

An Editorial (of sorts)

At last, at long last, it's here and you have a copy in your jam scarred, gnarled, abused and aching (and soon to be greasy with excitement) fingers. It took a long time in coming. From an initial idea and the original essay's handled (or not) by Mitch and Mick in the late 90's they travelled to the south of France with Enty. Here they lay unloved and dusty until I rescued what remained, in the summer of '06, and brought them back to where they belonged – East Lincs.

So it's now taken me months of sporadic and inconsistent effort to bring to fruition this journal of sorts. Mostly spent cajoling you lot into action or with some (Bob) trying to get you to stop. The result, I think, is a great testament to the ad-hoc climbing group sometimes known as the Burnley Team, hardened adventurers, intense piss takers, champion drinkers, pioneers, legends and most of all good mates....

Here then are our stories, it's one hell of an eclectic mix, some are very exciting, some are quite informative but most are downright funny, enjoy!

The Merits of Afternoon Drinking

By Mick Johnston

Slap.....Slap.....Slap..... I can't take any more of this as, for the umpteenth time, the faded orange fly-sheet lands in my face. We borrowed the tent from Healey, a slight oversight being the pegs and some of the poles. I'd like to compare this to some bad dream but I'm not sure if I've slept at all. A howling night long gale and more than a little trepidation have made this a night to forget. The only solace has been a time share arrangement as to who gets to sleep with Martha. To those unacquainted, she is Dave's Jack Russell. Apart from being a great team member she also doubles as a great hot water bottle.

With slowly awakening limbs we brave the cold and the short walk across the tundra to join our friends at the black icy loch. Even Martha looks pissed off, hiding from the elements between clumps of peat. Morning ablutions are quiet and brief before retreat is made to the cave for breakfast.

Looming above our hideaway and refusing to be ignored is the hulking black mass of Strone Ulladale. Six hundred feet of spectacular rock architecture are at the moment decorated by early morning cloud. Threatening skies and the constant wind combine to scupper today's objectives.

This is early April on the Isle of Harris in the Outer Hebrides. Despite the prevailing conditions, this is one of the most beautiful, albeit remote places I have visited, in a dark sort of way.

Our plan, and a long term dream of mine, is to make a free ascent of the crags classic line, "The Scoop".

The Scoop was first freed in an audacious effort at E7 by Dawes and Pritchard. The route has still had only a few repeats and, although the climb has lost some of it's aura, it still remains a lengthy, committing and technically difficult undertaking.

The company however, more than makes up for the weather. Noel Craine and Crispin Waddy with numerous visits to the Strone, are crag locals. Both having climbed The Scoop, they give us plenty of information and assure us we will be OK. Crispin tells tales of summertime visits, climbing till midnight and moonlight bathing in the loch. The only drawback being the dreaded Midge! Although Crispin denies encountering any, we're here early in the year because we don't believe him. I can't help thinking that any insect braving these conditions deserves to bite us on the bollocks! Greg's along too, fully at home and getting into the gnarliness of it all. The effort of getting here at all deserves the E grade. 14 hours in the car, including a near head on (ref- Greg). Two hours on the ferry, 1 bottle of malt (ref-Greg) and a 2 hour walk in add to the overwhelming feeling of isolation.

"We've come all this way and we're having a go" declares Dave and my heart sinks. I dig deep, and with some bravado, I agree. Before heading up to the cliff we swig on the bottle, the whisky eases my knotted stomach. With the feeling that things are out of control we head up. The first pitch is mine. Immediately engulfed by exposure, weighed down by gear and with whisky breath it's 8.30am at the beginning of a very unusual Saturday.

Straight away it's steep, my movements are decidedly workman like. Supposedly a bold pitch, I am actually heartened by the runners and with surprise I'm soon on the wall. With pegs clipped this is the first crux. Fuelled by the physical effort, I'm well psyched. The holds however have different ideas. Everything goes tiny and with freezing fingers a lame slap for the jug sees me off. With anger and relief I lower down to the rest. Oh well, blown the flash. Up again, warmer and more relaxed, I gain better holds then spacewalk towards the slings, swaying menacingly in the wind. Soon joined by Dave, suspended on the tat, we begin to feel the enormity of it all. Our friends back at camp already take on an insect like appearance as they prepare for their own adventures.

Dave disappears, running the next two pitches together, he's gone for some time. Relieved at leaving the stance and my emotional wavering, I am at once focussed by the moves and in my element. Laybacking up a Tremadoc style corner, the rock is perfect although I'm having to try hard. I thought this was the easy bit! Better holds in the horizontal striations greet the widening of the groove. I'm starting to flow although water cascades down from a fissure high on the right. However, our line is not affected by the water and the rock is matched only by the perfect friction. Back with a cheery Mr. Barton on a neat little stance, reality soon bites back and it's my turn again. One glance and I know all is not well. It's Tremadoc time again, pitch 4 manifesting in a smooth corner, disappearing at an alarming rate leftwards. It looks constricted but at least there is a peg to head for. I dwell on the stance becoming a bit too conspicuous. My plan to send Dave on the bold bits now seems a little flawed. The exposure is sickening, like stepping off the top of a skyscraper. Stuffing friends in regardless of size, I'm holding on far too tightly. How can I be sweating in this temperature? Gasping, I'm eyeing the peg and nearly drop the quickdraw clipping with a wobbling left arm. With full hot aches I've lost it and take up the butterfly stroke to gain the groove above. Indignantly I'm spat off and dangling from the decaying ironmongery. Hastily I'm rearranging the friends and plug in another for good measure. Re-united on the stance all I get is laughter. Did I really expect a sympathetic ear?

Ten minutes later I'm back at the peg. With hands on fire and a little more composed, I still can't work it out and take up swimming again. I surface in the easy angled

corner above. Relief is soon tempered by my surroundings. Flanked on all sides by overhangs, I get the feeling of incarceration and “the fear” takes over. Not being brave enough to jump off, I can’t communicate with Dave. My escape plan consists of six of the most pathetic RP’s ever placed. Palming around the arête I’m rewarded with bomber fingerlocks and sinking runners. I’ve just spent half an hour making easy moves feel desperate but that’s hindsight. Steep pulls and I’m hanging the stance only to be faced with the final indignity. Dead centre on the tiny ledge sits a huge turd, at this moment, about six inches from my nose. Forced by my sensibilities, I claw up the wall to the left turning to send the offending pile “Beckham” style earthwards. Cursing, I clip the anchors placing the blame on some disillusioned aid climber. Dave arrives with the usual rapidity laughing at the joke RP’s. He’s loving this. We share the great little perch in the sky and all is well for a while. Eyes closed I’m gone to somewhere distant. Detached and high on some whimsical memory my emotions are high. A sudden updraft brings me back to the Strone. Cracks in the sky allow a momentary flash of silver across the loch and the grim façade slips for a while giving our hearts a much needed lift.

Time is precious however and there is a mini-bus waiting. Dave is anxious to get on and drops down leftwards. To the uninitiated, pitch 5 consists of a massive coach sized block apparently detached from the crag. The ropes pay out almost quicker than I can I give and soon I’m called upon to board. I soon realise why Dave went so fast. The block actually echoes as I swing onto it. Devoid of footholds and gear, the ropes loop in an arc, thirty feet to meet Dave. “The Fear” has returned as I ape leftward swinging on Dave’s leg to clip in. Suspended comically on a couple of crap looking pegs, I feel we are now on “The Scoop” for real.

Squatting on Dave’s head, I bridge a few moves but not being my forte, I slam back down bruising us both. Thoroughly disheartened we discuss the folly of our situation. Pondering where we would rather be, we discuss darts and dominoes and drunken afternoons by a roaring fire. Back in reality and unable to face the corner, I contort up the left arête to better holds. Forty easy won feet ensue and I’ve got style again. Another perfect stance arrives but the wind hits hard on the very arête of the mountain.

Snow and hail form great white drapes out at sea. We are sheltered however by the huge curtains of overhangs above. Cruelly The Scoop saves it’s worst for last. The infamous roof pitch looks worse than I had imagined. Not wanting to get cold, Dave’s big lead is soon underway. A bomber titanium peg is clipped courtesy of Paul and Johnny but the breach is a long way rightwards. A fall from here is unthinkable and Dave is silent under the overhangs. His head against the rock and eyes closed I struggle to watch. Suddenly he’s gone, cutting loose around the lip, slapping for everything. It’s hard to tell through squinting eyes but I’m sure he’s laughing.

Intensely relieved I stifle my watering eyes, well chuffed with my partner. I certainly didn’t want to lead that pitch! The ropes are totally horizontal to the wall and whip around as Dave struggles to take in. I follow, cold and stiff in skin of the teeth fashion. ‘I knew what I had to do’ was his only comment with a wry smile.

All is joyous now as I pummel up the last fantastic pitch. Beautiful rough Gabbro affords holds everywhere. Even the wind has dropped as I plug a friend in the sunlit crack. Not feeling the need for any more gear, I sprint the remaining sixty feet to the top. Deposited on the broken summit slabs, free of The Strone, my ego is already taking on new proportions. The mundane task of finding a belay ensues although gear on the slabs is scarce. Further up I chance upon an old peg, a remnant from the first ascent. Clipping a quickdraw, I lean out to back it up with a friend. Without warning

I'm cartwheeling down the slab in a tumble dryer of earth and sky. With fists full of heather I stop short of the abyss, a few feet short of a potential 200ft fall onto the belay! Retching, I curse my stupidity at endangering us both. With soil in my hair and blood soaking through my shirt sleeve I bring Dave up. My drip white complexion tells the story and, once again, laughter fills the air. After the customary handshake we share the moment. Back in the comfort zone we rattle down the screes without a care.

In the flickering candle light of the cave I can forgive Noel's pasta surprise. The surprise being the sheep shit inadvertently scooped up after an upset pan. Martha is happy to be re-united with the team and out of the wind. Wine is mulled and the malt handed round in the best restaurant for miles. Crispin looks, and is, totally at home in this excuse for a cave. Greg the barman happily fills our cups as we bullshit late into the night, ranting of glories past and future plans.

I don't recall returning to our flat tent. Floating in my feather bed I can't begrudge Dave the luxury of the canine bed warmer. I mustn't let the old man get cold at his time of life.

The last day arrives soaked in torrential rain. Guiltily we leave the boys to retrieve abandoned gear from high on "The Chisel" The horizontal elements drive us wearily out of the valley to the sanctuary of the car. By the time our sodden friends arrive back we've finished all the Caffreys stashed in the boot.

Looking back from the ferry the island hangs in mist. Strone is already a memory, a tale to be told. Feeling a little more "lived in" we dine on egg, chips and beans washed down with crap coffee. What do you fancy next weekend?

A Right Royal Day At Fraggie Rock

By Alan Firth

"I'm going to have her tonight"

The words awoke me from my semi drunken stupor.

"Who?" I slurred, gazing through blurred eyes at Johnston.

"That little princess over there" He shot a glance in the direction of the corner of the bar Can Pastilla.

I peered through slit eyes and saw what he was talking about. Leaning casually against the wall was the beautiful Princess Di in all her regal attire chatting to busty Sam Fox.

"You've no chance" I replied.

"I have a plan" said Johnston." You start an argument with Gibby so as to distract the bar staff. I will then do my bit." He says.

So off I stumble, grab Gibby by the scruff of the neck and say something that was certain to get him angry, that is "Come on Gibby it's your round". And hook line and sinker he takes the bait straight away, and starts to argue the toss.

Once the argument was in full swing and with the bar staff totally distracted, I notice out of the corner of my eye Johnston swiftly dash as best he could over to the

princess, grabs her round the waist, tucks her under his arm and dashes out the bar door faster than you could say “Mine’s a San Miguel, por favor”.

While all this was going on Cunningham was boring Peel to death about the subtleties of a Fillet and Butt weld. But Peel was only interested in eyeing up any thing in a skirt. Outside the bar Radtke and Barton were soloing up the outside of a tower block of apartments to the amazement of all the people passing by at the time.

Johnston arrived back a short while later saying he’d left Di “fixing her car” just down the road. At that we finished our drinks and staggered off to see what he meant. About fifty yards down the road there she was underneath her Roller, actually a Fiat Panda as it happened.” Get her from under there” growled Barton. “Have you no respect for royalty”. So after delicately easing her from under the sump we set off back to the apartment for a few more beers.

Back at the apartment more beers followed, with Di standing angel like in the corner with that wonderful gaze following your every movement.

Cunningham meanwhile had spotted a live sex show going on in the flat opposite, a show he was going to keep to himself until I spotted it too, and called the rest over. Di was temporarily forgotten for the time being while we had some voyeuristic titillation. The plan was to take Di to Fraggles rock; she didn’t complain and seemed quite excited by the idea.

The following morning and after the usual brew stop in Bunyola we eventually arrived at the parking place and helped Di from the car and staggered off down the track to the crag.

There was a bitterly cold wind blowing that day but Di in her sleeveless sequined evening gown didn’t seem to notice the cold at all, must be that blue blood in her veins.

Eventually we arrived at the crag without getting lost or causing any mishaps as on our previous visit a few days earlier. After the usual banter we geared up and attacked those tremendous molten wax like tufas and pocketed central overhanging section of the crag. Peel was in his usual inimitable style, foot perfect, no fluster, hair immaculate all in coordinating attire. Radtke with his “I’ll not give in at any price” attitude, Barton on the Mono Doigt route finding that his only digit to fit the crux move was his little one, but still having the power to pull through. Johnstone in his element running it out on the long scary pitches with big fall potential. Gibb, Cunningham and myself content at exploring the ‘vertical’ slabs on the edges of the crag.

Di in the meantime just stood and watched in regal awe at all these deeds of daring do never saying a word.

As the day progressed arms began to wilt, fingers started to wear thin and the pub beckoned. But before we retreated it was suggested that Di do a route, and that she do the classic 7b+ up the centre of the crag. So after donning a borrowed harness the people’s princess was the first royal to climb at Fraggles rock. She set off with gusto and seemed to just float up, feet hardly touching, fingers lightly caressing the rock and breezing the crux effortlessly. She eventually reached the belay without drawing breath or breaking sweat a truly amazing sight.

After lowering off Radtke cried “To the hacienda boys, this calls for a banquet fit for a queen”. Sacks were hurriedly packed and the usual harrowing drive back to the hacienda Can Penasso just outside Bunyola followed. On entering the bar Radtke ordered Pedro the head waiter to set a table fit for royalty with ice cold Spanish beer and mucho Rioja. When the waiters saw who we had as a guest they couldn’t do enough for us and did us proud by providing us with a tremendous meal. With Lady

Di at the head of the table watching over the celebrations and many toasts to what must have been the first ever royal to flash a 7b+. But all good things come to an end at sometime, and Lady Di was needed back at the bar at which we'd found her. So off we headed back to Can Pastilla for more merriment and debauchery, to end what was a really royal week on the island of Majorca.

Mirror Wall

By Terry Holmes

“Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the wettest of them all – Robin Ellis I’d say”.

Here is an account of a fun day’s climbing, on this excellent piece of rock on the edge of Gallway Bay, in County Clare, on the West Coast of Eire.

Before we tell the story, there are a few things you may need to know about Mirror Wall.

Mirror Wall drops off the edge of the Burren Escarpment, 100 ft. vertically into the sea. There are many large boulders in the bottom, some are 15 to 20 ft. cube, and according to the guidebook, they are sometimes moved around with the ferocity of heavy seas. It is a wildly exposed crag, with all the weather coming straight in from the Atlantic.

The routes on the main wall are all in the Extreme Grade, with only one E1, this is the classic “The Ramp” and as the name implies, it take a big ramp line on the right hand side of the wall. All the others are E3 and upwards, (mostly upwards), the majority take cracklines of one sort or another.

The base of the crag is often washed by the sea, even when you think you are safe for an hour or two, it may well sneak in on you.

The recommended way to climb is to abseil to small ledges that run along most of the wall at 15 ft. above the base; these ledges are not always adorned with good belays, so belaying on the ab rope may be necessary. It is also a good idea to have an old rucksack with the top cut off to store the climbing ropes in.

So to the day in question. Four of us, Derek Hargreaves, Robin Ellis, Neil Herbert and myself had been enjoying a week’s climbing and drinking holiday in Doolin, which is conveniently situated 5 miles up the road. The weather hadn’t been very kind, but then in these parts it rarely is! Our theory was, if you can see the Arran Isles, out in the Bay, then you are o.k. – if you can’t you are going to get wet.

Well today was Friday and Nez and Robin had to go home the following day, and more to the point, they had yet to sample the atmosphere of Mirror Wall. We had only one ab rope and one cut off rucksack between the four of us (bad preparation as usual).

Anyway, the weather today looked half-decent, the tide was well out, so a plan was formulated. Derek and I would abseil to the base (first mistake!), leaving Rob and Nez with the ab rope and cut off sack, essential kit on most routes on the main wall.

They had decided to get a feel for the place by doing the classic The Ramp. So we are all in there, Rob and Nez belayed 15 ft. up the wall and Derek and I,

wandering around in the bottom. We are all happy, not too hungover! It feels great to be able to wander around down here, the first time all week we have been able to have a proper look around Mirror Wall.

“Ah well, suppose we should climb!” I store the ropes (just in case), and Derek sets off up “Through the Looking Glass E3”, the second easiest route on Mirror Wall. (We had done The Ramp and Virtual Image, E4, earlier in the week, but had to start from the ledges at 15ft up.)

The first moves up to the ledges are quite tough. So I’m enjoying the ambience, while Derek sorts out the climbing. Then suddenly, from one minute, the sea being calm and a few feet below us, it is now lapping around my ankles!

Shouting to Derek (who was going to lead the whole route in one) “I think we need a change of plan – get belayed”. Easy for me to say, only one problem, no gear or ab rope to belay on.

So now the sea’s above my knees and all Nez and Rob can do is laugh, and shout “Come on”.

Well it seems like ages but the ropes are in and with squelchy boots, away we go. I lead through and we meet Nez and Rob at the top.

The sea has now come in at an alarming rate, but Nez is determined to do a harder route on Mirror Wall. We give them the “essential kit” and recommend “Through the Looking Glass”.

Derek and I choose a route on the right end of the wall, a short E5 called “Quicksilver”, we can ab to ledges well above the sea for this one. First though, we decide to watch the lads for a bit, from the promontory at the end of the wall.

So Rob’s abseiled in and belayed 25 ft. above the sea. I moan as he’s belaying a bit high on the wall. At that same moment, the biggest wave yet crashes in and goes right up Rob’s backside, to which Derek replies, “No, I think he’s got it just about right, come on!” So all the while Nez leads out, Rob gets a Sea “Enema”.

Meanwhile, Derek and I have ab’ed in to our route on the climbing ropes and pulled the ropes in behind. We are just about to start climbing and at the same time Rob’s about to second their route and guess what – we cannot see Arran Isles anymore!!

So it’s pissing down, we are sheltering behind a block three quarters of the way down Mirror Wall, with one way out which is up. Rob’s climbing absolutely soaked to the skin, with Derek constantly shouting “Come on” at him – other than that everything’s great!

Well, Rob gets out, by fair means or foul. So then it’s their turn to shout down and laugh at us. Then we hear, “Do you want rescuing lads?” to which Derek replies “No chance, we’d never hear the last of it”. Well, the rain eases and we skulk out up a V.S. in the corner. The lads have had a good day so they decide on an early bath, excuse the pun, so they take “The Snapper” to Fanore for a Guinness and the craic. Meanwhile Derek and I carry on climbing for a while, not on Mirror Wall, I hasten to add.

Later, around nine, they pick us up and we head to Doolin, for the customary ‘Gallon of Guinness’.

“Yes, a very fun day’s climbing”.

P.S. “The Snapper” is the name given to our small van by Rob, which he got from the Roddy Doyle Trilogy. (Well work that out for yourselves.)

A Buttress of the Establishment

By Peter Grindley

This all happened a bit since. In fact, it was nearer in time to the Great Kinder Trespass than to the present. I find this thought a bit sobering, but I mention it as it bears on the negative attitude of one of the participants in the episode. These participants were three in number; John A. Hartley (the original, accept no other) at that time an apprentice lawyer displaying some signs of gifts as a climber; myself, about whom least said soonest mended as it'll all be obvious in due course; and to close the triangle, The Gamekeeper. This last gentleman played an honourable part, even if toleration of climbers was markedly absent from the list of his merits. Which was probably a fairly short document anyway. He was a feudal serf of the local private landowners. He preserved The Grouse, at that time not yet decimated by cold wet Springs and rampant parasites, so they could be shot at by The Gentlemen between August and the weather getting really unpleasant. That was his employment. His vocation and the delight of his life, which his employment let him indulge to the full, seemed to be to chase people off The Scout.

This Scout has nothing to do with Kinder. It is the visible but unobtrusive outcrop which sits on the north-easterly rim of the Widdop valley and smiles at the main Widdop buttresses on the other side of the reservoir. It smiles because it faces nearly south and gets practically the whole of any sunshine. Its gritstone -sound, harsh, pebbly and tempting to climb on- gleams silver grey and naked when north-facing Widdop is decking herself out in greasy rags of green algae. The Scout is on the whole steep and we thought it hard. You engaged with its short seductive walls and at once and inexorably the holds and your weight begin to sap at your fingers and arms while the pebbles tried to wear holes in your finger ends. In the days of this story it was perhaps a place still before its time; chalk and stealth rubber were yet to come, and the levels of training and technology which bred Reservoir Dogs were forty years and more in the future. Returning to even earlier days than ours, the first climbers (who had an uncouth wealth of fine new lines to go at on the keeper-free buttresses across the reservoir) had either left The Scout alone or had passed in the night and left no record. So to Hartley and me Scout the Unclimbed beckoned. Grey Buttress beckoned most of all, because it looked as if we might actually be able to climb it.

Grey Buttress was the only point on the Scout's best and most climb-resistant wall where the shape of the rock gave a chance to cheat the otherwise unrelenting steepness. A small half-height buttress, a sort of chimney-breast against the wall, allowed the problem to be split into three bites, or rather two bites and a nibble. The first bite was getting up the side of the buttress and on to its distinctly sloping upper surface. The nibble was getting yourself delicately in balance on this little lean-to roof with as much height gained up it as possible. Usually not a lot. You could have height or balance but not both, as the upper wall pushed you backwards as you rose. The final bite, the "Look Ma, no hands!" bit of the whole operation, was to stand up to your absolute full height to reach a horizontal handhold. From this point on things got more reassuring, but the standing-up bit, as I recall it, certainly did not. Runners? My dear Sir or Madam, you jest. There was simply nowhere to place one. The cutting edge of our runner technology was a car wheel nut with the threads filed blunt to spare the line sling. Friends were still just people you drank with down at The Ridge.

When Hartley and I first laid siege to Grey Butress the outline just given was all experience yet to be gained. Even laying the siege required luck and cunning. Sometimes we never even got to the rock before The Gamekeeper's conveyance came trundling up the road and we had to take to the moor. However, persistence must have found an occasion when The Gamekeeper was doing whatever else gamekeepers do to oblige their employers. Both of us had managed to crack the problem on a top-rope. At which point the customary interruption had occurred and we had not lingered in the area.

At this juncture Hartley and I began to eye each other in a shifty and furtive manner. Because somebody was going to be First Up. On our simplistic code of ethics Top-Ropes Didn't Count. Neither of us could bring ourselves quite to sneaking a solo surreptitious visit and bagging the thing behind the other's back. Such mature policies come only with age and experience. Also we were both just a bit conscious that the standing upright move was going to be a very different thing with no top-rope protection. Someone handy to help with the consequences of failure could be a great convenience. However, action could not long be postponed. If the word got about then they of Halifax, who would nick anything not bolted to the floor, might well reap where they had not sown. The threat of this indignity imposed unity on our actions. We set a rendezvous at the Scout, at a time convenient to neither of us but hopefully even less so to The Gamekeeper.

For reasons we may conveniently neglect to detail Hartley arrived via Worsthorne and the Gorpel track on foot while I arrived via Thursden and the tarmac road on a small two-stroke motorcycle. This was Made In England and of the kind which reduced Japanese bike makers to embarrassed giggles and world domination. Mostly it went along trailing a smoke plume worthy of a coal-fired battleship and at about the same speed. This however was still a good deal faster than Hartley. Both anxiously punctual like all decent men intent upon keeping each other honest, we each first perceived the other as we were coming along opposite sides of the reservoir. Now, The Scout was on my side. In fact the Grey Butress was straight up the moor directly above me, while Hartley had half the length of the reservoir plus the width of the embankment to cover before he even reached the road below the distant end of the outcrop. It didn't seem worth going all the way down to the embankment just to walk back with him, so I stopped, stashed the bike behind a bit of wall and set off up the hill.

I can still convince myself that then or later I had no conscious intention of diddling Hartley out of his just rewards, if any. I plodded up the moor in no particular hurry and taking no great notice of anything. I was no more than half way up when this benign frame of mind was disturbed by a raucous bawl from somewhere behind me. Yes, it was The Gamekeeper. Where he'd come from the Lord alone knew, but I was well and truly rumbled. Not only was it The Gamekeeper. Worse, he was getting out of his vehicle. Usually he was content to bawl and if we were clearly leaving do little more. Now he was obviously intent on a personal interview, which it seemed strongly in my interests to decline. The obvious way to this goal was to get to the rim of the outcrop far enough ahead of him to let me disappear in the rough country behind it before he could arrive and see where I had gone. So I gained considerably on him up the hill. Then as I got up towards the foot of the outcrop a sudden madness took me. I was within ten yards of the foot of Grey Butress and I was wearing my kletterschuhe. Yes, Kletterschuhe. So bad they never gave them a name in English; green split-leather uppers and less grip than a good pair of wellies. So I climbed it.

I surged over the top of it dry mouthed and high on adrenaline and delight, stood up, and looked back and around. Hartley from his longer approach line over to my left had assessed the emergency, witnessed my base and treacherous behaviour and was pounding across the hillside hot for a place on the podium. The Gamekeeper was still coming on, though perhaps with less enthusiasm. It was a classic interception calculation, which Hartley got right. He got to Grey Buttrass with just -only just - enough time in hand. He made it to the top of the mini buttrass. Then with nothing needed but adequate energy and a vital minute or two to settle and set himself up for the finish, the circumstances and his fell-race to the start combined against him. With capture, trial and transportation to Van Diemen's Land staring him in the face he had to give it best. He unwillingly went back down and scampered up a nearby gap to join me on the top. The Gamekeeper settled for the single point and stopped. We dropped well back from the skyline and in a wide deep sweep down the moor fled back to the road.

Walking back up the road to the embankment we met The Gamekeeper driving down it. He gave us a bit of an old fashioned look. He knew of course. And we knew that he knew. And he knew that we knew that he knew. He probably also knew that we didn't care very much. And there were two of us. So he drove on. He'd never noticed my bike either.

A Perfect Evening

By Dave Green

“OK I’m going for it just watch us”

“Yeah I’m ready”

Right if he comes off now he will either smack into that ledge, or if the gear rips he’ll land on me. I’ve a clear run down there or I could jump down here. Which is the least likely to rip the gear? Dunno let’s see what happens. See he left all his gear all over in the drop zone it’ll hurt more if he lands on that. Christ he didn’t do it like that on top rope, jump or run?

“Woo! YES”

“Nice one Paul”

Thank fuck for that.

“Right are you going to give it a go”

E6 6b? I’ve no chance I only managed to get to the first break once. Then again I’m not walking all the way up here at this time of day just to hold his rope for 15 minutes, it’ll be dark soon and I don’t want to lead anything tonight.

“Yeah why not. Make sure it’s a good belay.”

Ok boots on, tie in, check the knot, move all this shit I’m not bouncing on to it, chalk up, check the knot.

“That’s me”

Check the knot.

“When ready.”

Check the knot

“Climbing”

Check the knot

Right the first bit is easy, reach up both hands on the ledge pull up layaway with the left stand up, right hand undercut under that little roof. Piece of piss. Next bit not so easy, right foot high up on that smear, where the chalk is, force the knee in next to the right hand, extend the ankle, leg lock, perfect. Let go with the right, Shit! My knee’s slipping, grab the undercut jam the knee in harder. Ok let go slowly this time, nope. How much force can you get on a smear, push harder with the knee, that’s it let go very slowly, reach up with the right, find the hold with the finger tips, push down with the left hand, walk the fingers higher onto the hold, got it, left foot up. Bugger my knee’s stuck, relax the right leg and rock onto the left. Should I jam in the back of the break or try to find the hold that he uses. Use the jam, bollocks that’s another chunk of knuckle missing. Lean in, get in balance, oh there’s the hold, grab it and take a breather, get the gear out of the break , there goes another knuckle. Check the knot.

Blood pissing out off three fingers, hope it’s true what Paul said ‘if I bleed a little on every route I won’t end up bleeding a lot on just one’.

“I’ve cut myself”

“It must be a route then”

Easy mantle up onto the ledge and stand up. Nearly halfway ok a third then.

See all the chalk up there, that’s the hold. Reach for it, a foot off it. Shuffle along the break to the highest point, reach up, 8 inches. Stand on tiptoes, 4 inches. Shuffle more and stretch every fibre. Hands on a chalk covered elephants arse.

“That’s it you’ve got it, now left leg up and rock over onto the ramp.”

Piss off if I breathe too hard I’m off

“I can’t move I’m at full stretch”

“It’s the only way”

“Ok, watch us”

Hope the knots good. Foot up, no good it’s a mile off. Got to get higher or taller, pull with the arms, smear with the feet, slap with the hands, pull, smear, slap I can’t believe it’s wor, not working. Good knot though I can forget about that now.

“What happened.”

“I can’t reach the hold properly to pull on it”

Back in the break, try again. Shuffle along, stretch up, pull with the arms, smear with the feet, slap with the hands, smear with the knee, slap with the shin, smear with the belly, slap with the forearm, slap with the feet, pull with the face, OFF!

Nearly had it then, try again. Shuffle up the break, stretch out the arms, smear with the palm, pull a muscle somewhere, slap with the knee, push down with the shin, pull like a demon, slap with the belly, smear blood everywhere, grab the rope and pull up on it.

Done it.

“What happened there”

“Got fed up with it”

“Ok this next bits the crux”

Delicate bit of footwork here. Step through with the left over with the right high onto the dimple. Right hand on the arete, find the hold.

“Higher”

“Higher”

“Bollocks shit”

Swing back onto the ramp, try again. Left foot through, right foot over, reach up the arete, up, up, step up on the toes, reach higher, nearly there. Is that it?

“BOLLOCKS”

Grab the arete with the left hand, reach up to the big sloping ledge with the right, grip round the arete with the knees, elbows onto the ledge, the tops in reach now. Why am I so pumped on a slab route?

“What you doing coming up there, don’t do that”

“I’m fucked, I can’t do the stupid move so I’m getting to the top”

Reach up both hands on top, pull hard and scuff the feet roll over on your back done it. E6 6b.

Jeez I’m knackered must have lost half a pint of blood, ‘well maybe half a c.c.,’ and at least a pint of sweat, but I didn’t cry. Not out loud at least.

“Good route that given a bit more height and ability and a bit less weight. I reckon I could do it. On top rope of course.”

We trudge back down to the car, engrossed in a deep and meaningful discussion about route names, interspersed with inane drivel and total crap about route names. Drive round to the “New Hall”. It’s shut! A perfect end to a perfect evening.

Did Climbing Save My Life?

By Neil McCallum

Great title for an essay, don’t you think ? This is obviously total nonsense but what starting climbing and getting hopelessly addicted to it did do was to stop me becoming a cave diver, which as you all know is one of the most dangerous pastimes known to man or woman, but I don’t know any female cave divers. Perhaps the fairer sex’s survival instinct is too strong to engage in a pursuit so obviously lethal. Anyway this is not the direction I want to head in with this tale.

I have a tendency to become completely addicted to whichever pastime I bumble into. First it was marbles at Junior school. Littlies and dobbers, catseyes and crystals, sapphires, rubies and quicksilvers. The scraps and arguments, the tense games all hotly contested with strict rules, I loved marbles. On through school, next was BMX thanks to E.T., then athletics and fell running, thanks to my old man. Then on to skateboarding (ouch).

In my first week at university I went along to the Freshers Fair to join a club. I was interested to give caving or climbing a go, as my old man had done a little of each but not stuck at them as he was more into his fell running. (Still is the old goat!) At the climbers stall they all seemed a bit pre-occupied and dull. It was after lunch and these idiots were sober! The cavers on the other hand seemed mad, they were also pissed. I joined the cavers. I was immediately given a bottle of ‘Newky Brown’ and introduced to, who are now, several of my best friends.

For the next 3 years I lived and breathed potholing. We did most of the big deep caves and pots in Yorkshire plus trips to South Wales and France. So what next for ambitious cavers? Sumps. We started to take an unhealthy interest in sumps. These, to those that don’t know, are totally submerged sections of cave. When I say we I mean myself, Iain, Eric the Red and Cumbrian Neil, there were several other keen cavers in our club but we 4 were the hardcore, fiercely keen every weekend.

There are several short sumps in Yorkshire that don't require breathing apparatus, as you can just swim through holding your breath! – Free dives. So we actively sought out these curious caving trips and in the autumn of 1991 Iain and I plus a support man arrived at the first on the list (should have been second but this is closer to Preston) Old Ing Cave on Penyghent. A great beginners cave down an easy stream passage for 400 yards, which ends at a brown, foam topped pool of very cold water. The guidebook reads, 'Sump 1 is 10 feet long and can be free dived to a large airbell with deep water. Sump 2, also an interesting free dive, is only 2 feet long but the explorer must pass beneath a rock arch at 6 feet depth.' It continues, 'These dives should only be attempted by experienced and well equipped free divers.' Well we had all the gear, wetsuits, neoprene hoods and divers masks, and there's only one way to become experienced!

The first sump is easy as it is very shallow, the roof only dipping a foot or so below the surface. We had been told 'the technique' was to face the ceiling and sort of crawl upside down along it and pull like fuck on the handline. This is because in a wetsuit you are very buoyant and get forced up to the ceiling so it's easier to move in this fashion. Iain went first, and disappeared into the depths in a flurry of movement thrashing and kicking. That didn't look very easy! The call from beyond was 3 sharp tugs on the line, this is the accepted method of communication as obviously you can't hear each other. My go. I psyched myself up with 3 deep breaths and pulled hard to get under water using a twisting motion to get facing the ceiling so I could crawl along it. Being underwater like this was very weird the visibility was enough to see my hands on the thick, hawser laid dive line and the air pockets slithering about on the ceiling like quicksilver as I disturbed them. Just as I was thinking I was going too far, I should be there, I surfaced. The technique had worked a treat and Iain and I were now treading water in the airbell. This is a very surreal place to be, like surfacing into an upturned skip with no exit except back underwater, also the water makes curious and eerie sounds as it slops and slaps crevices and hollows in the rock. I was way outside my comfort zone, in fact I was so uncomfortable I was shivering violently. I didn't really meet the second of the above criteria 'well equipped' as my wetsuit was way too big, the cold water was continually flushing through the suit replacing the water I had warmed with my body heat.

The next sump is the equivalent of pulling yourself to the bottom of the deep end of the pool on a rope then contorting yourself through an open car window in a 'Dukes of Hazzard' style. Again Iain went first, he seemed to take a long time just to pull himself down to the bottom, then his light vanished and I was alone, very cold and not so much scared as unnerved. 3 tugs. I psyched up again, 3 deep breaths and I pulled hard on the dive line. Bloody hell trying to sink yourself in a thick wetsuit is really hard work and 6 feet down felt a bloody long way, deep enough for the pressure in my ears to become painful. At the bottom I could see the line disappear through the window like opening leading through into the large passage beyond and somehow I contorted through whilst starting to gag a little as my air was running out. Once through I shot upwards thanks to my incredible buoyancy and exploded out of the water with a huge gasp at the cool air. 'I did that' chuckled Iain, 'fuckin hell that was interesting' I gasped in reply. We were now in a large gloomy passage with very deep water and a long swim eventually led us to dry land and a section of fine sporting cave reached another sump. The guidebook says, 'this sump is narrow and awkward and should not be free dived.' So now we had to go back the way we had come, as is almost always the case with caving. The trip in had been taxing and exciting but we had coped well enough and we were slightly more confident on the return journey. I

went through sump 2 first and gave the customary 3 tugs on the line to tell Iain I was safe. I felt the line tighten as Iain came to join me in my watery, gloomy and mysterious position. I saw his light appear in the depths but he didn't come straight up, he rose at an angle and disappeared beneath the roof of sump 1 without surfacing. I instinctively lunged for my mate and caught his flailing boot, so for the fourth time that day I pulled like fuck and dragged him into the airbell. He surfaced with a very startled look on his face, totally confused about what had just happened, meeting solid rock where there should have been the airbell was incredibly disorientating. As the tension and adrenalin subsided we both cracked up, 'good job you tied your laces properly.' I quipped. We were both very relieved to see daylight after our first diving expedition but the seeds had been sown for future adventures.

We did these 2 sumps again, a couple of weeks later, because after telling Eric and Neil of our exploits, they demanded a piece of the action.

Our next free dive was just up the road from Kilnsey in Sleets Gill Cave, and should have been first on the list. This is a pleasant enough cave and after an hour or so a perfect clear pool is reached. You are travelling upstream at this point so you cannot contaminate the water in the sump with disturbed mud and silt as is usually the case. This cave also has a strange hydrology, the water is fed by percolation down through the rocks rather than active streams running straight off the peaty moors, so the water is very clear. The sump is 15 feet long and the guidebook describes it as 'very pleasant', and it was. Very good visibility and no restrictions, just a wide deep passage with cold, crystal clear water – fantastic! A far cry from floundering around in the murky peat stained sumps down Old Ing.

Around this time (early 1992) Iain and Eric started to purchase diving gear and take scuba diving lessons at the pool in Preston. Thankfully I was approaching my finals and so time and more importantly money were scarce. These lessons were purely to get enough experience to go cave diving. Also around this time I had started climbing at the wall at West View Leisure Centre to help get fit for the Gouffre Berger trip we were booked on in August 1992.

After my finals climbing really started to take hold and I was soon leading on my Dad's very inadequate rack, wearing my caving harness and my brother Andy wearing Dad's old Whillans.

The Berger trip was awesome and very successful, Iain and I reached the bottom of the cave at a depth of 1122m and spent 28 hours underground. Eric reached the top of the last pitch on a solo mission having arrived in the Vercors several days late. He then got trapped at camp 1 after someone had inadvertently pulled one of the ropes up its pitch and out of reach from below.(Cundy!) He spent nearly 3 days down there almost all of it on his own! He was comfy though as there were lots of sleeping bags and food stashed at camp 1. A derigging team found him hibernating in a large nest of fibre pile and down. We were not concerned on the surface as an exploratory team were working out of camp 2, bolting their way up a huge aven, and we just assumed he had joined in with those guys.

The Berger is in the Vercors Massif and the area is littered with stunning limestone walls and it was these that were really grabbing my attention. It seemed utterly unfeasible that they could be climbed! Caving was too easy, these crags looked like a real challenge. I was being drawn to the world of the vertical and away from the cold wet holes I had devoted all my spare time too over the last 3 years.

We continued on our free diving bent on our return from France and next on the hit list was Langstroth Pot. Beautifully situated near Yockenthwaite this fantastic sporting pothole can be attempted as a 'through trip'. Starting high on the hillside, you

descend 8 pitches, pulling the rope down after yourselves and emerge 300 feet lower from Langstroth Cave via 3 sumps of 6, 10 and 15 feet. The guidebook states 'free diving is inadvisable as air in intervening airbells is liable to become foul'. This was discovered after a tragic incident involving Newcastle University Caving Club, when several members were overcome by foul air and died.

The problem airbell is between sumps 2 and 3, the longest two, and one solution is to dive through both without taking a breath in the intervening airspace. This obviously cuts down the safety margins as you now have to travel about 30 feet without breathing! Our solution was to take 2 very small air cylinders with attached regulators called a 'pony set'. These were for breathing in the airbell not underwater. The four of us had a great trip through this committing pothole (once you have pulled the rope down after yourselves on the first pitch you are totally committed to the full adventure!) On reaching the sumps Eric went first closely followed by me, and he waited for me in the problem airbell where I had a couple of quick gulps from his 'pony set' and dived the final sump into Langstroth Cave. Iain did the same for Neil and we all made a safe exit after a very exhilarating afternoon. This trip set us up for Yorkshire's ultimate free dive experience, the Rowten Pot through trip!

Rowten Pot is described in the guidebook as 'a tremendous chasm'. It is a classic Yorkshire pothole almost entirely vertical and wet, 340 feet deep and very spectacular. It ends as most caves and potholes at a sump pool, with a diving line disappearing into the murky depths. It is at this point that the vast majority of cavers turn around and jumar back up the ropes rigged on the descent, as I had done myself on 3 or 4 occasions.

We attempted this trip with the same team as we were now very experienced and very well equipped free divers! The logistics involved myself and Eric rigging the ropes down Rowten Pot and waiting at the sump pool for Iain and Neil to emerge from it, having entered the system through the easy, roadside, Valley Entrance.

Timing was impeccable as 2 minutes after arriving at the sump pool the dive line started to twitch. Soon a dull glow could be seen growing ever stronger until Iain broke the waters surface with a huge grin and only a slight splutter. 3 tugs on the line signified to Neil it was his turn. He emerged in due course with a fearful grimace declaring 'fucking heeellll that's a long way, I'm never doing that again' in a broad Cumbrian squeal. This as you can imagine was incredibly reassuring for Eric and I, as we were already very nervous. The reason we were nervous was because this first sump, the third of the day for Iain and Neil, is, at 27 feet, the longest free dive in Yorkshire, nearly twice as long as our previous longest dives. Also it's quite a wide low sump with less than 2 feet between roof and floor which is covered in large rounded cobbles.

So after 5 minutes of hyper-babble, Iain and Neil buzzing on adrenalin breakdown and Eric and I pumping fresh adrenalin, we exchanged our harnesses and jumars for their neoprene hoods and divers masks.

Eric dived first and very quickly, perhaps 30 seconds, the 3 tugs on the line told me it was my go. So with the customary 3 deep breath's to psyche up I pulled into the sump. This was done with the now familiar twisting motion to get my hands and knees against the ceiling so as I could quite literally crawl along it.

It wasn't so much a crawl as an all out sprint for my life. The most unnerving thing was the cobbles jostling against my back as I bounced over them seemingly trying to slow me down and hold me back, but I would have taken some holding back because I really did 'pull like fuck'. 27 feet is a long way underwater, I don't know how long I was under for, about 15 seconds or so, but there is loads of time to think,

everything slows down, progress can't possibly be made quick enough. Until eventually I surfaced into the airbell relieved and absolutely buzzing my tits off, too meet a grinning fool clutching a bright yellow rubber duck and floating it around the pool like a child at bathtime shouting 'quack quack' and roaring with laughter. (Eric's laugh is loud and manic at the best of times, in fact he is nearly always laughing and it's incredibly infectious)

We left the rubber duck in its watery tomb and made the next 2 easy dives of 12 feet and 6 feet to arrive at the head of a very impressive stream canyon, the West Kingsdale Master Cave. We followed this downstream to arrive at the large terminal sump pool. This sump and the connection to the large resurgence at Keld Head is the scene of one of the most outstanding cave diving achievements ever made and contains the ominous 'dead mans handshake'. Geoff Yeadon and Oliver Statham progressively pushed both ends of this sump until eventually they were connected, they then completed the full traverse, 1,830m completely underwater, no air pockets, a world record at the time in 1979. (There is a brilliant write up about this in Bonington's book 'Quest for Adventure')

We made the 20 foot climb up into a high level passage known as the 'Roof Tunnel' and made an easy, dry exit out of the Valley Entrance, close to our parked car.

A recent guidebook to Yorkshire's 50 hardest caves reads, 'for well prepared cavers with free diving experience, the Rowten through trip, is likely to represent a memorable high point in their Yorkshire caving career'. And so it did!

Iain and Eric were now getting full into diving and working their way through the easier and more accessible Yorkshire cave dives, aided and abetted by Neil and the team who were more than happy to keep their heads above water, and help out with equipment carrying.

I on the other hand stopped caving almost completely to concentrate on my new found passion of rock climbing. I had bought a rope, a harness and some modern protection and was dragging my brother out to go climbing as often as I could. My first trip to Malham was a glorious sunny day in February 93. I had led a few HVS's in the Lancashire quarries, Rapunzle at Troy was first, and a couple at Crummockdale and Attermire. I was eager to get to grips with the right wing at Malham and we started the day with Clubfoot and Junkyard Angel. Andy wanted to go over to the left wing but as I stood at the base of Wombat a compulsion came over me, I had to give it a go it looked brilliant. Andy reluctantly uncoiled the single 11mm rope muttering, 'bloody idiot it's E2'. I then promptly on sighted my first extreme rock climb. I remember having some difficulty at the crux, as the crucial pockets were full of that silty sludge that builds up in them when it's been wet. But I was a caver, a bit of mud wouldn't stop me, and it didn't! I 'pulled like fuck' and flopped onto the flat grassy top pumped solid and panting hard. As I sat basking in the cool February sunshine it dawned on me 'I'm a climber, I'm a bloody climber!'

Iain and Eric, thankfully, both survived their cave diving exploits. Iain got married, had 3 kids and knocked the diving on the head. It's not a sport for a father! Neil married an American and moved to Wisconsin where there aren't any caves. Eric still dives the big, deep, open European caves, helping to push the limits with scooters and rebreathers and occasionally getting the bends!! I go back to lead Wombat now and again, because it's a fantastic route and it always makes me smile.

Half a Route, Third Time Lucky

By Chris Davies

God it was cold. It was February 2006 but the memory is as vivid as if it was yesterday. The frustration of having bottled it on the second pitch due to the appalling condition of the ice meant I had down-climbed the ice and rock groove and was now belayed to two ice screws that were about as secure as drawing pins in marzipan. I was scared, there was no getting away from it, the pick of an axe was just pulling through and crampons offering little purchase. Dan was still flying high from his recent trip to Norway and seemed keen to attack any ice in any condition. He jumped at the chance to take the lead and quickly made it past my pathetic high point and continued upwards with growing confidence.

The leader of the two Scottish girls behind us had arrived at the belay about ten feet to my right and having made herself safe was bringing up her second. We chatted for a while, I was desperately trying to sound calm and in control, I suspect she saw through this thin veil of deception - even I wasn't convinced.

Dan continued climbing, now out of sight but the constant stream of spindrift and ice blocks raining down made it difficult to look up. I was not bothered when the rope suddenly started to drop and coil around the screws protruding from the ice just above me, I thought he'd probably dropped the rope while trying to clip some gear, but it didn't stop coming. He must be off! The rope now raced back out, I hope he's got something in or we're in deep trouble. I quickly looked down; 60 feet of 70 degree ice followed by 300 feet of steep hard snow. We'd be down at the CIC hut in seconds, but it was not a prospect I was relishing.

I have to say, the noise of someone falling whilst festooned in razor sharp ice equipment is surprisingly loud, but the sight of 14 honed points from a pair of Grivel crampons heading towards me escalated the fear factor to new heights. Suddenly he stopped, a mere 10 feet above me, that was massive, must have been 40 feet at least. We stared at each other and the nervous laughter kicked in. 'You alright?' I enquired. He'd hurt his ankle and probably sported a few bruises, a lucky escape I'd say. Its not like Danny to be short of a witty retort, but for just this once the shitting it factor kept him uncharacteristically quiet. We abbed off and slowly limped back to the car with our tails well and truly between our legs.

A year later- March 2007 the weather is stunning but there was only one thing on our collective minds but neither of us dared to speak its name. The route had become the gully equivalent of the Scottish play. Up much later than intended we strolled up to the CIC each lost in our own thoughts at the chance to exorcise a few ghosts. It was a beautiful day, blue sky and no wind, why weren't we on the Etive slabs? Was I trying to talk myself out of this? Puff. We geared up near the base of the route, his highness, Alan Kimber was also intending to do the route, but he was hardly going to hold us up.

I led the first pitch; the ice was superb with each placement accompanied by a dull reassuring thud, I climbed past my high-point of the previous year and kept going. It was getting steep now but I had waited years to do this route and there was no going back. Dan soon joined me at the top of the first pitch but was a having an absolute

mare trying to get his over sharpened axes out of the ice- he cursed like a trooper all the way up the route- much to my amusement. He soon dispatched the second pitch and as I got to the stance realised the Rogue pitch awaited me, the technical crux of the route. I had cocked up, it should have been his lead – at nearly 50 I was obviously losing my touch.

It was overhanging blue green ice, and I was suddenly nervous but again frantically trying not to show it. Just after setting off I foolishly attempted to put a screw in on the steepest part of the ice-wall and was rapidly pumping out at a rate of knots. Keep going, just do it, how many times do we say these words to ourselves, or is it just me? Soon the bulge was below me, the gully opened out and I could even see the summit cornice.

Four pitches later I crawled over it and onto the plateau. It was deserted and bathed in sunshine, I was euphoric. Dan clawed his way, I must say rather ungracefully, up to me with a grin worthy of any Cheshire cat. We shook hands, at which time it struck me that after climbing together for about 30 years, this was the first ice route we had ever done together, my third attempt but worthy of every ounce of blood sweat and tears needed. What a day to do Point Five-probably the most famous ice route in the world.

Four Men In A Boat

By Chris Swindells

I had nursed a romantic notion of paddling down the River Ribble in a canadian canoe for many years but had never acted on it. Chris Davies (CD) had known about my wishes but we were all too busy climbing and mountain biking at the time. All this changed one early December night in 2002 as we were having a quiet cocktail soirée at Dave Peaces' house. During the evening CD asked me to take a peek outside in Dave's garden and lo and behold! a canadian canoe.

“Yes, of course you can borrow it”, was the answer to our enquiries. Cheers Dave.

As you well know great expeditions take a lot of planning.

“Who fancies canoeing down the River Ribble just before Christmas”?

“Me”, replied CD.

That was it. Expedition sorted.

During the course of the quiet, make your own, cocktail evening Andy Hartley asked if he could join us, Yes of course you can, the more the merrier. Then Matt Troilett asked if he could follow us down the river in his kayak. Yes, that would be a great idea because we knew he had some prior knowledge of at least part of our journeys route. Later in the evening Matt must have had some reservations about such a long journey in a single kayak in the middle of winter. Yes of course you can join us in the canoe, the more the merrier.

As the evening progressed through ‘Long Island Iced Teas’, ‘Pina Colladas’, ‘Black Russians’ and ‘Tequila Sunrises’, I invented my own cocktail and called it a ‘River Ribble’. I don't remember the exact ingredients that went into making it but it turned out to be a dirty green maelstrom of a drink!

During the ensuing week I realised my only knowledge of canoeing had been gained from watching the film 'The Deliverance'. To improve on my sketchy knowledge I rented the DVD and watched the film again. I doubt this added to my canoeing skills but I had forgotten how handsome Burt Reynolds was in his heyday.

The weekend before our trip we decided to have a bit of a practice run on the canal at Huncoat but Andy couldn't make it. Matt, CD and I paddled for a couple of miles, often through a thin film of ice, but everything proved ok. We were slightly concerned that the canoe was a bit low in the water but one more person should not make that much difference.

The day of our expedition dawned; well it would do several hours after we arose, and off we set. We had previously decided that to stand any chance of completing such a long trip we would have to be in the water by 7 'o' clock, so we launched the canoe in pitch darkness underneath the railway bridge adjacent to where the river passes beneath the new Settle bypass.

"Swimmy. What the hell are you wearing", asked a wetsuit-clad Matt. Green wellies, jeans beneath my waterproof leggings, a shirt and collar, a big woolly jumper and a large Barbour jacket.

"I don't want to get splashed as I am paddling", I replied. I was going through my Shackleton stage and thought what is good enough for him to wear is good enough for me.

Another slight but possibly important problem instantly arose as for the very first time all four of us got into the canoe designed to carry two people. The sides of the boat were literally just two inches above the level of the river. I am sure the immortal phrase from the film Jaws was going through all our minds as we gingerly pushed away from the comforting riverbank for the first time in pitch darkness.

At least the first section of the journey should prove uneventful as the river meanders gently through the flood plain between Settle and Long Preston by which time it should be light.

Matt and myself decided to paddle for the first section and when we arrived at the first bridge crossing the river near Long Preston after 8 miles CD and Andy would take over. We had planned to take on a little water during the journey and had taken two sponges and a plastic jug to use as baling implements along the way so whoever was not paddling would be baling.

The first 10 minutes went smoothly as planned as we glided gracefully through the dark waters of the river. It was still dark as we rounded a bend in the river where we could see the first ripples disturbing the flat calm of the water. We steered towards the middle where the water was deepest and slightly faster as we were paddling into a strong head wind.

Just then we struck something submerged in the middle of the flow. It was the remains of a disused weir, which had a solitary piece of timber invisibly sticking up just below the water line. An inch either way and we would have missed it completely. We came to an immediate stop and for a few long seconds nothing happened. The fang of wood must have stuck exactly in the middle of the canoe and the force of the water pivoted the boat around. As it turned broadside to the current water began coming over the sides and instantly flipped the canoe upside down discharging the occupants and all their equipment into the cold water.

The shock of the freezing water was almost debilitating and combined with the darkness confusion reigned for several seconds. Luckily Matt managed to grab hold of our stricken craft by one of two long pieces of rope that were attached to both ends

of the canoe and CD and Andy retrieved most of our equipment including sponges, jug, flasks and butties.

The river at this stage was relatively shallow and was only above our heads in the middle so we righted the boat, loaded our provisions and carried on regardless.

By the time we reached the first bridge CD and Andy were freezing but Matt and myself had warmed up from the rigours of paddling. This first section of the river had taken one and a half hours to complete instead of the planned hour because the water was slow moving and the course of the river was constantly meandering. We stopped briefly for a quick brew and a butty before tying everything back into the canoe lest it floated off again.

From here on the river steepened which hastened our journey but proved more problematical and exhausting for the balers. After another hour of good progress our first weir loomed up which had a large standing wave below it looking like an impregnable wall of water. We did not want to stop our speedy descent of the river so we decided to run it. As we approached the wave below the weir we all leant towards the rear of the boat thus raising the bow slightly and we managed to negotiate our first major obstacle. Andy, who was paddling up front, said it was like dropping into a large hole in the river.

Progress from here was good and uneventful until we reached Clitheroe where a 6 foot drop weir caused us to carry/drag the heavy canoe through a swamp with cold and tired limbs for a quarter of a mile before re-launching further down stream.

We passed through Clitheroe and on towards Eddisford Bridge where we had arranged to meet some of the ladies for dinner. The river became steadily larger with many small tributaries joining it and series of standing waves became more frequent until finally the inevitable happened. We capsized again. Everything that we had not been able to tie to the boat, including CD's trainers and both baling sponges was swept away. CD managed to phone Ann on his miraculously dry mobile so she could quickly buy some more sponges from a nearby petrol station so we could replace our vital baling equipment. We were all looking forward to a hot meal with the ladies but by the time we arrived we realised that to finish the journey before dark we could not stop.

Shortly after leaving our rendezvous point the already swollen Ribble is greeted by the Hodder and the Calder. Where the latter joins, the river takes on a new threatening dimension with deep swirling eddies and strong underwater currents. We suddenly felt very vulnerable in our flimsy overloaded craft and I began silently regretting my lack of preparedness and ignorance of all sports aquatic but summit fever had taken hold and our gung ho attitude remained.

Progress was swift with the balers being just as busy as the paddlers as the steepening, faster, deeper and rougher waters made their way inexorably towards the coast carrying its pathetic cargo. As we headed towards the Dinkly Dell footbridge a large section of rapids introduced itself to our vision.

We decided to tackle them head on.

Paddling and baling frantically we stared down an endless series of large beckoning waves and after a few brief moments of triumph we were again swamped. The overloaded canoe sank instantly and we were swallowed by the malevolent mass of water.

Somehow CD and Andy were pushed by the currents towards the river bank and managed to tiptoe to safety. As the canoe turned over one of the ropes got caught around Mat's foot and started dragging him underwater. I myself was being dragged underwater by my heavy attire and could neither make progress towards the bank or

the upturned boat. I was being swept down river parallel to Andy who was helplessly watching me drown just inches from his grasp. Later he said my eyes were those of a wildebeest being hunted by a crocodile whilst crossing the Mara River.

Matt finally surfaced due to his lifejacket and could see I was in trouble.

“Keep with the boat Swinny”, he shouted, but the boat was out of my reach and I was being dragged under again by the swift strong current. Just then an empty flask bobbed up in front of my face that was attached to the canoe by one of the ropes and I managed to haul myself to the upturned craft, threw an arm over it and held on for dear life. Several hundred metres down river from where we capsized the currents delivered the boat to the bank where Matt and I gratefully clambered out.

As we were emptying the boat of water we all burst into fits of giggles, cracking up at our recent predicament. Andy refused to get back in the boat preferring to walk the remaining 3 miles to Ribchester. The rest of the journey passed off uneventfully with CD and Matt paddling carrying a very subdued cargo.

Moab and The Black

By Mick Haffner

Spring 2003. Leonard and I are “styling” in Moab. Michelle’s flash apartment, fine food, copious quantities of drink, her and Leonard’s constant stream of friends and undreamt of hedonistic delights. No camping in the desert for us. The reality of the climbing trip would only kick in as we drove down to Indian Creek and those astonishing, proud buttress “splitters” came into view.

I’d been to Indian Creek a few years previously and, if its your climbing orientation, the urge to climb these cracks is irrepressible. They’re just designed to be climbed. That spring I’d met up with my old South African mate (now living in Boulder), Kevin Smith and Capetonian Renaissance Man Duncan Elliot (aka Drunken Idiot). Their morning ritual to fend off the numbing cold involved a glass or two of single malt. Extreme but, who was I to argue. Then off we’d go. Hands, tips, ring locks, thin hands, cupped hands, fist, off-width, rattly fingers. We had the jargon. Our last climb was the lightning bolt route on Six Shooter and atop the tower Duncan and I planned our summer in true climbing-bum style. I was going to the Karakorum and he was going to Huascarán in the Cordillera Blanca, Peru. We would then meet up in Gangotri in the Indian Garwhal Himalaya and, in our uber-fit state go for the dream line of the Scottish Pillar on Bhagirathi III. He wanted beta on Huascarán. “The best beta I can give you is not to go” On the Buhler route on the Anquosh face in 1987, and despite being a committed atheist, I prayed, and entered into a Faustian pact (which I broke) with the big fella. “Please God, get me up this thing and off alive and I promise to throw my axe and crampons away”. Sadly Duncan died on Huascarán and not only did the climbing world lose a beacon of endeavour, commitment, intellect, humility and humour but so did the world of Theoretical Physics. A truly talented man. They then went back to Boulder and I did the Moab R&R thing. Moab’s existence defies logic. In this old uranium mining town, sited next to the most toxic mine-waste dump imaginable, on the banks of the mighty Colorado river is the most thriving community of climbers, skiers, mountain bikers, white water kayakers, base

jumpers, red neck 4 Wheel Drive jeepsters, cowboys and very serious god-botherers. The partying is relentless. The bars are full and wild. And so are the Mormon churches. Its all very enigmatic.

I was in further need of the splitter fix and R&R was getting dangerous so I hitched down to Indian Creek. The mormons obviously weren't being very charitable that day but eventually a (very) old pick-up did stop. Well almost ran me over. "Got a climbing partner?" "No" I reply. "You have now". The alcohol fumes in the cab were overwhelming. This was going to be one wild ride. The man was manic, drunk and he'd lost his glasses the previous sleep deprived, way overindulged night in Moab. He looked familiar in a 70's Stoney Middleton Café sort of way. "Where ya from dude" he asks in an accent somewhere between Halifax and California. "Originally Burnley but I" Now he's wired. "do you know Gerry Peel". Its clicked. Alan "Heavy Duty" Stevenson. Now we all know Gerry. We're all in awe of the man. Somebody of his climbing ability should not be blessed with such charm! "No I don't know Gerry but I know his brother." And the crack was on. I mentioned Bob Larkin's name and that sealed it. "If you're a mate of Bob Larkins you're a mate of mine". Heavy Duty (or "Al the Brit" as the US climbing community call him) at that time was revered, in fact almost worshipped. The Sheriff of Indian Creek. He was involved in everything. And that weekend, through knowing a couple of old timers, I was his deputy. There was more bullshitting and laughing going on than driving. The truck wasn't steered; more aimed, and all at breakneck speed. He re-defined "pressure overtaking", whereby the driver in front had no choice but to pull over. It was almost a relief to get on the rock, but not before a Full English, all played out before a gathering, adoring crowd. It was almost rock star stuff. But this is a serious digression. Back to 2003.

Driving down to Indian Creek with Leonard brought all this back and, like the splitter cracks, there were many parallels. In fact it didn't surprise me to learn that Leonard & Heavy Duty had been best mates for years. Two climbers driven by the same wild lunatic energy, always in search of the ultimate high. It turned out we'd just missed Heavy Duty - he'd departed for BC. News was filtering back that already he was the Sheriff of Squamish. Organising the parties, doing the DJing. Plus all the peripheral stuff! He was probably the Sheriff of Halifax too!

We'd trash ourselves on one crack after another, even snagging first ascents. This was a masterclass on the intricacies of crack technique from Mr Coyne. Coyne Crack (5.12a), ground up, pre-friends wasn't a bad achievement for the 70's. And then it was back to Moab where the rest days were anything but. In fact they were getting quite scary.

A trip to the remote Texas Tower was the next adventure. Our mate Buffalo Bill had assured us of unclimbed towers, superb rock (for the desert) and stunning scenery. We would go in his 4 Wheel Drive rig, he would do the catering and general organizing. It is a very special place and Leonard and I were fully involved with the climbing whilst Bill would be doing the organizing. This meant drinking beer at the camp, coming up to the tower in the afternoon, do some jumaring and then abseil down to his rucksack. His rucksack contained two items (beer and a Glock 9mm) and in some sort of Conquistador ritual he would shoot the top of the bagged tower. It was all getting a bit disconcerting, so it was back to Moab, re-group and head off to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. Re-grouping involved a big all night party at Michelles and leaving Moab on a dopamine high – very Hunter S Thompson-esque and hardly ideal training for the most committing rock climbing on the planet. It makes Gogarth look like a sports climbing cliff.

So we're on the rim of the canyon, meet up with our mate Doug who like me is keen to sample this mythical place. And who better to be with than the King of the Canyon, creator of Stratosfear, still one of the worlds great coveted long hard climbs. ("blow the crux 5.11X pitch dude and you're both at the bottom of the canyon").

I'd like to say we set off at first light, but we'd drunk too much around the campfire the previous night. Just nervous apprehension. The sun was well up as we descended Cruise Gully and into the abyss. The poison ivy, rattlesnakes and down climbing is all unnerving enough and then it's a few hundred feet of worrying soloing ("can't waste time with ropes man") to get to the start of our route The Journey Home. The first pitch would warrant E3 5b – sustained, long, sketchy, hard route finding, crap pro. Falling is unthinkable. Leonard cruises it. Then its pitch after pitch of fantastic Lakes/Wales type groove climbing – fantastic line, great rock, incredible position. It was so absorbing I didn't notice Doug's grey pallor and a countenance of fear and angst.

I'd just run a couple of steep pitches together and got to a poor stance right on the stretch of the 60m rope. An average belay was fashioned from my two remaining pieces – an RP2 and Friend 3. A belay I didn't really want to weight. Because of the overhanging nature of the rock I couldn't see what had happened but its obvious Doug is off and in space. It was OK for ten minutes but I'm now in need of weighting the belay which I very reluctantly and tentatively do. It holds and I lock the rope with a hitch behind the plate. Another ten minutes passes and NOTHING has happened. Discomfort had turned to numb legs and a very sore waist. Another ten minutes and still nothing. Communication is useless because of the roar of the river, the steepness and the distance to Doug (100 feet or more).

Another 20 minutes and Leonard appears. In tears. Doug has had a massive and fatal heart attack. The trail rope is through his gear loop so Leonard has to solo the 5b/c climbing to him, reach out and get prussiks on the rope. By the time he's prussiked to me I'm lapsing in and out of consciousness from the combined weight. Leonard immediately sees the seriousness of the situation. One corpse you can deal with but not two. In a Herculean/Whillansian feat of strength he pulls up Doug's dead weight, I get the belay plate out and I'm isolated from the system. Leonard's in beer for the rest of his life! Its cost me a fortune already.

The next 600 foot of climbing is a blur of superb rock, continuity of line and incredible detachment. Just massively contrasting emotions. We top out, trudge to the campsite and a climber asks us where our mate is. We both break down.

The following morning a rescue team are on the rim and by lunchtime they've retrieved the body – a phenomenal effort.

Leonard goes back to Australia. He's had enough. I take his rig down to Flagstaff, Arizona where I hook up with some crazies I'd met at Arapiles earlier in the year. Its wilder than Moab and no intractable alcohol and god-fearing laws. The place goes off. Its mental. I want to live there. Third day at Paradise Forks a climber unzips his gear and another fatality.

That was one scary climbing trip.

May '05

By Bob Larkin

‘The factors, the factors.’ I was adamant. ‘The factors’ must be right. Good weather, injury free, holidays, partners and fitness must all coincide. As with any undertaking ‘the factors’ are paramount.

Complete nonsense of course..... all you need is desire!

I was sharing a car with Al and Gil, the latter was driving. He drove most of the way with his mobile in his hand. (What is it with this country? We are obsessed with mobile phones). We met the others at Fort William. Traffic was conspicuous by its absence as we journeyed further north in what must have been some of the best weather Scotland had seen for years. The scenery was stunning. We stopped at the Cluanie Inn for something to eat, then it was on past the Five Sisters and the Skye bridge eventually arriving in Sligachan. The sun shone and everyone was there. We pitched our tents, then went to the pub (really? How unusual). Alcohol; another British obsession.

Thursday dawned with fantastic sunny weather. After numerous cups of tea we decided a trip to Blaven would be a suitable venue for the day. Terry and Roy were keen to do Stairway to Heaven. The rest of us were just keen, but with no sports plan. In the event Keith and Swinney did The Jib E1 and I did The Prow VS with Al. Gil declined to climb and couldn't understand what had happened to all the bolts. Blaven is a very impressive fortress of rock, almost on a par with Giggleswick. I found the approach to the crag very arduous, not almost on a par with Giggleswick! By the time we had completed our routes and returned to the car I was well and truly knackered and looking forward to a good rest. The sun was still shining.

“Bob, we're going for the ridge. Are you coming?”

This was a surprise.

“Ok.”

“If we have a meal in the pub we can be in Glen Brittle and ready to go by 7.30.”

Now I really was knackered and just wanted to rest, but this was a chance not to be missed. In nearly 40 years the ‘factors’ (i.e excuses) had never before coincided. “Come on, let's get that meal.”

My frugal nature (no it doesn't mean tight) prevented me joining them in the pub.

“I'm going to make my own. I've got some lettuce and carrots. I'm just going to have a sandwich.”

“Tight bugger.”

Keith and Swinney went to the pub. I busied myself making a healthy salad completely unaware of the debilitating problems it would cause the next day.

We left Glen Brittle at 8.00p.m. taking the path to Choire a Ghrunnda. I was soon 40 yards behind and feeling the effects of the days efforts. Still the walk was quite easy and there was still plenty of warmth in the sun. Every so often Keith and Swinney would stop to look at the map. Then just as I arrived to give my opinion they would fold the map and set off and I was soon 40 yards behind again. Our plan was to walk until dark and then bivvy. As darkness fell we found somewhere to sleep. The air was still and warm.

Breakfast was 2 bananas and a drink of water, and we were off by 4.45a.m. Unfortunately the previous night we had completely missed Choire a Ghrunnda and had bivvied in the middle of nowhere. This meant 2 hours of hard uphill slog to reach the starting point of Gars Bheinn. In a perfect blue, cloudless sky the whole ridge stretched magnificently before us. A dragons spine of adventure. Commitment must be absolute for it would surely expose our weaknesses. In that early morning light it looked like a piece of cake. I could almost taste the Guinness I would be drinking before nightfall!

I can't remember all of the ridge many of the place names are unpronounceable for me. The first real problem was the T.D. gap. Now I remember this because of 2 other climbers that arrived at the same time carrying 2 of the most enormous rucksacks I have ever seen. As we abseiled into the gap these 2 started to dismantle their sacks and arrived in the gap a few minutes behind us. They had rock boots, harnesses, helmets, hexes, cams, nuts and slings and a few kitchen sinks. Once we had reached the top of the gap we never saw them again. They might even still be there.

It was very warm on the ridge, a bit too warm. The sun shone constantly. We pressed on, walking or scrambling as required, always conscious of the precipitous depths on either side of us. Visibility was perfect and I was always aware of the difficulties that presented themselves if we had to exit the ridge at any stage. There just did not seem to be any way off. I was glad we had good weather, but it seemed to be taking its toll. On reaching Collies ledge we had a brief stop for something to eat and drink. Keith and Swinney were ravenous but I wasn't hungry at all. In fact I didn't feel too well, but with the pint of Guinness looming ever closer I was sure everything would be ok. What could go wrong?

The ridge was quite busy. People were scrambling all over the Inaccessible Pinnacle so we skirted round the side, mainly to save time. By now I was getting further and further behind and consequently having less rests. It was important to keep going if we were to reach Sligachan before nightfall. The ridge is not always easy to follow and we wasted time and energy on a number of occasions through thoughtless wanderings. One particular mistake found us having to traverse a delicate slab above a 3000 foot drop. It felt like VS climbing wearing trainers and a rucksack. I was especially glad to get that bit over with. Its beyond me why we didn't get the rope out or search out the correct route. I think we were all getting tired. I certainly was. In fact I had very little in reserve and was desperate for a proper rest. I just didn't feel too good.

More walking, more scrambling, more sun, more fear. I felt ill. We had to really start motoring to reach the pub that night. I'm sure Keith and Swinney would have, but they had to wait every 2 or 3 hundred yards as I stumbled on exhausted. It was 6p.m. and we had not reached the Bhasteir Tooth. Even after finishing the ridge it's at least a 2 hour walk to the pub. I was not going to make it. At this point I didn't care. I needed a rest. I felt ill. They can do what they want. I was going to stop. No Guinness for me.

Of course Keith and Swinney had little choice but to stay. I'm sure they were disappointed. We were all tired and went quickly to sleep in broad daylight at 7p.m. We awoke 2 hours later and after a few words and a quick call to Terry, who was convinced we were staying on the ridge to get out of buying a round, we quickly went back to sleep. The air was getting cooler.

Still fantastic weather as we set off at 5.45a.m. I felt remarkably well. We topped out on the final summit, Sgurr nan Gillean at 7.30. I'm sure we got lost on the

descent from the summit. Keith was skipping about like a kangaroo on steroids as he negotiated some vertical scree, without a 2nd thought. Swinney and I were more aware of our own mortalities and rigged an abseil. I don't think we saw Keith again. He was anxious not to miss out on a tour of the island by the 2 wheeled enthusiasts. We made a leisurely descent to Sligachan, stopping at will. Our brains were stuffed with images and experiences of the ridge. They will be there for a long time. We bathed our feet in the cool stream and felt like Kings. We didn't do every summit. So what. Maybe I'll go back, but I doubt it. The 'factors' won't coincide and it will never be the same.

But wait! Wait! It's all coming back to me now. That strange dream during the final bivouac – my 2 companions forced me to carry the rope and all their water making my knees ache and my back bend. I remember on Collies ledge how Swinney held me down and Keith stole my food and water. They threw stones at me on the death traverse, pummelling me from all angles with fist sized stones. They taunted me endlessly. At the abseils they would pull the rope forcing me into terrifying solo descents. They mocked my feebleness and incapacity. They shared my sleeping bag and made me sleep on rough stones, and the taunts. Always the taunts, endless, abusive, demoralising. Thank goodness it was only a dream..... or was it?

Only we 3 will know the truth of what happened that memorable day in May.

Rescue on Vector

By Barry Rawlinson

I'm suddenly awakened by the lights and realise the predicament that I'm in. Thoughts of how impetuous youth can put one's life in danger. What events actually got me here in the first place?

July 1966, World cup year and a couple of friends Bill Corry and Keith Jennings and my younger brother David, all with only less than two years climbing skills, decided to have a two week camping and climbing holiday to North Wales. Having no transport, train and buses were the order of the day. First stop on our trip was the Ogwen Valley and Idwal Slabs. Camping was a quarter of a mile or so from the climbing and we could see the slabs rise upwards before us and to four young lads they seemed pretty impressive

All the classics, Faith Hope and Charity were dispatched in the next two days, Tennis Shoe was next on the list to test our ability, and it proved no problem. Resting on the ledge just below Holly Tree Wall we noticed a climber on a route just above us. I started to have a conversation with the belayer to ask what route he was on, 'watch me' was the cry. Looking up, he was already twisting and turning, gravity pulled him down. Tension came on his single piece of protection almost hitting his horrified belayer. Mouths open, we had just witnessed a monster fall. The guy was screaming in pain as we approached him to try to assist. His ankle was badly broken, but his main complaint was his arse, which he had hit on the way down. Now I'd taken first aid in my pursuit of the Duke of Edinburgh awards, so I knew how to immobilise a broken ankle, but how to deal with a sore ring piece was best left to the professionals and before someone calls me homophobic I just have to say in my

defence that 'I love my home'. The sound of the helicopter arriving took about 40 minutes so I told the injured climber that it wouldn't be long.

One of the rescue team was climbing Charity to get equipment up to us, he hauled ropes up behind him, we then helped to haul a stretcher up as well. After attending to the climber the rescue team strapped him to the stretcher ready for the long lower to the foot of the slabs. Good luck I said to the climber and he thanked us for all our help. Well for four young lads that was quite an eventful day and we headed back to our tents. With strong winds and heavy rain sleep was hard to come by, so much so that by morning we were very nearly washed out. Knowing climbing was out for the day the decision was made to head down to Tremadoc.

On arriving our luck was in, the Barn at the Farm had vacancies, which at least would give us the chance to dry our wet clothes and gear out.

After a day of inactivity we were eager to get on the rock again. Most of the routes were dry so the day was spent climbing some of the classics 'just to get a feel of the rock'. Bill, my work mate and good friend, had a few weeks previously witnessed Joe Brown (he was Bill's hero) climbing Vector on a TV program and being young and inexperienced dare we try it? Well Bill didn't so he went off to climb with my brother David. Keith not too let me down, said he would give it a go.

Knowing this route was going to be the hardest lead I thought I would do it. I stepped on to the wall; the first section up to the Ochre Slab went smoothly the holds were good. Looking up the slab I knew it was one of the crux's, placing a couple of bits of gear I set off, it was going OK until pulling out at the top of the slab: my foot was off and so was I, the 20 footer I took was the longest lead fall I'd ever taken.

"You o.k." Keith asked "yeah, just warming up" I replied. Five minutes rest and I was climbing again, determined not to repeat the fall again, I didn't and soon was doing the short traverse left to the cave belay. Clipping the pegs for the belay, I took the slack into Keith and he climbed up, sometime on a tight rope but a good effort as he had only climbed HVS. On reaching the cave he took out his cigarettes; I asked him for one, "you don't smoke" he bellowed. "I do now" I replied and that was my first fag. After having my first fix I prepared for the second pitch. Stepping out of the cave felt airy at first but the climbing felt easy. Just got to get up the final crux of 'the niche', placing gear I set off. It was a cruise! Maybe the 20' fall had relaxed me. Tying on at the belay I turned and noticed a few climbers watching me and at 18 I felt like a star. Taking in the slack as Keith climbed my emotions were pretty high, to have done Vector on my first attempt felt fantastic. Up the final niche came Keith, I shook his hand he said well done and I had my second fag ...

You can imagine when we eventually caught up with Bill & Dave how excited we were, asked how I found the climbing I replied, even allowing for my fall it didn't seem too bad. Now this seemed to inspire Bill and he asked if I would go on it with him the next day, "of course" I retorted, after all my confidence was sky high.

That night we laughed and joked but when morning came disaster for Bill it was raining, with not a lot to do we decided to catch the bus into Porthmadog to stock up on provisions. It was about 3 o'clock when the sun finally came out so we headed back to Tremadoc and after some light refreshments we ambled up to the foot of Vector. It was still a little wet so we decided to leave it for a couple of hours. Then about 6.30 we arrived back at the foot of Vector. Bill said he would like to lead the first pitches, racking up and tying on he set off. I can see he's nervous, "relax Bill you can do it" I say to him, but to no avail "lower me" he says. As he reaches me I know he is gutted and it goes quiet. After about five minutes Bill says "I would still like to do Vector, will you take the lead". "Of course" was my answer.

It was now about 7.30pm still lots of time as I geared up, climbing with ease the Ochre slab soon arrived, thinking about the fall of yesterday I placed a couple of nuts and set off, I need not have worried as I pulled through to the short traverse left to the cave. On belaying Bill, pulling in the slack he set off and seemed to be having a little trouble. The rope went tight, and I knew he was at the slab. After some too'ing and fro'ing he was at the traverse left. On reaching the cave he was full of pride for 'the lead', I think it surprised him.

The light by now was fading as I stepped out left of the belay, again the climbing felt easy as I reached the final crux of 'the niche' that again proved no problem. Belay on I started to pull in the rope, after 40' it stopped, the wind by now was quite strong so communicating with Bill was hard.

Making now what I would consider a stupid move I untied my rope and went hand over hand down the rope to the bottom of 'the niche', on reaching the bottom I could see the rope twisted on a crab. I shouted to Bill to pull it towards him to free it, and after a few tries we released it. Now it was quite dark although the moon was shining brightly as I went back to the belay. I took in again, but there was no movement, it was then I heard the muffled cry of "staying in the cave for the night" I was dismayed.

Soloing to the top of the cliff in the near dark I found David and Keith waiting. After telling them the situation I noticed they had a rope and some gear. OK I'll abseil down to Bill to get him down; it can't be any easier than that can it? Just as I was about to set off a lad called Nick came along, he had another rope so I used it for a safety line. Lowering myself in the dark I was a little apprehensive. Bill by now was in earshot, but when I got near him I was too far left, so I decided to push off and swing. Before I knew it I was below the cave by about 10' it was then the wind twisted me round. Both ropes had now entwined, I was going nowhere. Bill asked me to pull some slack in below me and throw it to him, he would try and pull me into the cave, try as he could I got nowhere near him.

A shout from below me suggested sending for the Mountain Rescue, I agreed. As I hung there from the rope, I could feel the safety rope tighten on my chest it was hurting bad. But little did I realise it was slowly stopping me breathing, it was now quite cold and windy, but I felt a warm clammy sensation come over me, calmly I was slipping into sleep unaware that maybe I was actually slipping away. It was then the bright lights come on, they triggered me back to realisation as I thought that the Mountain Rescue had arrived, but what I didn't know was it was Nick's spot lights from his car shining up at me.

It was about half an hour later that I felt myself being hauled like a sack of spuds upwards to the top of the cliff. The rope sounded like a violin string as the wind whistled round it. Reaching the safety at the top I was greeted by an array of climbing legends; Joe Brown, Pete Crew, Cliff Phillip with a group of about six others.

Being back on terraferma felt good, turning round I saw Joe Brown begin the abseil down to rescue Bill. All that Bill could say was "IS THAT YOU JOE" never has anyone been so proud of being rescued especially by Joe Brown. I could not thank the rescue team enough, but for them I do not know what would have happened to me, and of course Nick for shining his lights up at me to keep me awake.

On our return to the barn we were greeted by the farmer's wife with cups of tea and stacks of sandwiches and biscuits 'Heaven'. Just as I was nodding off to sleep Bill piped up "What a story to tell, being rescued by Joe Brown" "yeh " I said "now go to sleep". Morning soon came and I awoke with very sore ribs and I had the rope mark engraved around my chest, at least I was looking at it... ..

Fontainebleau, 1983

By Will Simm

Jerry's overloaded Polo sped through the northern French countryside in early morning darkness. I was acting as co-driver to Jerry while Joe and Gaz squabbled in the rear.

We'd been to Fontainebleau last year and now were on our way there again. This unique climbing ground had opened up new vistas of difficulty and possibility which we'd used as spurs for our climbing when we got home.

"Did you go to Pex yesterday, Joe?" I asked the "Wad". "He's never anywhere else", interrupted Gaz.

"No Will", said Joe, trying to ignore the remark, "I had a mega sesh the day before and thought I'd have a rest day in between to save myself for Cuvier, - mmmm could be bubbling you know Will, the Wad's on a comeback".

Jerry's teeth glinted in a smile in the oncoming lights. "Joe, you've had more comebacks than Georgie Best".

"He was on the weights yesterday, Jerry", giggled Gaz. "Er, didn't do him much good at Baldstones, Sunday".

"Fucking shut up and shift your arse over you bastard, you've got two thirds of this seat to yourself. Look at him Jerry if he shoves that water carrier in my side again I'll fucking kill him", said Joe vehemently.

Jerry looked over his shoulder saying, "I'll bang your bleeding heads together if you don't shut up – behave yourselves".

"It's this twat Jerry", complained Joe, "If he starts coming out with the funnies when I'm trying to concentrate on a move I'll fucking strangle him. He knows I can't stand anybody hassling me when I'm working something out; like that bastard at Bowles going on about us using chalk. I just lost my rag".

"Yea, we did notice", chipped in Gaz.

And so it went on through the night until we started to doze uncomfortably as we motored towards Paris.

Having negotiated the mad Scalextric game of the early morning traffic on the Paris Peripherique, we were soon pitching the tents under massive trees on the free site near Cuvier.

Cuvier is a large complex of sandstone boulders just off the N6, Paris to Auxerre road. The sandstone is light grey in colour changing to a smoky cream in places with sometimes a covering of harder, white quartz rock; like armour with a dull glint.

Some of the hardest problems and traverses in the Fontainebleau area have been made here. However, it would be a mistake to think that this was the be-all-and-end-all of 'Bleau climbing. There are many other areas of excellent quality, all of differing character revealing the varied nature of climbing in the forest. The "big crowd" feel of the week-end at Cuvier would spoil the magical atmosphere of the forest for a lot of people so it's perhaps as well that there are areas such as L'Elephant, Trois Pignons or Gorges d'Apremont which are so extensive that quiet corners are easier to find, with their more open aspects making for quicker drying after rain.

We tried to sleep, but the sun sent flickering spots of light, via the slowly moving leaves onto the walls of the tent. Vibes reached us from the nearby boulders, setting off trains of thought about what we'd done here last year and stuff we'd left outstanding. It was all waiting just inside the forest, and here we were wasting time trying to sleep. The sun was very warm, meaning poor friction and consequently sore

fingers which would have little chance to recover in the four days of solid effort ahead. Jerry's glove compartment looked like a medicine chest with bottles of Tincture of Benzoin and Surgical Spirit, held in place neatly by rolls of surgical tape and elastic bandage.

Feeling lagged by the journey and lack of sleep, we drove to the Cuvier car park. It was Friday afternoon and the big Paris week-end was just underway. A few climbers were beginning to swagger through the forest with door mats and pouf bags in their hands, - invariably smelling of strong perfume and Gauloises. They cracked their rags almost viciously at the holds to dispel the "magnésie" left by uncouth visitors like ourselves.

"This is it", I thought as Jerry and "The Wad" chalked up under the "Light-Blue" friction slab opposite Number 1 White, and cruised it effortlessly. I had had a bad time getting used to trusting the friction here last year and the heat and sweating hands set my mind racing. I stepped up on the first slopers and desperately tried to regulate my breathing as the finger dinks disappeared and became friction smears just below the rounded top.

Well, that was the warm up over with and Gaz, Joe and Jerry were already trying No. 1 White, at about 6a English. This problem is a blind, round edged crack which only opens briefly into a finger-lock near the top. Jerry and Gaz "passed" it but Joe and I, having used up the regulation three attempts, decided to move on. Our performance didn't please us, having done this one last year with nasty hangovers.

A "Black" slab on razors was by now being tried by the lads and the disappointment soon passed as we got involved with the hard start. Just getting off the ground was desperate but progressing, slightly leftwards over the elephant's arse top, seemed to be a matter of faith. This was the start of the mind game. A certain degree of fine tuning was necessary to bring one round to believing that there was anything to use in the first place. Having convinced oneself that the faint shadows and tiny edges which plucked the finger skin could be used as holds, a deeper search had then to be made to dispel the doubts and sheer impotence before balancing upwards.

Across from the slab we all saw a severely undercut boulder with just two smudges of chalk about ten to twelve feet up. Walking over in unison we realised that the overhanging wall seemed devoid of holds, except that is for a small pocket, quite low down.

We were all asking ourselves how the chalk smudges had got there when Gaz gave us the instant answer by jumping and stretching upwards towards the distant marks. There was a slapping noise and a puff of chalk rose through the foliage as he struggled to grip and at the same time swing his body to get a foot high on the bulge. But, no chance, there just wasn't enough and we all walked on blinkered to the chance that it might "go".

If we had only known then that here was probably one of the hardest problems at the 'Bleau to date, we would have gained some measure of what might be expected of us in the sessions to come, and consequently cut loose for home.

Later, after some enjoyable success in the place Morin, our day degenerated into a blur of heat and raw fingers. Warning voices had been sounding every so often saying that we shouldn't overdo it on the first day - we had plenty ahead of us yet and so on. Eventually, we all forced each other to untie his boots - but just at that moment yet another "classic to finish off with" made an appearance and back on they went.

At the camp site, eating tangled spaghetti in a Bolognese sauce, we drank wine and beer and made plans for tomorrow. Trois Pignons seemed to be on our minds and

when Bertrand from Claremont showed up with a recent guide our feelings were confirmed.

The following day saw us tramping across what looked like the Sahara Desert towards a large cluster of boulders, the Cul de Chien.

As we approached, a strange looking group in theatrical costume were cavorting, Fellini like, amongst the boulders with a large, brightly coloured disc. They turned out to be a film crew making an advert for cheese and the disc that was being cart-wheeled along the skyline was a giant painted ply and polystyrene cheese.

The sun was searing and sweat was running before we'd even touched rock. We tried to ignore the film crew's ladders and kicked off with a warm up "Blue" joke as our feet slid on the polished holds and chalk went waxy in the hands. But we pushed a bit harder and eventually succeeded on a couple of "Reds".

As he descended the back side of the rocks, Joe gave an excited shout imploring us to "come and look at this roof, lads". Dashing 'round the corner in response to this we were stopped in our tracks as we were confronted by the beautiful Toit du Cul de Chien. I recognised it from the Fontainebleau article in "Mountain Magazine", but now in full sunlight with three Frenchmen taking it in turns to try, the full drama of this test piece filled me with awe.

One man was consistently getting established on the crux moves to the lip. Each time he would reach the finger pocket way over right and pull his torso up to near the ceiling while leaning out backwards to get a pocket jug on the lip. His left hand, instead of going straight out for the hold made peculiar palming moves on the ceiling, until he could just touch the jug. - As if making a controlled fall backwards. Unfortunately, as he reached the lip he was unable to stop the momentum of his body or get enough of the hold to withstand the swing; flipping off with feet thudding into the sand below.

I could feel the electric wave of excitement running through our little group. I knew just by looking at it that one of the lads could succeed. The angle, the nature of the holds, the surge of energy told me that it wasn't beyond them.

We waited our turn, sitting like lizards in the mid-day sun. We were all trying to calm ourselves, knowing that we would have to drop down a cog or two here. Trembling slightly with anticipation, like a young boy at the scene of his first conquest, I stepped up on the initial holds. Making a meal of this fore-play I took care in angling my feet on the slopers, like I was positioning myself for some symbolic rite. A side hold for the left hand and a stretching move up brought the finger pocket within reach. I had to concentrate on using a sloping edge blackened with rubber, for my right foot, then try to get my fingers into "that" hold. I knew I had blown it as soon as I found that I could only insert two fingers in the crucial pocket. I drew myself up to the roof and tried to lock off on those two digits, but couldn't hold it. "What a failure", I thought as I crashed into the sand. I knew now that I would not be able to do it. I had to fight like mad to stop my flagging spirits from stampeding. I felt sick; this was a perfect example of the kind of problem we'd come over here for and I couldn't get near it.

My stupid negativity was washed away by the sight of Jerry, working an evil off-width to the right which had been spewing out eager bodies at regular intervals from its top funnel. Everyone was delighted when he cracked it, but Jerry we knew was a master of such problems and when we saw that even he had not come away unscathed we declined the offer of that beckoning slit.

Meanwhile Joe and Bertrand were getting the hold on the lip of the "Toit", but were experiencing the same flip-off effect as its French suitors. As Bertrand crashed

into the sand for the umpteenth time a stranger picked his way through the exhausted bodies and strolled up to the start. He had words with Bertrand who turned to us, "He says were not to use magnesie"

"Tell him to fuck-off", said Joe as we all stared disbelievingly at his own chalk bag and waited for the performance.

What followed happened very fast and the only concrete description I can give is that he could be seen resining up at the start and he emerged at the top. What took place in the brief interval between was a blur of fluttering limbs and slapping hands as the climber appeared to run up overhanging rock, half-heartedly touching some of the holds. It was certainly an impressive performance and we all retired, muttering things like, "Well, perhaps it's not our style", and so on.

We knew from its reputation that the Trois Pignons massif was more extensive than the small area that we had seen. With Bertrand's help we found the location of other boulders and made our way over. There were more trees here and a possible chance of shelter from the scorching sun. We filed up a sandy path like Red Indians on the trail of their quarry. The place made Hampton Court Maze look like kid's stuff, with better and better boulders round every corner. We stumbled through a little passage between two boulders, ducking to avoid an overhang, and found ourselves in a clearing surrounded by large walls and slabs.

We sensed a certain atmosphere as soon as we'd entered this arena, as if the cavalry had set a trap and we'd sprung it.

A small group of French sounding men and women were sitting on a flat boulder watching two men stamina-traversing to and fro like dancers performing a routine. We immediately felt a close affinity with these men, or should I say their attitude to climbing.

The younger of the two wore a crop of carrot red hair which reflected the bright sun as his head turned quickly from side to side, looking for holds. His muscular development was not exaggerated like that of the weight lifter or gymnast, but his movements, even on difficult ground were slow and deliberate, suggesting an enormous hidden strength. On small slopers or pockets on bulging rock he appeared to be almost weightless, not straining in the slightest to hang on. He twisted and turned as he got heel and toe hooks on tiny edges, sometimes using vertical ripples for his feet which brought his body into full horizontal. Then he would be upside-down, feet way above his hands as he rested, chalking up. He was smiling most of the time, sometimes laughing, and if his hands or feet occasionally slipped and he floated to ground, he would walk over to his friends with a shrug of his shoulders and take a drink of mineral water.

The other member of this dynamic duo was older and built like a gymnast. His head was bald on top with short hair at the sides, giving him the look of a priest from an oriental monastery. He was obviously terrifically strong and his climbing was more explosive than the other's, but in perfect control. In short, they complemented each other greatly.

Joe, a noted problem-traverse specialist, who had been known to spend hours working on a single finger change was drawn naturally towards them. He waited patiently, watching their every move, until they decided on a break and he could get on the rock.

Joe began the traverse on the bulging boulder and although he must have been very finger sore and tired with the exertions of the day, he drew deeper and made one pass. On the return he stalled at a long crucifix between two sloping pockets and the elder Frenchman, realising that Joe didn't speak much French, mimed the move with

arms crossed and fingers jabbing the air, simulating an undercut. Joe dropped down left on the hidden hold and the Frenchman promptly showed us another traverse on the other side of the arena.

The day went on in this way with Jo and Jacky, as we later learned were their names, showing us more esoteric traverses and greasy finger-tearing arêtes. A crowd had started to gather by late afternoon, just in time to be delighted by Jerry (with Gaz as first reserve) executing a perfect Bradford Wall rock-over and locking off without any visible signs of shake on a bulging quartz wall as he pressed out to reach the top.

At the point when I for one was almost delirious with fatigue, Jacky conducted us along a traverse on a band of overhangs, like a guide showing visitors a line of masterpieces in a gallery. He executed this in bare feet like a gymnast performing a routine on his apparatus. We were butchered, the holds were damp and none of us got past the first move.

The only problem left for us to deal with was fixing a return match for tomorrow. We sat down to examine Jerry's latest boot design and tried to communicate with each other to find the best area to meet. Jacky suggested "Elephant" in the afternoon and Jo thought "Gorges d'Aprémont" might whet our appetites in the morning.

Jo lived close to the free campsite on the outskirts of Barbizon and came to collect us in continuance of our master-class at Fontainebleau. Like lambs to the slaughter we handed him the tincture bottle as a sort of peace offering.

Aprémont, was as beautiful a climbing area as any I'd seen. Just outside the village of Barbizon, the boulders started at the edge of a sandy parking lot. Jo showed us a couple of warm ups on the Red Circuit, very steep and delicate slabs.

Then came a rounded mantle on the edge of a low roof. If one cheated and started with feet on the ground at the lip of the roof, it consisted of a desperate mantel on slopers, a lock out on one arm and a reach at full stretch for a dink, way up. But the way Jo did it from the back of the cave, carefully placing a foot jam and slowly extending the body at full stretch backwards to reach the first holds, was for us at that time, impossible. We couldn't even do the mantle on its own, although Jerry came close.

By way of a complete change, Jo conducted us to the bottom of a genuine "friction slab". It was on this that we realised the crucial importance to the 'Bleausard of correct "resining-up". We also began to understand why most French boulderers treated chalk with such disgust. Put simply, chalk on a friction hold spoils the adherence of the resin coated rubber sole. Also, try getting your boots to produce the all important squeak while rubbing the soles with a chalky palm and you will still be there a week later.

The performance of an experienced boulderer under his chosen problem is not just a complicated ritual, but a series of well thought out techniques to bring the boot soles and rands into their peak condition. First, the soles were cleared of dust and then if too dry, wetted with spit sprayed onto the palm and transferred to the sole. The small square of resin impregnated coconut matting would now be brought into use, feet being moved in a pawing motion, like that of the classic bull getting into a rage. This got the soles hot and black like, as Jo said, "Grand prix cars having to do a warm-up lap to warm up their tyres". The soles would be now tapped with the "pouf-bag" filled with powdered pine resin and then made to squeak again by rubbing with the palm to check their adherence. If not satisfactory the whole process would be repeated. The holds on the slab weren't "holds" in the sense that we'd come to know them. They were slight changes in angle; smudges, shadows and ripples which had to be used with more subtlety than razors and incuts.

Jo stepped up on the starting holds and did a very hard toe share on a shadow before attempting to step up and rightwards in a diagonal movement. He kept his hands low, pushing off the slab on finger tips, with body vertical and heels well down to keep his feet at the correct angle. Then, after feeling his left foot squeak onto the next hold he made moves on more tonal changes to reach the top.

None of us got up this “Science Friction”, or even past the toe change. Jo and one or two others who had been watching the performance, looked at the soles of our battered E.Bs. and laughed openly at their chalky appearance.

At the end of the morning session, Jo did another steeper slab which was at least a grade harder. The crux was set more than twelve feet above a steep rocky runnel and looked an extremely committing, bunched series of moves; going onto friction slopers and layaways from a start on delicate razors.

The boys tried here but were repulsed by the start as the sun again burned down from a cloudless sky. Time was against us as we had to keep our date with Jacky at Elephant, some ten miles away.

It was normal kick-off time for a Saturday afternoon Football League game when we arrived at the players’ entrance of the stadium. Except, this was Fontainebleau Forest on a Sunday afternoon and the pitch was overhanging rock. The stands were full to capacity and the atmosphere was stomach churning as we went through the tunnel into the arena. A preliminary warm-up kick about was taking place with the Melun striker, Jacky Godoffe, going through his paces on an horrific looking traverse across an overhang, to finish through another roof we’d thought hard last year. The Barbizon star, Jo Montchause was taking a breather on the subs bench for this game.

I don’t think I’ve ever seen as many climbers and associated hangers on in one place at the same time. Performing to a crowd felt alien to me, but obviously Joe had none of my misgivings. Declining the long harder traverse start, he swung out from the pocket on the lip of the overhang on one hand, feet dangling. A loud sigh came from the assembled spectators, rising on the hot air with Joe’s chalk as he coated his free hand from his bag in a relaxed manner. A kick of his feet set his body in a whiplash wave of movement, culminating in a one arm pull up and a fast grasp for a pinch on the rib. He was soon racing up the finishing slab, much to the approval of the crowd. This overhang, although in the 6a range was just chicken feed in comparison to some of the other things nearby, but Joe had a good sense of dramatic timing when playing to an audience and made sure his ascent followed the struggling failure of a young athlete who was obviously being groomed for stardom.

We all did the overhang and then followed Jo and Jacky round some of the tastier morsels of the area, while a massive photo session was taking place.

Gradually, we wound down and gravitated to a high, deeply pocketed wall where we followed Jo on some pleasant solos. Playing like apes in the beautiful evening light, we petered out like batteries down on charge.

We arranged to meet the two at Cuvier, the following evening and crawled off for wine, beer and curry at the tents.

The following day didn’t go to plan. Jerry’s car developed generator problems and we spent a frustrating time trying to get a new part to get the car useable again. By the time we got to Cuvier, Jacky was just leaving but we arranged to meet there again on the following day, after they’d finished work.

We decided to work the White circuit while we were there and did some excellent problems, starting at No 1 White and finishing in the “arena” at the La boucherie area.

Gaz went missing for a time and was to be seen beavering away in a dark corner some distance away. As it turned out this softening up procedure was to stand him in good stead during the final minutes of this year's session.

Next morning it was back to Apremont to pick up a few threads from the previous days. Basically, we concentrated on the difficult friction slabs, conscientiously trying to perfect our "resining-up" technique and prove one way or another whether it was actually working. Our pouf-bag wielding seemed to help on at least one friction special, but our technique was still haphazard and in need of refining. Our Axminster off-cuts looked extremely unprofessional when compared to the rubber backed coconut-matting squares that were an integral part of the gear of most French boulderers.

We did realise that the resin pouf could be just as detrimental to the rock as chalk. In fact, we thought more so because it clogged the pores of the rock and hardened into an impenetrable glaze which necessitated the use of more of it to keep the holds useable. Chalk could at least be toothbrushed or washed off.

As we explored this rock maze set on an extensive hillside we came upon Jo, equipped with pots of paint, brushes and rags in a wicker basket. He was highlighting the numbers, dots, dashes, squares etc. which are a feature of Fontainebleau, to identify circuits and problems.

We drove back to Cuvier at tea-time to meet Jacky, who had his wife and recently born child with him, accompanied by their two mischievous dogs.

It was fascinating to see Jo and Jacky in action on problems we'd had difficulties with. This was both because of their different approaches and in seeing if, when we put these techniques into action, there was any improvement in performance or even success.

The famous No1 White, La Lili, was a typical example. Where we had used a pinch for the right hand and footholds low down, while doing a semi-circular slap for a rounded lay-away with the left; Jacky got his left foot high and sat on it with knee pointing downwards, and right leg counterbalancing while reaching the holds in seemingly perfect relaxation.

Copying this naturally turned out to be a very tall order indeed, if you didn't happen to have the suppleness of a new born child or be a yoga adept. But we decided to work on it anyway.

We moved further along, Jerry stumbling after us carrying the cot with baby in-situ, which had somehow been left behind.

I think Jacky was understandably anxious to show us his other "baby", "L'aerodynamite", the mysterious wall with the "impossible" start. So, we were about to witness the explanation to the conundrum we had set ourselves a few days earlier. This was Jacky's problem, generally accepted to be one of the hardest things at the 'Bleau at the time, Font.7c, and only recently robbed of its B3 status by Jacky himself.

He chalked up carefully and looked at the holds he was making for to pin point their exact position. He did a standing start jump, reaching at the same time for the chalky smudges. His feet fluttered propeller-like as if in an attempt to hover for a split second while he clamped the rounded holds. But it wasn't enough this time and after a brief but determined struggle to get established, he called it off.

"Freection how you say, sheet", he explained light-heartedly.

"You sheet also" said Joe quietly.

Inevitably, we wandered into the "arena" of the place Morin and Jo and Jacky showed us their way of doing many of the problems. One was the overhanging wall

with sloping holds that Gaz had nearly “passed” last night, in his secretive beaverings. Our Gurus evidently held this, “Le carnage”, in very high esteem. Even they had a little trouble with it, but it was after all Font. 7b+.

Gaz was on it first like a jackal on fresh pickings. He executed a perfect lock-off on the right arm and reached slowly and carefully for the next sloping hold. Jo and Jacky were very impressed with this and encouraged Gaz to stay with it when he had done the hardest move. Gaz did as he was bid and fought on to finish.

Other climbers who had been watching seemed to be stunned and were disbelievably shaking their heads, staring at the boulder as if they had seen an apparition. When the cheering had subsided we tried it, but a combination of many things would not allow us to pass. Feeling the crucial holds I consoled myself with the thought of returning the following year.

We all struggled during the remaining half-hour of daylight. It struck me that the situation was like a competition to see who was chicken enough to take his boots off first. The Frenchmen were not fools like us and had been pointing us at problems while standing at the bottom in trainers, for the best part of an hour before we finally grovelled off in agony to the car park.

We knew it was all over here for this year, but in the restaurant later we talked to our hosts about the possibility of a return visit in winter when, as they assured us, the friction was superb.

Gaz’s name kept cropping up in the conversation from time to time, as the Frenchmen marvelled at his brilliant ascent of Carnage. They spoke of coming to England next summer and I think that Joe was already working on their sports plan when he burst out in a loud voice,

“I can’t believe it! Our Ned, the bastard, he’s their hero not the Wad”

Manchester, Plymouth, Ticker and God (plus two)

By Roy Healey

Well here I am. All that has gone before me has ultimately led up to this. Ticking the grades 1 to 5, the Churns upper and lower, Calfholes – Browgill, the classic through trips, Simpsons, Swinsto, getting harder and harder, Lost Johns, Gingling and Jingling, Sunset far extension blasting, but that’s another story.

I’m a climber and a fell runner. I came into caving/potholing cos I can. I like to push myself to go as far as I can, as hard as I can, to compete with myself, with others, with grades. I’m competitive. I’m a ticker!

This is a story about a trip down Quaking Pot. A quick apprenticeship through the grades, learning to move underground, to conserve energy. Going out with the lads who had the permits, the gear, the knowledge.

The grapevine said a trip was on!

Four applied, one from Manchester, one from Plymouth, Me (Ticker) and Pete Hartley (a.k.a GOD!!) In Yorkshire caving circles Pete was the man. He’d been down before.

Quaking lies on the side of Ingleborough. We walk to the open pot on Crena Bottoms carrying the minimum of gear. The guidebook warns of no possible rescue from beyond 'the crux'. No going back now, I'm in!

Before S.R.T. it was all ladders. In our lunch hour on the building site we would put an electron ladder in a tree and climb!

The original crux is a squeeze through a slot in a stal curtain, the cave then stopped at the new crux. That was until a team from Preston Caving Club took a lump hammer to this new squeeze.

The new crux is an 'S' shaped constriction of about 25 feet going down to a narrow rift passage. Before we got to the crux two lads caught us up. They were from a team of six who had started in after us. Four out of the six didn't get past the original crux! The two were Jonny Adams and Rob Matheson, two of the top climbers in the lakes at that time.

God enters 'the crux' and is gone, I get there and stop, 'what the fuck!! How can that go?'

Helmet off, battery off. Both held at arms length and head first you slip and slide down to the bottom, don't even think about getting back up.

After 'the crux' you still have 5 pitches to go, all without safety lines. At the bottom a loose boulder choke aven called 'Gormenghast' One of the lads said 'you have more chance of being rescued off the moon than from down here!!!'

Back out up the climbs we keep safe, no mistakes, the seriousness of it all really kicks in. At 'the crux' you can't just go through it, you have to stage the transfer of gear. So it's a relay, each team member at arms reach. Once all the equipment is through you can go for the top. It took six men an hour to get all our gear up through 'the crux'. It took me all of my effort, my absolute total effort to get up, just like a salmon jumping up a waterfall, being forced back down continually! At the top I was totally spent, my stomach was churning and I dry wretched.

All six up 'the crux' and heading for the surface. This was an early descent of Quaking Pot and the trip took us 9 hours.

One week later all my toenails fell off!!!!!!

God said 'if the hardest caves in Yorkshire are grade 5 then Quaking is grade 7'

The South West Experience.

By Andy Mitchell

1

The dusk draws in across the granite square in St. Just village, Cornwall, the sky is red and the evening air warm and balmy following a perfect summers day. Mick and I are drawn by the pulsating rhythm being emitted from the "The Star", as we enter the pub we are engulfed by a cloud of warm air heavy with cigarette smoke,

conversation and music. Mick heads for the bar as I stumble around behind steamed up glasses and curse myopia.

With drinks we cross the throng of happy revellers in the bar striking up a conversation with Jim, he looks like he has just stepped from the pages of a Robert Louis Stevenson novel, huge thick beard, sailors jumper and a voice that can be heard from port to starboard. Jim is an amateur ‘dialectologist’.

Claiming that within twenty minutes of speaking with us, he can tell to within two miles from where we hale. So professor Higgins like he latches onto every dropped H, flat vowel and rolled R. Jim is drinking and spilling down his beard a considerable quantity of an evil looking brew called The Black Prince, he claims it to be the best value in the area, a small bottle with an ABV of 9.2 for a mere 72p. We are gullible, naive and already pissed and so on my visit to the bar, when in Rome do as The Black Prince does! Jim is a Northern lad, but the accent has faded after a long exile on the Lizard from former wives and bailiffs.

“Climbers are we boys?”

Impressed by his razor sharp perceptions we go on to recount our story.

2

I place a friend 2 in the short horizontal crack after a twenty-foot run out of steep but straightforward climbing from the rusty peg above the crux. I skip between right and left, on the only useful foothold, hands in the crack by the friend. I’m beginning to get pumped, my composure is going rapidly, I keep changing feet, keep shaking out arms but I still cannot see the next hold. Just as my whole body begins to shake I spy a superb flat jug four feet above me, I know that once I’ve got hold of that I’m into easier ground. I grab the undercut with my left, build up my feet and make a long and powerful stretch to the jug with my right – yes, yes, yes – I’m in jug gained and only the last thirty feet of easier climbing to the top.

I abseil off and return to the beach below to the congratulations of my partner. We are at Sharp Nose point Devon and have just climbed Coronary Country a new E7 by Mark Edwards. I’m hopping about with excitement at the quality and as usual saying that it’s the best route that I’ve ever done. I shut up as Mick drops back onto the beach to soak up some more rays before it’s his turn for a Coronary. Thirty minutes later Mick is up snorting like a prizefighter, he ties on nods and with a scowl and his chin out he is on his way.

The start is an easy but bold flared crack, clipping a friend at twenty feet he traverses right and to a rest in a quartz break before launching out onto the crux sequence above. A quick draw hangs from the peg at the end of the crux, layaways, smears and a long slap off dinks have Mick at the break next to the peg. He clips the peg and quickly motors up to the friend 2, he looks at the undercut for the left hand but is determined to find an alternative. There is limited time here and he starts to look very pumped – suddenly he gives up his search for the alternative, grabs the undercut with his left hand and lays one on for the jug with his right.

“Awesome dude!!!”

I had recently returned from a long trip to the States and some cheesy West Coast affirmations tended to pop out now and again. A superb day; Fay, Pacemaker and Coronary Country. Our main goal of Cave Man at Berry Head, a few days down the road, would be shown no mercy.

We drew up at the campsite, after the obligatory post crag flier, in the infamous Shorrocks 1.6D Fiesta at this stage in its life having a dent in every panel bar one. I dive out and bound up to the reception where a very officious looking guy is peering open mouthed over my shoulder to the Fiesta. I make my request simply and politely one night, two people, small tent, small car and we definitely do not need showers – how much please? He surveys large maps, plastic wallets and with a well-trained smile replies £7.50.

At this stage in my life money simply represented tokens to pay for two essential liquids – one, the scourge of the atmosphere petrol (or diesel) placed into a car and then driven to the crag, preferably with me inside. Two, beer to be poured inside me when ever I had been climbing, considering that my nick name was the Martini kid – because I would go climbing, any time, any place, anywhere, this was a considerable expense.

The tokens for this trip had been gained by knocking an outhouse down for Mick's neighbour – Shell Shocked Cyril. Some dodgy guys with a pickup and pull on leather boots had quoted £400 for the job, Mick and I sat listening on the other side of the wall. When the pick up was out of sight and the smell of Guinness dissipated Mick and I hopped over and offered to do the job for fifty quid. Cyril was moved to tears and dashed of to tell his equally deaf sister and we immediately set about the job. Four hours of continuous work and with little progress made I was sent back in to re- negotiate with Cyril – he agreed to push up the booty to seventy-five quid

I asked the man on reception to give me a minute to consult my colleague on the said price. Mick nodded told me not to be so damn stingey and pay up. I returned brandishing a tenner, nodding my head and asked,

“does that include breakfast?”

The north south divide opened up like the mid Atlantic ridge – he dashed out from behind his counter and ushered me down the steps to the car,

“ We won't have your sorts on this campsite!”

We found a second campsite and whilst leaving the car I was given strict instructions to pay the quoted price and under no circumstances to mention breakfast!

The following morning our destination is The Count House and Bosigran. We descend the gorse covered valley towards the cliff with a spring in our step and a Cornish Pasty in our rucksacks , big enough to stop a bus. Our first objective is the superb Kafoozalem on the main cliff, a 120 foot E3. The route is of unbelievable quality and we enjoy the warm up before sitting at it's base on a grassy ledge surrounded by the classics of Raven Wall, Evil Eye and Bow Wall. We munch through our hearty lunch and ponder on the crust of our pasties – Jim of course provides the answer,

“The tin miners ate pasties because a by-product in the mines was arsenic, and so this allowed miners to eat the contents of the pasty and then fling away the crust which had become contaminated by the miners dirty fingers “!!

So in the true tradition of the miners we launch our crusts into the rocks for the guillemots and fulmars.

After lunch we ab into the Great Zawn, we pull our ab ropes and look up the ominous dark walls. Xanadu and Judas take the left wall Dream Liberator the right arête, The West Face (our route), Desolation Row and Candy Man the right. The rock architecture is superb the sea crashes in and boils up through vents and explodes on boulders, raising and falling 3 to 4 metres with every wave cycle. The walls seem to come together to form a roof some two hundred feet above – these are the true

temples of British climbing – the Zawns of Cornwall, Pembrokeshire, Gogarth and Skye even before you put hands on rock the adventure is well underway.

The West Face has two main pitches and as Mick walks our two largest friends up the off width lay back crack of the first he looks distinctly out of place. I reach him at the belay, the sun is creeping around the arête and about to offer some support. The second pitch takes a series of grooves, roofs and restricted corners with of course poor pegs thrown in just for good measure, E4, my arse. I fire off up the groove only to be spat off going around the second roof, I lower to the restricted corner and second time find the crucial holds and bottle to turn the roof and enter the exit cracks. I'm disappointed but the route is breathtaking, E4, I don't think so!

We cook up tea at the Count House with the sun still shining in the sky. Across the kitchen is a very pretty woman being bossed around remorselessly by a male friend with a Home Counties accent.

“ More onions please Jenny”.

“ Jenny, these peppers need to be much finer.”

“ Jenny – how many times do I have to tell you we cut the leaks in half and then length ways, not crossways, we are not Welsh darling.”

We have a quick chat to her and arrange to meet her and the sloane in the pub later, we disappear to eat our pasta surprise (no surprise there).

In the Pub by the Harbour there is a fiddle band and I'm sure that we could be in any period over the past two hundred years, ready to join a boat to discover the North West Passage, or find the source of the River Congo or simply to fish the open seas. We join Jenny and her partner, who likes to be called JJ! JJ of the CC turns out to be a bit suspicious of us (increasingly so as Jenny begins to laugh at our daring deeds and general charm) and when Mick nips to the loo he tackles me.

“ So then how do you chaps come to members of the CC?”

Luckily for me about two weeks before the new Yorkshire Gritstone guide had just been published and so I took an inspired chance.

“ Heard of Earl Crag or Bridestones, JJ?”

“No”.

The proverbial plum had begun to dislodge.

“ Well, Mick and I wrote the sections in the new guide book on those two crags”.

On Mick's return I was enthusiastically recounting tales of Mantleshelves, Indian's Heads and Don Whillans' Duck. Jenny and JJ soon left to be alone on the cliff tops. (Hopefully she pushed him off !!!)

The next day we searched out the Edwards' at Compass West and went with them to Carn Barra to see Mark's new and very controversial bolt projects. Many of the ideas that the Edwards' had at the time had masses of logic, the rappel bolts above Isis to protect the SSSI had a sound environmental rationale. The situation was very strained at the time in the British mag's and the Edwards' were perceived as the hooligans of British climbing, we met two pleasant friendly and hospitable people. Carn Barra is very impressive and the central overhanging area is very Kilnseyesque. We wanted to avoid controversy and so chose to repeat a number of the traditionally protected new routes. The best of which was a sea arch, not a huge route but very atmospheric, belaying on wires at the base of the arch. The route launches out up the inside arête before traversing into the roof and pulling through the lip via an overhanging crack and up the leaning head wall to finish. All this has to be performed whilst the waves crash in and spray and foam dance on the breeze.

Mick goes for it and the crux proves to be pulling onto the head wall using the crack. The route was superb and warranted the three stars and the E5 grade that it had been given. We returned to the main crag to see Mark attempt his 8a+ project, no success this attempt but he looks close. We shake hands and thank them for a great day.

3

“ So Jim after that we drove here to St. Just and had a few early evening pints in the pub across the square before getting carried away and ending up in here”.

Jim had listened avidly and attentively to our drunkard ramblings. He had climbed a great deal in his youth and so had a good knowledge of the crags, but had lost touch with these fancy E grades. It was now his turn to make good the claim that he could place us within two miles of where we came from by just listening to us speak for twenty minutes. He stood between us and put his arms around our shoulders and said “I know where you’re from boys.”

We stared heads down with glazed eyes into the wooden floor as the one word fell out of his mouth like a word from god

“Rawtenstall !!”.

Much to his dismay and disbelief we spat Black Prince all over the floor and fell about laughing

“Sorry Jim you owe us a drink Rawtenstall is three miles away !!!”

Looking Back – 1966 - Gouffre Berger or the Alps

By Dave Barton

Bill Bowker arrived at our house in Clayton St, Great Harwood. This is where I was born and there was a great Chip Shop at the bottom of the street, now well known over a wide area. After a brew, Bill and I did the usual tour of the local pubs, the odd minor scuffle about and then back to the Chippy for supper.

This is when Bill says to me,

“What are you doing going to France potholing for? You’d have much more fun coming to the Alps with me. “

I agreed since we seemed to get on well. Bill was very laid-back and took everything in his stride and we had done a small amount of climbing together. He had more experience having been to the Alps before and was a climbing instructor in Derbyshire. What I could not understand was why anyone would want to partner a complete novice up some hard Alpine routes, but I’m glad he asked me.

As it happens I was a quick learner; you had to be or you wouldn’t live long

It has taken a long time writing this for some reason.

July 4th 1966. Straight in at the deep end and not knowing what to expect. Our first route to acclimatise ourselves was the North Ridge of the Piz Badile, an easy route over 3000' long. What I couldn't understand was why we started the route at 5-30pm with only three hours of daylight left. We had no food or bivy gear and Bill must have known we would have to spend the night out. Maybe he was testing me so I kept quiet. The night was very cold and I was glad when daylight came. We got down to our tent just below the snowline and rested for a couple of days in bad weather.

On a very warm day on July 9th we bivied under a huge boulder near the base of the Badile. The next climb on Bill's agenda was the Cassin route and all went well till we reached the HVS exit chimneys near the top. They were all choked with ice and any pegs in situ were buried beneath it. Up till now we had been doing alternate leads.

“ We're not making much progress Bill ”,

“ Well we've got to get up, give us some gear and I'll have a look “

Bill steps left of the cracks and did a full run-out with no gear at all, except for one peg at the top for a tension back above the cracks. I followed up and by this time the weather was getting bad and it was starting to get darker. The wind got to gale force and it was very cold by the time we reached the ridge. Route done but no chance of descending the N. Ridge in the dark and in that weather. Luckily we found a slight depression where the wind was bearable. Next thing I remember is Bill waking me at about 5am when it was coming daylight. I still wonder to this day if I would ever have woken up after that night. In my anorak pocket was an orange which was frozen solid and I still remember banging it on the rock and breaking it to bits.

Off we set along the ridge with the ropes blowing horizontal. With clear blue skies and the sun rising we were soon both warm and all we had to do was to reverse the N Ridge back to base - wonderful experience.

Another rest day in fine weather then it's off again. The next route planned was the Cengalo, a brilliant looking route which had not had a British ascent. Bill had heard that there was some hard rock climbing to gain the snow and ice ridge and I decided to do it in my EB's, with plastic bags and crampons for the walk up the glacier. By now I was quite confident on the rock and found the route enjoyable and steady till we reached the snow ridge, my EB's not being very good on snow and ice.

We reached the summit by mid afternoon and struggled to find the best route down to the Sciora Hut. A brief rest and then we arrived at the landrover in the dark after a very hard day out. Didn't use my EB's again !

Next day we walked back up the hill to our tent well above the Saas Fura Hut to pack up all our gear. Then it's off to Chamonix where Bill's ambition was to climb the famous Walker Spur on the Grandes Jorasses. We arrived on the 15th and were told that the weather had not been too good. The snow line was quite low.

Walking through the streets we met an American called Gary Hemming who knew Bill quite well from previous years.

“What you up to“ says Bill, and Gary reached in his rucksack and pulled out a detailed photo of the Walker Spur. He was planning a solo ascent, but thought conditions were not yet good enough.

The next day Bill says “Let's give it a go, it should take us about two days “

On the 17th we walked from the Biolet campsite to the old Leschaux Hut above the Mer de Glace. It was by now a broken down shed, but it was free. We settled down and I found it hard to sleep that night. Also in the hut were two other British climbers hoping to do the Walker and every time I opened my eyes the moon was shining through the cracks in the walls onto one of the Brits who never seemed to close his

eyes. He seemed well spaced out and we didn't encourage them. I've never liked the dark since I was a kid but that's another story.

Dawn didn't come soon enough for me and we set off to arrive at the bottom icefield. It's on with the crampons for my first ice pitch. They had been lent by a friend and off I set. After a few feet I came skating straight back down. The front points didn't reach the end of my boots and I had to climb using my insteps to grip as best I could. Bill leads through taking with him one 3" ice screw to which he belays. "OK Dave, when your ready "

After about thirty feet off I come, dragging Bill off his stance and onto the peg, which luckily holds us both. I get my first bollocking from Bill.

At this time there are two German climbers alongside us and they offer Bill some more ice screws. He says " No thanks we're OK "

We eventually reach the top of the icefield and the start of the rock climbing. While taking off our crampons and sorting out the rock gear I knocked over my sack and out came all of the food and oranges I was carrying, straight down the slope to disappear 500 feet below. But worse was to come. Amongst the food were 40 Senior Service. Bill was quite a heavy smoker back then and I thought he was going to kick me off the stance.

I set off up the rock and we soon caught up with the two Germans. Bill had said earlier that there was only one good ledge at about half height and I was confident we would be there first. Bill was a bit happier by now. On the ledges by the couloir above the 'Tour Grise' we set up our bivy. It was going to be a cold night with little food, a pan of hot water and no fags. As usual we had the basic bivy gear of all your clothes and ventile anorak, with your feet in your sack. By now I was wondering how long you could survive without food and using all this energy. Morning didn't come too soon and after another pan of melted snow off we went. The climbing by now, was not too difficult and we just had to be careful not to knock anything down on the two Germans who were not too far below us.

We made good progress and reached the summit by mid afternoon in glorious sunshine for a brief rest before moving down the Italian side, wondering about the descent. Our German friends arrived on the summit and waved us goodbye. They would be heading down to Italy, hoping to arrive that evening.

The weather slowly clouded over and with no passports or money we decided to get back to the Chamonix side. I took a desperate route back up to the ridge with no gear in at all and saw a good ledge above me. Above the ledge was sloping rubble and each time I moved onto it I slipped back down. All I heard from Bill was " what the fuck are you doing " I shouted down to Bill to untie from the rope as I did not think I was going to make it . But I did. Bill came up the correct way and then came another bollocking. Soon on the ridge and at a little col we came across a small steel Bivy shelter. Searching for food we found the knob end of a French loaf about 3" long. It was rock hard and could have been there for months. We tried to soften it in melted snow but quickly ran out of gas.

After an uncomfortable night we set off down the French side. The sun was up and beginning to soften the snow slopes. By now I was feeling very hungry and Bill was missing his fags.

We found a snow and rock ridge which we slowly descended for a while and Bill came up with the idea of glissading down the steep snow slope on the side. This looked horrendous and I strongly disagreed. Bill said " We'll have to get down somehow " so we roped up and descended carefully down the slope. The snow beside us moved sometimes and a snowball rolled past gathering size to disappear down a

large bergshrund some 400' below. That's where we would have finished up had we glissaded down.

Eventually we came to the bergshrund and did an easy jump near where it met the ridge to relative safety. All we had to do now was negotiate the snow slopes down to the Mer de Glace. Still roped together off we went. After a short distance Bill suddenly disappeared in front of me. I threw myself onto my axe to try to arrest him. The axe flew up in the air and the rope went slack. Luckily Bill had bridged out as he went down the crevasse, stopping some ten feet down. I went over to assist him and saw a large expanse below him. We carried on, soon reaching the main glacier. By now it was going dark and I was finding it hard to put one foot in front of the other but somehow I made it down to the tent. Bill still had something in reserve and I think he was missing his tobacco fix.

Sometimes in life you're lucky. I was in more ways than one on this ascent and this stood me in good stead for my climbing years ahead. Many thanks Bill.

The Eiger. Third Time Lucky.

By Dave Barton.

The first time I heard the word Eiger was from a friend who introduced me to the sport, his name was Alan Fothergill and the year was 1963.

I remember that we went to Widdop a couple of times and then to the Lake District. The route in the Lakes that Alan wanted to do was a hard classic of its day, known as Gimmer Crack. Alan had a BSA Road Rocket and take it from me, nobody ever passed him. Setting off from Great Harwood, we soon arrived in Langdale. 'That's the crag up there' said Alan. I didn't speak, just wondered whether I would make the walk up never mind climb the route. Alan packed the sack handed me the rope and off we set. As expected, I found the walk a bit stiff to say the least, but eventually we arrived at the crag. We geared up at the foot of the climb with black 'Pumps', bought from Woolworths, a few slings, steel crabs and of course the new hemp rope. Alan tied me on and showed me how to belay. 'You lead off, I'll do the hard pitches' he said. It went OK 'till the cloud came in and it started to rain. I was holding the rope around my waist as best I could, Alan was on the crux pitch, I couldn't see him and the cloud was right down. The rope kept going tight then slack. 'Climb when you're ready', Alan's voice came down from somewhere above. Soon I arrived at the top. Alan found the descent gully, but following him down, I dislodged a rock which hit him on his head. Luckily it wasn't too bad of a cut. 'This is what it's probably like on the Eiger', said Alan and that stuck in my mind.

In 1965 Alan took me to the Alps. Both of us had all the new gear and on arrival in Chamonix we headed straight to the telepherique station and caught the cable car up to the Aiguille du Midi. At the summit we exited the ice tunnel, looked down towards the Frendo Spur, looked at each other and decided that the best thing we could do was to get back in the cable car never to return. For some strange reason however, Alan decided that we should go round to Grindlewald to see the Eiger. I couldn't wait. The epic stories I had read about the Mountain really made me want to see it for myself. On arrival in Grindlewald the weather was poor, with cloud

obscuring any views that we might have of the mountains. Despite this we set up camp at Kleine Scheidegg and I decided to have a walk up to the bottom of the face. As I set off, all sorts of things were running through my mind, even though I was on holiday, I was also suffering a deep sadness from the recent death of my mother. As I walked through the mist the sounds of tiny rock falls kept drawing my gaze upwards, but the cloud shrouded everything. It felt really eerie. Eventually through the gloom, I could just see snowline at the foot of the wall. As I looked up in one last vain attempt to make out something of what was above, the cloud suddenly cleared. It was like a miracle. Rays of sunlight illuminated the entire north wall giving me a view of the face that is as fresh in my memory today as it was clear then. For a while I was fixed to the spot, but soon the cloud rolled back in. Just as it did, I heard a loud bang and the sound of falling rocks coming from above. Even though I was a long way from the face, I ran down as fast as possible, but even as I fled I knew I would return.

The following year with a little snow and ice under my belt, I teamed up with Bill Bowker. We had a very good season doing routes like, The Walker Spur, the Cassin Route on the Piz Badile and even making the first British ascent of the North West Spur of Cengalo. It was during this season that I learned why they called my companion Bivouac Bill, his gear would fit in a butty box. This stood me in good stead for the years to come.

In July 1970 I set out to the Alps with Don Whillans, our plan was to climb the Eiger's North Face. Unfortunately the weather was very poor, but we still decided to have a go. Don was not very happy with the conditions on the face and it wasn't long before we saw large avalanches sweeping down the icefields. It was time to retreat and that's what we did as quickly as possible.

The fifth of July 1971 saw me returning to the Alps to make a second attempt on the Eiger North Wall, this time with Jack Firth. Jack was a good climber, one of my best mates, but more than anything else was as hard as nails. We did lots of routes in the first couple of weeks and met up with two excellent British climbers, John Jones and Martin Burrows-Smith. Jack's eyes lit up when he found out that Martin wanted to do the Eiger, he had no designs on the face himself, but knew how keen I was, even to the extent that he'd warned me not to contemplate a solo ascent. After teaming up with these lads in the Dolomites, Martin and I joined forces and headed for Grindlewald both very keen for the Eigerwand. Once again the face looked in poor condition, but being British we decided to have a go. On the easy slopes we met up with two German climbers, Robert and Heinz. Both had much better gear than us, I remember they carried very long ice stakes and it was clear they had a lot of mountain experience as we soon found out.

Robert and Heinz led off in front of us and soon we reached the Hinterstoisser Traverse which was fixed with a mass of old ropes covered in ice. Robert at this stage decided not to go any further due to the poor conditions. Martin and I didn't know what to do, so I decided to have a go at crossing the traverse. Clipping into the old ropes I soon found myself hanging in mid air and with that we decided to retreat with Robert and Heinz. Just then, we heard a loud swishing noise and looking up, I saw a huge piece of ice which had come off the top of the Rote Fluh some thousand feet or so above. Just before it reached us, it split into small pieces. As we tried to take cover one piece hit Robert on his head and shoulder flattening him to the snow slope. In an instant he thrust his axe into the slope in front of him and passed out for a few seconds. As I got to him he was coming round, luckily he was just badly bruised, after a few minutes he was organising our retreat and soon had us back to safety. He treated us to schnapps all night in the local bar.

For the next couple of weeks it rained hard most days and was very mild. We returned to find the face looking completely different, most of the lower slopes had been washed clean. It was a nice sunny afternoon so off we went again. We found a good 'bivi' in a small cave at the foot of the face, but within a couple of hours it was thundering and lightening. We decided to have a meal and return back down the following morning. We woke about 7.00 am and to our surprise the skies were clear all around and like fools we decided to press on. Soon we reached the Hinterstoisser Traverse again, clear of ice this time, but still a very scary place to be. On we went. At the start of the first ice field the feature known as the Ice Hose which usually gives easy access was not there, just polished rock, not steep, but no holds and no protection at all. It was mid afternoon when we finally reached the second ice field and it consisted of hard solid water ice. It was here that I found my long Stubai axe was useless to say the least. I was totally relying on my crampons and Don's Whammer, stones kept coming down all around us, making the climbing really unnerving. We were in the worst place possible. Martin had a much better axe and a lot more experience on the ice which showed later on. Eventually we reached the feature known as 'The Flat Iron' and moved on to 'Death Bivouac' to spend the night. This brought back bad memories about the climbers that I'd read about who had perished here. We had a reasonable night, Martin in his sleeping bag and me using Bills method of bivi. Waking early, Martin led off across and down the third ice field. This I found very difficult and scary, but eventually we gained the Ramp and climbed this for a thousand feet or so. Martin got the ice bulge at the top of the ramp which looked difficult from below. As he disappeared over, I heard a tinkling noise, it was his crampon coming down. Somehow I caught it, avoiding what could have been a disaster. We crossed the 'Traverse of the Gods' in safety but when we got to the Spider, all kinds of stuff kept pouring down from time to time. We had to take a chance. Martin led off and luckily all went well to the exit cracks. The sun was overhead by now and water was already beginning to appear in the cracks and I made the mistake of following an obvious crack which unfortunately came to a dead end. By now water was running into my boots and realising my error I came down and found where the correct 'obvious' crack actually started, it was now about 5.30 pm

In the distance we saw small flashes of lightening and within about thirty minutes the whole face went dark. The lull before the storm. At this point we decided to stay put, cleaned off a small ledge and hung all the ironmongery as far away as possible. We got the bivi bag over us and tied ourselves down as best we could. Out came the stove and Martin attempted to make a brew. When the first flash came we were both knocked back against the wall gasping for breath. Out came Martin's cigs. 'Give us one ere' I said, thinking it would be my last. The storm raged for the next sixteen or seventeen hours, striking us both at regular intervals. Each time we thought, this is it and even now looking back it is the longest night I can ever remember. It also made us think about my earlier 'mistake' in the obvious exit cracks, had I found the right exit crack to start with, we would have been close to the summit at the height of the storm and would surely have perished. The following morning about 9.00am there was a lull and the cloud lifted for a while, ledges below us had about 10 feet of snow on them and the exit cracks above us were full of ice. The first thing we did in sheer desperation was to wave for help, but realising how useless this was, we set about what we had to do. My axe had been broken in the storm by the lightening, so Martin took the lead. He excelled leading the next pitch, everything he was wearing was wet and frozen, his sleeping bag lost five thousand feet below. He was climbing up a chimney about ten feet above me, when suddenly he slipped and came sliding right

past me. I was wedged between some rocks with no belay, the icy ropes kept sliding through my gloves. Somehow he came to a rest on the snow slope below, not deterred he promptly re climbed to his high point and then led us out onto much easier ground. We soon reached the summit snow field. I was leading up when we heard loud buzzing noises from our hammers, they too promptly disappeared into the void below, along with all our ice screws. The rumbling of thunder started again as we pressed on as fast as possible, Martin on one side of the ridge, me on the other. We passed over the summit and down part of the western flank where we stopped to rest. Suddenly a huge flash of lightening came out from the summit. We had missed this by about two minutes. We descended in soft snow and as it began to get dark the thunder started again. We finally reached the top hotel and the door was locked, but some kind person let us in, fed us, gave us as much drink as we wanted and a room for the night. All they asked, 'that we pay at the station below when leaving Grindlewald'.

The following morning, we walked back to the campsite to pack our gear and were amazed at the number of people who were shocked at our safe return. We had been watched on the climb for two days by someone in the next tent and a local mountain guide had told everyone that we had little chance of returning alive from our position, once the storm had hit. Our prayers had been answered however and what made the climb even better to us was that we had had the whole mountain to ourselves. We returned to Chamonix to tell Jack and John about our wild adventure and lucky escape.

I had realised my life times ambition. It had a fairy tale ending for me when I came home, got back with Pamela and married the following year. Two young daughters, Jane and Lucy soon arrived and Pam and I spent the next years developing a business and bringing up the family. Despite some tempting invitations to join expeditions to the Himalayas, I decided that 'serious' climbing had to take a back seat and so it did, for quite a few years. Of course, I was always a 'lifer' and I'm back climbing again, enjoying the companionship of many good friends. What more could one want in life? My father always told me 'Nothing comes easy, you have to work at it' How true his words are.

The Lost Arrow Spire

By Craig Entwistle

The Lost Arrow Spire is a spectacular finger of granite detached from the north rim of the Yosemite Valley just a few metres to the east of Upper Yosemite Falls.

In the first half of this century, El Capitan and Half Dome were regarded as being routes of the future and although ascending these walls was an obvious challenge to the valley climbers, current standards rendered them impossible.

The Lost Arrow Spire however was regarded as a last great problem and after a siege lasting a number of years it was ascended, rather controversially, by a climber called Jack Arnold who threw a rope over the spire from the rim and prusicked up the other side. This was 1946 and John Salathé who had been working the route for a couple of years was not impressed and dismissed this ascent as a "rope trick". During

his attempts on the Lost Arrow, Salathé had become the first climber to use an expansion bolt for upward progress. At the time this was regarded as being a milestone in climbing techniques and many climbers regarded this as being the beginning of a new era; The golden age of modern aid climbing.

There are numerous routes to the top of the spire, the original Direct Route being 16 pitches long. The route chosen by most visiting climbers however is The Lost Arrow Tip which follows the last 3 pitches of the Direct Route.

Although it isn't a great rock climb, a visit to the top of the spire is a classic trip with an unforgettable finale; the outrageous tyrollean traverse back to Terra Firma.

I climbed the Arrow Tip in the spring of 1995 with 3 climbers I met on camp 4. Ruben and Steve were two climbers from Scotland who jointly owned the Edinburgh climbing wall, Alien Rock. Peter was from North Wales and worked at Plas-y-Brenin.

The hike up to the spire is a spectacular trail of switchbacks which at one point takes you to within about 100m of the base of Upper Yosemite falls. (the falls are the 4th highest in the world) This is particularly spectacular in spring when the falls are swollen with melt water and the force of the spray can knock you off your feet.

At the top of the trail it's worth taking the tourist steps down to the viewpoint at the top of the falls and watch the water falling over 1200ft into the middle cascades.

A small wooden footbridge about 100m upstream enables you to cross the river and make the short hike up to the Lost Arrow Spire.

To get to the first pitch you need to make a 300ft rap off a large tree down to a rock platform known as the Notch, which separates the spire from the main cliff. This is where the fun begins.

Two ropes tied together usually suffice to get you down to the notch. However you don't pull the ropes because these are your way off when you reach the top.

To get to the start of the first pitch from the notch requires probably the most exposed first move in the Valley. From the eastern edge of the notch you need to step off a flake, reach round the corner, clip a peg then pull directly into some horribly polished 10.d moves. All this with over 2000ft of space below you and the roar of the falls in the background. A second peg soon eases your anxiety then there is a good rest below another awkward section. The overhanging 10a fist crack is horrendous! For fist read offwidth. Leapfrogging our only No. 4 camalot was the only way to protect this horrible crack for 40ft to the sanctuary of the Salathé Ledge. The last climber up mustn't forget to drag the rap ropes up behind him.

The top two pitches are usually linked. A few hard moves lead to a rusty old bolt ladder where wires are required to hook over the bolt heads. This section actually goes free but no one fancied the 12b slab moves! There is plenty of room on top of the spire for 4 climbers.

Once on top the rap rope needs to be pulled as tight as possible using a jumar and fixed to the massive ring bolt on top of the spire. Judging by the scorch marks on the rock I reckon the ring bolt also acts as a lightning conductor. At this point I noticed some dark clouds rolling in and suggested we hurry up!

Ruben was first across, then Pete, then myself leaving Steve to rig the ropes into a loop so that we could pull the ropes through afterwards.

The lads set off down the trail while I was still packing my sack. I'm glad I was taking my time, just as I was ready to set off and catch the lads up, I noticed a mountain lion and 2 cubs lying on a rock about 100m away catching the last rays of the afternoon sun. A perfect end to a great day.

BALDRICK'S BOYS NIGHT OUT.

By Lumberwigg McGregor

THE CAST.

BALDRICK – SPUZZ
MATTADDER – MATT T
CAPTAIN FLASHEART – STRONG TOM
QUEENIE – CANADIAN FIONA
SIR PERCY – ACCY NEZ
MANWELL – MANWELL

(I know Manwell wasn't in Blackadder but we are in Spain)

We're at El Chorro after three days at another crap climbing venue in Spain, great night club and hotel though. We've been at the refuge about an hour chatting to an English couple of which the woman can't take her eyes off Spuzz. "That's it. That's who you remind me of" she shouts, pointing her finger at Spuzz. "BALDRICK".

So it's the last night of the conquest of El Chorro and a great banquet is being held at the castle. Queenie stands with a goblet of wine in hand and says "I'm bored, I want some action around here." So someone suggests a trip to the next village to drink some ale at the local inn. Nine merry souls climb aboard the trusty hire carriage with Baldrick in tow because he was worried he'd never see it again.

We all arrive at the inn to find that no ale is sold at the establishment, just spirits. As we scan the room we find that there is only one gender present and they are all gyrating to themselves in the full length mirrors on every wall. This is where the Arch Bishop (Stephen Fry's character) has the last laugh as he knew it was the night of the gender bender which puts Queenie under pressure from the alpha male among us.

Anyhow we decide to stay and are very soon quite inebriated from the very large shots of spirits that are sold to us. After a few hours it is noted that Baldrick is missing with a few other members of the cast. "Where's your funny looking man servant" slurs Queenie to Mattadder.

"I let him go back to El chorro".

"And how did he get back" exclaims Queenie.

"He took the hire carriage"

"And how do we get back you silly billy"

"A taxi your majesty"

"There's no such thing, they haven't been invented yet" says Sir Percy.

It is all soon forgotten and the drinking and laughing continues. At 2am the inn is closed and the motley crew is staggering around trying to find a way home. The local law enforcers are out in force to which Queenie tries her charm. They must be gay as well, because they are not prepared to give us a lift back. Then Manwell comes staggering out of the inn. Sir Percy has been chatting him up most of the night.

"Hey Manwell take us to El Chorro" shouts Mattadder

"Ok no problemo" says Manwell concentrating on staying upright.

"But he's more drunk than you are." Says Sir Percy.

“I don’t care, he has transport, I’m not staying here all night until Baldrick remembers to come and get us.”

Manwell then leads us to his transport an old workman’s cart drawn by an old donkey. We all climb aboard and Sir Percy is made to ride next to Manwell.

Manwell whips the donkey in to action, as fast as possible backwards, straight into a luxury carriage on the other side of the road. Manwell climbs down nearly falling flat on his face as he has forgotten how high up his cart is and how drunk he is. This has all happened right in front of the local law enforcers so Manwell staggers off to consult with them.

“Quick get in the driver’s seat Percy” demands Mattadder. Percy slides across just as Manwell comes back. He’s not happy to see Sir Percy in his seat and so pushes him back over to the passenger seat while blabbing away in Spanish. The local law men seem unbothered about the near destruction of the luxury carriage and Manwell whips the donkey into action again, this time forwards but heading straight for a tree. Quick thinking Sir Percy grabs the reigns and pulls the donkey away at the last second, much to Manwell’s amusement. Manwell takes back the reigns and whips the donkey into a frenzy then drops the reigns. The donkey careers off down the road and Manwell is waving his arm in the air screaming like a banshee. “Grab the reigns again Percy” pleads Queenie as we head for a bend in the road. Percy snatches the reigns again and calms the donkey down. This goes on, Manwell whipping the donkey then waving his hands in the air and turning around and laughing at every one behind him while Sir Percy tries to keep the cart on the road. Meanwhile back at the castle Baldrick is tucked up in bed with a cup of cocoa and a good book oblivious to what is happening to his master and his companions.

Everyone is petrified and money is offered to Manwell to get us back in one piece and to drive properly. Manwell’s humour suddenly changes and he gets very upset. “I thought you my friends I no want your money” he spits while still turning his back on the road. He then whips the donkey into frenzy again and we bolt off down the road with Sir Percy pulling at the reigns trying to stop us falling down the huge ravine that has now appeared to the right

“Ok Ok!” Whimpers Mattadder from the tool compartment of the cart

“Just keep us on the road. Percy you fool concentrate and make him slow down.”

“Manwell. You can have anything you desire” says Queenie.

“You look very nice lady”

“Apart from me. It would be like sleeping with Baldrick” shivers Queenie.

“Ok I have coffee et tobacco”

“That’s lucky Sir Walter Raleigh came with us and has just come back from the Americas.”

Sir Percy is still tugging at the reigns and the cart is still careering all over the place while Manwell still howls in laughter.

“That’s it I can’t take any more. I’m not doing it any more” says a despairing Percy. He then sits back and folds his arms. With that the cart goes off the road straight in to a ditch luckily on the left and not down the cliff on the right. We rattle along for a bit in the ditch and come to a stop at an alarming angle. Mattadder has managed to smash a plank out of the back of the cart with his head but he and everyone else seems to have got away unscathed.

Nervous laughter then emanates around the cart as every one starts to clamber out. Manwell has suddenly sobered up, as have we all. It looks impossible to get the cart out of the ditch, but then suddenly there’s a large flash and a puff of smoke. “Ooo Captain Flasheart” drools Queenie.

“Yes Captain Flasheart here to the rescue” he say’s with a customary slap of the thigh. He then tells every one to push while he inspects his nails.

The donkey and cart are now back on the road, but there is something badly amiss. One of the donkey’s front legs is facing the wrong way.

“That’s it we’ll never get back it’s all Baldrick’s fault” weep’s Mattadder. Manwell then starts to grapple with the donkey’s leg, much to its annoyance.

“Stand aside my man “says Flasheart.

“Que” say’s a puzzled Manwell. Flasheart then start’s to rive the leg about and it suddenly pops back into place.

“You’re my hero Flasheart” say’s Queenie while hanging on to his leg and fluttering her eyelids.

“Hey Queenie play you’re card’s right and I’ll let you hold my rope”.

“Enough, enough, lets get going before Manwell forgets he’s taking us to El Chorro and sets off back down the mountain”. We all jump back into the cart and the donkey limps into action. Manwell is now very quiet and concentrating on the road, the donkey is making a lot of noise but surprisingly moving up the mountain pretty quickly.

Manwell is starting to get confident again and starts his taking his hands off the reigns and waving them around while doing his hyena impression.

“Pack it in Manwell, or I’ll have you’re head off before you can say esta lueago.”

Scowls Queenie.

Eventually we pull into El Chorro, just as the wheel falls off the cart.

“That’s it I’ve had enough, I’m walking from here and when I get back I’m going to kill Baldrick.” Says Mattadder through gritted teeth.

“Change the wheel Percy. Me and Captain Flasheart have unfinished business to attend to.”

The wheel is changed and Queenie insists she drive the old cart up the dirt track to the castle. Manwell is in no mood to argue as he wants’ to keep his head on his shoulders.

We arrive back to find Mattadder scraping around on the floor.

“What are you doing sir” says Sir Percy

“looking for tobacco, there’s none left and Raleigh’s bugged off.”

“Get you’re funny looking man servant up to make us all coffee so we can get rid of this horrid little Spaniard” orders Queenie.

“There’s no coffee he must have drunk it all” says Flasheart. “Lets string him up by his moustache and whip him to death.”

“Hey where’s my ciggareto et cafe you promise”. With a bit more scraping of the table and floor enough tobacco is found to make one prison standard tab and by pouring boiling water into a half drunk cup of cold coffee Manwell is forced out of the door where he finds his cart already turned around and facing down the hill.

With Manwell gone we all collapse around the table. “Shall we kill Baldrick now?” says Sir Percy.

“I can’t I’m done in” sighs Mattadder

“Yes and I want to shag Queenie” announces Captain Flasheart. “We’ll kill him in the morning.” We all look out of the window to see it is morning.

Electric Blue

By Matt Troilett

After a good drink the night before I woke up in the usual hazy state. Some people say that they wish they hadn't had that last pint, but its good fun at the time and you are always guaranteed to sleep well through the night. Dave was up early and as usual he had no hint of a hang over. It had pissed down all night and things were pretty wet, we had our normal café stop and decided Rhoscolyn was the safest bet. Nez teamed up with Terry and they went to find their route. The sun was out now and along with Pam we slowly made our way to the main crag, Dave suggested he warmed up on the classic "The Sun" which he walked up with about 3 pieces of gear as protection shouting down that it was still a bit damp, great I thought. I managed to drag my way up glad that it was Dave who had led it. No sooner had I arrived at the top than Dave's rope was coiled (Dave how do you coil?) and he was back down for a butty with Pam. He tells me it's my lead and that Warpath is the only thing dry. I can't remember much about the route only that there was a hard move low down and that it was a great route, my loss of memory was maybe down to the fact that after finishing the route I was thinking it would be enough for the day, but Dave arrived at the top and with a wry grin suggested an easy solo round the corner. He was smiling and appeared quite excited by the prospect.

Dave and Jerry had soloed this route the day after they had done an early and fantastic ascent of Conan the Librarian E7 6b. During their ascent Jerry had told Dave to calm down and take it steady to which Dave had replied "Don't tell me how to climb loose rock" they were both over 50!

I remember leaving Pam to her sun bathing and walking off at an excited pace, the buzz of climbing had finally replaced the hangover. After scrambling down to the ledge I noticed Terry was mid way through the crux he turned and told us that it was greasy and to be careful, suddenly the prospect of soloing "Electric Blue" seemed quite daunting. Dave set off first and it was at this point that he turned to me and said "be ready for me I can't swim very well". The sun had been on the route a bit longer now and after a slight pause and a look round at me waiting nervously below, the crux was done, Dave turned to me and said with a laugh "it's your turn now". Arriving at the top I was greeted by laughs and Nez telling us both we were mad. He later told us that it was his first E4 on a sea cliff, those are the breaks! Great end to a great day.

Cold and Wet

By Andy Hartley

Cold...

Kid! Kid! During the early seventies my alarm clock on a wintry Sunday morning consisted of my brother pacing at the bottom off my bed yelling at me. Another Sunday of snow and ice (loose description) climbing up the lakes, quick brew throw some food together, then head north. I think this was the era when our kid

owned an Austin 1100, which if we had a full load was painfully slow, so slow all of the passengers use to make forward hand movements as though we were in a wheelchair.

Heading up the motorway Paul mentions he has just bought a job lot of second hand climbing gear among which is an assortment of wires which even Bob Larkin would turn his nose up at, half a dozen biners made by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, a Whillans harness (not bad), and pride of place a MacInnes, terradactel ice hammer state of the art at the time, well this new addition to the armoury causes a dilemma because we now have three axes and a ice dagger (those were the days), and both of us wanted to use the new hammer. Early start spoiled by the compulsory cafe stop, egg bean on toast what a classic breakfast, then off up Kirkstone pass, not much snow as usual but undeterred we got sorted, Helly Hanson fleece bottoms and the ubiquitous Ronhills over the top, and set off up the slog too Dolly Wagon Pike all the time each of us wondering how we could both use Hamish's wonder tool.

Up to the tarn then traverse across to the base of dolly wagon gully which was nicely banked up with snow as far as the chock stone , gear up quickly then our Paul leads off with the new tool taking pride of place and just stops short of the chock stone sorts out a belay and up I come. The next pitch is my lead and very reluctantly our kid gives up the ice hammer, he then tells me he wants to second the pitch using the hammer also, well how is he going to do that, he comes up with a simple plan just clip any protection to one rope leaving the other one free for lowering the hammer down, problem solved. Up I go over a bulge then the rest is just steep snow, full rope length later I stop sort out a belay and shout down to Paul all sorted. Whilst I'm still wondering about lowering the hammer our kid shouts up JUST CLIP IT TO THE ROPE. Not thinking, I do exactly that then hold it up high for him to see, he gives thumbs up and away she goes. Well smiles soon turn to horror as the axe picks up speed and starts bouncing and cart wheeling down the pitch like an instrument of death from the film Hell Raiser, I then see Paul look up seeing the axe faithfully following the route of the rope, he then looks at the rope, then the knot by his nads, fuck ! All his smiles disappear as he fumblingly tries to unclip from the belay and climb up and put a loop of slack in the rope, the loop arrives just in time.

...and Wet

Here we are, three climbing lifers each of us now the proud owner of a new sea kayak totally touched buy a romantic idea of great sea adventures. Having done some river paddling the cross over of skills should see us right. Leaving Trearddur bay the swell isn't too bad, Ian and I are using our river paddling clothing but Danny is showing off his new dry pants and sea touring top complete with pit zips, it was a very hot day and Dan never shut up about the bloody things. Heading north we intend to paddle to the Gogarth cliffs, having done this trip before everybody is calm and confident. Now the sea has tides, obvious that isn't it? Well yes and no, because we have to paddle round a headland know as Penrhyn Mawr which we have done before without too much trouble. But this time were about half a mile away and Ian and myself could see quite a bit off surf on the horizon and anything you can see so far away is usually quite big. This observation seemed to be lost on Dan, so we ease up to asses the situation only to have Dan paddle past smiling and spouting on about his new jackets pit zips. Before we can answer he is out of ear shot, we try to catch him up to warn him but we

needn't have bothered Dan had discovered the tidal race (a section of fast moving water akin to a river but in the sea) because he was frantically back paddling, too little too late! He was swept along some 300 yds before breaking out into calm water, we nervously follow his line and joined him. Safe for the moment, this eddy is a good spot to assess the situation then Ian's radar goes off he spots a woman in a kayak on the other side of the race so off he goes, strong support and he is across the race and chatting away. Me I'm not to sure because the race is flowing quite fast left to right and after 500 yds flows into the most chaotic sea I have ever seen. Whilst I am thinking about following Ian, Dan's off across the race, waving his paddle around and puts in the weakest support stroke I have seen and promptly folds into the sea, he has now capsized. A few seconds pass then he attempts an Eskimo roll which we have all been practising but its far from a easy manoeuvre, it doesn't happen.

Shit before I manage too shout across to Ian Dan is out of his kayak, whilst he has managed to keep hold of his kayak and paddle he is very swiftly being swept towards Ireland and that chaotic area of sea. By now Ian sees Dan and turns to follow, me I'm a bit slower off the mark thinking we don't need anybody else in the water, when I reach them both Ian is attempting to get a tow line on Dan's boat with the idea to tow him and kayak to the shore not easy in a big swell, on the edge of all the action is a rib with three blokes in watching our rescue attempt, having never been in this type of situation before it isn't going well, by now Dan's getting tired , luckily his very expensive paddle is on a leash and tied to the kayak, not so lucky with his hydration system, hatch cover, and all the contents of said hatch all of which was ripped from the kayak. By now Ian who has been doing a sterling rescue attempt looks at me and just says, I don't want to be here, fucking hell me neither, its taking all our skills just to stay upright never mind tow Dan. Looking over Ian's shoulder I spotted the rib was still there riding the swell on idle, all it took was a nod to the guy stood by the wheel and 75 bhp came slicing through the swell and alongside Dan, within minutes he was hauled into the rib and his kayak taken in tow, cheers lads we said after they gave us a rough idea which bay the drowned rat would be deposited in. And then they were gone leaving us to turn towards the shore, not easy in 18ft kayaks and big swell, thankfully there were no more mishaps as we sneaked our way back up the side of the race which was easing up by now. As for Mr Morgan we found him in a small bay struggling to stand up, strange that, as we paddled closer all became clear his new dry pants now contained about 25 gallons per leg, Dan you must remember to close those pit zips before swimming.

The Cuillin (was it a ridge too far?)

By Ann Davies

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I thought it was too good to be true. Six weeks before:

Him: "You know at half term?"

Me: "Yeah"

Him: "We could go away, just the two of us, spend some romantic time together"

Me: (Thinking) "I've more chance of my arse healing up"

Me: (Saying) "Ooh love that sounds really nice!"

Two weeks before:

Him: "You know half term?"

Me: "Yeah"

Him: "I was talking to Andy and Ian. How do you fancy doing the Cuillin Ridge?"

Me: "What just me and you?"

Him: "Well we could do, but Andy and Ian fancy it, do you mind?"

Me: "Is it hard?"

Him: (Says) "No, you've done the Snowden Horseshoe, its just like that, but well, longer."

Him (Thinks) "and other lies like 'The cheque's in the post' "

So, the scene was set. Maps laminated by Ian, courtesy of Lancashire Fire Brigade, up there Friday afternoon, early to bed, up early for an Alpine start, bivvy first night, finish in time for a pint in the Sligachan Sunday night. Bobs yer uncle, Fanny's yer aunt!

The reality was, set off late from home, pint in the Clacaigh just before closing, Glen Brittle campsite late, bed late, up late, set off about 10ish after a bacon buttie. (It wasn't boding well but this must be what they mean by a Rossendale start!)

The day was superb, not a cloud and the sun crackin' the whatsits. The first hill, (Gars Bheinn) was the biggest slog ever. We were carrying enough water to last a camel a week (always remember, there's no water up there!). Unfortunately what there was up there was people. People who should have been at the Trafford Centre shopping. After a two hour wait at the TD gap for several parties, I realised why it was taking them so long, yes there was some numptiness (at one point one of them dropped a rucksack full of gear, knocking his second off the rock) but it was also as polished as buggery. As I've never been one to let climbing etiquette spoil a good outing, once we got going I stood on Chris's head to give me enough height to get a bit of purchase on some decent rock, I thrutched my way up. I was climbing stuff in big boots with a rucksack that I wouldn't have attempted in rock boots with a rope and the RAF rescue team on stand by, but I suppose that's what adrenaline's for. The rest of the first day melds in my memory. All I can remember thinking was how it keeps coming at you, each new section different from the last, but the views were superb.

We bivvied that night below King's Chimney. It was quite late but still light. Parties were still passing us. I made a chilli (no, not from scratch, it was tinned), Andy produced a surprise bottle of wine (God bless him) and Ian revealed (steady on girls, not that!) what is now known as his infamous hip flask (well you can't be in Skye without a tot of single malt to warm yer cockles). Spirits were high, the views stunning as dusk fell.

We slept well and woke to the shittiest day known to mankind. We set off, mists down and within an hour, horizontal rain. It was then we discovered that Ian's laminated maps weren't much good, particularly as he'd left them in the car. Anyway, onward and upward.

Can I just say at this point that its nothing like the Snowdon Horseshoe, (the lying bastard), but big do's little do's at about 6pm we'd climbed above the clag and I

could see Sgurr nan Gillean (the final peak). As the lads discussed what time we might finish and the possibility of the need for a forced bivvy that night, ever the optimist, I quoted the immortal line that the lads still reminded me of,

"Come on lads, we'll be in the pub for eight"

I was shortly to discover that distances on the Cuillin can be very deceptive.

We were at the Bhasteir Tooth for eight, last summit at half past ten. We sat the four of us, the lads debating about the right way off, it was pitch black, still pissing down and blowing a hooley. By then the non-laminated map was the worse for wear. Ian held it, I held the torch. Suddenly a gust of wind ripped the map which flapped away into the darkness. I gasped. Ian sat with just the two pieces he held in his grasp, like he was just finishing a dump,

"Its alright, we don't need that bit!" he said. He's always been a dry bugger.

We decided to drop off the summit and bivvy as soon as possible. The route off was treacherous. We stopped and Chris stripped me out of my sodden waterproofs (this was the nearest we got to sex that weekend!) then shook me into my sleeping bag and bivvy sack. I was too exhausted to care. I lay there listening to the sound of running water, (in the morning I discovered I was laying in a stream), hyperventilating from the lack of oxygen.

Once in our respective bags Chris said "We'll get up at first light" Ian gasping from the oxygen deprivation of a closed and saturated bivvy bag replied "I take it you are presuming we'll all still be alive then!"

Anyway we were and I lived to tell this tale. In the light we were about 20 feet from the path, the day was beautiful as we walked the last mile or so down to the Sligachan. It was closed when we arrived (it was only 5.30 am) so a celebratory pint was out (it was 4 years later before I managed a pint there), but all good things especially good mountain days are worth waiting for. I am sure the Cuillin will probably remain the pinnacle of my mountaineering exploits – but all in all, I don't think that's bad.

My First Fell Race

By Doug McCallum

It was a cold and rainy day in September 1963 or 64, my pal & fellow Blackburn harrier Graham Peel called round & asked if I was up for a training run. Well Graham was a very good runner on track & cross country, I was only running for fun & a chance to chat up the girls in the team, which I was not very good at. I have always put that down to my running socks, you see they were my old grey school socks & the likes of Graham always had smart white ones.

Any way I went and packed my Reebok Ripples, towel grey socks, (I only had one pair) shorts & vest into my very versatile Tattersalls Tripe brown paper carrier bag & off we went. I had not asked where, I assumed we were going to Witton Park

for a run round Buncer Ln. & Pleasington. Well we headed in the opposite direction & when I asked Graham where we were going his only answer was, what I later realised, to be a sadistic chuckle.

After about half an hour he turned in to a farm lane which was partly flooded due to the incessant rain & parked up near a farm. Ok. Enough is enough & I told him to stop mucking about & tell me what was going on. He told me that he had heard about a bit of a run & it was only a couple of miles. I didn't have a problem with that until I had to pay to enter, now that I didn't like & it meant that I could only afford half a pint when we went up Burnley Mecca that night. After we had registered & changed things started to look up, I noticed the other runners wearing an assortment of socks, old army socks, navy socks, even home knitted socks. Not a bloody pair of white socks too be seen, except Grahams of course. At last I could hold my head up & not worry about my socks, but where were the girls?

As we lined up at the start I was still under the impression that we were just going to run round a few fields & farm tracks & the opposition didn't look much, no problem. We were off running in the direction of Todmorden & I decided to set off like a bat out of hell & settle down for the last couple of miles. Something was wrong at the front, the leaders must be lost I thought because they had suddenly turned sharp right and seemed to be climbing up what looked like a sheer cliff face. This is where I found the opposition were a problem, as they started to pass me. I pulled myself up the side of this cliff grabbing any tuft of grass or rock to help me & then found myself in what can only be described as a queue clinging to this mountain. I told myself this wasn't happening, the runners in front were now taking it in turns to rock climb up a gully. This was not good and it was now my turn. The guys behind were in no mood for a poncy cross country runner holding them up from their death wish. I was pushed from behind & the only way to go was up. Oh God please don't let me fall was all I could think as I clung onto the wet & slippery rock & got even more assistance from behind. At last I was up but the runners in front had disappeared into the mist & the two guys behind were quickly passing me with shouts of "tha set off too fast lad" & "don't get lost or yul bloody freeze." What could I do but try to keep up with my new found mentors who were fading into the mist. After what seemed an eternity of staggering up hill over tussocks & bogs we suddenly started to go down hill, maybe this was my chance to speed past the mountain men in front, after all I had trained as a runner not a rock climber, I was wrong again. I felt that I was running on ice, my feet were slipping all over & I was having trouble staying upright never mind running. My thoughts turned too how I could get revenge on my ex pal, as I slowly slithered on my backside to what I hoped was the finish. I can't remember crossing a finishing line just Graham who had got changed shouting well done. 'What do you mean well done' I said 'I was nearly killed and what the hell was that all about?' 'It was the Theively Pike Fell Race, didn't you know? Anyway hurry up & get changed or you'll freeze'. Where had I heard that before?

After a wash in an old cast iron bath in the farm yard we were given hot tea & a meat pie, the pain & fear I had felt was slowly fading, I wrapped all my gear up in my towel & went back to the car leaving what was left of my Tattersalls Tripe carrier bag in the barn, I must remember not to use them again at high altitude. That was my first fell race & I shouldn't have worried about only being able to afford half a pint in the Mecca. I was so knackered I didn't get there, some things never change.

Postcard From Germany.

By Jerry Peel.

I awoke that morning and lay staring at the all too familiar shapes of the room appearing before me, harsh reminders of my reality, of the choices I had made which meant I was lying here and not on a climbing trip with my buddies Mick and Rad.

A lukewarm cup of tea stood by the side of my bed, an offering from my wife who had already left for work. I began to doze back off to sleep making the most of the moments before I too had to get up to go and 'earn my living'. The noise that awoke me was not the relentless beeping of my alarm clock but the familiar sound of 'Jimmy' the postman. I laughed to myself as I listened to the hurried footsteps of my old school friend and 'milk monitor' partner who even at the age of twelve was renowned for his ability to run wherever he went, delivering the school milk at record breaking speed and now here he was with what had to be his perfect job!

The letters he had brought fell onto the mat in the kitchen and my alarm signalled it's final call for me to get up.

Through the window I could see it was a decent day and as it was Friday I was inspired to get on with it as in only a few hours I would be out and free to touch the rock again...

As I slurped the last dregs of my freshly made breakfast coffee I walked towards the mundane pile of envelopes that lay on the mat, more reflections of the responsibilities of everyday life. I sifted quickly through the junk mail and bills but stopped when I realised I had received a postcard! I was only momentarily intrigued as the spectacular photograph on the front of the card immediately informed me that Rad and Mick had sent it. Feeling chuffed that they were obviously thinking about me I began to read the account of their climbing adventure in Czech and Germany,

It became apparent that thoughts of me could only be fleeting, as it really was what can only be described as a very detailed account of an amazing adventure. Every available inch of the postcard had been filled with what had to be the smallest print ever written down by man. As I began to decode the small print it became clear that the climbing I had had to forfeit for work commitments was something Rad and Mick were going to be discussing animatedly for a very long time!

Whilst I felt pleased to have received the postcard and fortunate to be able to empathise with their obvious 'climbing exhilaration' another part of me could not ignore the voice running through my head. It reminded me that had 'the buggers' not brought the date forward I too could have been part of the adventure. But as a decorator, father and husband I had customers to please and living rooms to complete.

So I just got on with my daily routine of grafting to earn a crust. At least today was Friday so the fast approaching weekend meant I too would soon be touching the rock albeit on more familiar territory. The weekend past all too quickly and my mind was still drawn towards thoughts of Rad and Mick, out there in the awesome climbing area of Frankenjura, Germany. But with the smell of paint in my nostrils such thoughts had to be pushed from my mind in order to justify my reasons for not being 'out there' with them!

Then Jimmy the postman with his swift familiar step arrived. He delivered the next blow! A punch, which left me vulnerable to the flood of emotions that entered my already tormented mind. The second postcard from Germany dropped insidiously onto the doormat! Mick had redpointed 'Chasing the Trane first attempt; (One of the most famous routes in Germany. First ascent, John Bachar(1980); who was not only a

brilliant climber but was also chasing the dream to become a great sax player. John Coltrane was his main inspiration, hence the name 'Chasing the Trane'.

This kidney punch hurt and I have to admit at this point my love for Rad and Mick was challenged by the demon of jealousy! I thought back to the time I had bought chips for Mick who at the age of fourteen; fifteen years my junior, had rushed excitedly home to share the news of his evening climb with Jerry Peel brandishing his chips like a prize trophy! (He never did pay me back for them!) And Rad who had introduced me all those years ago to the delights of red wine drinking! These were real friends and yet here I was feeling ostracized and sickened by my own reaction to their obvious enjoyment.

The Friday night phone call from my other dear friend Dave (Bubba) Barton was to be the saving grace. The talk of a weekend away in Anglesey; this time there was no stopping me!

The party was made up of myself, Dave and Alan Firth and as we approached Anglesey the incessant rain that had accompanied us throughout the journey was beginning to show signs of clearing up; a common occurrence on Gogarth, which seems to have its own magical climate. As we sat drinking coffee contemplating our chosen route the sun began to appear from behind the dark veil of heavy clouds!

Conversation became focused on Mick and Andy Mitchell who had recently made an ascent of 'Conan the Librarian'(E7). My heart began to race at the thought of being able to attempt what Mick had reported to be an exhilarating route! Dave of course was up for anything and Alan ever the gentleman said he would be happy to take photographs and climb the following day. The conditions were coming together perfectly and the decision was made to try 'Conan'.

It was late afternoon; the sun was high in the midsummer sky and the mood set on beginning the climb as soon as we could. We drove to Northstack and walked to the top of the crag to prepare for our abseil into the Zawn. I was immediately reminded of the feelings I'd had on my first sighting of this spectacular sea cliff some 25 years previous. And then like now it took my breath away as I stood in awe of its magnificence.

As we abseiled into the Zawn it became apparent that this could be a daunting task as we had left it a bit late and the summer afternoon was beginning to show signs of turning into early evening! In addition to this it appeared that the first few metres of the climb were damp, not uncommon at Gogarth. However despite the amount of recent rainfall, beyond this, the route did look fairly dry. We belayed on a ledge jutting out about 10ft above the sea, violent waves crashing relentlessly beneath us, not quite the millpond we would have liked!

Dave tells me to get my arse into gear to do the first pitch and I accept the challenge and quickly begin racking my gear, very aware of not taking too much or too little. I set off on easy ground and begin feeling my way through the not too ideal slimy damp holds, conscious of the fact that even a mistake at this stage means I will end up in the drink!

I feel a sense of relief when I reach the dry rock. It's still fairly easy climbing and as yet I have not placed in any gear. As I bend down to dry my boots I look below to where Dave is standing huddled in a corner of the belay. He shouts up to me words of encouragement to take my time but get gear in as quickly as possible. I place a small r.p in a marginal placement. I am pleased at this stage to have some prior knowledge of the route from Mick; well at least I thought I had! I begin to search for what he

described as a peg, which had to be clipped before moving into the bottom of the groove where the hard climbing begins. I still question to this day the existence of such a peg. This could be but down to old age, over indulgence in red wine (thanks Rad!) or some other universal phenomena but I never discovered it! It was not there for me to clip!

So there I was literally stuck between a rock and a hard place, fully aware my safety depended on reaching that groove. I was making little progress with only one marginal r.p placed and time as always moving on rapidly. I shouted down to Dave. "No peg here but I'll see if I can get into the groove". I knew in my mind that 5ft off the deck I could probably have done it one-handed but here the rock appeared brittle. I wasn't sure I could trust the holds, and the inevitable fear of a fatal fall onto the jagged sea rock below was quickly becoming a reality. With Adrenalin pumping through my veins and the thrill of the climb driving me on I knew my life was hanging in the balance of my next decision.

But no matter what I was feeling my reality was that there was no peg and I had to move into that groove with no gear and a potential 50ft fall into the sea. The words of John Long (in his article 'The Only Blasphemy') flashed through my mind; "At least die trying!" perhaps this was it, Death on Conan!

I shouted down again to Dave to inform him of my last look for the peg and at that moment my decision was made. I was confident that technically the climbing was not difficult and these holds would be jugs at 'Bridestones' (My favourite climbing spot.) So with my mind clearly focused I began to move. Hanging the crimps in trepidation knowing they could snap in an instant, my whole life suspended in this one solitary moment. My body continued to move towards its unknown destination; in the sea or in the groove? And then I had it! I was gripped on to a good solid hold, knowing I could get gear in. I felt a deep sense of relief that my life was safe. I immediately began to place gear into 2 or 3 good rock placements and in the sure knowledge I could hang my granny off them I shouted down to Dave, "I'm in the groove!"

As I stood bridging the groove it became clear that from this point it was going to be a technical climb. I smiled to myself as I remembered that my rock boots had only recently been resoled. What a stroke of luck; they hugged my feet like slippers and had the perfect grip. With these on my feet I could balance on the wing of a fly! So if nothing else I knew I could rely on the rubber soles of my boots.

As I continue to move up the groove I start to get pumped in my legs, just another thing to contend with on what is turning out to be a very technical pitch. I am concerned about the time it is taking for me to place the gear. Dave is still standing huddled on the lower belay, and the only prior knowledge I have of the goal looming overhead is that Andy Mitch fell off the crux move getting to the first belay. Of course not being the competitive type this played absolutely no part in my determined efforts to reach it without even the slightest slip of a foot!

I continued to climb and reached the point where I knew I had to move right, with about 20ft to go to the belay. The climbing changed from bridging up the corner to smeary crimp wall climbing on a traverse, a real on - off move, but with my trusty new re-soles the friction was perfect. I was in my element and reached the belay. NO PROBLEM!!!!

I fix myself secure and shout down to Dave to begin his ascent. His response is one of elation. At last he can start to second the pitch. Those of us lucky enough to know Dave also know that one of his many gifts is 'speed' and he arrives at the belay

in about fifteen minutes; on a pitch that has taken me about an hour to complete! After sharing in the triumph of our first pitch success Dave begins to rack up for the next one. As he crouches over his gear I look towards the sky and notice a gathering of very big, black clouds racing towards us. Suddenly there is an ominous threat of rain. I draw Dave's attention to the fast approaching doom and we look knowingly at each other.

With the rising tide beginning to swallow up the lower belay the only way out of here is up and the only way up is on a dry route. It seems that someone is looking after us and like the biblical parting of the waves, the clouds miraculously separate. We are momentarily encircled by darkness with a spotlight of sun breaking through to light our way but more importantly keeping our route dry! We both smile with great relief and I make the not too unlikely suggestion that Dave has cast one of his magic spells!

Dave continued to prepare his gear in the knowledge that although less technical, the next pitch began with a difficult move off the belay and held the fear of loose rock. Protected by only two ice screws in a pitch of seventy feet. Pure madness! But necessary on such fragile rock.

As Dave begins to manoeuvre himself off the belay I offer a little helpful advice...

"Take your time Dave the rock's loose".

Words I soon regretted. Dave turned his head towards me. His piercing steely-eyes boring through to my very soul, with a sharp response that left no room for misinterpretation:

"Jerry! Don't tell **me** how to climb loose rock!"

Ok! So this is a man who has climbed The North face of the Eiger! As well as numerous other scary routes in the Alps. What a fool am I!

Dave then disappeared leaving me to reflect for a while on the magnificence of the surrounding Zawn; thinking of Johnny Dawes and Craig Smith who did the first ascent of 'Conan' in 1986. What an achievement! I look out to sea at the mass of endless white foaming waves racing towards me like a pack of wild horses. Inspiration for the climb 'Dream of White Horses'; by Edward Drummond and Dave Pearce in 1968. As I sit here writing now I sadly remember Dave's untimely death in a fatal abseil accident at Gogarth, his favourite climbing spot! I am brought back to the reality of the climb by Dave's voice.

"Jerry! Watch it here there's a big loose block I've come too high"

I feel relieved that I led the first pitch as it is becoming obvious that Dave is having to negotiate loose rock all the way across to join 'Dream of White Horses'. When he does reach safety, he is totally out of sight. My ropes tighten and I know it is time for me to follow this horrendously loose pitch. I finally reach Dave feeling elated and there are congratulations all round. What an awesome route!

It is about 9.30pm and the sun is beginning to show signs of setting. We quickly pack our bags and walk back to the car. Once in the car I enjoy the contemplative silence. Physically drained and mentally exhausted. I feel a sense of overwhelming contentment, everything is empty; but everything is perfect. My mind and body have been brought together in a magical way that for me only climbing can achieve! I

cannot wait to share my experience with Rad and Mick and laugh to myself as I remember the effects of the postcard from Germany; the bitter blow no longer hurting as now I had my own story to tell.

Other Stuff

By Derek Hargreaves

It's 1975, Martin's brother had, amongst other things, an Escort MK1, a Kermantle rope and a Hex' 11. I on the other hand had cycled 17 miles into a headwind to buy my Viking Hawserlaid and the strange thing was – I cycled back home into a headwind too.

My most prized possession, however, was not the rope or the Troll waist belt I'd bought second hand for a fiver, or those three "Hiatt" steel karabiners – you know the ones that pierce your thumb if you caught them in the hinge whilst "fumble-clipping"! No it was my E.B.'s bought new for twelve pounds seventy five from "The Dales Outdoor".

I was Ron Fawcett and Martin wore glasses so he was Pete, but despite being "top rockers" we still needed Martin's brother for a lift to the crags if we were to share leads on "ordinary route" at Widdop or the "A Climb" at Ilkley. I mostly climbed with Martin but he did other stuff too, like homework and rugby, though he said he wanted to be "the best climber in the world", and I suppose that's what he eventually became despite everything.

Chris was a climber and so was Rob. Chris did other stuff too, caving and crap like that. Sometimes it seemed like everyone would be doing other stuff and that's when I would dial 813820 and ask his parents if Rob was about.

Rob also did other stuff but liked climbing best of all. He wasn't Steve Bancroft but he could have been. I fancied Rob's sister and remember once snogging her on the coach coming back from Ice-skating at Bradford with the scouts.

If cycling to Crookrise or Earl Crag seemed too overwhelming, the growing "habit" still needed to be "fed", and the only "food" on offer to us young junkies was Thornton Rocks. Now seeing is believing; a 160 ft. high ever steepening limestone slab, quarried and devoid of features or cracks, save for an inverted V overlap at one end and a couple of rows of small trees running bottom to top. This place is a sight to behold and the climbing? Like a dream come true.

I keep having a recurring dream about not "tying in" but only on climbing walls, it reminds me of the dreams I had as a child when desperately having to out-run a mysterious pursuer – my legs would become heavy and still and slow motion became the only means of escape. Where, I wonder are all these images produced and directed – who or what is trying to scare me and why?

Reaching the undercuts from the poor lay away and high-step rock-over, pumped solid and still only half way up the headwall at Kendal, reaching down for the rope to make the next full-on clip only to see it snake back down through the 'draws to the floor without me. These dreams always finish unended, their outcome tormenting me. Do I fall to oblivion, or grab the nearest clip and hang from it embarrassed, waiting to

be rescued? Yet strangely all the time I am only ever filming these tense dramas, hovering above, unable to offer either advice or assistance.

When I fell from that limestone slab with Rob belaying me, it was like some mocking dream in slow motion directed not by me, but rather the outcome taken out of my hands by the same producers and screenwriters responsible for my childhood dreams. I had never fallen a long way before and had been frightened at the prospect.

My last runner was clipped, a sling round a sapling. The climbing above looked pretty much the same as that which had brought me to this small tree; smooth limestone, not many hand-holds, just friction, only gradually becoming steeper and steeper with the friction diminishing the further away from the runner I climbed.

Looking at my feet I began to feel my E.B.'s no longer sticking to the rock, but easing themselves back down the slab, like watching treacle sneaking off a spoon. As the small fingertip flakes came into view, the anxiousness which had started to fill my stomach and squeeze my heart, began to ebb from my body down through my shaking legs and off somewhere into the atmosphere now thickening around me.

My over-stretched fingers began to curl around the first of the flakes, thank fuck for that. "Shit, shit, shit", I grasped frantically at the next flake, then the next and the next, but it's too late now, the freeze thaw effects had taken it's toll, the flakes and me have already begun to accelerate down the slab, they look and sound like small ceramic tiles as they start to bounce and roll. For the longest short moment as I grasped hopelessly at those flakes it was just like my childhood dreams, not quite sure what it was I was trying so desperately hard to escape from.

This nightmare, however, was at last having it's conclusion. I really was falling, turning, spinning and screaming, vision distorted, like watching T.V. when they put a camera-man in a bob-sleigh.

When was it all going to stop. Stopped. I'd stopped. I was upside down and on my back but I had stopped and was still alive.

"Yee Hah" I yelled to quell some of the adrenalin. "Are you o.k.?" yelled Rob. "Yep", I replied, "I'm o.k."

Chubby Pirate Tour 1995

By Donald Rigby

First of all I was asked to do this by my mate Nez (who I don't see all that often these days) when he phoned the other night out of the blue so to speak. I can't imagine why he felt I was qualified for the job as I was never all that good at climbing, even when I was at it all the time some years ago. The following story then is not about gut busting E9 heroics or any such topic, but shall be based around the more familiar pastime of a teenage climber which is of course, the low budget climbing trip fuelled by enthusiasm, reckless behaviour, beer and weed. I hastened to add, if my mother reads this I may be in the shit again, and I sort of feel the need to say that I am in no way recommending behaving as we did in those days, although if you survive you will realise it was a lot of fun. I would also like to add that 14 years on I have settled down somewhat and am about to father our first child with my girlfriend Nathalie. I

consider myself now as quite well behaved and not as much of a wanker. So as all good climbing trips began in those days, we did whatever Nez told us and before we knew what was happening we were stuffed in the back of his Vauxhall Cavalier and were heading south to Pembroke. We stopped at the tobacco shop in Accy where Andy Mac insisted we loaded up with some weird flavour leafy matter for the two weeks ahead. I hope Nez asked Andy to do one of these stories it'll save you reading this shit and it'll be much more entertaining I can assure you. So about 16 biftas later we are all passing out on the back seat and some time later still we awake in Bosherton and Nez tells us to get out and put up a tent or two. That was a proper campsite that was. One tap, a hedge to piss in and a quid a night and only a stones throw from more sea cliff limestone than you could shake a stick at. I have some vague recollections of sleeping outside cos my tent ended up swamped in puke from my mate Matty B who was probable only fifteen at the time – still no excuse.

We climbed there for a few days then set off south to go to Lundy for a week – with an interval in between that took us via Newquay in Cornwall. All of us were well into skateboards at the time, and the town was full of surfers so we had a day on some hire gear and then got legless in Newquay, the cops wouldn't let us kip in our car the first night so we got a shady B and B where I remember the landlady's daughter doing dumbbells in her undies every time we walked past her room, bargain thought we. All into town a second night and Big Al manages to find a girl pissed enough to give him a kiss which was a surprise to him as he was blindfolded at the time, the rest of us were obviously less appealing. Eventually we get back up to Bideford where I think I experienced the first chippy who refused to pour peas on my food. Instead they came in a little pot (like they all do nowadays) which caused quite some confusion I can tell you. We spent most of that night sat on the pub floor watching a massive red bearded pirate shadow boxing in the middle of the room whilst some bare footed folkites rattled off a few numbers on their fiddles. The ferry to Lundy was a puke fest but we were hardened to it, already caked in the stuff from a week of oblivion. We were all keen to find the rare Lundy cabbage, unique to the island. I have no idea if we ever found it, but we basically ate a bit of every weird green looking plant going, hoping it to taste a bit cabbagy. No luck I'm afraid, we stuck in three climbing pairs that week, Nez and Troilett did the harder stuff, me and Matty B did the stuff with belay ledges big enough to skin up on, and poor Al had to listen to Andy Mac whinging everyday about god knows what. (if you read this Andy, I do love you, but you have been known to whinge like fuck on occasion) highlights of that trip include the big wall crawl in which me and Matty multi pitched our way back to camp along the ground, almost the full length of the island. The grade is to be confirmed as I have yet to hear of a repeat attempt. My estimate is that it is hovering a few grades below moderate and may not receive any stars on account of heavy foliage. We also managed to nearly kill some skinny dippers whilst trying to warn them discreetly of our arrival at the top of the crag. In order to give them half a chance to get dressed before we abbed off, we clanged a bit of gear around noisily and then Andy Mac caught a bloody big rock with his foot which tumbled over the edge. We shit ourselves and peered over to see both of the dippers on route, helmets on and the lot! I was impressed, so much so we left a rope behind and ended up doing some multi pitch wiggly E1 on a single 9mm. E1 of course is far from desperate to your modern day climber, in fact it hasn't been desperate for ages to anyone, but add a couple of foolish teenagers and a reefer or two and it becomes more challenging I'll say. I must also mention that the second Rigby brother finally appeared, appealing to someone other than his mates puke,

which put the Rigby's in a position of esteem within the ranks .I've never been back to Lundy since that trip, for a while I wasn't sure if we'd be allowed even though we hadn't behaved that badly at all. Nez has been back and he wasn't strung out for the crows, so I guess it's all done and dusted. In any case, the place is an amazing venue for a climbing trip to remember. We've all grown up a bit now but if you want to experience the kind of approach to life and our rock climbing then I suggest you make up a pot of 10 containing the following ingredients. 1 level teaspoon adrenaline, 2 pounds of testosterone, 8 cans of Spar strong and pure beer, 2 Dead Kennedy's albums of your choice, 1 Doors album or your choice, 14 large reefers and 0 common sense. Swallow it fast, it tastes like shit, but it's got a bit of poke....

The Dedicated Followers of Fashion.

By Mark Radtke.

Looking back over the brief history of rock climbing, it is clear that the nature of our sport today, has resulted in part by an evolutionary and sometimes retro evolutionary process. The actions of certain characters, or groups of individuals have undoubtedly influenced the shaping of subsequent events and whilst these actions have invariably been criticised, or acclaimed they have probably provided us with a uniquely colourful inheritance.

Different periods have had varying degrees of impact on the sculpting of our sport, but I am sure that events that occurred in the 1980's were as influential as any in its evolution.

At some point during 1985, or 1986, I can't remember exactly, a good friend of mine called Ian Cooksey and I, found ourselves ensconced below a steep little route at Kilnsey Crag with two notable climbers from Lancashire. Although only a miniscule blip in my climbing memory, the incident sticks in my mind because of the bizarre circumstances surrounding it and the amusing irony that has since transpired.

The two Lancashire lads were Mick Johnstone and Ian Horrocks. Mick and Ian were stable mates so to speak, with well known climbers of the day such as Mark Leach, John Dunne, Jerry Peel and Mick Lovatt and indeed were regarded as peers, by this group of contemporary activists.

Ian Cooksey hailed from Cumbria and had served his apprenticeship during the late 70's where, biting at the heels of the likes Whillance and Cleasby, he had climbed most of the modern extremes that adorned the mountain crags of the Lakes'. Ian and I had struck up a strong climbing partnership, which was based as much on mutual cultural interest, as on a strong thirst for travel and adventure. Whilst both of us were passionately ambitious about climbing neither of us were followers of fashion.

The route that had somehow brought us together and was now the focus of our combined attention was called Ground Effect. It had been climbed a couple of years earlier by Pete Gommersall and typically for hard routes of the era was graded at E5 6b. For us, this simply meant hard, but not quite cutting edge. The incident sticks in my mind because in those days, here in the UK, the very way in which climbs were being ascended was being strongly debated, which led, depending on ones point of view to groups of climbers sitting, metaphorically speaking, 'in very specific camps'.

Looking back, I am sure that my amigo and I with our long hair, droopy moustaches and white sports socks pulled over the ends of our Ron Hills were definitely perceived by Mick and Ian to be firmly sat in a very different camp from themselves. Since their own garb of contemporary lycra tights and radical fishing fly earrings suggested they had embraced the progressive and new wave continental style of climbing, I must say we thought the same of them.

Ground Effect was characterised in typical Kilnsey fashion, by an initial section of steep rock which led to good holds and some runner placements. Above these initial difficulties, lay an impending groove protected by two 'in situ' threads.

If my memory serves me correctly, we all managed to boulder the initial fifteen feet of the route out and were able to ascend to the good holds and retreat back to the ground with relative ease.

I can't remember who decided to tie on and go for it first, but whoever it was retreated unashamedly after scrutinising the fragile slivers of rock which supported the crucial threads that protected the crux. After this initial failure each of us took the opportunity to impress the other camp, but after the 'sharp end' had gone round full circle we decided it was all a bit too scary and went elsewhere.

Failure can be a hard thing to bear and it wasn't long before the burning memory of Ground Effect saw me once again scrutinising the beguiling thread in the groove. This time, I was able to throw caution to the wind and make the crux moves, clip the second thread and wobble my way to the belay and breathe a very big sigh. Unsurprisingly, each of my compadres were also drawn moth like to Ground Effects' flame, but with craft and cunning also escaped unharmed.

Since then I, like them, have visited Kilnsey more times than I can remember, occasionally trying new challenges, but more commonly repeating and re repeating many of the excellent sports routes that have become our favourites. For me however, Ground Effect never allowed such familiarity to spoil the experience of it and judging by the lack of traffic that the route saw, I suspect the same applied for most other people as well. That was the state of play up until 1999 when, whilst on a familiar visit to the big K, I was surprised to see a line of shiny bolts adorning the groove of Ground Effect. My initial reaction to this was to be a little saddened, knowing that the experience of gambling with those suspect threads would now be denied to many. These thoughts quickly evaporated however as it dawned on me, that what had been presented here was in effect the opportunity to experience something new. The result, a superb new sports route graded F7b that will now feature regularly on my repeat agenda, as I suspect it will on many other peoples.

Interestingly enough, the person responsible for adding the bolts to Ground Effect was Pete Gomersall himself who, twenty years earlier had used some weird magic in getting everyone to believe that poxy bits of tat, threaded behind flimsy bits of rock would be 'allreet'.

All I'm waiting for now, is an easy ego massaging ride up the likes of Deathwish, or Stairway, or even Wombat.

Ice Warriors of the Past

By Bob Larkin

The phone rang disturbing my early evening catnap. It was Dave.

“Do you fancy Wales tomorrow?”

“Why?”

“C.D. and Andy Hartley are going down to do Amphitheatre Buttress on Craig Yr Ysfa. It should be fun. If you’re interested pick me up at 7.15 a.m.”

“Count me in”

I resumed my general lethargy disturbed only by the odd mince pie and packet of crisps, ‘it should be fun’. ‘it should be fun’. Dave’s phrase kept interrupting my thoughts. A one thousand foot rock route on a high remote crag in the middle of December would hardly be fun. It might be interesting but it won’t be fun. I should have known better.

I was up at 6:30am. It was foggy and the roads were icy. I arrived at Dave’s spot on time. Dave was forcing some soggy sawdust masquerading as cereal, down his reluctant neck.

“I knew you would be early.”

I wasn’t sure whether it was a complement or a whinge. We were in for a long day and whinging at this hour was a bad omen. I like to believe it was a complement.

We arrived at C.D.s without incident. Andy was already there. C.D. was not well. A bad sign.

“Dave do you want to drive my car. I over did the beer last night and don’t feel well.”
“No problem.”

We were on the road for 8am. I was comfortably ensconced in the back seat. With concentration at a minimum I began to feel drowsy. But Dave's words kept creeping insidiously into my conscience, ‘it should be fun’ ‘it should be fun.’

Fun is bouldering at Widdop on a warm summers evening. Fun is soloing routes at Crookrise you’ve done 20 times before. I was apprehensive. I dosed.

The journey south was comfortable enough, the only problem being C.D.s frantic outbursts as Dave pushed his car through ice and slush at a steady 90mph.

We were not the only ones at the remote car park. 2 other cars were there, but no sign of the inhabitants. However it was 10:15am. We got kitted up as quick as possible. Now I can remember reading many years ago in the classic ‘Lets Go Climbing’, by Colin Kirkus that there are certain things you must take on every trip into the hills. It was time for us to do a check.

“Map	No”
“Compass	No”
“Torch	No”
“Whistle	No”
“1 st aid kit	No”
“Spare clothing	Wearing it”
“Spare food	Eaten it”

“Right then were ready. Let’s go.”

It was at this stage that C.D. dropped a monumental clanger.

“I’m only taking 1 axe.”

It is true we intended to do a rock route. It is also true that C.D. rang up earlier for a forecast which stated that there would be no snow. But the evidence before my eyes made it blatantly obvious that we would need 2 axes.

I must have been under some kind of hypnotic spell or still lethargic from the drive down, but I failed utterly to grasp the Orwellian significance of what C.D. had just said. 'One axe good. Two axes bad. One axe good. Two axes bad.' Anyway the outcome was that we all took only one axe each. I was later to realise what the initials C.D. stood for. Complete Dick.

The path to the crag was easy flat and boring apart from the bits that were strenuous, steep and interesting. We arrived at the foot of the route at midday. Now I know, and you know that one thousand foot of rock is a long way. I also know, and I know that you know that one thousand foot of rock covered in powder snow and with only 3hrs of useful daylight left is much longer than one thousand foot. The truth is that even with one hundred years of climbing experience between us, we had blown it before our crampons could make the first spark. Nevertheless even with the odds stacked against us we would have to do something.

Andy and C.D. opted for an easy start up some low angled slabs. Andy, who led, didn't even bother to put his crampons on. Dave and I chose a different start round the arête to the right. Although this was much steeper there was plenty of turf and an obvious large flake at 25 ft that would give some good protection. Dave is a self confessed novice at this type of climbing and was finding it difficult to fit his borrowed crampons without the assistance of a computer.

"Do you want to lead?" I asked

"I'll have a go." Was the surprising response

I knew Dave had done very little, if any, of this type of climbing, but I realised things were badly amiss when he started to lead without gloves and with his axe still securely strapped to his rucksack.

"Shit a brick that was fucking hard!"

Andy's ashen face had suddenly appeared around the arête level with us but about 15ft away.

"Any chance of a rope?"

"Piss of, my hands are cold."

"I've no crampons on, its desperate." He pleaded

"Have I to lead?" I asked Dave, ignoring Andys predicament

"Go on then."

Andy vanished and I was soon involved in my own mini epic. With no ice, soft turf, powder snow and one axe the technique needed to progress involved moving upwards faster than you fell down. This is not a new technique; in fact it has been the basis of my climbing for many years. Dave put it succinctly;

"Find a placement that feels unsafe, then use it anyway"

After a colossal effort to resist the temptation to back track, I reached the flake and good protection. This provided the necessary confidence to continue.

"What is that on your head, a rice bowl?"

Andy had extricated himself and in better humour was beginning to berate my 'state of the art' climbing gear. Of course, this is nothing new. I have suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous comment about my dress sense for years.

I carried on with trepidation. Stabbing iron hard rock and slicing through disintegrating turf I soon reached a good stance. Dave arrived without too much effort and a second pitch was soon polished off. The rock steepened above and provided a good excuse to bail out. We traversed off rightwards into the gully to meet Andy and

C.D. Light was just starting to fade. We slithered down the powder to the foot of the gully. Daylight receded into early evening. The air was cool and still. The black and white unspoiled outlines against the starry sky reminded me of why we go climbing.

The journey back to the car seemed to take longer than it should. At the car we paused only long enough for Dave to 'gell up' (ask him not me). Then it was back to that well known tranny in Helmslow, 'Anne's greasy spoon', where we sampled some excellent potato pie and sherry trifle that was good enough to win prizes. It seemed to be a fitting end to the day. But not quite. We had to pick up the tail end of a pub crawl somewhere in Edenfield. We found the group of reprobates about to sample their 12th pint. Nez was noisy as usual, Mick was pissed as usual and Roy was anxious to formulate some plan to make it an annual event. Andy and Keith just laughed a lot. After a quick drink we made our excuses and left.

Dave was right. It was fun.

A Journey Down The Starless River

By Craig Entwistle

The camera was perched on a boulder about three metres away. We sat there shivering uncontrollably, staring at it waiting for the timer to do its stuff. Nothing. Guppy got up and pressed the button again. We counted to ten. Nothing.

A photograph of us here would be great for the album but I couldn't get my mind off the long slog back to camp 1 and the sanctuary of our sleeping bags and thermarests that we had left there that afternoon.

"Guppy, f**k the camera, lets make a move pal!" I said.

It was nearly midnight and, after almost nine hours underground, we were sitting at the terminal sump of the Gouffre Berger, 1122 vertical metres below the surface of the Vercors Massif in South East France. Camp 1 was nearly 700 metres and 15 roped pitches above us, I wasn't excited about the next few hours at all and I didn't want to waste any time on a camera with no film inside!

Andy "Guppy" Gudgeon and myself had been invited on this Berger trip by a friend in the Alternative Derbyshire Caving Club. The A.D.C.C. is not a big club and they were looking for people to make up the numbers and needed as many 65 quids as they could muster to go towards the permit and the rope fund. In the end about 18 of us paid up with the aim of bottoming the Berger.

Me and Gups combined the trip with some mountain biking in Les Gets in the Alps to get a bit of fitness. I'd also been getting fitter by driving up to Alum Pot a couple of times a week to do laps jumaring up and down the main 200ft pitch. Gups lived too far away for this and only managed one trip in about 6 months. We did manage a camping trip to Sand Cavern in Gaping Gill which gave us an idea of the logistics involved in camping underground.

The mountain biking passed far too quickly and, after managing to climb only one route in the magnificent Bourne Gorge, we made our way up to the Refuge at Moliere to meet the Derbyshire team.

It was now Friday, and although the permit had only been valid for two days, to our delight, we found that the early arrivals had rigged the cave all the way to the sump. A superhuman effort! The only downside to this was the fact that we would be required to be part of a de-rigging team later in the following week.

A meeting was called for Saturday morning where everyone stated their own ambitions regarding the descent of the cave. Everyone preferred to descend later in the week to be part of a de-rigging team so they wouldn't have to go underground twice. This left the cave free so me and Gups decided to go for it there and then. A few reservations were voiced by the older team members about two unknowns descending as a team of two rather than the ideal number of three. However, teams would be following relatively close behind so everyone decided that it would be OK. We hurriedly packed our waterproof sacks and headed over the Sornin Plateau to the Berger Entrance.

It's a twenty-minute scramble over boulders from the sump back up to the base of the Hurricane pitch (Puits Ouragan). This horrible, and aptly named pitch, is the most intimidating place I have ever been to in my life. The whole of the water of the cave crashes down over a 150ft pitch onto giant boulders. The noise is deafening and the spray laden wind knocks you off your feet. The rope hangs a mere 12ft away from this awesome waterfall. I had an uneasy feeling of being a long way from home.

I was first to the rope and started juggling as quickly as I could. My carbide lamp was blown out after the first few feet. It was pointless making the effort to re-light it so I got my head down and didn't stop until I reached the belay. Gups was close behind.

After another 200m slog upstream we reached Joly's Hall where, on the way down, we had stashed a flask of pea soup and some power bars. We had a five minute rest then carried on to the base of the Little Monkey Pitch (Resaut Du Singe). This is another intimidating 150ft wet pitch. At the top of this pitch you are faced with the Cascade Series, a complicated series of waterfalls and pitches which really sap your energy as you try desperately to avoid falling into one of the many deep pools. Another 100ft pitch (Gache's Shaft) takes you into the Grand Canyon. On the way down this place really freaked me out. You descend via a muddy slope by the right wall of the main chamber which is so big that you can't see the ceiling or the left wall, just an eerie darkness which is too big for your light to illuminate and the rumbling of the river somewhere down below you.

At the head of the Grand Canyon is Camp 2 which is not really a nice place to hang out. Definitely a last resort camp.

4 small pitches lead to the infamous canals. The canals seem to last forever and, again due to the fact that you are desperate not to fall in, this part of the cave really takes it out of you. To negotiate the canals requires yarding across fixed ropes sometimes up to 30 feet above deep pools. On more than one occasion I pulled a rusty bolt out with my fingers.

At the end of the canals, a small pitch of 50ft (Vestaire) leads straight on to the calcite slopes. At this point we both realized that we were almost totally beat and although we estimated that we were less than an hour from camp 1, we had a ten-minute break. There is only one more short pitch before camp one. The Balcony Pitch (50ft) however was probably the hardest in the whole cave. What should have taken me five minutes took nearly twenty. Guppy shouted up at me to carry on to camp and get a brew on.

Gups woke me about 45 minutes later.

"Where's the brew you shoddy twat?" he shouted.

“Sorry mate, must have nodded off” I giggled.

We made a brew and ate some Beanfeast then crashed out. It was 3am and it had taken us 12 hours to get from the surface to the sump and back to camp 1. Earlier in the day we had stashed food and brewing tackle alongside our sleeping bags and thermarests. As an after thought I’d taken some spare dry thermal underwear to sleep in and to wear for the trip out of the entrance series.

Camp 1 was unbelievably cosy yet I was so tired I found it hard to sleep. The situation was surreal, at one point I swore I could hear a car engine. I was so wasted that I was Hallucinating.

I woke at about 6am ready for a quick brew and blast out of the entrance series to the surface and hopefully beer and pizza for lunch in Autrans. Gups might as well have been dead because I couldn’t budge him. I eventually fell asleep again and woke up at about 8.30am. I managed to wake Gups and struck a deal with him. I’d re-fill the carbide lights if he got a brew on.

We eventually made a move. I was so glad that I didn’t have to put my wet under-suit on. I wandered over to take a last look at the “Hall Of Thirteen”. This is a massive chamber adjacent to the camp which has some amazing stalagmite formations, some as tall as 50ft. I’d been too tired to admire the view previously.

Immediately in front of us was the Great Rubble Heap. This is a continuation of the main passage in a grand scale. The ceiling must be over 100ft high and the floor is littered with boulders ranging from T.V. size to house size. It is not uncommon for people to get lost in this boulder field.

As we stumbled through the boulder field we met Seth, Fuz and Warwick on their way down to camp 1. We wished them luck and carried on, not willing to exchange small talk, our minds focussed on the tiring entrance series just ahead.

One more small pitch leads to Lake Cadoux, which is usually crossed using a rubber dinghy, but due to relatively low water we could wade across.

Another slog of a couple of hundred metres takes you to the bottom of the entrance series. From here there are 12 pitches to the surface and you are still nearly 100m deeper than the deepest cave in Yorkshire! Aldo’s Pitch is another 150 footer, quickly followed by the 4 Relay pitches of 110ft, 20ft, 35ft and 20ft. Two big pitches follow. Gontard’s at 80ft and Garby’s which is a perfectly circular shaft 150ft high. At the top of Garby’s is a series of awkward meanders which seem to last forever until eventually you reach Cairn Hall and another 120ft pitch. At this point I could smell fresh air from the Sornin Forest. My tiredness was overtaken by my excitement. I could almost taste the beers that we had stashed at the entrance.

After the Holiday Slides (50ft) is the 100ft Ruiz Pitch. An awkward exit at the top of the pitch leads through a slot to the base of the 45ft entrance shaft.

The sun was shining. It was 3.30 in the afternoon.

After a couple of beers and a chat with Tony who was on entrance duty for the day, we logged ourselves out of the cave and headed back to the refuge.

The refuge was deserted but fortunately the bar below the bunkhouse was open. We had no cash so we started a tab and by the time the rest of our party returned we were well out of it!

We chilled out for a couple of days, spending lots of time in the swimming pool and in the bars in Autrans. Three more teams went underground during the next couple of days.

The permit for the cave meant that we had to be fully de-rigged by Saturday so a plan was hatched to flood the cave with rested up people on Thursday and Friday. The last

team up from the sump on Wednesday were to bring the tackle from the lower pitches up to the canal series then head out. A second team would then go down to bring the tackle up to camp 1 and carry out what gear they could. A third team would then go to camp 1 for the rest of the tackle. When everything was out, the entrance series could then be de-rigged.

On arrival at the Berger Entrance we heard from a team who had just exited the cave that there was still a team at camp 2 and a team at camp 1. This obviously messed up the original plan although there were two tackle sacks at camp 1 that had been brought up from the bottom of the cave.

I must not have been feeling right because I volunteered to go solo to camp 1 for the bags. The trip to camp 1 took about an hour and ten minutes. About half my original time. I think this was because I was running most of the way because every time I stopped I got the eebie geebies! The great rubble heap was particularly freaky.

I arrived at camp 1 to find Paul, Mark and Johnny fast asleep. I made them a brew then grabbed the two rope bags and headed off up the great rubble heap for the second time that week. Guppy and Seth had come down to the top of Aldos pitch to help haul the bags. Good teamwork got us back to the surface in two hours.

During the night and the next morning everyone exited the cave. Simon went back under ground to de-rig the entrance series solo. A major effort on his part!

The trip had been a great success with 15 out of the 18 team members getting to the sump. The only disaster was Fuz and Warwick who had turned back from a small pool at -952 metres called the Bathtub, thinking that they were at the sump at -1122 metres.

Right Wall

By Alan Firth

‘Bye Bye miss American Pie’
Drove my Chevy to the Levee,
but the levee was dry.
Them good old boys were drinking whisky and rye.
Singing, ‘this’ll be the day that I die.’
‘This’ll be the day that I die.’

Here I was flanked by Cenotaph Corner to my left and Cemetery Gates to my right and the final line of Don MacLean’s famous tribute to Buddy Holly kept repeating in my mind, things didn’t bode well. I’d just arrived at the first crux of Right Wall and was nervously fiddling a wire in the famous “crozzly pocket” to back up the friend I’d already placed.

I glanced down at the route I’d already covered to reach here, lots of good gear in the slanting crack and not too difficult so far. This was my first ever attempt at an onsight lead of an E5, and after 30 years of climbing I didn’t want to blow it now. But those chilling words from MacLean’s song kept reverberating in my head and didn’t help give me the confidence I needed.

Bazza and Gil were watching and shouting words of encouragement from below. The Cromlech was busy that day. A team of Russian climbers on an exchange visit with the South Wales MC were there, making the day quite memorable what with their problems communicating to their Welsh hosts.

The nut nestled home, it was a bomber, a few deep breaths and I set off for the halfway ledge. Got the crimps, feet up, pulled hard, found the next hold a small jug thought shit that's not good enough, wobbled for a few seconds and did a quick retreat back to the safety of the pocket.

More encouragement from Bazza and Gil, more deep breaths repeated the moves, foot in wet pocket. MacLean's words were in my ears again. It looks like miles to the ledge, if I blow it I'm looking at a forty footer at least.

"Go on Al you can do it" Gils voice drifts up to me.

"Fuck it" I say to myself and on I go. I pass my previous high point and reached for what I thought might be a jug and found that it was flat, but adrenaline surges and I carry on. I make the next move, then the next, I feel as if all the other climbers are watching, voices are calling instructions and willing me on, some probably hoping for me to take the big whipper who knows. Heart beating loudly in my ears I press on and before I know it my hands reached the halfway ledge. A quick mantle and I'm safe for the time being and breathe a big sigh of relief.

"Thank god that bits over, only one more crux to go" I say to the guy belaying on Cemetery Gates. He looks at me incomprehensibly he must be one of the Russians. I look up towards the next crux; the move out of the "porthole" brings back memories of watching Roy doing the moves in his usual unconventional style the previous year. I recall seeing him somehow getting both hands and feet in the hole all at the same time, and then doing some hideous contortions to extricate himself making it look desperate. Terry's tale of him taking a fifty footer didn't help either.

More bomber gear on the ledge, deep breaths and off I set. I reach the Porthole without too much trouble, a quick shakeout and without hesitating attempted the moves. I found a small crimp above the hole but didn't think it good enough for my meagre power range, the potential fall and the prospect of hitting the ledge on the way didn't look inviting at all. So I scuttled back to the relative safety of the hole to review my next strategy.

I'd heard there was an RP placement by the hole but the crack was worn away, nothing doing there. I made another couple of attempts at the move but still wouldn't commit myself, Don MacLean's words were almost deafening now. My confidence was disappearing fast and I needed a boost desperately; when I spotted a runner placement in the most unlikely of features I'd ever seen or used before, even in my vast experience. Just to the left of the hole were two nubbins of rock which were a perfect fit for a Rock 3 sideways on.

The nut fitted perfectly and it was brilliant, on with the quickdraw, in with the rope, a few moments to compose myself and I thought 'Ok Maclean eat your heart out because here I go.'

Both hands in the hole, run feet up on tiny's, lay off the pocket with the left, reach for the tiny crimp with the right, pull like you've never pulled before. Left foot in porthole and span through for a good sharp flake, don't blow it now I think to myself. Bazza and Gil were shouting something but all I hear is Don Maclean fading into the distance and as the holds got bigger the smile on my face even bigger. I placed my last runner over some good flakes this being my bandolier I'd nothing else left just a few wires on their krabs. Punch the air in triumph knowing I'll not blow it now and

head for the top of what, in my experience, must be one of the best and most exhilarating pitches of it's kind in the country, if not the world.
"This'll be the day that I die" These words are a distant memory now; this was the day I lived.

The Hasse

By Terry Holmes

The Team – Dave Barton, Mark Radtke, Jerry Peel and Myself

The North Face of the Cima Grande is one of the classic Alpine North Faces. The Hasse Brandler route takes this awesome 'Big Wall' head on.

In 2005, Dave's 60th was rapidly approaching so what better way to celebrate than to get a team together to do this classic North Face. All of this was the brain child of Rad (Mark Radtke) who had had this climb on his agenda for some years. Rad and Dave made plans to go at the end of August so with Jerry and Myself making up the team, we head for Cortina in Northern Italy. It's the perfect base, good bars, restaurants and plenty of 'designer gear' shops for Jerry (proper alpinists, us lads!).

The following day we go up to the Laverdo Hut. Rad and myself walk round to the North Face only to find the overhanging diembre's high on the face streaming with water. Apparently the week prior to our arrival there had been a week of non stop rain and the locals said the face would need a week to dry out. Dave goes to look for himself and confirms it's not on.

We have already booked a room in the Laverdo Hut, so we decide to stay and do the Yellow Edge on the South Facing Cima Piccola. The Yellow Edge overlooks the Hut and is very photogenic, so on descending from the climb we are stopped by an Italian tourist with binoculars, we knew exactly what he meant when he spoke just two words, "Complimento Binocilio".

It's now Tuesday and we've only 4 days left. A decision has to be made. We decide to go back up at first light on Thursday. We have a plan 'B' to do the Comici Route (which is just to the right) if conditions are still bad, although deep down I think we knew we'd go for it whatever the condition.

On Wednesday it's a bit of sport climbing but it's not very inspiring. In fact it's like Giggleswick Scar compared to Gordale Scar! We wine and dine in the Cinqui Torri in Cortina, I'm trying to be a sobering influence ready for the 4am start the following morning. Rad reckons without a drink we won't sleep, one litre of red wine turns to several and when we leave the restaurant, Rad and Dave suggest a nightcap at the bar across the road. They serve draught Leffe by the pint! It's starting to get ugly!

Four am and we are on our way. A forty minute drive, a one hour walk and we're under the North Face. It's still dripping somewhat but the lads have made up their minds. Finding the correct start takes longer than expected but Dave and Rad eventually show the way. Straight forward cracks and corners to begin with, then this amazing diagonal traverse for something like 7 rope lengths. The climbing ranges from straight forward 'Dream of White Horses' type stuff to 3 to 4 pitches of solid E3.

Dave and Rad are in front with Jerry and myself just behind. This works quite well for us because route finding is not always that clear. Rad leading the pitch to the big ledges climbs way to high and gets committed on a hard and loose descending traverse. This is bad enough, but Dave has to follow this without protection. On taking the last piece out he just grins and in typical 'Barton fashion', just steams across. The ledges below the overhanging diedres, were on earlier ascents the first bivvy site, but we had not come prepared for staying the night. Jerry and Rad in particular were confident we could be up and down in the day. There's no going back from here, the only way is up!

The next 4 pitches are all hard, the first 3 at E5, followed by 1 at E4 and today they are dripping wet. The first E5 pitch goes free except for the last move to the belay. From here on some aid has to be used. It's tiring and time consuming but eventually we're through this section and we guess there's maybe 7 or 8 pitches to go.

The first couple are quite pleasant, but then we are in the exit chimneys. One pitch in particular is like the inside of a cave, dripping wet and really dirty. It's late in the day by now, we know because the sun has come around onto the Face which means there's about an hour of daylight left.

Rad leads the dirty chimney and suggests we all follow on the end of the rope to save time. That's when Jerry turns to me and says "I think I'll take my top off for this pitch, it's brand new and it might get dirty". I think he was serious.

Two pitches later and it's dark. Rad and Dave are up above somewhere and Jerry is on his way to join them, leading by head torch. I'm sat in the dark 100ft below for what seems like ages. Eventually they shout for me to climb. Now I'm climbing by head torch. On arrival at the belay ledge (if you can call it a ledge), I see what the problems are. There isn't enough room for 2 let alone 4 people, and all the belays are at one corner. Dave and Jerry are sat to one side on a sloping ledge, Rad's cramped up at the back and I'm sat on the edge with one leg dangling. Still never mind, it's only 8 hours till day break.

We try to sleep but each time Jerry or Dave relax and doze off, they slide diagonally towards me. Rad's space is the area of a dustbin lid and I've got just one cheek on the ledge. I think we all doze off a little but then we hear the one thing that we dreaded, thunder and lightning. It seems a long way off at first, but then gets closer. The lightning storm comes within about a mile of the Face but then passes down the south side of the mountain. We didn't sleep anymore that night.

At first light we're off. Jerry offers to go first but I say it's my turn. I lead off and guess what, after half a rope length, I'm at the top! We just didn't know how close we were in the dark. We traverse the summit into the warmth of the sun and find the descent.

On the way down we meet an Italian Guide with his Client. He instinctively knows we have been up there all night and asks which route we'd done. "The Hasse Brandler" we proudly say, and he replies "you are hard men!"

E5

By Neil McCallum

E5 has an aura about it, but why should that be? After all it's only an arbitrary number given to certain bits of rock. Is it where things start to get really serious, not necessarily? So what is it about E5? Maybe it's because it seems so out of reach when you first start. Maybe it's more to do with ego and respect of one's peers. Maybe it's because they will often take blank and intimidating lines, one thing is for sure they aren't easy and the majority of climbers will never climb them.

I've noticed on my travels that we Brits aren't alone in this E5 worship it happens all over the world.

There are 5 main grading systems in operation around the world and British E5 equates thus: USA 5.12a, France 7a+, Australia 25, Germany VIII.

All good round numbers (except 7a+, but the French have always been awkward buggers and I'm boycotting UIAA grades), to anyone anal enough to like numbers and most climbers are. Climber's aspirations are driven by routes up rock faces given arbitrary numbers. Sponsorship deals and climbing milestones are measured by numbers.

Here's my pick of my most memorable routes of each grade in its own country.

Central Wall E5, Blue Scar, Yorkshire Dales, U.K.

A route many will be familiar with, easy for the grade which is always nice and absolutely stunning. Not my first E5 but the first true on sight, no prior knowledge, belayer never done it, just the guide book description. Never desperate and with good if spaced protection it's a climb that leads you on. There is a little sting in the tail just to make you earn it, but a quick sprint for the tree and your there, 120 feet of perfect Yorkshire Limestone. Travel the world if you like, you won't find better, as good maybe but not better.

No Mans Land F7a+, Buoux, Provence, France

The original sport climbing destination, brilliant pocketed walls a short warm up walk from the car, sunny aspect and all amidst the Provence countryside. The French invented a branch of climbing which most of us love, it's quick, safe, close to the car and most of all good fun.

Get to Styx wall which is where most people end up on a first visit and look right. Wow, look at that buttress, what goes up there, that faint yellow groove looks awesome. Well it is, it's out there and it's No Mans Land. An unusual sport route in that it starts with a traverse out onto the nose of the buttress along a thin break as the ground drops away. It then blasts upwards in a very technical fashion, no sinker pockets, but intricate, balancy, edges, climbers climbing! Didn't flash this one and had a hard time on it, 7a was my absolute limit back then but I just had to give this route a go. Some you win some you lose, but it was a memorable tussle with an awesome route.

Fear and Loathing, Red Rocks , Nevada , U.S.A

A big steep jug infested pitch a mere 15 miles from that sleaze and drug infested bitch, Las Vegas. Much of this routes attraction lies in the name, some route names inspire, some don't. Some conjure up images in the mind, an anticipation of what could be waiting for you. Well go to Las Vegas and it could well be Fear and Loathing. Hunter S. Thompson knew both very well and if you haven't read the book it's a classic. The film is very good as well , Depp is brilliant as the anti-hero.

All you can eat for \$5.99, what a bargain. 4 young climbers, 2 Brits, 1 Aussie and one Yank are rough from a heavy night at a punk rock gig (Bad Religion - awesome) at the Hard Rock Café (appropriate?) and various weird clubs. Anyway breakfast is at lunch time and the Irish themed casino tempts us in. Amongst the weirdo's a typical yank (ie. Overweight , ignorant , no passport and a gun collection) serenades his girl with a bad version of a bad song ("she's my girl , she's my world , but she ain't my truck.....") this predictably meets with a bit of banter , a "don't give up the day job" etc. Soon a very large, over dressed, under paid rent-a-cop arrives.

"I have reason to believe you boys has been throwin' names".

"Sorry throwin' names, what's that, like."

"Don't get smart with me son, I'd like you to leave your meals, get your belongings and follow me."

"No way dude we haven't had 'all we can eat for \$5.99 ' yet" at this point Renty beefs up , adjusts his cap and puts his hand, in a dramatic fashion, on a very large and loaded handgun.

"OK we're coming Sir" say the big tough climbers. At which point we're marched ignominiously through the throng of mini skirted hostesses, leprechauns, loitering sharks, o.a.p's with bottomless handbags of quarters, 99cent margueritas, and general chaos to the bright daylight of a town that never sleeps – Fear and Loathing.

The route by the way soars up a 'Comedy-esque' piece of rock, but 3 grades easier. Another route with a sting in the tail, is that what makes them memorable? A total jug fest on perfect sandstone, right up my street – brilliant.

Mr.Joshua 25, Taipan Wall , Grampians , Australia

"Oh my God, look at that, it's awesome, get the camera out."

Steep sandstone slabs provide a 10 minute slog out of the car park in the hot morning sun .This puts us in sight of the most stunning view in Australia. Taipan is a sight to behold, it looks absolutely stunning and it is in every way. The rock is brilliant, the routes are brilliant, the situations brilliant and in amongst it is Mr. Joshua and it's brilliant.

Taipan Wall is a gently overhanging 200 foot high and 1000 foot wide sweep of the most perfect sandstone on the planet. At the right hand side, connecting a series of water worn scoops is the best 25 in Oz, everyone wants to do it, everyone should do it. Typical Oz fare of carrot bolts and good trad gear give a well protected if slightly run out festival of all that's good about climbing. Awesome moves lead steadily up until an awkward sequence across the bottom of a smooth scoop gets you to the crux out on the arête of the scoop in a fantastic position. A couple of stiff pulls and then the pump starts as the upper half is way slopey, the type of holds that just inflate your forearms to bursting. Keep yarding though and eventually the belay arrives, there is a 2nd pitch but very few bother, probably coz its 26 (and we came for 25), a one move wonder straight off the belay, plus your mate would have to 2nd the 1st pitch and no

one wants to do that. So ab off into space with an inane grin and perhaps a few celebratory whoops or is that scoops?

An interesting aside to the climbing on Taipan is the closing cracks. Don't have any gear in when the sun comes on the crag late afternoon as the rock expands, the cracks get fractionally narrower and your wires become irretrievably stuck. Well, until the cool of the night that is, when everything cools and contracts, the cracks open up and gear can just fall out of its own accord, where hours before it was welded in!! Whoop Whoop the cracks are closing Whoop Whoop...

Superlative VIII , Bruchweiler Geierstein , Sud Phalz , Germany

The historical value of a route can make it a classic, as much as the line, the quality and the name. This beauty has all 4. Put up in 1978 by local activist Thomas Noltner and his young protégé, the late great Wolfgang Gullich. This was a new breed of route for the area involving cleaning and bolting by abseil, but 4 bolts in 30m wasn't exactly overkill. There's 9 now and it still has a feel about it, especially on the 30' run out in the mid section, the climbing's steady but still you can't relax. This was the 1st grade VIII in the region and is one of the areas most sought after ticks. The two pioneers knew how good it was and I think the name is genius, why add superlatives to a route name when you could just go right ahead and call it that!

When you arrive at the crag, the route is obvious, straight up the middle of the narrow end of this very impressive prow of rock, like an up scaled version of the one at Wilton. The meat of the route is the first 40' which follows a hairline crack with hard moves interspersed with good jugs. The crux is at 15' and is a 6b pull on sidepulls and a tiny crimp with poor feet. This gives access to a slopey ledge with a large mortar hole as a foothold (wartime target practice apparently). A quick sprint from here leads via superb technical climbing to an obvious resting place at a big break. The route is pretty much in the bag but you can't relax too much as its 60' to the belay and there are only 3 bolts. Perfect fluted sandstone leads to a final big undercut move for the mother of all jugs and you're up, superlative!

Donkeys

By Gilmour Peel

The holiday in question was in Majorca, with friends and family. On the first meeting, you may think that one of these friends is a little bit psycho, but never judge a book by its cover. To hide the psycho mans identity we will call him Swinnie, as I don't want him to turn into a werewolf, but anyway that's a different story.

We had been all over the island, St Gubia, Santanyi, but the place I remember most was Allaro. Not because of the climbing but because of this little story which I am about to tell you.

To get to Allaro we had to drive through a valley with crags on either side, untouched by human hands, a climber's paradise. We drove up the single track road winding up this mountain for about two or three miles with views to die for. After that we came to a little Spanish bar and restaurant where you had to leave your car and go

the rest of the journey, about half a mile, by donkey. At the top there was this beautiful monastery where you could eat and drink and then we came to a bed and breakfast for those who were too knackered to make it back down after the slog up. Now it doesn't take a genius to work out that to get all the food and drink to the top you would use donkeys, bloody hungry donkeys as well. We set off up the track and about halfway Terry and Roy decided to go to a different sector of the crag which we called Mega Tufa Wall. Swinnie and I carried on up to the top where we would end up sore with laughter.

We reached the top and dumped our gear on the floor, then settled down to eat and drink before climbing. Finally we decided to get geared up. All our gear including the leftover food, which consisted of tasty buns and cheese baguettes, was left to the side of the track.

It was only about 20 ft to the bottom of our first climb. We had started on an easy route to get warmed up for those 7a's ha ha, anyway I set off up the route and at about 30 ft, I could hear the sound of hooves getting closer so I decided to look up the track where I could see a local man, two donkeys and an Alsatian dog coming towards us. They were quite near when I suddenly remembered all of our food so I shouted to Swinnie to move. In the meantime I'd clipped myself into a bolt so Swinnie could move the food, but he wasn't quick enough. The food was all over the place and the buns were being devoured. The donkeys were having a right feast, slavering and drooling all over our food. It was a good job I had the sense to clip myself in because I was in hysterics watching Swinnie act like a demented demon shouting at the donkeys, they weren't taking a blind bit of notice. I was sore all over and if anyone had seen me jumping about I bet they would of thought I'd flipped. I couldn't climb any farther and so I was lowered to the ground still rolling around with laughter. After regaining my composure we tried to rescue some of the food but it was all covered in slaver but the sacrifice was worth it for all that laughter and I have to say that this was one of the funniest moments I have ever experienced. I'm 61 now and still climbing!

Some Tales Of Local Lads

By John Hartley

Widdop was the place where youngsters from Burnley and District on the Lancashire side and Todmorden and Hebden Bridge on the Yorkshire side met to learn their skills and techniques as rock climbers. The 11 a.m. bus from Burnley to Worsthorne every Sunday and the walk over the moors to Widdop in all weathers was my initial training and I became a Widdop Local Lad.

From Widdop we 'discovered' Heptonstall Quarry. Now it's a long way from the West Face of the Drus to Heptonstall Quarry and probably a similar distance from Heptonstall to the Drus, but it was not so in my head. As the Pink Floyd number goes – the Lunatic is on the Lawn. There is a tenuous connection. One of my early heroes was Guido Magnore – well, until he met Whillans anyway. His book of the first ascent of the West Face of the Drus fired my imagination. I fancied some pegging – diagonal abseils – wooden wedges and all that stuff. Rod Brown, a Burnley Local

Lad, told me of this quarry where no-one else had been climbing and perhaps we should go and have a look.

What a look – it was fearful, daunting but as always when you look carefully and rub your nose on the rock you find a route. Rod had visited the quarry earlier and climbed the first route there with Johnny Parker, another Burnley Local Lad – an enthusiastic young climber who tragically died following his new profession as a diver. This route was Fairy Steps – severe but impressive.

After recovering from the shock of the first look, Rod and I pegged our way up Red Wall. Not an outstanding route but in my mind we weren't spoiling anything. Next came Sunstroke Slab - done on a dismal day in December with ample rainfall, sliding turf ledges and an occasional peg to retain contact with the crag. V. Diff!

Thereafter we realised there were free and mixed routes to be explored. Rod left for University at Sheffield and I was joined by two Yorkshire Local Lads, Dave Bull and Edwin Leggett. The Girdle Traverse from Right to Left came early in our explorations – usually on wet days with Edwin when the Widdop or Bridestones boulders were greasy. I have read of some criticism of this route but what our critics do not appreciate is that the abseil from Rabbit Ledge across the wall to the left of Bulls Crack was an attempt to emulate the diagonal abseil pictured in 'The Book'. That's how things happen in Local Lads' minds.

Peter Grindley from Bolton became a Local Lad and he, Edwin and myself each led a pitch of what was to become Triplex. It starts in the Right or Lower Quarry and Edwin led the first pitch. He knew the ground having earlier pegged 'Cup and Lip' after we kept fielding him after many a slip. The second pitch posed the problem of how to get onto Sunstroke Slab.

There was an incipient horizontal crack which refused any orthodox peg. Peter made some small blades from hardened packaging banding and being hard he was able to chisel one into this crack – thus was born the RURP – long before they were invented in California. Peter was the only one man enough to trust this rurp – well he had made it – and Edwin and I ensured he felt sufficiently obliged to lead this next pitch. My final pitch was exposed but comparatively safe – a big channel peg at the bottom of the crack and a big lump of ash as a wedge higher up. It was still there last time I looked.

The wedge I used on Triplex was one of a number I had cut from prize seasoned ash. (Just like for the Drus). The others were in my mind destined for – and how I wish I could write in a whisper – that superb crack that became Bulls Crack. David, Edwin and I had top roped the crack and put in a fine ex W.D peg at the bulge. There was nothing else for protection so David was declared hero for the day, screwed up his courage and led the crack free to create one of the best routes in the North of England.

On a surprisingly dry day I topped out of the rather dirty corner between Red Wall and the Embankment. Edwin followed and Peter arrived at the top looking down on our efforts. He took one look at me covered in dust and choking – 'Haboob' he said. Echoing the style of Whillans (Woubits – what the hell is a Woubits) I coughed out – Haboob what the hell is Haboob – a Saharan Dust Storm said Peter. And so it was – Haboob.

To the right of Bulls Crack is an impending wall. One Sunday a group of Local Lads were in the Quarry and Grindley started playing about with the first few holds and tied onto a rope. This route had not been inspected by any of us, and remember we did not have nuts, friends, cams or such other devices as are known to modern climbers but remain a mystery to our generation of Local Lads. After 10 or

15 feet he traversed left to clip the peg on Bulls Crack and traversed back right to the line of his proposed ascent. What good that peg would have done I can't imagine if Peter had succumbed to gravity. He completed the route just like that – no other 'protection' – on form Peter was brilliant. Edwin and I gawped – me in particular as I was next. My recollection is burning forearms and a slip half way up which resulted in slight assistance from the rope and the cynical enquiry from Leggett below "had I slipped or was I pushed?" Peter was the eldest of the three of us and thus 'Senility' was born.

Our Local Lads developed more routes in the Quarry and then Don Whillans and Albert Ashworth used to meet up at my parents' house in Burnley prior to a Thursday night climbing at Widdop or Bridestones. Should we show Don the Quarry and in particular the dramatic geometric over-hanging crack we had christened Forked Lightening Crack? We did and everyone knows of Don's investigations and final lead of this spectacular feature.

After my fixation with the Drus I never did a route on that mountain but Local Lad Edwin climbed both the North and West Faces with American Tom Frost. Edwin led the big diedre on the West Face, so Heptonstall pegging stood him in good stead.

Would you believe that the Blue Streak Missile, Britain's contribution to the space race in the late 60s, has a connection with the Local Lads? Well it has. Jack Umpleby of Todmorden and the instigator of the route up the arete on the middle boulder at Widdop (Umpleby's Corner), was a senior engineer at Joseph Lucas in Burnley. A safe and steady climber, Bill Smith and I celebrated Jacks 50th birthday with Kipling Groove. Not quite Brandler Hasse but still significant for us.

Lucas was making the case for the final solid fuel rocket motor for the Missile which when ignited sounded like a monster firework. This was made from a rare and unusual steel. Jack recognised that this material would make excellent pegs. Everyone knew of Yvon Chuinard's chrome-molly pegs; you remember blades, angles, leepers, bongs and rurps and Denny Moorehouse began manufacturing his CLOG brand in Wales. What uncle Joseph Lucas doesn't know about metal it doesn't take him long to find out. With the appropriate heat treatment we produced thin blade pegs which had a high degree of hardness so they could be chiselled into poor cracks but most importantly retained high tensile strength. These attributes gave us our name of HITENS. They substantially out-performed chrome-molly and still do but things change – someone invented nuts and fewer pegs were used – but in any case the material became prohibitively expensive and production ceased.

I built a great grinder in my garage at Higham for trimming the blades. It had a huge motor and when I pressed the start button the capacitor dimmed all the lights on our avenue. My wife, Jean, posed as 'Export Manager' and arranged air freight – yes AIR FREIGHT of pegs to Australia and we heard they were almost used as currency in Yosemite. Not bad for Local Lads.

Spud Bashing on the Walls of Los Mallos de Riglos.

By Mark Radtke

As I clip into the belay, a vulture erupts from a nearby cave and allows its huge prehistoric form to fall into the abyss before spreading its wings to capture the air and reveal its true magnificence. The feathers at each wing tip spread like outstretched fingers and as they catch an early morning thermal the bird wheels out across the wall in an effortless display of gravity defying grace. Looking down at Dave 150 feet below creates a strange illusion, already the dangling ropes are swinging way out from the rock face, yet the three hundred feet of rock below him has already taken on the appearance of a slab rather than an overhanging wall.

Dave arrives at the belay and clips himself to a bolt that has been drilled into a large pebble. The pebble itself is one of millions grouted into the face by what appears to be red dirt and even now after several days of climbing on the stuff I still find myself touching the mortar to reassure myself that it is in fact solid.

Above us lies four hundred feet of impending rock which on closer acquaintance has taken on roof like dimensions and appears more like a petrified field of unearthed potatoes than a climbable rock face. Here however, rather than creating an atmosphere of oppression the surreal like world which we are now leapfrogging our way up is providing us with a space walk of truly exhilarating proportions.

Eager for more spud bashing, Dave leaves the belay swinging from potato to potato like a Gibbon, barely using his feet and only interrupting his flow to clip an occasional widely spaced bolt. Laughing he shouts down as he hangs off one arm from the tip of a huge rugby ball shaped pebble, miraculously it remains in place and soon Dave arrives at the next belay. The rope tugs at my waist urging me upwards and once again I'm engrossed in the potato fields, pulling on a myriad of bizarre features which protrude from the face. Three pitches later sees us reluctantly standing at the top of the Visera an outrageously overhanging wall of red conglomerate. Our route Fiesta de los Biceps wears its name well, overhanging over a hundred feet in its thousand feet of ascent. Overhead vultures make use of their massive eight foot wingspans to ride the thermals in their quest for carrion. Below the whitewashed village of Riglos sits sleepily, dwarfed by the spectacular backdrop of walls and towers. Now as the noonday sun casts its red glow over Los Mallos and our burning bodies, cold beers call. The vultures will not be dining on climbers today.

That afternoon as we lazed in the tiny street outside 'Antonio's', the old gentleman who'd been stood at the bar since our arrival forty beers earlier, peered suspiciously out of the door into the bright afternoon sunlight. He may have been thinking that we might do a runner, but I suspect it was just to cast an eye over what were probably all too familiar proceedings. Dave gazed dreamily up at the Pison reliving some memory of the past. A few other climbers chatted, excitedly pointing up at tiny figures on the face high above us. Greg shared the remains of his beer with Lotto an old moth-eaten boar hound and guardian of the street, whilst Mick engaged another group of locals in lively banter. As I caught the old mans gaze, what I had taken for his look of doubt evaporated and wicked wrinkles formed at the corners of his bright blue eyes. He gripped his bicep in a gesture that might be construed as improper in certain company and said in a language that was neither Spanish nor English yet which I understood better than either 'you must return'.

We did

The Four Peaks

By Dave Cunningham

August bank holiday Saturday, 1979, nice forecast for "Sunday". I decided I would run to Ingleton via Pendle, Pen-y-ghent, Whernside and Ingleborough. 7 o'clock start from my house on Slade Lane in Padiham. I ran to Pendle summit via Northtown, Dean Farm, Stainscombe, Spencemoor and Wild Boar Clough.

From the summit I could view the route I was going to take 'I must of been mad' Ingleborough looked a long way away. So off I went down past Robin Hoods Well to Downham, to pick up the footpath to Sawley, from Sawley I kept to the road to Settle, then onto Stainforth where I had lunch and phoned my wife Kathryn to arrange a pick up time at Ingleton common.

So up to Dalehead and Pen-y-ghent summit, passing people carrying large rucksacks who must of been doing the pennine way. Over the summit and across black-dub moss to Ribblehead. At Ribblehead I did see a few people I knew out for the day picnicing and when asked I told them I was doing the four peaks (I don't think they understood what I meant).

After tea, mars bar, and a sit down, I set off over Whernside and down to the Hill Inn. Lots of people about so I carried on to the summit of Ingleborough. I descended Ingleborough down to Crina Bottom to meet Kathryn at Ingleton common, 5 minutes late. Then off to Ribblehead to cool my feet in the river and to picnic in the afternoon sun.

I often now look from the summits of Pendle, Pen-y-ghent, Whernside, Ingleborough and surrounding hills and it makes me realise how important these hills and dales have been to us all who cycle, run, climb, walk and take part in other outdoor activities. (It makes living in an industrial Lancashire town more than bearable)

Down The Leap – A cautionary tale.

By Alan Firth

Preface

A few years ago whilst on holiday in Pembroke enjoying the pleasures of a break from the routine of saving the planet a team of the worlds greatest super heroes witnessed a greasy Poles failed attempt at the infamous leap of Huntsman's. This is the story of the rescue that followed as told by the fantasy world that is Hollywood. Some names have been changed to protect the guilty.

A trickle of sweat ran down Bonds' brow and into his eyes, stinging and blurring his vision. A slight tremor passed through his body. The undercut thumb sprag was cutting into his left thumb and blood was trickling down the back of his hand. With arms pumping and feet slowly sliding on the greasy slopers, he needed

to get this wire in place desperately, if not, it was a certain ground fall onto razor sharp needles of sea washed limestone seventy feet below. The previous nights revellery started to take its toll, the bile in his stomach was churning, he was sure it was the Vodka Martinis mixed with Swinneys broth with wood lice 'croutons' that was the cause. The soles of his feet were still blistered from walking on hot coals with those Gothic weirdo's he'd met in the pub down in Manobier. But at least he didn't have to flash his 'old man' to the landlady just to get another beer after closing time, some people have reputations to keep.

Bond had set off on a new line that he'd spotted on a previous visit, which if successful would be even bigger than the Big Issue. He glanced down at van Damme a look of concern on his face told its own story with just a poor friend placement between Bond and certain death.

Bonds' tuxedo was starting to feel uncomfortable; he made a mental note to inform his Saville row tailor to make some alterations next time in London. With power draining fast and just a few seconds to go before he fell to his doom the wire slotted home, in with the rope and the adrenaline surged. With the pressure off for the time being he'd still got what he imagined the crux to do before reaching easier ground, but at least he wouldn't die now. With forearms screaming with lactic and heart rate at over 200 Bond surged for the top only to be halted 30 foot higher by the scream. This scream so unnerved him both hands slipped off the tiny layaway and he plummeted earthwards which seemed like an eternity until the reassurance of the jolt from the rope coming tight and the runner holding just inches before he would have hit the ground.

"Bond are you ok?" asked van Damme his face etched in concern.

"Yeah, sure, I think, what was the scream I'd heard?" Brushing himself down.

"It seems like some dame just tried to jump the leap and missed, she's probably shark fodder by now" he replied.

"She's in the sea" a cry rang out from top of the zawn. It was Arnie and Sly they must just have arrived.

They looked out to the head of the zawn, and there she was, frantically swimming for the cliff face, obviously badly injured but still with one good arm to swim with.

"Were going in, bring the ropes Arnie, I'll set up the Abseil" shouted Sly, and sped off towards the end of the zawn hotly followed by Arnie. Muscles rippling and sweat glistening in the sun they moved slow motion like feet hardly touching the earth.

Sly's instant bolt gun fixes the abseil anchor to a rock on the opposite side of the zawn from where the girl, who had now managed to clamber onto a ledge just above sea level. The telltale signs of the dark triangles circling just above the surface indicated the presence of sharks.

Sly fixes the ab. and clips his harness to the rope, shoulders his Uzi 9mm and steps to the edge and says with a wink to Arnie "I'll be back" and disappears into the void, reaching the sea 150 feet below in one mighty leap down the rope, skin on the palms of his hands burning with the friction as he descended.

While Sly was down the zawn, Arnie noticed that a flock of strange looking sheep nearby were watching intently at the proceedings and to Arnie's surprise these sheep carried AK47's and worst of all Hiltis' and they were being joined by more of their mates some with RPGs strapped to their backs.

'Something just doesn't ring true here' he thought just as the woollies opened fire in a cacophony of bullets and rockets. Earth and rocks exploding all around, Arnie

dived for cover rolling and leaping to avoid the maelstrom, shooting from the hip with his own arsenal of twin Gattling guns taking out the first wave of Peaky's, poorly disguised as Herdwick sheep with one continuous blast. He eventually finds shelter behind a large rock to reload and where he can call for backup on his mobile.

"Bruce" he screamed into the Nokia "get your arse into action and get that chopper over here to Huntsman's Leap, it looks like there's gonna be some action going down".

Through bleary eyes Willis looks at the phone then at the totally naked foxy brunette lying next to him, pert breasts pointing skywards and sighed." Sorry babe looks like we've gotta save the world again". And leaps out of bed, dons his trousers and white vest, straps on his shoulder holster and is out the door of his Winnebago before the chick could blink. On the trailer attached to the camper is a Huey chopper ready and armed for any eventuality just like the one unfolding. Bruce unhooks the trailer and moves the unit away from the camper, jumps in behind the controls and within no time at all is airborne and heading for the coast. Meanwhile down in the depths of the zawn Sly oblivious to what was going on above was swinging on the ab rope hoping to land on the ledge where the girl was now seated. He eventually manages to throw the free end of the rope to the girl, who with amazing agility and strength in one arm pulls Sly over to the ledge. Stallone then slides down the last few feet to the ledge and to his amazement realizes that the girl is none other than Lara Croft.

"Sly you came just in time" cries Lara

"Why whats going down honey?" He asks.

"I discovered a plan by those peaky wimps that they were going to bolt all of the trad routes in Pembroke, but worst of all they were going to convert the Bosherton Pub into a bouldering wall. They'd discovered I'd found out about their plan and threatened to bolt me to the crux of Souls and leave me to the fulmars spit, a fate worse than death, as my Chanel No5 couldn't drench that awful smell. I was on my way to warn everyone of the plan and was being chased by Peaky's disguised as Herdwick sheep when I attempted to do the leap, but lost my balance at the last moment and fell into the sea" she replies.

At that moment their rope to safety flutters down from above, blasted from its anchor by a well aimed RPG.

Unknown to Sly and Lara, James Bond and Claude van Damme were frantically swimming out to sea to give assistance, landing well aimed blows to the nose of any great white that came near. They eventually arrived at the ledge where Sly gave them a helping hand to clamber to relative safety.

At that moment Arnies' head appears over the edge of the zawn.

"Hey you guys, less of the sunbathing and get your ass up here goddam quick, I've got big problems with a flock of very angry woollies." He snarls.

The four on the ledge looked at one another, nodded, and without a word leapt back into the sea and headed for the opposite bank of the zawn, Lara assisted by Bond ever the gentleman. After fighting off a shawl of Great Whites they eventually arrived on the opposite bank safe but soaking wet.

"This is going to be the biggest climb of our lives" says Bond to the other three looking up the wall towering above them.

"Yeah , deep water solo of an E5, in sopping wet gear as well. We'd better strip to our undies, even you I'm afraid Lara" says van Damme.

“Fuck you “ she retorts tearing off her top to reveal a stunning body that even Bond thinks might be worth exploring sometime in the future.

“OK you guys lets go” snarls Sly.

Bond and van Damme set off first, followed by Sly with Lara hanging on with her good arm round his neck just a few feet behind. Muscles rippling, tendons tearing they climbed steadily, knowing at anytime if one fell he could take them all to their maker.

On the top of the cliff Arnie was having his own little war; he was now surrounded by hundreds of Hilti totting Peaky’s

“Give it up Arnie it’s not worth fighting for, you know you’re on a losing battle, the bolt will reign supreme over your out dated trad climbing ethics,” squeaks the leader of the flock of Peaky’s. It’s that mad, hooped T shirt, candy striped tights wearing Barry Bibson the original demon of Bosch.

“Spin on this, ya shandy supping ponces” replies Arnie giving him the finger and a blast from his Gatling gun and at the same time taking out a handful of Peaky’s trying to sneak up on him. Thinking that if help doesn’t arrive shortly the incessant shrill of the Hilti will be heard all over the country and trad climbing will be lost forever.

“Charge! he can’t get us all“ screams Bibson. And at that moment hundreds of Peaky’s surged towards Arnie across the moorland, guns blazing and drills screaming.

Arnie thought ‘where the fucks Willis’, shrugs his shoulders, slams a well chewed Havana into the corner of his mouth, says to himself “a mans gotta do, what a mans gotta do” and stands up to face the screeching mob, Gatling gun under each arm and lets rip.

On the wall below our four soloists are making steady progress, climbing as fast as possible under the circumstances. Bond in the lead van Damme close behind with Sly and Lara following, with the top in sight and success nearly assured Bond starts to relax and at that very instance the handhold he was using decides to part company with the crag with Bond attached. ”Shiiiiiiit not again!” cries Bond as he plummets seawards, head first, for the second time that day. But with lightning reflexes and superhuman strength van Damme holding a good jug with one hand grabs Bonds’ ankle with his free hand as he plummets past and halts his fall.

“Cheers old boy, could have been quite nasty that, what oh “says Bond, shaken but only slightly stained, hanging by his ankle with nothing but fresh air for over one hundred feet between his head and the angry sea and rocks below.

Bond then clambers over van Damme back onto the rock growls slightly and sets off upwards this time with full concentration. The other three look at one another, smile, shake their heads and follow on with grim determination knowing they’ve another major task ahead when they top out.

Arnie meanwhile is slowly being swept towards the edge of the cliff face by the incessant barrage of bolt drills and RPG salvos. But as he was just about to run out of ammo Bond, van Damme, Willis and Lara emerge from the depths.

“Ya need any help Arnie?”.Asks Sly dragging his Uzi 9mm from the base of the cliff plus an assortment of weapons he’d just happened to have found stashed in the cave at the base of the cliff.

“Thought these might come in handy” he says passing round the weapons to his companions.

“OK let’s waste a few Peaky’s” Says Lara turning to face the mob Sten gun under her arm and breasts bared to the world.

Just at that moment the Huey rises from the depths below the cliff face two 7000 Watt speakers blaring ‘The Ride of the Valkyries’ out over the battlefield nearly deafening the sound of the weapons. Willis hanging out the side door letting rip with the onboard machine gun.

“Looks like you could do with some assistance and I just love the smell of napalm in the morning,” bellows Willis to the guys on the ground.

At that the superheroes wade into the enemy with no fear whatsoever. Fists smashing into faces, boots into the groins, destroying drills and crushing bolt hangers in one clench of the fist. The Peaky bolters were no match for this mighty group and eventually realised their plot was thwarted, turned and ran headlong towards Stennis ford, and lemming like plunged over the edge screaming all the way to their doom. Their last sight, some cool young buck on sighting Ghost Train on wires completely oblivious to the scene of carnage happening all around.

Within no time, all that was left were a few injured bolters limping off to the car park to retreat back to their cellars deep in the underworld that is Sheffield these days.

Our heroes stood side by side bodies coated with blood and streaming with sweat looking out over their latest triumphant campaign.

“I think this calls for celebratory drink” says Bond “ but I don’t think I’ll need these anymore” stripping off his Y fronts, complete with tell tale stains of some worrying moments earlier in the day and tosses them into the Leap. Some admiring looks from Lara didn’t go unnoticed either.

“Lara! wanna ride to the boozier” It was Willis hovering just above their heads hanging by his feet out the Huey one arm reaching down to take hold. Lara reaches up with her good arm and within seconds is pulled up on board the chopper.

“See ya down the pub you guys” shouts Willis with a knowing wink and roars off in the direction of the pub.

And with the sun setting over the distant horizon they pack up their gear and head for the St Govan’s for a well earned pint or two.

Prologue

As our heroes climb into their Humvies’ unbeknown to them a sinister head shape with dark red eyes and long fang like yellow teeth dripping with saliva appears from a hole in the ground near the coast line.

“He, he, he,” the hideous creature sniggers, takes one last look around and slithers down into the depths of Preposterous Tales and surveys his secret lair. There before it, neatly stacked on shelves are hundreds of Makita drills and batteries being recharged ready for the final solution.

The subterranean creature sits atop a stalagmite viewing all before him wringing his hands together and utters, with an evil smile, just two words “My precioussss”.

Written & directedSeymore Butt

Filmed on location at the Pembrokeshire national shooting range.

No sheep were hurt or molested in the process of making this film. Well not many anyway.

The Old White Bear to the Sierra Nevada

By Greg Rimmer

"I've booked the flights," Chris said as he placed another pint in front of me. As simple as that. Two ten day returns to Alicante to take a well earned rest from a busy schedule of working hard and riding hard.

"We leave tomorrow night."

The vision of a relaxed ten days on Spain's Costa Blanca, endless quantities of strong continental lager and tapas with maybe the odd hour taking some winter sun on the beach was shattered by four simple words... "We're taking our bikes."

We'd only been a biking partnership for a few weeks, ticking off rides in the Yorkshire Dales midweek and weekends, going at it as if there was no tomorrow.

There was only ever one speed with Chris, and that was double fast, and if the uphill going was steep enough to make progress slow, he'd throw his bike over his shoulder and boot camp as if on an SAS selection course. Guidebook times for rides were blown away, and anything under thirty miles wasn't really worth looking at except for an evening outing. I felt good about the whole thing; the fresh air, the friendly competitiveness, the exercise. But there was a certain amount of frustration building as we ran out of routes to do.

"Mulhacen" said Chris.

"Come again."

He repeated himself. It was then it clicked. Having a keen interest in climbing and mountaineering I knew that Mulhacen was the highest mountain in mainland Spain (Teide on Tenerife is higher) and at 3479m represented a good target for anyone wanting to ride high. I'd never seen pictures of it, but seemed to think that at around 10,000ft, it could still have snow cover in October. All the better.

Chris assured me that there would be no problem taking bikes on the plane, so we set about packing them up, his GT Jalopy having clocked up more Airmiles than most winter sunseekers, travelling halfway round the world twice before. Boxed up, the check-in girl looked at the amount of gear we had with us and showed surprise and leniency when it only just went over the personal baggage allowance. A smooth flight, an early morning landing and balmy weather gave us a promise of things to come, a prospect enhanced by the fact our bikes had actually come on the same plane as us. Bike rack, hire car, resort, sleep. It was all a blur, but when we came too in the early afternoon, the sun was hot and high and we had bikes to build up. A quick and flat 40k on the black stuff to check all mechanicals were in order was followed by an early evening planning session in the fading warmth of the sun outside the Bar Sol.

The outcome of our evening session, apart from the hangovers (it's not a good idea to re-hydrate on Estrella), was that we should spend the following day driving down to the Sierra Nevada, find a map and somewhere to stay and see what happened. Suck it and see, as they say.

Getting into the area was easy, finding a map slightly more problematic but when we did, it was obvious we needed to be in Trevelez for the start of our ride. Arriving in darkness in this small village tucked up tight on the southern slopes of the Sierra Nevada, Chris somehow managed to pidgin his way into a pension with No. 2 in his vocabulary of four useful Spanish phrases; "dos hombres por noche, por favor".

Suitably impressed with the accommodation he had lined up for us at £6 each for the night, we retired to the nearest bar and took a glass of beer in the warmth, noting how much cooler it was up here than down on the coast.

From the map an obvious snaking road led almost up to the summit of Mulhacen, veered off westwards and cut through the summits of the range just below Peak Veleta (3396m). Yellow on the map, it was the same colour as the one we'd driven into town on; logically, we figured that we were in for a huge tarmac haul up the hill, starting from an altitude of 1500m. To add a little interest, we decided we'd take the track contouring around from Trevelez to join the road to the summit, thereby riding a little off-road, and hopefully getting some impressive views to the south before it was heads down on the tarmac. We decided to travel light, on the map it looked like maybe 35km one way, returning by the same route, mostly downhill and a lot quicker. Plans made and beers drunk, we retired for the night.

Several large cafe con leches after waking up, we were still waiting for the sun to appear over Pena de los Papos and warm our bones. It really was cold. Gathering together our things, we bought a couple of litres of water to mix up some High 5, and checked our bikes. At 11 o'clock the sun hit and it was warm. Off came the fleece jackets, on went the shorts and we set off on yet another grand day out. Riding the tarmac out of the village I felt a mix of emotions - excitement, apprehension, but above all, one of well-being. Three days ago we were in the midst of yet another dank autumnal afternoon in North Yorkshire - here and now it felt like spring, fast turning into summer as the sun burnt off the early morning chill and we turned onto the already dusty track. Half an hour of zig-zagging above the village through terraced fields clinging to the hillside impressed on us the scale of things. The clustered white buildings below looked just a stone's throw away yet we felt we'd had to earn this view. Glad of a breather when it levelled off, we followed the track southwards, contouring the eastern flank of the fairly non-descript lump of Jamali. The gently undulating forest track reminded me of riding down Ennerdale, through pine forest with all its rich smells, in and out of barrancos, water crashing below and the whole of the Guadalfeo valley opening out below, a long way below. The gently undulating track gradually became a steady climb as we headed west to the junction with the tarmac above the village of Bubion, 17km out and at 1750m. A brief stop to take in the views, down to the clustered villages of Pampaneira, Bubon and Capiliera but mostly upwards - the first view of our objective - to the summit ridge of the Sierra Nevada range, snow patches and all.

"It's all uphill from here youth".

Chris states the bloody obvious sometimes. Strangely enough, it was exactly what I was thinking.

"And a long way", I added.

A smattering of traffic came and went accompanied by puzzled looks from drivers and passengers alike as we readied to set off again. Then it occurred to me that we were in the most mountainous country in Europe and we hadn't seen one other mountain bike! Used to getting strange glances from passers-by due to our sometimes grunge-biker looks, we thought nothing of it and saddled up for a long, drawn out and smooth ride to the top.

Three bends and less than one kilometre brought us to a car park, a sign and a dirt track heading off into the pines. What's happened to our tarmac? Where's our road gone? Stemming the mild panic slowly rising, we parked up and looked at the map. Yes, no two ways about it, this was it. The prospect of riding a smooth surface for

30kms uphill had seemed quite reasonable. Off-road, it started to look a bit more serious. Still, neither of us would suggest anything other than going for it. We decided we'd review the situation every 1000ft of ascent, and set about weaving our way up the rutted, dusty and root-riddled track, riding in the shade when the pines offered it. The going was reasonably ok, the tedium of repetitive pedal pushing broken by the need to pick your line, focusing only on the next few yards and the next bend up ahead. Several vehicles passed us on the track, throwing up dust into our sweaty faces and filling our throats with bits of the mountain. Regular fluids and the odd magdalene kept us going, through the tree line and out onto the hogs back ridge between Prado Llano and El Chorillo at 2600m. The angle kicked back a little and we enjoyed the views as we made steadier progress, until our pleasant isolation was shattered by two cyclists passing and pulling away from us. So they do bike off-road in Spain after all! We carried on, and ten minutes later pulled up alongside the bloke and girl who'd passed us. We exchanged niceties; they being Swiss explained both their politeness and the way they could ride up mountains. When they learnt we were Brits, they asked if we'd hired our bikes, then how far we intended to go. Slightly unnerved by their questions I wondered whether it was Chris, myself or our bikes which looked so unsuited to the job in hand. It became apparent they'd stopped to turn around and ride back down. They were going to ride all the way to the top the following day, but were just recce-ing the route today. Chris and I looked at each other in disbelief, wondering who in their right mind would ride so far up a mountain to turn around and do the same again tomorrow? We bade our farewells and they made a point of wishing us luck as we rode onward and upward.

Shortly after riding around the nipple of El Chorillo, we investigated a lay-by signed Mirador de Trevez. Recognising the name, we rode to the edge and looked down at our starting point, 3500ft below - it still looked like you could spit and hit it. God, all that effort and it still looks so close! Only slightly perturbed, we carried on to where the angle picked up again, and a barrier across the track, manned by an unofficial looking man and his dog. Neither seemed very interested in us, but the several cars parked up showed they were there to prevent further vehicular access. Through the barricade the track got rougher and steeper, with some unconsolidated and distinctly bouldery sections taking us, with a lot of sweat and no shortage of cursing, from 2700m to a levelling on the western flank of Mulhacen at 3100m. It was graft, but again, the breather offered by a bit of flat was gratefully accepted whilst we looked across to the peak of Veleta and the break in the crest about 5 kilometres to the west. Winding around the southerly spurs of the crest, climbing and descending, those final few kilometres seemed to take a long time. We could still make out the white blobs of the huddled villages down to the south, and much closer below the track, the odd refugio used by mountaineers in the winter months. Lagunas of melt-water offered little oasis' of greenery for the chamois grazing nonchalantly as we passed by, and the chill in the air as we passed into the shade reminded us of where we were, that time was getting on and that we still had a lot to do. The final few hairpins in the track took us through the remnant snow patches of last winter and to the notch in the ridge. We stopped. Knackered, but back in the sun, we drank and took some photos and had a good long look back across those last few kilometres.

Through the gap and onto tarmac for the final few hundred feet up to the summit, with superb views down onto the high plains on the north of the range, and the cluttered jumble of an out of season ski resort below our feet. Even in the sun it was now

cooling rapidly, and we decided not to linger. We considered how those gentle undulations of the approach might feel when tackled in darkness after a full day in the saddle.

"It's all downhill from here" Chris shouted across to me as the wind rush whipped his words away and we hurtled back down to the notch and our thirty miles of off-road descent. Yes, I thought to myself, in theory.

The fact that we were on the home run gave us added energy and we flew like the wild bunch down the loose, bouldery and dusty track. Verging on out of control at times, at others, throwing in the odd boulder hop and jump, it was the downhill ride of a lifetime. Shortly before the car park and the tarmac, our male Swiss friend appeared heading up the hill again. What the fuck!! Is this guy some kind of nutter, or what? We slowed slightly as we passed to answer his 'Did you get there?' with an exuberant "Yeah, all the way to the top!"

The contouring forest trail had become a slightly steeper affair since we'd ridden it earlier in the day and the fading light added a sense of urgency to the task. Several times we thought we recognised the final uphill and each time we were disappointed, but when we finally hit it we didn't have to ask each other - we knew. The downhill into Trevezz was pure unadulterated madness. We could already feel the warmth of the bar, the coolness of the beer and we fishtailed our machines around each dusty hairpin in tight formation, playing with the track, daring it to give us something we couldn't handle at this eleventh hour. We hit the tarmac at speed as darkness crept over the village and the bar was hot and the beer was cold.

Burnley Team on Lundy

By Yor Yelaeh

Hi my name is Yor and this is my story. The names have been changed to protect the innocent.

This is 2 days into the Burnley Lads trip to Lundy and we have been blessed with good weather. The climbing has been good but the craic has been arseholes better!

On the first day after the boat trip, before we could check in, we found ourselves sunbathing outside the Marisco Tavern. Three hours and four pints of Guinness later we checked into The Manor House, THE place to stay on Lundy. It sleeps 12 people, silver service, the business!

Once we'd sorted all the rooms and the gear out, with daylight left our thoughts turned to cragging. The crag of choice was Alpine Buttress, one abseil to a steep grass slope and Dar set off. Beer goggles on and the top came sweet. Wolfman Jack E3 5b, 5c three star Extreme Rock 'tick', a good start to the trip.

So you get the drift of how the trip was going to develop!

Team Intel had said the route to do was Antiworlds E4/5 6a, 5c, 6a. The previous days exploratory look had revealed that the rock held the damp in the morning so best to start after 12.

That day Yerrj and I came out of Deep Zawn via Quatermass E2 5c, 5a, 5c. There are two things you must know about Deep Zawn. First it's a zawn and second its deep!!

So our plan for the next day was to ab in about noon to give the crag time to air. After another night in the Marisco Tavern, all teams had their plans for the day. Yerrj and I were to go in at noon but unbeknown to us we had been betrayed in the planning by Evad and Dar.

When we arrived at Deep Zawn there was an abseil rope already set up!
BASTARDS!!!

A big rope length down and we land on the ledge. Dar is on his way up, seconding the first pitch. The start is a traverse into a thin crack line which is often wet. The early team had to aid the start which was good, however, we did not! The route description for the first pitch, reads, 'make a series of tricky moves right to gain a steep thin crack and follow this (technical) to gain a resting place at the foot of an impressive groove. Climb the thin slanting crack on the right for 15 feet, then the groove itself to where a smooth fin of rock divides it. Climb up past the fin by hard moves until it becomes possible to swing out right to better holds'. What it doesn't say is that by the time you get to the fin you are 15 feet above your last gear which is 2 poor and small wires! Having reached this point the hard moves appeared way scary. Thankfully Evad on the belay above said 'rock 9 high up on the left'. Although difficult to place, it felt crucial and gave enough confidence to commit to the hard moves. Once done, easy moves followed and the belay was gained. Pitches 2 and 3 went without too much difficulty and the route was in the bag. One of the best outings of that grade that I have ever done.

Back at the pub Gerg said he would do dinner with a leg of Lundy Lamb. Two pints of Guinness and back to the 'Manor' for a grand meal and the best of craic. As the night progressed the bottle of Bacardi that I had fetched from home went down a treat and that's after 4 cans of Stella. Unfortunately the coke for the Bacardi's ran out so I had to make do, mixing it with red wine!! Needless to say the 'team head' was in the 'team shed'.

The route for today was to be A Widespread Ocean of Fear E5 5c, 6a. After a slow start and a small breakfast and an even slower walk to the Diamond, the head was still in the shed.

Straws drawn and I had the first pitch, 100 foot long, 5c, and minimal protection. When the word scary is used in the guide text you just know its not going to be easy. The route starts at the foot of a basalt dyke which is climbed with no gear and then a step onto a steep wall, small RP's in a crack line that contained pegs with no heads. I knew how they felt! The wires were crap and wouldn't hold. 20 feet up, shit gear and 10 feet of 5c climbing to the first good wire. It seemed like an age until I committed myself to the sequence of moves, halfway across I managed to get a skyhook on a good edge which felt good enough to press on to the good wire placement. A line of leftward trending holds led to a very uncomfortable stance. Yerrj led off on pitch 2 confident now as heads had begun to clear. I was just glad to get my lead out of the way, watching Yerrj climb as he does, slow and confident, strong on every hold, the top came soon. The stance was very uncomfortable as the guide says and to set off was a great relief for screaming feet. At the top hand shakes all round and a slightly brisker walk back down the island to another cracking night in the Marisco.

Journal Frog

By Big Al Rigby

Master collator, you've been waiting as long as Terry Nutkins mullet for this collection of words. Hey Terry, you made it into the first para-giraffe. Well this sort of bad start is what you get for hassling the big man, you'll probably soon wish you'd never bothered. Master Collator you used to live two doors down from my old English teacher, but I don't wear no uniform now pal, well ok, except for the kinky stegosaurus suit with the vinyl botty panel, but you're never going to see it. That's strictly for the she o saurus.

Forthwith, therefore, we shall venture sideways into a beer goggled collection of shaggy dog anecdotes regarding the antics performed by the esca-lads of East Lancashire and their acquaintances. All told from my kaleido-beeroscopic viewpoint in the traditional fashion of those tall tales that arise in the pub after 11 pints of Theakston's Old Bishop's Bomber Pendle Landlord. Well the best shaggy dogs that East Lurcheshire ever produced are pushing up the daisies by the canal these days (God rest their weary ankles) and my beer goggles fell off when I dove in at the deep end of this ramble so I really don't know how readable this nonsense is going to get!

I'll start by observing that East Lanchavshire has sadly lost it's protected wilderness status these days since Kappa tracksuits went on offer at Winfields.

Oh, I give up honestly, this writing is terrible. You can see I'm stalling here.....struggling to recall something noteworthy.....

Alright back to the plot, that's it, antics in Lancashire, land of climber's with wooly pulleys full of holes and with only a slight hint of a smell of wee, Clymbyng, as they call it when you get nearer the border, what's that all about eh? Some old boys dig a few holes in the ground in order to procure a bit of material to build a few drystone walls (Fred Flintstone style car wheels, factories and most importantly the odd pub), and the next generation crawl around in the undergrowth, brush off the moss and climb out?!! Great stuff!

Funny to think, the rock from out of that hole in the ground is now holding up the roof at The Rose and Crown – and it gives you something to do with your life before you go the pub. That is what I call common sense.

I mean everyone understands the balls to the wall, eyeballs out, thrill of collecting cigarette cards..... what could it be?The anticipation builds..... could I make the full set of bearded weirdo cricketers? Is this the one?..... But it takes a true man to combine this kind of noble pursuit with a life spent scratting about in the bottom of a quarry for fun, those early climbers were tapped and they looked like bearded weirdo cricketers to boot.

So in summary, climbers are actually a kind of genetic mistake. Like a group of disillusioned stealth shepherds with a tendency to gaze longingly at ruminating animals and rub their large red corky balls.

Lancestershire must be, as well, either, the worst place in the world to climb, or the last place anyone would want to climb because all the crags have the letter z in them and all the climbers names end in z.

"Come to Lancaashite, lets go climbing at Anglezarke, with this Nez ,that Nez, Spuz, Tuz, and Baby Gruz, we can do a bit of zed pointing"

So anecdotes of climbing are still escaping me. Hopefully something will ebb forth from the gelatinous gloop amongst my ears ever so shortly. I'm sure the reader

is already showing signs of a generous room full of letter z's at this point, but you can blame that on the painful process of Lancastration you are being subjected to.

Blimey I'm really beating around the bush here, so here's a bit of an epic story about me moving to Sheffield to be part of a world famous climbing scene and get amongst all those famous routes and famous rock.

I moved to Sheffield went halves on a pink caravan and got into snowboarding.

The Pink Pussycat was a caravan which cost 50 quid, It had a customized paint job of a Dr Doolittle 'push me pull you' cat on the front and an enormous wave on the side. Well to be honest, my half of the van cost 50 quid, the other half belonged to my mate Pop who was the night watchman at Sheffield Ski Village, he lived in a static up there, but The Pussycat was up there too for a while, in use as a spare room for Pop when all the other climbers and snowboarders were having a session in his main abode. Scamp the dog owned Pop as a pet at the time and he was a legend in his own fur, Scamp would randomly piss on you're leg or shag your snowboard if you left it lying around.

Late one night in The Pussycat, as the story goes, Scamp awoke and got bailed up in the corner growling his arse off at the wardrobe door, where upon there was a mirror. In the mirror, in the half light glow of Hillsborough, the mirror beheld an old man in a flat cap standing inside the caravan pointing at the dog. Naturally, as there was no such man actually in the caravan, Pop rapidly soiled his boxers and ran screaming outside closely followed by the ever so brave yelping fur ball. I think he spent the night with some friends. Truth be told, I got the caravan for 100 quid off an old lady who sold it, because it reminded her of her dead husband with whom she used to spend holidays in the van. No shit! And I never told Pop that before!

We promptly drove it to West Wales on a surf trip and left The Pussycat there for the Welsh to deal with.

Oops, that didn't end up being a tale about climbing at all. I'll try again, this is an account of my most unsuccessful and second funniest trip to Font. Me and my mate Catfish were sitting in his living room in Leeds on a friday sciving lectures. Like a couple of student bums, we wanted to go climbing but it was pissing down, so I think we just decided to chuck our boots in the car and drive to Font there and then – not even checking the weather (bad bit of foresight that). We just set off, snap decision, can't even remember if we booked a ferry or just turned up, but we got a late sailing that day and arrived in France in the pitch black. We didn't have any GB sticker or headlight stickers so we made them all out of silver gaffer tape and the reflected heat promptly blew the headlights out of our little Citroen about 10 miles down the road. Shit. So we pulled over, let the lights cool off, cleaned off the sticky debris (as much as you can with melted gaffer) and to our great surprise and elation we found that we could still get full beam, although it kind of pebble dashed the road with gaffer shadow. Our great elation wasn't shared by all the froggy drivers between Calais and Font though....and it was still pissing down.

We spent the next two days climbing in the rain, the only other signs of life were a couple of Germans with no sense of humour and we were going stir crazy for a dry spell, we ended up talking to ourselves, hiding in caves and twitching a lot, we adopted a pet pine cone called Tyrone to keep us happy. We took pictures of him doing routes.

Catfish was actually no stranger to cave dwelling life. In fact he coped with it better than me. He usually climbed with Kelp who wasn't around that weekend, but Catfish and Kelp were kind of like Cumbria's B grade Reeves and Mortimer. Without these lads, Barrow in Furness might have gained a good reputation, I did a load of

trips with them while I was at college in Leeds – many could warrant a paragraph or two. These guys could put another layer of scum on an already accumulated crust of bad personal hygiene and were great at all out pound-stretching. Catfish spent so many unwashed seasons living in a cave in El Chorro that he contracted Kronos disease, nearly died and now he can only drink cider – the unfortunate sod.

Any way back to the plot.....it rained all weekend and we wanted to go home, but we couldn't cos all the ferry crossings were cancelled due to a big old storm raging up the English channel so we were stranded for two days sleeping on our karrimats in the foyer of the ferry building. To pass the time I tried to teach Catfish to skateboard. He was shite.

A couple of days later we got the ferry and it was in the biggest waves I'd ever seen on a channel crossing, almost up to the deck, big old broadsides smashing us all the way across. Needless to say it was another puke fest, but not for us, we valued our food too much and kept it down. It was a bargain crossing though, all the contents of the duty free and newsagents were thrown off the shelves and rolling about in the isles, didn't score any booze but I think we had enough Pringles and Wine Gums roll up at our feet to get us back to Leeds.

A couple of months later Catfish got his own skateboard, fired off down a hill (probably pissed) smacked his skull on the deck, straight to intensive care and nearly died for a second time. What a donkey - 1st class.

While we're on tales of misadventure, here's another, the tale of the ill fated River Rawthey canoe trip with Stubacca, T, Phil Dean, and my brother (Pootle the Flump), I broke my boat in half, lost both my shoes, lost my paddle, examined the terrain of the river bottom with my head and lost my motivation to do any more canoeing. I'd been in the pool a few times but still thought an eskimo roll was some kind of chilled chocolate snack. This was to be my shortest sporting career. So when we rolled up at this river (can't remember who's idea it was to go, but I'd gladly cave their heads in with any available chocolate snack) it looked like a good old frothy, flooded northern river, nice and bubbly and brown and cold looking and to anyone who new what they were looking at it probably looked like a bit of an exciting undertaking, it did to me, but we'd been listening to some Minor Threat and Black Flag on the way up so I was psyched up, I think I got in the water first actually – who knows why, and promptly disappeared downstream upside down, quite fast, sporadically testing my helmet on the bottom. Luckily, T knew what he was doing and came and saved my not too buoyant self from a full length river thrashing.

As it transpired practically everyone took a bit of beating on that river, so I didn't feel too ashamed.

Stubacca went on to become a successful winter ironing board rider and create lots of human shaped bomb holes below cliffs that he'd just hurtled off. T on the other hand, has just developed an already bad taste in music, nourished a crap sense of humour and generally learnt to cry a lot when he gets his nipples twisted in the pub. He is however, a fairly good goat boater and was perhaps casually responsible for saving my life.

So a few months later I repayed T his favour on a climbing trip in the lakes. During a night sleeping in the four wheeled ford escort Hilton, I donated a few healthy litres of recycled beer down my leg into his passenger side footwell. We were paralytically bladdered from a night at Churchills in Ambleside. Stubacca slept under the hedge in the graveyard, and luckily, T was distracted from my crime because he'd puked on Pootle the Flump's contact lenses and was busy trying to fish them out. That's what happens when you spend you're campsite fees on beer. My memories a

bit fuzzy, but I assume Neville the engine driver and his brother Pondlife were there snoozing in the boot, probably lying on top of the Beast.

The Beast was the youngest member of our team back then, and most accomplished underage drinker in Whalley at the time, he was a brave little turkey and prototyped the one in, one out, gear placing principle (which has never taken off), based on a piece of protection being able to support it's own weight but nothing more, thus arriving at the top with one piece in and 12 sitting on the stich plate. One night on the way back from another classic night in the Cross Keys in Clitheroe he tried to catch a flying road cone in his chops and unwittingly created a handsome void in his pearly whites, for the next several years he used it to great effect for casually holding roll ups. He also came to some renown for experimental washing with toothpaste instead of soap, and, to his credit this stands as a great experiment in hygiene research which Catfish and Kelp could have learned a great deal from.

I suppose I should give a mention to Neville the engine driver and his brother Pondlife happily snoozing in the boot back there. My brother (Pootle the Flump) and my unesteemed self, pretty much learned to climb, surf, snowboard, skateboard and drink with these two animals. We've had too many adventures to list and it's been great. Neville is a natural born leader who we called number 1 for years – who is number one? I am not a number I'm a free man! I haven't really given much attention to Pondlife in these words, as I don't think words really explain this guy, you could explain him better with some kind of noise. However if I were to write about all the funny things he'd said and done, my computer would sprout legs, shit itself and run out the door.

Thanks for reading this shit, remember, bullshit is in the ear of the beholder, because he who has an ear full of bullshit has fallen asleep in the wrong place!

Just to clarify an earlier point, and for general awareness, I think it would be unfair not to justify slandering Terry Nutkins – Old Terry Nut-k now lives on the Hebrides where I believe he is free to have bad hair anytime he wants, I heard him on radio 4 the other day talking about fleas.

Mr Collator, people who compile journals really have to be persistent don't they? Every credit to you, you've shown the tenacity of a first class clag nut to pull this together, or perhaps to coin the more modern term, you are a Frodo, a stubborn little shit that refuses to let go of the ring. Monumentally good effort.

Never let anyone tell you that East Lancashmachine is behind the times or living in the past, it was the first place in the world to have the Hole i'th Wall and you can't get more progressive than that.

The Good The Bad And The Ugly

By Mark Radtke

An account of the first ascent of a wild adventure in Gordale Scar

The Good The Bad and The Ugly E7 6b,6b,6a. Mark Radtke and Dave Barton Sept 1992.

THE UGLY

It's late afternoon a cold wind blows through the gorge, spray is lifted from the waterfall and carried in erratic eddies towards an overcast grey sky. A middle aged couple making a monumental ascent of the waterfall wince with discomfort as they are caught, inevitably, by a vicious blast of icy water. Their friends wait for them at the bottom, perhaps deterred by the adverse conditions currently being experienced by the adventurers above.

I smile inwardly and wonder if they will be happy tonight. After a while the couple descend and make a leisurely departure, voices blending into the sound of falling water as they vanish round the arête guarding the entrance to the gorge. Today is good in Gordale, cold, gloomy, sombre and relatively free from the countless pilgrims who come here to pay homage. Gordale at its best.

I finish tying the two 9mm ropes into my harness and hand them to my climbing partner who methodically clips them through his belay device. His eyes trace the line of our proposed route which meanders up an initial wall of shattered and decaying limestone and an evil smile begins to touch the corners of his mouth. He turns his head towards me and I detect a familiar glint in his steely gaze and imagine a fire burning behind his eyes. I've seen this fire before. The last time was when he was recounting the tale of a recent incident in a pub which turned a bit ugly, Dave walked away relatively unharmed, some were a little less fortunate. Dave thrives when the odds are stacked against him. I find the fire contagious.

Turning to the rock, the first hold that is gently tested creaks and pulls away in my hand. Dave smiles wickedly as I gaze upward across the next thirty feet of loose unprotected climbing. I reassess the situation and make cautious moves upward inspecting each hold in intimate detail before trusting it with my weight. The climbing is not too difficult, but here I'm treading on thin ice and beneath the ice the water is deep and the current treacherous. The ice creaks and cracks with each upward movement. Heart beats sound loudly in my head as a committing move is made to gain a suspect looking flake, body pivots to the left and eyes cement the flake in place. I imagine the flake moving, but it's solid and now I breathe easier as I clip ropes into pegs and create a lifeline between vertical and horizontal. A slim groove above contains a protruding peg which beckons alluringly. The groove looks deceptively easy from below, but enticed into its intricacies by the peg and the true reality of the seduction becomes apparent.

Enmeshed in a series of intricate moves, legs bridge across the groove holding body in tension. Feet smear on flakes that threaten to explode under the pressure and eyes hunt across the rock seeking holds that will provide tenuous access to the sanctuary of the ledge that waits above. Fingers curl round an insecure edge that seems to diminish in size, as muscles contract to levitate my body upward. The sound of water echoing round the gorge fades, as all senses are focused by the intensity of

concentration. As mind and body work together in heightened synergy, holds that were previously conspicuous by their absence begin to appear with a regularity that tempts me to run to the awaiting horizontal, but deception still abounds and words of caution interrupt my reverie, as footholds crumble and clatter to the rocky floor below. Deep breaths suppress the adrenalin surge and words circle round my brain like a recording on a closed tape loop 'don't blow it now, don't blow it now. The inane mental bombardment isolates me in the immediacy of the moment and deflects distracting interruptions, allowing delicate progress to the sanctuary of the rubble strewn ledge that marks the end of the first pitch.

Once I'm secure Dave shouts up that he wants to lead the pitch. Understanding his desire I'm lowered earthward. Back on the gorge floor I relax, mind soaking up the addictive chemicals now coursing through my body and watch Dave dispense with the climb with a fluidity of movement that is only interrupted as he occasionally stops to cast loose pieces of rock to the gorge floor. When he reaches the belay the light is fading and it's obvious that we're not going to be able to complete the rest of the climb today, so happy with what we've achieved I lower Dave back down the rock face so that he can clean the pitch. With gear removed from the rock and packed into rucksacks we proceed with eager anticipation to the Listers Arms in Malham. In the comfort of the bar we are soon quaffing satisfying gulps of Pendle Witch, an appropriately named brew with which we have become painfully acquainted with of late. As the second pint is drained I savour feelings of the 'fix'. An imaginary needle injects my veins with opiates and I glance across at Dave and knowing the look on his face mirrors my own. Gazing round the room I feel conspicuous, 'do people understand I wonder?' Probably not, and who cares anyway.

THE BAD

The following day and I'm hurtling round the winding road back towards Malham after a hectic night on the town. Music is cranked to distortion and causes the speakers to reverberate. The singer agonises about the futility of war and failed relationships. I agonise about the futility of climbing and curse my addiction. Palms sweat on the steering wheel as thoughts of last night's crimes merge with feelings of excited uncertainty about the day ahead. 'Why the hell did I insist on that extra round?' I screech to a halt outside Livsey's cafe in Malham with heart pounding having just taken an imaginary "whipper" from the intimidating roof crack on the second pitch of the route. Dave is waiting inside the cafe. He looks me up and down. 'Good night?' he asks. The simplicity of the question means that he's already deduced from my appearance how I'm feeling.

I groan. Dave laughs sadistically. I enjoy relaxing moments as we drink coffee and relate respective tales about the previous night.

Back in the gorge and levels of excitement begin to rise, white chalk marks trace a tenuous line from the gorge floor up the left wall and bear witness to our activities of the previous day. Mercifully the weather has been kind and above the first belay ledge, dry rock bulges with a barrier of overhanging ramparts. To the right of the belay a black gash in the rocky cornice, offers the possibility of an inhospitable breach through the overhangs. This is the proposed start to the second pitch. I notice Dave examining the brutal intricacies of the roof crack and by the look on his furrowed brow, understand that his thoughts are echoing mine. 'It's going to be hard, the outcome uncertain'. He turns towards me, smiles and pre-ordains the future with one simple statement, 'Piece of piss'.

Dave re-climbs the first pitch and soon we're both ensconced at the belay. It's an oppressive place with loose rock and overbearing roofs blocking out the sky. The crack above our heads, whilst offering the only reasonable means of breaching the overhangs, looks alarmingly difficult at close quarters. I quickly check the rack of gear on my harness, carefully noting the position of a couple of crucial looking pieces and begin to make tentative progress up and outwards.

The first moves from the belay feel hard, as eyes scan the rock, searching to detect the friable and avoid betrayal, but here the ground is steep and caution is a luxury. Hands and fingers fight in desperation to gain purchase in the roof crack and feet send shards of rock to the floor below. Despite its teeth, the crack offers comfort as wires and friends are placed within its depths. Suspended from hands welded into the fissure above my head, forearms bloat. A long stretch outwards from an awkward hand jam and a friend of unknown security is placed, urgent gasping shouts for rope and the friend is clipped, but at a costly price. Screaming messages of doubt, are sent hurtling along neural networks to materialise in consciousness clouding judgement and causing vital seconds of hesitation.

Failure bursts into my mind like an exploding star and split seconds later I'm free of the tormented torture and hurtling through space. Thoughts race, extrapolating time. Questions have time to flood into my mind with poignant precision; Will the gear hold? Will it hurt when I hit the rock? Will the belay rip? Is Dave ready for the fall?

Dave knows this game well, he's been in this situation many times before. From the belay he's been watching my every move, patient, contented, excited and eager, the struggle above his head fuelling his thirst for a share of the spiritual riches that success will bring. As I part company with the rock he responds catlike, paying out just sufficient rope to stop me simultaneously swinging into the wall and crashing into the ledge. I trace an arc through the air like a clock's pendulum and on my second swing, Dave grabs my harness pulling me back into the belay.

With the tension broken we both laugh hysterically, the seriousness of the situation rapidly evaporating with the knowledge that the gear in the roof is good and the crack whilst being desperate, is definitely feasible. After a brief rest I feel relaxed and climb comfortably back up to my high point. Words of encouragement, tinged with excited anticipation float through my consciousness but, do not register in this cerebral knife edge battlefield. A strange pirouette on one arm brings the edge of a flake within reach, a desperate slap outwards and fingers lock onto the edge of the crack, another move and the surreal upside down world returns to the relative normality of the vertical.

Lungs draw in huge gasps of air and my heart pounds loudly in my head pumping blood into swollen energy starved forearms. I hang motionless from a huge hold on the lip of the overhang, changing hands alternately to shake life back into aching arms. When sufficiently recovered, I move cautiously up the vertical headwall, strangely isolated with Dave hidden in the darkness below, communication drowned by the sound of wind and water echoing from the impending walls opposite. I shout to Dave hoping that he'll hear me, to get ready for a fall as I make the desperate final moves to gain the second belay. With feet smearing high I make a dynamic lunge just managing to catch the ledge and claw my way rightwards to gain one of the most outstanding belays in the gorge. A rocky perch isolated from the ground below by

space, with white walls of limestone spreading in all directions enhancing its remoteness.

THE GOOD

Dave arrives at the moves just below the belay and the fire in his eyes tells all. 'What do you think' I ask sadistically, Dave bunches up, and then explodes like an unleashed coiled spring, 'Fucking wild' he gasps, as his fingers lock onto the ledge. A broad grin spreads across his face.

As soon as Dave is secure and we're both hanging from the belay, we sort the gear into a semblance of order and Dave, eager to unravel the secrets above begins to explore the intricacies of the third pitch.

The moves off the ledge are unprotected and the consequences of a mistake here could prove particularly uncomfortable as Dave would clatter down hitting the ledge and then on past me to end up hanging in space. After a few tentative forays Dave commits himself to a sequence of moves and manages to gain a bridging position in the slim groove above my head. Suddenly a foothold that he is smearing on disintegrates, I hunch instinctively, ready to absorb the full impact of Dave's free fall onto the belay as he goes hurtling past me and on into the void below. Miraculously he manages to stay in contact with the rock, 'Fucking hell Dave, are you O.K' I shout in concern.

Manic laughter is the only response that I get.

I shake my head in bewilderment remembering tales about his past exploits. On sight soloing Cemetery Gates and Cenotaph Corner in 1968. Nearly being frozen to death after succeeding on the North Face of the Piz Badile on his first visit to the alps. Epic success on the Eiger's North Face in 1972. Racing to the summit of the Matterhorn and back to Zermatt in four hours and then his disastrous fall from the top of Bolton climbing wall in 1983. An ironic accident that left him two inches shorter, with fused ankles and on a permanent course of pain killers.

I look up. 'Just take it steady Dave'. The comment is pathetically unnecessary but it makes me feel better anyway. As I make the comment the rope begins to tug at my waist making me pay it out with increasing rapidity, I smile.

After a few minutes Dave shouts down that he's at the top and begins to take in the remaining rope which quickly slithers up the groove. Even with the security of a rope from above, I find the moves leaving the ledge both difficult and exposed. With 150 feet of space below me, I appreciate the manic tones in Dave's laughter. In the groove the game of progress is superbly played, as stone dictates the movements of each hand and foot with choreographed like precision.

After about thirty feet of absorbing and superbly exposed bridging, I pull onto grassy nettle covered ledges and scramble up to Dave who is securely attached to a large ash. A gentle breeze blows through the tree causing the leaves to dance, the air tastes cool and fresh, the damp earth looks rich and fertile, the vegetation unnaturally green. Dave stands motionless beneath the tree, I look at the wrinkled lines spreading from the corners of his eyes and study the burning light emanating from within their depths. A smile touches the corners of my mouth, a grin breaks across Dave's face. I begin to chuckle, Dave laughs, the trees shake, the Jackdaws scream and the wind begins to roar.

Two Weekends. One on the beer and one with the fear.

By Neil McCallum (Accy Nez)

The Magnificent Seven

Northumberland, 26/27 September 1998

Accy Nez, Burnley Nez, Robin, Matt T, Suicide Dan, Derek' Yul Brynner' Hargreaves, and team leader Micky J.

“The magnificent seven. Ring ring 7 a.m. move yourself to go again, cold water in the face brings you back to this awful place.” The Clash.

Hungover again. Shit!
Long drive ahead. Shit!
Weathers lookin' Shit!
Fuck it “Come onnnnnn!”

Reach the A1 at last, but its jammed solid. Big greasy breakfast – that's better. Arrive Bowden Doors in the mist, almost Scotch Mist.

“Who's that drifting into view.”

“It's Burnley Nez and Robin, a toilet roll each, now that is luxury.”

At the crag – bloody hell it's dry, it's in good nick! Heads full of hangovers, bellies full of grease, hands full of perfect sandstone – ahhhh, you know.

Nothing very hard, but all the classics, up and down, no ropes just boots and chalkbags, VS here, E1 there, even an E2 or two and Matt T disappearing into the mist on a Poseiden Adventure. A few flailing attempts on a very famous and very hard boulder problem and we move onto Back Bowden. It's claggy and damp so pumpy traverses until exhaustion.

“Pub.”

“Eh.”

“Pub.”

“Ohhh pub. Come onnnn.”

“There's one.” ‘Like a lighthouse, illuminating the passage of a travel weary flagship, lost in a sea of mist and dehydration, desperate for a port for the night’ – ‘but with climbers, mate!’

Food on the hoof – Stormin' Normans chippy , and book in at the B and B.

“Quick turnaround tonight, lads.” Says Mick.

“O.K.” say us.

Thirty minutes later and it's the bright lights of Wooler, via the on premises sports bar.

“Mmmmmm tasteful décor, original '71.”

Next pub, Waggledance all round.

“Mmmmmm tasty, another round.”

“Oh no be careful Dan.” Who is up on a bar stool!

Robin talks him down, disaster averted, so another round.

The mist slowly descended from the hills and filled my head, as pint after pint descended our throats, ‘honeywhacker’ was the cry!

Time to hit the disco.

Very classy. A barn with the 'n' removed.

Dance like silly bastards. Burnley Nez falls off a local farmers lad, biggest whipper of the weekend, to a conclusive K.O.

Wobble home. Yul Brynner in front – The Magnificent 7.

Very late or very early. “Where’s the bloody toilet Troillet.” Getting desperate, getting really desperate, can’t find the door just an ornamental urn, “Ahhhhhh.”

Hungover again. Shit!

Going home today. Shit!

Weathers lookin’ Shit!

Fuck it “Come onnnnnn!”

Kyloe in the Woods, nice walk in, didn’t get lost at all.

“Whatever happened to white dog shit?” asks Derek.

“Shit nose. Dick face.”

Can’t breath, can’t speak. Laughter hurts!

Superb climbing, and surprisingly motivated despite hangovers. Some classics ticked and some classic failures.

Perfect flakes, painful pockets, flawless rock, taking the piss, bouldering hard, laughing harder and ‘quite literally, mate’ a smashing weekend.

Fear is the mind killer.

Gogarth. 4/5 October 1998.

Accy Nez, Matt T, Derek, Terry.

Saturday morning and we arrive on Holy Island in perfect climbing conditions.

“Ever climbed on Yellow Wall Matt.”

“No Nez, never.”

“Fancy The Moon and maybe The Cow.”

“Yeah whatever.”

We get the kit sorted and stroll over to the ab point.

Now if you have ever read Ed Drummond’s account of the first ascent of The Moon its enough to make your palms sweat, it sounds terrifying. Loose rock (unusual for Gogarth), shit gear (that’s strange), and maximum exposure ‘strictly spacewalking’ (very uncharacteristic). Anyway there’s a team down there already so we throw our rope alongside and ab in. Sure enough the other team are on The Moon, the second just starting to follow the big pitch. Hang on, do you recognise him. Yeah its Happy so where’s Larry? (two guys we met in Arapiles, I christened them Happy and Larry, coz they were a bit gormless but friendly enough.) He could hardly climb V.Diff 6 months ago.

They seem in control so we get our shit together and Matt leads the easy first pitch to the stance below the big one. I follow and grab the gear, slightly apprehensive but comforted by the fact that a V.Diff man has just followed this famous pitch. So off I go climbing steadily (unusual for a speed demon like me!) good gear, good position and everyone else uses these holds so they must be solid. The pitch passes uneventfully, the crux feels easy, and on the belay I’m a bit disappointed – “Don’t believe the hype.” Next thing we’re at the top, warmed up and ready for action.
Round 2 The Cow.

Matt's turn for the big pitch, so he grunts and struggles and curses and he's 3 feet up the crack. So that's it, he bungs in some gear and blasts to the belay in that Matt T. way. It always astounds me when I second him coz I would have been shitting it and putting in gear no matter how hard it is to hang on.

So we're back on the Moon stance, having the craic, enjoying the situation. I'm feeling good. "So where's this pitch go?," "up there." "Oh shit." I've got the fear all of a sudden, it looks awesome!

I set off tentatively, feared up, trying to find gear that doesn't exist. A friend in a sand pit, a peg you wouldn't hang your coat on. Pull over an overhang into the groove – shit can't reach the tat – tiring now. Use a little undercut, stand up, everything's going disco, clip. God that's crap. Tough it will have to do. There's a peg in the groove above the next, smaller, overhang. Must clip it, I have too clip that peg. Massive lock off but can't quite reach it. Getting really pumped, getting really feared. Must clip that peg, have too clip that peg. No strength left, pumped solid, can't go up can't go down."Take." I weight the crappy bit of tat and thankfully it holds. Take stock and calm down. Hang on what's that, "BOLLOCKS!" it's only the biggest fucking hold on Gogarth and I've missed it, dickhead! Use the jug, stand up, clip peg, good bridged rest, SHIT! I hate it when that happens. All that remains is steady climbing to a 5b scree slope and I'm on top. What a cracking route, that's Gogarth live through the fear and you're on top of the world.

Back at the car we wait. It goes dark. Eventually Derek and Terry get back, "epic?" "Yeah, summat like that."

Book into a BnB at Trearddur Bay. Its Evil Keneval night on the box, "that man should have been a climber, he's crackers." A meal and several pints, steady away, there's more of the same tomorrow.

A massive breakfast and were set for some Positron action. The first pitch is easy and Matt romps up it. Soon I'm with him at the stance not really warmed up but never mind. The second pitch traverses diagonally left on very steep rock, round an arête and into a chimney that's followed to the Rat Race stance. I leave the belay get some gear and I'm pumped solid. Every single hold faces the wrong way. I scurry back to the belay for a breather. Now I'm warmed up. Next go I get to the arête, no more gear the first piece feels miles away, getting feared again. A quick look at the 6a move round the arête, shit that looks hard so scurry back again. Matt's obviously getting pissed off with my to-ing and fro-ing. So a quick rest and I'm off again, "go fer it Nez, don't think about it just do it," encourages Matt. So I grit my teeth, move round the arête, shit foothold for the left, must be a hold somewhere. Oh well that shit undercut will have to do. Scared now, a big swing looming, so through with the right foot and do a funky fall come lurch for the chimney, phew. A couple of minutes to catch my breath, let my legs stop shaking, get some more crap gear and watch Terry tussling with his route. Soon I'm off up to the belay, remembering being scared on Rat Race, pumped solid 20 feet out from my gear.

A short while later and Matt's at the belay. "Shit, Nez that move was desperate, I nearly blew it." This makes me feel much better. The next pitch, the big one, is famous for being very pumpy and quite bold, Extreme Rock and the description of Al Rouse unable to get his stopper's to seat in the flake above the crack and the massive whipper. Matt heads out to the spike and disappears upwards the ropes running out steadily till the shout breaks my reverie. Soon I'm out at the spike below the thin crack. Should that crack be there? Should there be that much gear? The crack is pumpy but positive and every piece seems bomber, nothing like I expected. Up to the flake, more good gear. Traverse left towards Dinosaur, big holds, loving it now, and

thinking this is piss. Storming up to the belay, mild pump, just enjoying the situation. Arrive at the Dinosaur cave, smiles all round – What a brilliant route, “that big pitch is something else, easier than expected.” “Yeah, but it’s always easier when your second.” Say’s Matt. “Well, yeah, suppose so.” And we all know that it is

I hate the crappy pitches to escape the main cliff and at the time I wish we could just ab off and walk out. But it wouldn’t be Gogarth if it was easy.

How To Climb Big Walls When You’re Struggling On E 2’s In 12 Easy Steps

By Craig Entwistle

Step 1; Go to a country that has some Bigwalls

When me and Vick flew out to the States in January 1998 I hadn’t touched rock since September and anyway this was a snowboarding trip so who gives a shit about fitness. A combination of Millwaukie ice at \$3 for 10 cans and the best junk food the town of Bishop had to offer was helping to keep me and our wallet fat. 39 cents Cheeseburger Wednesday and 29 cents Hamburger Sunday at Macky D’s was the icing on the cakes in Schatz Bakery.

We soon had to adapt our plans when, even with the little luxuries in life being so cheap, we realised we couldn’t afford the \$49 a day to snowboard at Mammoth or the \$1200 for a season pass!

We bailed out and went climbing at Joshua tree.

Step 2; Find a climbing partner with bigwall experience who is a far better climber than you and has tons of gear

At Josh I got drinking and climbing with a young guy called Dave Potter from Washington State. Dave was only 20 but was onsighting 5.11’s (no mean feat at Josh) and had done the Nose “in a day” the previous year. He had ambitions to do harder El Cap routes later in the season and suggested we go and try some smaller walls, first in Zion National Park then at Redrocks.

Step 3; Embark on a rapid fitness programme

So we headed back to Bishop, got some mileage in at Owens River Gorge, bouldered on the Volcanic Tablelands and at the Buttermilks then drove across the desert to Vegas. We narrowly avoided getting sucked in to Vegas and drove the 3 hours north on Interstate 6, through Arizona, to Utah where we teamed up with Dave in Zion.

Step 4; Go somewhere that has some easy walls

On arrival in Zion the weather was shit, El Nino was dumping great powder at Mammoth but was pissing rain onto all the crags west of the Gunks. We waited a

couple of days and got an amazing break in the weather which dried the rock out quick enough to give us the chance to do our first Zion route. (Although it's stupid it's also frowned upon in the States to climb on sandstone the day after rain because sandstone loses up to 40% of its strength when damp.)

Step 5; Choose an easy wall

Touchstone wall is definitely not a bigwall at only 9 pitches but an excellent warm up to the routes in Zion.

Step 6; Send the strongest member of the team up the hardest pitches

There is some quite taxing aiding on pitches 2 and 3, (friends on two cams and dodgy RP moves) There are also some excellent free pitches near the top but the last 5.6 death slab pitch is avoidable !

The overall grade is about 5.10 / C2 and is easily done in a day.

Step7; Chill out for a couple of days

The weather crapped out again in Zion so we went to the Carnival World Buffet at Rio's Casino in Vegas.

Digression, The Carnival World Buffet at Rio's is the best buffet in Vegas. For 12 bucks you can sample as much food as you like from almost any country in the world. You name it, sushi, pizza, chow mein, fish and chips, you'll find it here!

Tip; play the nickel slots! A couple of bucks worth of nickels will keep you playing for ages consuming as many free margaritas as you dare ask for.

The weather had also broke for the better in Vegas so we decided to stick around and climb at Redrocks.

Step 8; Choose a harder and bigger wall to climb

Due to the better weather it was suggested that we attempt the Original Route on the Rainbow Wall.

Although it was free climbed at 5.13 a few years ago by a couple of lost sport climbers trying to find the Trophy Wall, the Rainbow Wall is still a great route for any perspiring bigwaller. Most of the bolts placed by the Vegas Pussies were chopped soon after their ascent leaving the wall in its original state.

We decided to attempt the route clean because we didn't have any pegs! And also because it's cool not to hammer stuff into cracks anyway. We had a double rack of cams and wires and a set of HB offset brass nuts which proved invaluable.

The route can be done in a day but all the advice we got suggested a bivvy on the route to ease the pace and enable us to watch Vegas light up at night. This turned out to be some of the best advice I've ever been given.

Step 9; Give the haul bag to the youngest team member for the walk in

The walk in to the Rainbow Wall is hell even with the lightest sack. We set off at lunch time and bushwhacked our way to the base of the route in about 3.5 hours. This gave us enough time to fix the first 2 pitches so we could have a lie in next morning. We started climbing at about 9am. The first part of the route takes an awesome groove

for about 800ft. Dave was in his element, free climbing as many moves as he could and resting on gear as little as possible. All day he kept screaming “Dude! Free climbing on bigwalls is so freakin coool maaaaan!!”

I was out of my tree, the fact that we had no nailing gear meant I was having to pull free moves out of my aiders quite a way above small brass nuts to reach the sanctuary of a rivet!

We eventually reached the Rainbow ledge at about 4.30pm. I took a dump into a snowball and launched it off onto the slabs below (there was no one following us).

Dave did his in a small snowdrift at the end of the ledge!

After a tin of cold ravioli and half a bottle of Wild Turkey (which had been left by a previous team that bailed off due to snow) we settled in to our pits and watched Vegas light up; an awesome sight! Sleep was a bit sporadic due to the chunks of ice that kept rattling past us in the night.

We topped out the next day at about 1pm after another lie in and descended back to the camp site dreaming of Rio’s and the Carnival World Buffet.

Vick told me that she hadn’t slept for two nights because she found a mouse in the camper and left the stereo on loud for two days to try to scare it off!

Step 10; Keep on keepin on!

High as kites after 3 awesome days on the Rainbow wall we headed back to Zion.

It was Easter weekend and the place was full of bumbles hogging all the classic routes. Now that we were accomplished bigwallers there was no stopping us!

(Middendorf and Long, watch out!)

First choice was the classic Moonlight Buttress. 12 pitches of perfect sandstone with a thin crack that eats rock 7’s and small cams. The route was log jammed with 2 teams planning to bivvy at the top of pitch 4 and a team just below pitch 8 which is the main bivvy ledge. We jumped straight on the route and fixed ropes up to the first bivvy, bailed off, got some kip, then started jugging by head torch at about 3am. We really pissed the first team off, first by waking them up at 4am and second by the piercing scream and 30 footer that Dave took just above them when a cam snapped a loose flake! One team below us bailed out.

Things changed for the better when we arrived at the ledge at the top of pitch 8. We woke up the San Diego Boys at about 6.30am and decided to have breakfast with them. We shared our ravioli and they shared their fruit salad. John, who flew Phantoms in Vietnam, shared a big fat spliff then went back to sleep in his portaledge. The last 4 pitches went far too quickly. The crack which splits the upper part of the buttress was perfect finger size enabling you to top step your aiders and place bomber pieces. We topped out at about midday then made the pleasant stroll back down the tourist path to the truck.

Step 11; Realise your Ambitions

I’d first seen Spaceshot on the cover of the Black Diamond catalogue in 1994. It was an awesome picture taken by Greg Epperson and showed a team of climbers with big white haul bags lost in a sea of red sandstone. I wanted to climb that route but never thought I’d be capable of it.

Anyway, there we were stood at the bottom of the route deciding whether to go for it when we met Greg Epperson himself preparing to photograph Kathy Dicker’s solo attempt on the route. Kathy took 2 days on the route, including a night spent sleeping

in a haul bag, so we fixed the first 4 easy pitches and started climbing the day after. The in joke was "Dicker! I hardly know her." It went straight over her head. Spaceshot is not the biggest wall in Zion but it has some quite technical aiding. The route traverses over a massive roof 900ft off the deck which makes bailing off much harder. Make sure your partner gets pitch 6. We moved quickly again and were back down at the truck by about 4pm.

Step 12; Quit while you're ahead

The only thing that could stop us now was the weather. And it did! We made the long drive to Yosemite dreaming about cruising up the Salathe Wall. On arrival we got a great site on Camp 4 and got pissed for 10 days waiting for the rain to stop. When the rain stopped we discovered, with the aid of binoculars, that black streaks on El Cap were in fact large waterfalls.

Our only option was to go back to Bishop and Macky D's and The Bishop Grill and the Mexican restaurant behind the supermarket and the pizza place and Schatz Bakery and.....

Further reading;

How to climb Bigwalls by John Middendorf and John Long

Rock climbs in Lancashire and The North West by Phill Kelly and Dave Cronshaw

Voyeur X; Top French Porn Mag.

Hawkscliffe '99 (A conversational piece)

By Bob Larkin BA BMC RSPCA

Author's cover note:

Dear Nez,

Please find enclosed my piece for the magazine. It is satirical prose with deep metaphysical undertones which attempt to explain the transient nature of the human predicament. Although the metempirical association of the human condition and rock climbing cannot be denied I am sure you will agree that the piece goes some way to explaining the profound and insoluble differences. But of course this will be obvious on reading it.

Other magazines have been after the piece (Gardeners World, Nuts and Athletics Weekly, to name but three.) I will therefore have to charge a small retaining fee which will guarantee my loyalty. Shall we say £XXXX. I am sure you will agree to this. If you have problems raising the amount Mick Johnston said he would help out and contribute any financial assistance.

Bob.

Editors note:

Dear Bob,

It is with great pleasure and relief that I have been able to secure this article for this humble journal. The monies paid will obviously be re-cooped from the cover price, at the expense of donations to Yorks Bolt Fund, Mountain Rescue and Children

in Need. These needy causes would surely agree it's a small price to pay for such an outstanding piece of literature. I'm sure all who fork out the, now inflated, cover price will also agree its well worth the extra. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for waving your fees for the two additional pieces contained herewith. It has been a most rewarding task editing and typing your works, correcting your awful spelling and atrocious grammar was, believe me, a labour of love.

Nez.

It was a pleasant day. Perfect for scratting around in the primeval undergrowth of Hawkcliffe. I was there with Phil. We had spotted some lines that needed cleaning but contented ourselves with repeating some recent routes.

"This slab looks good with the peg in it."

"Peg!!! I didn't know you could put pegs in Yorkshire Grit these days."

"You can't."

"I don't understand. I thought you had to leave routes until 'someone better' comes along."

"Ah yes, but suppose there isn't anyone better, and suppose the guy who put the peg in is an environmentally aware visionary."

"You mean like Swinney?"

"No you pillock."

"What's it called anyway?"

"Blull Gumm Sloggitt."

"Course it is, yeah yeah. What's it really called?"

"Blull Gumm Sloggitt!!"

"Give me the bloody guide book, I'm not doing a route with a stupid name like that."

"It looks really good, and dead safe with the peg."

"Maybe we should take the peg out."

"No hammer."

"We could smash it to smithereens with rocks."

"Won't that leave an ugly scar."

"Oh, I hadn't thought of that."

"Come on your lead."

After a good friend in a nearby crack it was easy to reach and clip the peg. Climbing past the peg proved to be somewhat more problematical and it soon became clear after a number of attempts that I was not going to be able to do the route.

"Too hard, your lead."

"Give us the rope you big jessy."

Phil tried and made a slightly better effort but the small crimps were just a bit too small. They needed improving with a JCB. We had better luck on Black Forest Gateaux. Very enjoyable and much easier. Squirrel Crack was the next route to succumb. Our solitary fumbings were disturbed :

"Hey is that you Bob?"

"Hello Matt. How's things?"

Matt and Nez had arrived in friendly disarray.

"Have you heard about Terry?"

"Terry who?"

"You know. Terry. Mark's brother. He works a lathe or summat. He had a really bad accident yesterday. Fell off Adrenaline Rush at Caley. Fractured his skull, broke his

neck, dislocated shoulder, serious internal injuries including a punctured lung and ruptured spleen, and he might never walk again.”

“Is he in hospital?”

“They kept him in overnight. He’s back at work on Monday. Are you doing another?”

”Do you fancy Bubba?” suggested Phil.

“Bubba! Bubba! You mean that’s a route name? It sounds like a pet hamster to me!

Whose naming these routes anyway?”

“I think it’s Rad.”

“Oh well that explains it then.”

“I’ll bet he’s even named a route ‘Zyo Kruk Klik’.”

“Your right he has.”

“Silly bugger.”

At this stage Matt sauntered away to join Nez who was about to start Blull Gumm Sloggitt. I have scant recollection of their ascent. Most of it seemed to happen in a blur of speed and precision. Their next target was Flame Arête.

“Oh shit!” exclaimed Matt. “I’ve left my runners at home. Have you any spare gear we can borrow Bob?”

“Sure plenty in the blue sack.”

Now Matt doesn’t know me all that well. And he certainly doesn’t know that most of my equipment has been found in various stages of decomposition at some of the most obscure crags in the country. Either that or it has been bought at some seedy, ultra cheap car boot sale.

I felt guilty at lending him the gear, but strangely proud that my useless runners were decorating the upper reaches of Flame Arete. There was no way I could have put them there.

Matt had recommended that we try Sandbach Kid. So after we had dispensed with Bubba, (not without considerable effort!) we moved over to the other end of the crag. Sandbach Kid looked serious and daunting so we settled for another, better protected, new route called Fistfull of Siestas. A short technical problem which we eventually overcame.

On returning to retrieve my gear Nez had just completed Driveby and was engaged in a new steep line left of Black Forest Gateaux. I suppose they could call it Krixentropensa or Overhanging Wall. Its their choice.

All the names and places in this article are completely fictitious and refer to nowhere and no one in real life.

A Day Out With Mr. Barton

By Mick Johnston

The walk over the mountain to North Stack is an effort for Dave and I. The combination of over the top socialising plus a few dodgy limbs results in a shambolic arrival at the wall.

Its unusually busy with people sunbathing and looking pensive, some even climbing. One of the latter bringing up his mate even enquires as to our game plan.

“I’m doin Wreath an ee’s doin Bells” is Daves no- nonsense reply. Inwardly I laugh and reflect as to who is more sceptical, as the lads look us over.

At the bottom of the wall we're soon eyeing our chosen objectives.

"Its ok I lie" trying to give Dave some moral support.

"There's a bit of gear before you move left round the arête and a good nut when you're there"

Twenty minutes later a shaky looking Dave is round the arête and shouting that the runner placement is gone. Knowing the route, I argue that it can't have and my stomach churns as The Wreath and Mr. Barton look about to part company.

I can't believe what I'm hearing as Dave announces he's "Going for it anyway".

Realising now that he's too far right and there's no good gear in the next fifty feet, I find myself pleading with him to reverse back to the dodgy gear, but Dave, deaf to everything, is already slapping up the arête on unclimbed ground.

Now completely horrified I curl up in a ball and grip the rope to my chest. Suddenly my world changes and I'm hurtling upwards to find myself eye to eye with a grinning Dave. We are both 20ft from the boulders and suspended by a solitary RP.

"Down growls Dave"

The comment that comes drifting down from the wide eyed onlookers above has us laughing all weekend.

"Yeah that guy reached maximum velocity!"

Thanks.....

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to this publication it was a great effort on all your parts as I know its not easy to put pen to paper and write about yourself. All the essays stand up on their own merits because of the characters that are in them and the characters that wrote them. Well done guys. Now you've read them all I'm sure this will take pride of place as chosen toilet reading to be dipped into now and again for another chuckle at the comical tales and perhaps to get things moving with the gripping accounts! Now I've finished I'll have a lot more free time, and if you want to thank me buy me a pint, I rarely refuse! He he

...and a special thanks to Terry and Chrissie for help with printing.

...and a massive thanks to Lucy who helped tirelessly and kept me sane!

This book version has been devised to help to develop my research for my PhD project, looking into why climbers climb, their creativity and feelings around fear. I am also very grateful to the contributors to this journal/book and also to Clive Palmer who first recognised the amount of beautiful data there was in here back in 2008. This then became the basis for the PhD and encouraging people to write and be creative in telling their stories.

not all of the stories have been transferred to the book, not because they were weak, but mainly because they were not as relevant to the research (also cost of a big book). I generally kept it to 1 narrative per author; but not exclusively. Keith.

This is a book devised from a collection of stories told by mainly armature climbers and writers from the Burnley area of the UK. It was the brain child

of Enty's back in the 90's and has now become the basis for a PhD study and further research into climbing, climbers and creativity of writing and story telling.

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