

WHERE RAVENS FLY

BARROW MOUNTAINEERING AND SKI CLUB 1951-2011

DES SLAVIN

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BARROW MOUNTAINEERING AND SKI CLUB

A HISTORY 1951 – 2011

DES SLAVIN

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF ALL

B.M.S.C. MEMBERS PAST AND PRESENT



COVER PHOTO OF DOW CRAG BY JIM ROSKELL

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POEM

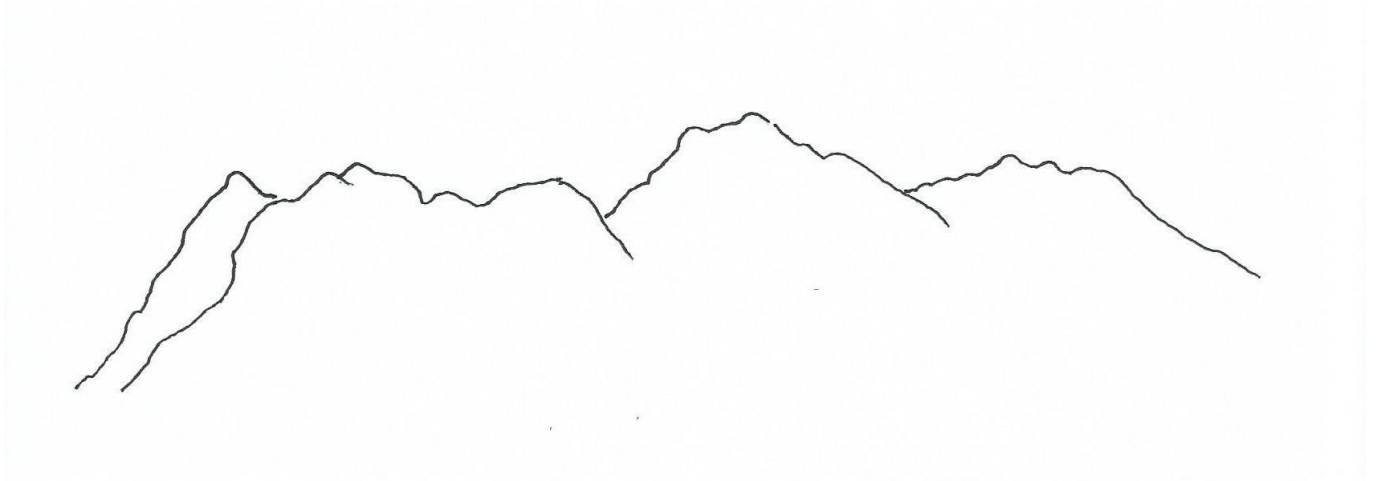
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WHERE RAVENS FLY



Where Ravens Fly

*When we climb higher and higher
We enter the realm of the raven.
We often hear their raucous call
As we inch across a rocky wall,
And see their silhouette
As they soar above,
Guardians of the places
That we love.
Whenever we go, they're always there
Perched on a rock or in the air.
We know, when climbing, we're not alone
When we see the raven upon his throne,
And hope we remember before we die,
Of the time we spent where ravens fly.*

Des Slavin

*WHERE RAVENS FLY**BARROW MOUNTAINEERING AND SKI CLUB.**A HISTORY OF THE LAST 60 YEARS 1951 -2011***INTRODUCTION**

I think it was at the February 2010 committee meeting in Gleaston village Hall that our club president, Peter Kelly, suggested that something ought to be done to preserve our club archives. Up to this point, what we had, had been kept in a few boxes at Ian Currie's house. It was resolved that the material should be collected and organised and a start was made with the help of Jack Hool, Ian and myself to put the archive in some sort of order.

Soon after that meeting Peter Fleming phoned with the sad news that Jim Roskell had lost his long fight against cancer. Jim, a real stalwart of the club, had done a great deal of work to keep the club running, especially as membership secretary and tireless efforts at Coppermines Cottage. Not long after that, my old colleague, Jack Lancaster, an early club member was taken into hospital and then into a nursing home. More recently Ken Arts, an early club member, died just a couple of weeks after I spent an afternoon with him discussing the club's early days. These events prompted me into thinking that some of the older members might not be around for much longer, so I offered, somewhat rashly, to produce a club history, and talk to some of the older members about the club and their experiences before it was too late.

In preparation for this work, I re-read 'Coniston Tigers' by Harry Griffin and was immediately struck by the similarities of their motives and those of our members behind heading for the fells and the crags even though we were operating a decade or two after Harry and his friends. My own connection to the Great Outdoors goes back to the late 1950s with the scouts and to 1960 when I joined Barrow Ramblers and got to know people who were also in the B.M. & S.C. After the Second World War, when some of our members were young people, the hills that we could see from Barrow proved an irresistible attraction. I remember looking out of the front window of our house at Newbarns and seeing the hills to the north stretching from Black Combe to the Coniston tops and knowing, from an early age, that I wanted to go there.

The opportunities for recreation were much more restricted in those days and few people had their own transport. Those with bikes were able to venture out a fair distance but it was the bus and the train, particularly the line to Coniston that had a great attraction to many young people in Furness. Unlike today, most people then, including myself, got our first taste of the mountains by fell walking and then graduating to scrambling and rock climbing, and eventually, if we were fortunate, the opportunity to experience mountaineering in the Alps and other mountain ranges. Coniston became a Mecca for the adventurous due to the bus and train and its proximity to Barrow. It's no coincidence that the Fell and Rock Club, Coniston Tigers and the B.M.S.C. all developed from Barrow and district.

Many early outdoor experiences were often provided by Scouts, and by teachers, who were often willing, in those days, to give up their time to introduce youngsters to the pleasures of the Lake District. I was in the Scouts and also lucky enough to have a geography teacher, Aidan Smith, who was able to take a group of us by bus or train to those areas accessible by public transport. There were no such things as climbing walls or outdoor recreation centres and we had to rely on those older people willing to share their time and expertise with others. It was individuals like Jack Lancaster and others who shared their love of climbing with young people and helped boost the number of climbers joining clubs in the 1960's. Even though I have only been a member of the club for about twenty years, my association with club members goes back to 1960. As for my qualifications to write the History of the club, suffice to say, I was the only one who actually volunteered to do it.



Chapter 1

The Early Years

In the late 1940's, during the slow recovery from the Second World War, a small group of climbers began to find their way back into the Lakeland hills. Their equipment was basic, to say the least, consisting of home-made (often shipyard made) and ex-war department gear such as the gas cape and 'commando' rucksacks. Food was scarce and still rationed and so a weekend on the hills required quite a lot of planning and effort. Coniston had a bus and train service for those from Barrow but the limited services often meant that to return home on Sunday evenings after a day's climbing, they had to walk for three hours to Foxfield, to catch a train back to Barrow.



'Doe' Crag from a glass slide by W.A. Poucher.

Dow Crag was the 'Mecca' for aspiring climbers and on the way to the crag they passed Cove Hut which offered some protection from the elements and it was soon pressed into service by a small group from Barrow. It was rented from Rydal Estates for the sum of £1.00 per annum, by Don Atkinson on behalf of the 'Barrow Boys'. The hut had previously been a powder store for the quarries above on the slopes of Coniston Old Man. The next photograph shown was taken in 1948 and some of those on it became members of the B.M & S.C. a few years later when the club was formed. Another place where Barrow climbers stayed was in rooms behind the Black Bull in Coniston.



Cove Hut 1948 with Ron Miller, Ginger Caine, Alan Montgomery, John Thompson, Jack Lancaster, Oliver Geere and Ken Braithwaite.

Many local climbers got to know each other during this time and it was thought that they should get together and form a club. The Fell and Rock Climbing Club had its roots in Barrow but as it grew to become one of the senior mountaineering clubs in Britain and more remote from Furness, it was felt that there was scope for a new local club.

I was told that an advert was placed in the North West Evening Mail inviting those interested in forming a club to a meeting at a local pub. After many hours at the Records Office at Barrow Library, going through all the newspapers for 1951, I have been unable to find that advert but know that such meetings were held because Graham Whiteman, the first secretary of the club, wrote about exploratory meetings at the Criterion Hotel in Cornwallis Street where beer and free beef sandwiches were consumed. From these early meetings in 1951 a committee was formed consisting of Graham Whiteman, Alan Montgomery, Jack High, Tommy Cull, Jack Cull and Jim Sheppard.



Jack High – Sunlight Crack 1951.

Once established, several badge designs were considered and the one chosen was a coiled rope, crossed with an ice-axe and a ski-stick and the initials B.M & S.C. Officers were appointed with Jack Blackshaw as president, Mr Mc Dowell, Honorary Vice president (he was kind enough to have the badges made as he owned a large clothing store in Cavendish Street), and George Green chairman. Other members apart from those already mentioned were Jack Thornton (famous for his mural on the bar wall of the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel), Gordon Cockin, Audrey Hanby, Fred Shaw, Jack Diamond, Jack Willacy, Roy Cooksey, Ian Currie, Bill McClure, Derek Ledghard, Mr and Mrs Ted Gray, Alan Scott and others not recorded.

The first advert I did find in the Evening Mail was dated the 12th September 1952.

BARROW MOUNTAINEERING AND SKI CLUB

Are holding an open climbing meet on

Sunday Sept 14th.

9.50 a.m. train to Coniston.

Anyone interested and with a view to
membership is invited to come along.

Mr G. Whiteman. Hon. Sec.

The news in that same paper on Monday the 15th of September told of a tragic accident on that meet. Nineteen year old Jimmy Sheppard was killed while descending D buttress after climbing



Great Central Route with Arthur Brooks, Ian Sinkinson and Alan Finch. Apparently he was elated after completing what was considered to be a tough route at that time, but slipped as he made his way down. He was wearing 'rubbers', as most climbers did which may have caused him to slip on a grassy ledge. Despite a doctor being present at the crag his injuries proved fatal. A number of climbers in the area, including Ian Currie, helped volunteers and Police to carry his body back to Coniston. Another climber at the scene took a series of photographs which were later published in the Picture Post Magazine. Some members of the club were so outraged at this apparent lack of respect, that they complained, and the photographer apologised and his letter included the cheque he had received in payment. The accident proved quite a blow to the new club but it struggled on until an E.G.M. was called to re-organise it in 1954. This seemed to work and the future looked more promising as new members were recruited.

Jack High and Graham Whiteman 1952.

The club acquired the use of a room above a blacksmith's shop at Ings near Staveley in 1955 which served as club hut and provided overnight accommodation at a cost of 1/6p (7.5 p.) per night. This helped to pay the rent and also buy firewood from the woodyard next door. Ings, however was not ideally situated, being away from the main climbing areas, and so a more suitable location was sought, closer to the crags.



Alan Montgomery on C Ordinary



Graham Whiteman on Kern Knotts 1950's

Committee meetings and socials were held in the Derby Hotel in Dalton Road and annual dinners took place at the Black Bull or Sun Hotel in Coniston. Jim Cameron, the well known professional mountain guide, was often called upon to be guest speaker, and eventually became club president. His son Alastair was an active member until quite recently.

The Public Records Office at Barrow Library has an extensive record of the local Evening Mail and I was able to find an advert for the 2nd April 1955 and a report of an A.G.M. from 30th June 1956.

MOUNTAINEERS ? _____

The Barrow Mountaineering and Ski Club are holding a social meet at the Derby Hotel, Dalton Rd.
April 5th at 7.30 p.m. Colour slides (Alps and Lakes) Anyone interested is invited.

At the AGM the acting secretary, Ian Currie, reported the club was making good progress with an increase of seven members to a total of thirty six. He mentioned several meets in the Lake District and proposed a meet to Ben Nevis for the next year. The photograph of Peter Fleming and George McClure was probably taken at that meet. (see chapter on Scotland) A Winter meets list for 1954, hand-written, provided by Peter Fleming is shown below.

BARROW MOUNTAINEERING AND SKI CLUB

WINTER MEETS 1954

JAN 17th SILVER HOW – HELM CRAG 9.25 bus to Ambleside. Miss A. HANBY

30th 31st CLIMBING – BORROWDALE. Camping at Burneside campsite, Keswick. A. MONTGOMERY

FEB 14th OPEN MOUNTAIN SEARCH ?

27th -28th SNOW CAMPING AT GRISEDALE TARN. SNOW AND ICE WORK. G. WHITEMAN, G. COCKIN.

MARCH 14th 9.25 BUS TO AMBLESIDE. FAIRFIELD RIDGE. E.A. GRAY.

27th – 28th CAMPING – LANGDALE. CLIMBING – GREAT GABLE. E.FINCH, I. CURRIE.

APRIL 16th – 19th EASTER WEEKEND . CLIMBING AND WALKING. SEATHWAITE FARM,BORROWDALE.

G.WHITEMAN.

MAY 2ND THE PRESIDENT’S MEET. 9.25 BUS TO AMBLESIDE, ILL BELL & FROSWICK.

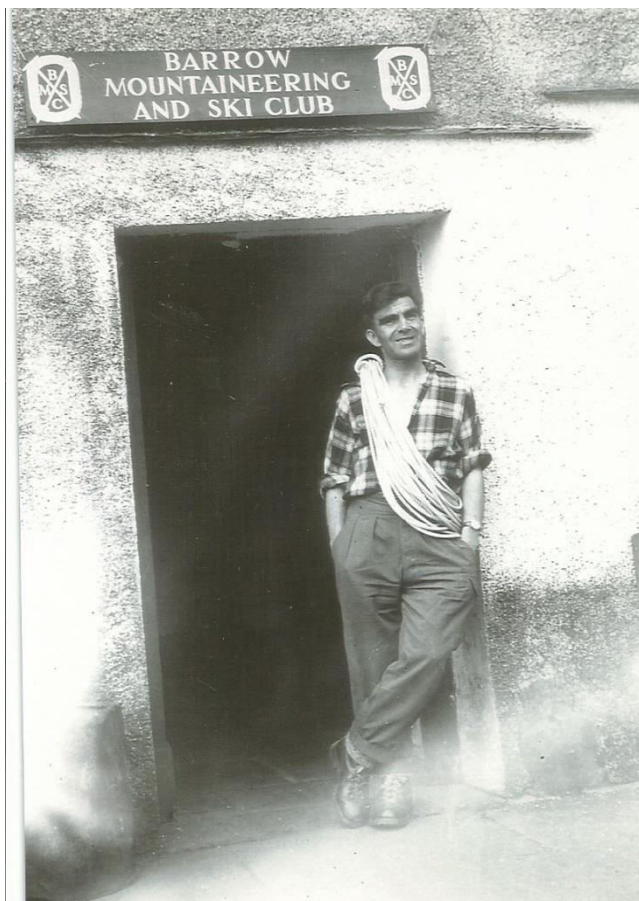
J.E. BLACKSHAW.

15th – 16th CAMPING - DOW CRAGS, CONISTON. G.COCKIN & MISS A. HANBY.

A big change came about in 1958 when the club was able to lease a cottage in Coppermines Valley. It was formerly used as the Mine Captain’s office with stables below and was being used by Usher, the builder from Coniston, as a base for the collection of building aggregate and became surplus to requirements. It was leased to the club for £26.00 per annum payable twice yearly at £13.00. The cottage then became the focal point for many members to escape the weekly boredom of working in Barrow Shipyard and was sometimes the venue for wild parties after a hard day’s climbing.



The cottage soon after it was acquired by the club.



Alan Montgomery at Coppermines Cottage



Levers Water- 1963. Bill Barnes, Jack Hool, George Last, Dave Kirby, Ged Knight, Alan Kirby.

Chapter 2

'Let's Go Climbing'

The title for this chapter came from a book I remember as a youth which was an introduction to rock climbing techniques and was written by Colin Kirkus, a well known climber of his day.

By its very nature rock climbing needs suitable places to climb and the Coniston area was fortunate in that there were many crags, both large and small, but in particular, there was Dow Crag with its great buttresses offering opportunities for some of the longest routes in the Lake District and, what was better still, was on our door step. The area was also linked to Barrow by Ribble Bus and in the early days, by rail, before Doctor Beeching axed the rail link in 1963.

Many of the rock climbing routes were of limited technical difficulty, (not many of HVS standard) mainly due to the limited nature of the equipment available, which meant that protection was almost impossible in some situations. The rule was that the leader could not afford to fall as the consequences could be disastrous. The rope was tied around the waist and a few slings were used as protection. Stones were often jammed into cracks and canny shipyard workers bored the thread from the inside of a nut to use on slings to get better protection on routes with suitable cracks.



Les Bell and Allan Charlesworth.(or Jim Roskell ?)

The introduction of nylon rope in the late 1950s in Britain was made use of by an enterprising Peter Fleming who bought a full 1,000 ft reel of new Kenyon hawser laid rope to take to the Alps. The owner of the famous Snell Alpine Sports Shop in Chamonix was keen to get his hands on this new

innovation of nylon rope. He did a deal with Pete to take modern ice climbing gear in exchange for some of the rope (he was reluctant to part with hard cash). The new rope had none of the disadvantages of the old hemp variety and was far more forgiving in the event of a fall due to its elasticity. It also had a much higher breaking strain than Alpine Manila, which broke at 2,000 lbs.

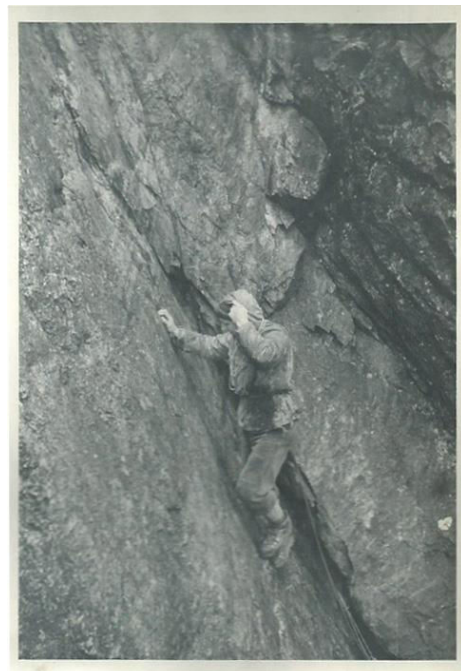


A young Peter Fleming at Dow Crag.

Many routes were climbed in boots or rubbers. One lad was kicked out of the Fell and Rock Club for climbing a delicate slab in nailed boots when the club had banned such activity to protect the route. One innovation mentioned by Colin Mc Creath was the introduction of the 'Gimmer' boot made by Stables of Ambleside which was a rigid soled lightweight boot but with a tread and could be used instead of heavy boots or rubbers when the route was appropriate. New lightweight rock boots began to replace 'rubbers' and from France came PAs (Pierre Alain) and from Manchester EBs (Ellis Brigham) which were the forerunners of the modern rock shoe.



Colin on East Wall Girdle , Grey Crag.



Jack Garstang, Great Gully.

I visited Eric Montgomery, whose brother, Alan was a founder member of the club. He told me the route which impressed him most was 'Eliminate A' on Dow Crag. Alan was very active on the local crags and Eric describes him as being in the 1st Division of climbers while he was in the second. Tony Fisher had a van and would transport Eric, Lenny Flay, Derek Copley and others up to Wasdale Head where Wilson Pharaoh, the landlord of the Hotel, would allow them to stay in the barn for the weekend. It is no surprise then that the club chose to use his Hotel for Christmas Dinners.

One of the crags members helped to open up was Seathwaite Buttress in the Duddon Valley. In June 1956 the three routes known as 'Snap, Crackle and Pop' were put up by a team comprising of Bill Broom, Peter Fleming, Doug Whyllie, Colin Liversedge and Dave Winstanley. A whole list of routes compiled by Bill Barnes is included to show that many new routes were pioneered by the BMSC.

1956, June – Peel Crag – Mossy Slab, Mossy Corner, Jackdaw Chimney. Climbers – W.Broom, P.Fleming, D.Whyllie, C.Liversedge, D.Winstanley.
 1956, July - Seathwaite Buttress Direct. W.Broom, P.Fleming, D.Winstanley.
 1957 – Raven Crag – The Arete, The Groove, The Scoop. W.Broom, P.Fleming, D.Winstanley, C.Liversedge.
 1958, May – Pitches 4 and 5 of Low Water Fell. D.Copley, W.Barnes.
 1958, July – Little How Crag - Rainbow Traverse. A.Kirby, W.Barnes.
 1959, May – Holly Tree Chimney. Grey Crag. D.Copley, W.Barnes.
 1959, May – Harry's Climb. Great How Crag - H.Greasley, W.Wilkins.
 1959, May – The Ghyll. Church Beck. A.Montgomery, A.Fisher, W.Barnes, L.Davies, B.Merritt.
 1959, Sept – Low Water Fall – Cove Crag. W.Barnes, J.Foran.
 1960, Feb – The Cobbler. (crag unknown) W.Barnes, K.Arts, J.Foran.
 1960, Apr – Inebriate. (crag unknown) G.Knight, J.Grier.
 1960, June – The Bull Track Overhang – Long Crag. J.Hool, J.Harkins, K.Butterworth, A. Halkyard.
 1960, July – Kraken Wall – Low Wether Crag. J. Hool, J.Kolbe.
 1960, Oct – Rudyard Groove – Long Crag L.Bell, A.Charlesworth.
 1961, Feb – Shrove Groove, Valentine. Raven Tor. J.Lancaster, W.Barnes.
 1961, Mar – Rita. (crag unknown) W.Barnes, J.Miller.
 1961, Apr – Variations on Rudyard's Groove – Long Crag. A.Gough, H.McDonald, H.Turner.
 1961, Sept – Variations on Original Route, Great How Crag. D.Copley, I.Currie, W.Barnes.
 1962, Mar – Original Route – Yewdale Crag. G.Knight, N.Cain, D.Miller, L.Bell.
 1962, May - Napoleon - Great How Crag. W.Barnes, J.Roskell.
 1963, Feb – Septimus – Great How Crag. J.Lancaster and others.
 1964, Jan – Scorflufus – Cove Crag. C.Mc Creath, W.Barnes.
 1964, Sept – Doubtful – Grey Crag. C.Mc Creath, A.Gough, L.Bell, W.Barnes.
 1964, Oct – Privateer - Grey Crag. J.Hool.
 1965, Apr – Triddle Groove – Low Wether Crag. D.Winstanley, W.Barnes.
 1965, Apr – Horrendicular – Low Wether Crag. J.Roskell, W.Barnes.
 1965, June – Viper Cove Crag. J.Hool, C.Mc Creath.
 1965, Oct – Tobacco Road – Low Water Crag. J.Hool, C.Mc Creath, A.Gough, W.Barnes.
 1966, May – Chrysalis – Raven Crag, Yewdale. D.Miller, P.Fleming.

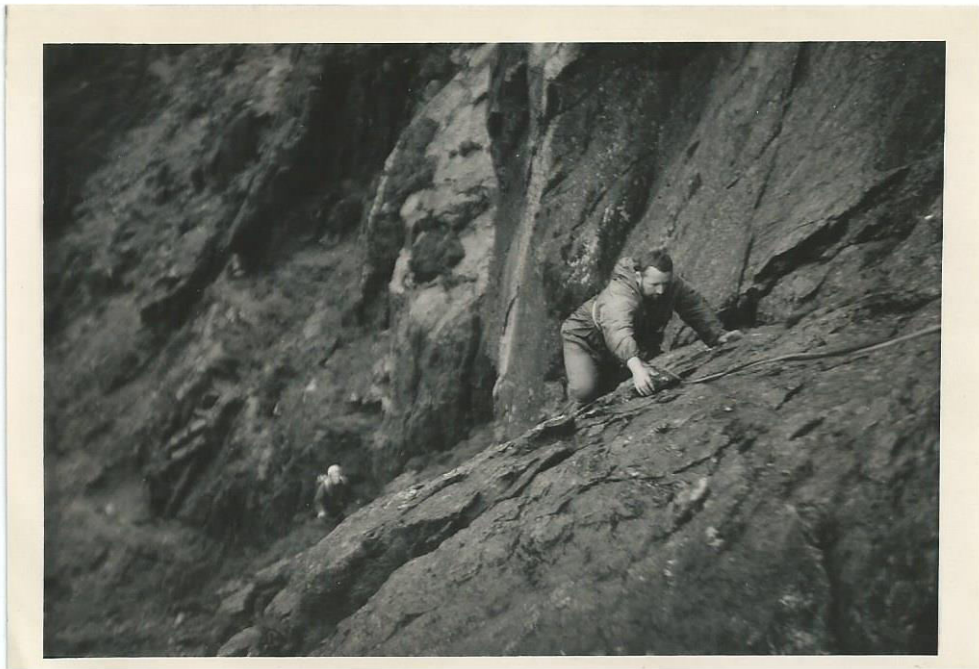
1968, Feb – The Gangway- Great Blake Rigg. D.Miller, D.Gere.
 1968, July – Brazington's Route – Grey Crag. J.Brazington, D.Winstanley.
 1969, Aug – Module – Grey Crag. C.Mc Creath, B.Heslin.
 1971, Apr – Rheingold – Grey Crag. B.Heslin, J.Garstang, J.Hool.
 1971, Sept – Troll – Low Wether Crag. W.Barnes, D.Winstanley.
 1972, Apr – Curved Air – Grey Crag. C.Haynes, C.Mc Creath, J.Hool, W.Barnes, B.Heslin.
 1972, Aug – Odin – Great Blake Rigg. T.W.Birkett, B.Heslin.
 1972, Sept – Nemesis – Grey Crag. B.Heslin, J.Broadhurst, C.Mc Creath, J.Hool.
 1977, Aug – The Reiver. Buckbarrow Crag. J. Holden, W. Barnes.
 1971, Sept – The Pale Horse - crag above Low Water. J. Holden, W. Barnes.
 1981, Apr – Columbia – Stonestar, Duddon. M.Lynch, A.Phizacklea.

This list is meant to give a taste of the activities of the club, mainly in the Coniston area.

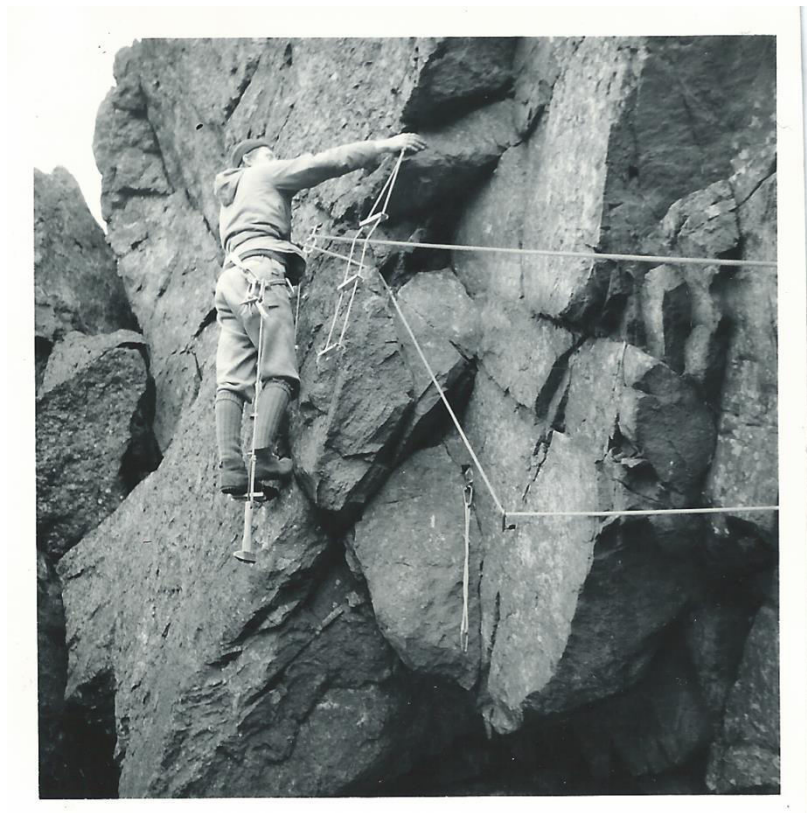


Alan Kirby. Grey Crag, Burtneß Comb 1963.

Dow Crag had some hard routes such as the Eliminates on A,B and C Buttresses and GCR (Great Central Route). Hopkinson's Crack and Gully, Girdle Traverse (all VS) and Black Wall (HVS) were good routes and yet had been put up way back in the 1920s. When Tony Gough and Pete Fleming climbed Central Buttress, Hell's Groove and Gremlin Groove and May Day which were all VS in standard, Tony used nailed boots as he wanted to experience the traditional way of climbing like the early pioneers. Jack Hool pointed out an interesting passage in Ken Wilson's 'Classic Rock' where Murray's Route was being described by Tony Greenbank, when he was reminded of others on the route before him – *'of Barrow lads (whose fingerprints grace Polaris nuclear submarines beneath the polar ice, and who have spent night after midsummer night on the crag) having a tussle with the verglas on the gun-barrel chimney along the top traverse, although they would normally be climbing Hard VS. It is not a climb to be underestimated'*.



Les Bell – Giant's Crawl, Dow Crag.



Mike Hill, Kernel Crag, 1960s

In the early days transport was always a problem and this is why Coniston and Langdale were the most visited climbing areas with Borrowdale being a little bit more awkward to get to. Motorbikes came into their own for the young climber who wanted to get about and both Pete Fleming and Dave Winstanley made use of them to travel far and wide. Dave's trips were often not without incident and he had a bad crash while following Pete to Wasdale when he was trapped under his bike before the ambulance arrived and enough people were available to lift it off him. He was seriously injured but survived to go on and have many more crashes.



The 'One and Only' Dave Winstanley.

It has been said that members of our club did not climb to the highest standards and that an aspiring young climber, who wanted to improve, would have to join another (perhaps, more senior) club to gain more experience and find companions of a like mind. Some joined the Fell and Rock Club and later, others were attracted to the newly formed Ulverston Club. Some like Jack Hool retained their membership of the BMSC but others left never to return. Some of the top climbers of

the area never joined the Barrow club. Rob Matheson was never a member and Al Phizaclea was only in a short time in his youth before he headed off to join the Ulverston club. Pete Fleming joined the Alpine Club in order to gain experience to climb the highest peaks in the Alps and improve his technique to help him fulfil his ambition of completing the 4,000 metre peaks. A number of others have more than one club membership but have never abandoned their original club.

Our club was never able to mount such prestige expeditions as the ambitious Ulverston Club which went as far afield as their incident- packed trip to the Hindu Kush and the Everest attempt which ended when Pat Gunson had a heart attack at over 20,000 ft. (this was when Pat was taking part in an army expedition). We may not have had their ambition but we have had the stamina to keep going for over sixty years.

Chapter 3

Coppermines Cottage



A momentous occasion in the club's history occurred in 1958 when the club had the opportunity to lease a cottage in Coppermines Valley. Previously, a cottage in Irish Row was used now and again, courtesy of Roy Cooksey, but he was able to negotiate the use of the old mine captain's office next door to the Youth Hostel. Usher, the builder from Coniston had been using it, but, as he no longer needed it, he offered to lease it to the club for £26 per annum, payable twice yearly at £13. Part of the building was in disrepair but it did provide a good base close to good climbing crags and had plenty of scope for development in the future.

Conditions were basic, to say the least, with no electricity or mains water, only one inside toilet and one outside, in the far corner of the garden with a hand rail along the wall to guide you there in the dark. Candles and later gas provided light and coal was used for heating. John Broadhurst remembers borrowing the mountain rescue stretcher from the Youth Hostel to carry gas bottles up from Coniston. The end of the building which we now know as the 'members end' was derelict with a large hole in the roof and debris down below. Only cosmetic work was possible on the cottage largely due to the fact that the club did not own the building. Despite this, the cottage became the focus of club activities and many climbing expeditions and social events took place there.



The cottage about 1960.



The 'Young Ones' including Jack Grier, George Last and Wendy Kolbe. (1960's)

Finances were always a problem and this was highlighted in 1969 with the threat of eviction due to the non-payment of rent. Apparently there had been a mix-up over names on the cheque and the bank had returned it. Another problem was that Rydal Estates, the owners of the property, claimed they had no knowledge of the sub-letting arrangement. This situation was resolved and at the next A.G.M. the members voted to approach Rydal Estates to buy the cottage. The total cost was to be £1,560 but this was to be offset by a grant of £750 from the Sports Council. (£1,000 was for the cost of the cottage, the rest was for repairs) The task was now to raise the money for the purchase and many fund raising activities were suggested, with a sponsored walk appearing to be the most successful. Estimates had to be submitted for repairs and professional fees as well as maintenance costs and changes to club rules to satisfy the Sports Council in order for the grant to be approved. Everything was completed satisfactorily and on the 13th September 1972 all was signed and sealed and Coppermines Cottage became the club's property. The deeds were signed by Jim Cameron (president), Roy Cooksey, Tony Gough, Bill Ashton and witnessed by Jack Garstang.



Now could begin the task of getting the cottage into a fit state of repair and a long programme of building work began and was to continue throughout the 1970s. John Anderson supervised a lot of the work and was ably assisted by John Broadhurst, Jack Garstang, Colin McCreath, Tony Fisher, Allan Charlesworth, Peter Fleming, Bill Barnes and Jim Roskell. Many others were involved in jobs that included getting the old barn end of the building fit for habitation. This required new supporting walls for the roof and new windows. Drains had to be dug to link up with the old septic tank which was replaced later. Stairs had to be fitted to link the new part with downstairs. These were donated by Jim Miller and made it possible for a separate members section away from the guest end. This was important as it provided more opportunities for the club to let this section to other clubs and organisations and make some income for the club. Prior to this, the warden, Jack Garstang, had tried to make money by letting other clubs share the facilities and even allowed the Youth Hostel to send people over as an overspill. The new arrangements were much better and the income raised could be used to subsidise other club activities as well as the maintenance and continued improvement of the building.



Major reconstruction work.

One major problem was the lack of electricity and the club negotiated for two years with the North West Electricity Company in an effort to get linked to the grid. Overhead wires had been turned down by the Lake District National Park Planning Board. It was probably because of work going on at Levers Water and the water treatment plant at Paddy End where power was required that the cottage was finally connected. On the 17th March 1974 electricity was available for the first time in 61 years, when the mines had their own generator. This meant that lighting and electrical appliances could be used and so made life a lot more comfortable for those staying at the cottage.



J.Broadhurst, J.Garstang, L.Davis, J.Hool, B. Heslin, Tony Fisher , M.Garstang, Ros Broadhurst.

Another problem occurred in 1983 when a severe storm caused damage to the roof as well as affecting the Youth Hostel next door. The club found that it was, unfortunately, under-insured to cover all the repairs. A long series of correspondence with the insurers led to the club having to bear part of the costs of work to put the damage right. Emergency repairs were carried out to safeguard the building before full repair work commenced. This was quite a setback for the club's finances but the work was completed and the cottage weather-proofed once more.

During the early 1970s Bill Barnes lived at the cottage while he worked in the area. Acting as an unpaid caretaker, living rent free and using coal and electricity. He did eventually pay towards his stay but some members were not happy about this situation, because they felt a little intimidated when visiting the cottage when Bill was there, as though they were intruders, even though they were members. This may even have led to members not visiting as often as they might. Others were not so put off and welcomed the kettle being put on and a friendly chat from a knowledgeable person. The dilemma was raised at a committee meeting but it was felt that, on balance, Bill did more good than harm by his presence and he was allowed to stay until he moved on his own accord.



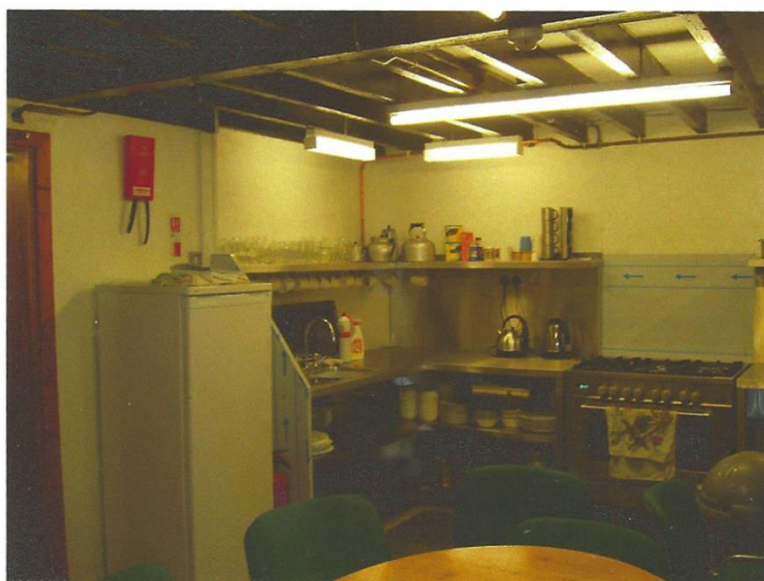
Colin McCreath hard at work.

Further work continued to make improvements to the cottage. A new washroom was built next to the toilet in 1978 and an extra toilet and showers made for members. A new septic tank was installed and arrangements made for it to be emptied periodically. The guests kitchen was updated but a problem with water seeping from a ground source continued for many years until a drainage system was employed to get rid of the surplus water. Supplying gas from large gas bottles could be annoying when one had to be changed over when the other was empty, especially in bad weather. A solution was found when a large gas tank was installed in the garden. A new concrete platform had to be built and trenches dug to accommodate the gas pipe. The size of the tank meant

that it only had to be topped up about once a year and it was a much more economic way of buying gas. New windows with double glazed units were fitted and two new solid fuel stoves replaced the old open fires and proved much more effective in providing heat than letting most of it go up the chimney. New flues had to be put into the old chimneys to accommodate the new stoves. With all this burning material about it was decided to fit a modern fire alarm system with smoke and heat sensors as well as emergency lighting. A small drying room with a de-humidifier provided the chance to dry out wet gear. Mike Mitchell fitted fans with a ventilator to the showers and upgraded the gas boiler, eventually providing a separate one to cope with extra demand when both ends of the cottage were being used.



Jack Garstang and John Broadhurst supervise the installation of the gas tank.



Kitchen improvements in 2007.

By the year 2000 I felt that the area outside the guest entrance could do with tidying up and undertook a project to lay a new patio, so that on good days, at the end of some strenuous activity, one could relax outside with a cup of tea, or something stronger. I also laid a new path to the upstairs door which was easier to clean than the old gravel path. More recently members will have noticed that this small area also has a patio with seating so that members can sit outside on a nice evening. It seems to appeal to the few smokers we still have left. The replacement for the wooden seat outside the kitchen window was assembled by Ian Currie and myself, but the piece of slate that was supplied was somewhat larger than I had planned on and seems to resemble a small slate altar. Mind you, it does warm up nicely in the sun, and, both members and passers-by seem to like it.

An opportunity arose to buy the land between the cottage and Red Dell Beck, and Rydal Estates were approached to ascertain the value of the land in question. A previous attempt in the late 1980s had stalled over the problem of solicitors acting for our neighbour, Mr Johnston and Rydal Estates and the B.M.S.C. Apparently Mr Johnston knew all about our proposal to buy the land. This caused a delay and it was some years before another attempt was made to acquire the land. A survey of the area was conducted in 1999 and the actual amount of land was found to be just under an acre and valued, as rough grazing, at about £1,000. Rydal Estates wanted £3,000 plus £1,000 for legal fees and other administration costs. The committee tried to negotiate for what we considered to be a fairer but lower price but no such reduction was forthcoming. It was agreed that we should continue with the proposed purchase of the land. Things dragged on for some time until we were informed that the area of land that was available was somewhat less than expected, as part of it had already been sold to Philip Johnston when he acquired his land some years earlier. The long delays began to annoy some members and eventually it was decided to put the purchase of the land to the membership at an E.G.M. as to whether to continue, or not. It was pointed out that as the land was designated as a S.S.S.I. (Site of Special Scientific Interest) nothing could be done with it, and it would remain as rough grazing as before. We would be getting less land than hoped for, and it was way above market price. Others argued that we should buy it to protect the club's interest in the land immediately adjacent to the cottage and also to prevent it falling into the hands of Mr Johnston. The resulting vote narrowly decided to give up on the purchase idea. I think people were fed up with the prevarications of Rydal Estates and the Solicitor and if they had 'got their fingers out' sooner then the deal would have gone through long before people lost interest.



Ian (Yan) Currie hut warden.

After the millennium there had been some discussion about upgrading the guests kitchen but nothing came of it until a chance meeting by Ian Currie with a John Rowe on the Coniston Fells. This chap lived in Cark and was a sheet metal worker with experience of commercial projects. This led to the design of kitchen units made of stainless steel which would last a life-time. The cottage had to be closed for the whole of March 2007 while the old kitchen was ripped out. A skip was filled with old units and appliances and a small dividing wall demolished as it was taking up valuable space.

Electrical work was completed by outside contractors. The new units arrived by truck and were assembled and squeezed through the door and fitted into the kitchen. John Broadhurst did a lot of the plumbing work. A new ventilation system was designed with a powerful extractor fan incorporated into the window to get rid of steam and smells. A large new stove with a gas hob and electric oven was bought along with a larger fridge, micro-wave, small freezer and new crockery to complete the renovation. All the work was completed in time for the cottage to re-open again for those who had booked in April.

Most people were impressed by the finished product, apart from one wag who claimed 'it looked like a bloody fish and chip shop'. It was, however, extremely functional and easy to clean. It was a massive improvement on what we had before. This led to proposals that the members' kitchen should also be upgraded and this we hope to do in the not too distant future. There have been claims that the new facilities are too good and too expensive for a 'humble climbing hut' but it must be remembered that the cottage provides all of the club's income and without it we would find it difficult, if not impossible to provide the wherewithal for the club to continue its existence. As booking secretary for the cottage I have had many complimentary comments from visitors and as a regular user of the cottage myself, I must say that my friends and I have found the improvements most beneficial. The continuing work at the cottage both in maintenance and better facilities is done to make life for members and visitors a pleasant experience and one which we hope they will want to repeat.

In the past the vast majority of maintenance and building work was carried out by members, who often had skills, or learnt them. Today it is often not possible for members to be allowed to do the work. Our members were qualified to build nuclear submarines but not considered fit to do domestic wiring or gas fitting without the right bit of paper. Fortunately we are in a healthy financial position and can afford to pay for such jobs to be done. This doesn't mean we can throw money away and we still need people to do jobs when work parties are due or when emergency repairs need to be done. Many people have been involved in this work over the years and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has participated in the renovation and maintenance of the cottage since it first came into our hands in 1958. Some have already been mentioned and others can also be seen in the photographs used to illustrate this chapter of the history of the club.



The cottage in 2011.

Chapter 4

'Winter Wonderland'

The mountains in Winter have always provided that extra allure as the appearance of the hills change to look more inviting (or intimidating, depending on your point of view) and offer the extra challenge of routes that were, once familiar, now becoming an altogether different prospect. Chapter 2 shows a Winter Meets List for 1956 and the weekend of the 27th and 28th of February shows 'snow camping' at Grisedale Tarn, with the chance of snow and ice work. In those days the snows of winter were somewhat more reliable than in recent decades and so it was possible to schedule Winter climbing in the meets list.

The unreliable snowfall in the last thirty years has blighted many plans for Winter climbing both in the Lakes and in Scotland and newsletters have many tales of trips spoiled and climbs thwarted by the lack of snow and ice. During my twenty five years as a Lake District National Park Warden the ice-axe training sessions due to be held, often in February, on the slopes of Helvellyn were often cancelled due to a shortage of the 'white stuff'.

Our earlier members were often more fortunate in the winter supply of snow and got out as often as they could, especially in the Lakes. Once again, equipment was limited, and often ex-War Department ice-axes and crampons left over from World War Two were put to good use. Balaclavas and mitts were often the only specialist winter clothing available. Despite this, the club found itself visiting the crags, where gullies held the snow, to practise their Winter climbing techniques. Dow Crag, Helvellyn, Great End and Scafell were all places that were popular .



Derek Copley, Jamie Dixon, George Sillcock and Eric Montgomery on Great End , 1957

Winter meets in Scotland were more likely to see snow and ice but in the Lakes it was possible to head out soon after a fall of snow and not have to plan a long time in advance, which was the case with trips to Scotland. Hastily arranged trips were made when the conditions became conducive to snow and ice climbing. As a result, such trips were often not recorded and there is a distinct lack of information in the archive about winter climbing in the Lakes, which is the theme of this chapter. This has meant I have had to rely mainly on the memories of those who took part in these wintry excursions, although there is more information recorded in the latter years.

The earliest climbs were handicapped by a lack of equipment and limited belays for protection. Gullies were often on the menu and on many of the routes step-cutting and the use of long ice axes was the norm with nailed boots having an advantaged before crampons became more widely available. Easy Gully and Great Gully on Dow Crag were favourites and various routes above Red Tarn on Helvellyn were done. Nethermost Pike offered Pike Gully and Nethermost Gully while Great End had Central Gully and Skew Gill. On Scafell there was Deep Gill. In the early 1970s Peter Fleming and Tony Gough attempted the first winter ascent of Central Buttress on Scafell. The first pitch was covered in hoar frost and it became obvious it was too risky to continue and so they 'abbed off'.



Preparing for the fray. Bill Barnes, Ged Knight, Allan Charlesworth.(or Jim Roskell ?)

The 1970s saw an improvement in the quality of the grades climbed largely due to improvements in equipment with drive-in ice pegs, ice screws, ice hammers, short curved ice axes, dead-men, harnesses, helmets and longer double ropes – all of which helped to make belaying and protection more secure. I have been told that a more competitive attitude amongst climbers pushed up the technical difficulty as they strove to outdo each other. Sometimes this led to dubious practises such as when one well known local climber, who will remain nameless, used a water supply pipe to Hodge Close to pour water over the edge of the quarry, which then froze, to provide a, never to be repeated, ice climbing extravaganza, once the pipe was returned to its original position.



Low Water Beck.

Peter Fleming provided me with a list of some of the routes he did in the 1970s and 1980s which give a good flavour of the winter climbing activities of Peter and his friends.

Dates	Route	Grade	Companions
30 Jan 1977	Steep Gill, Scafell	V	B. Mc Kinley
20 Feb 1977	Mickeldore Chmney, Scafell	111	P. Blezard, A. Danson
22 Feb 1977	Moss Gill Scafell	1V	B. Mc Kinley
18 Feb 1978	Great Gully, Dow Crag	111	?
28 Jan 1979	Black Crag Icefall, Dove Crag	1V	J. Hool, B. Mc Kinley
10 Feb 1979	Raven Crag Gully, Borrowdale	111	D. Jewel
11 Feb 1979	Jogebar Gully, Ruthwaite Cove	111	J. Hool, P. Kendall, D. Jewel
17 Feb 1979	Inaccessible Gully, Dove Crag	1V	J. Hool, B. Mc Kinley
18 Feb 1979	Great Gully, The Screes	111	J. Hool, B. Mc Kinley
25 Feb 1979	Spiral Gully, Grasmoor	111	J. Hool, B. Mc Kinley
	Dove Crag Gully, Grasmoor	V	J. Hool, B. Mc Kinley

18 Mar 1979	Moss Gill, Scafell	1V	B. Mc Kinley, A, Phizacklea
12 Jan 1980	Window Gully, Great End	111	B. Mc Kinley
	Central Gully, Great End	11	B. Mc Kinley
1 Mar 1981	Force Crag Waterfall	1V	J. Hool, B. Mc Kinley, A. Phizack'
13 Dec 1981	Hell Gill, Oxendale	11	B. Mc Kinley, A. Phizacklea
	Crinkle Cut, Crinkle Gill	1V	B. Mc Kinley, A Phizacklea
28 Feb 1981	Sandbed Gill, St John's	1 V	J. Hool, B. McKinley
12 Feb 1983	Low Water Fall, Coniston	1V	B. Mc Kinley, A. Phizacklea
13 Feb 1983	Great Gully, the Screes (RHF)	1V	B. Mc Kinley, A. Phizacklea
11 Dec 1983	Black Crag Icefall, Dovedale	1V	B. Mc Kinley
22 Feb 1986	Greenhow End, Deepdale	111	Les & Barbara Swindin

Once newsletters became more frequent , thanks to the likes of people like Angela Mc Creath and Martin Hebbert, there were more reports of Winter climbing to be found and I have selected some of these to illustrate club activities.



Tony Gough on Dollywagon 1973

The Cleveland Hut in Patterdale was used in March 1977 and those attending included Colin Mc Creath, Tony Fisher, Roger Burrow, Peter Palmer and R. Barker. On the Saturday one group headed to the Greenside Lead Mines while the rest headed up Brown Cove. The snow conditions were best to the right of Swirral Edge and one team headed up a gully with lots of snow in it. The others attempted a nearby rock band. A cornice had to be breached to reach the summit of Helvellyn and an Arctic wind faced the teams as they headed along Nethermost Pike and Dollywagon before

descending into Grisedale. The Sunday was wet and prevented any further climbing. Kirkstone Pass was officially closed but our intrepid travellers managed to make it over the top anyway.



Peter Fleming and Betty McGregor.

'Cold Climbs' published in 1983 and edited by Ken Wilson shows some of our members in Great Gully on the Screes in Wasdale. Jack Hool is seen in the Right Hand Finish of the gully from a photograph taken by Peter Fleming. Jack also climbed with some of the Great Gully team in 1981 along with Dave Geere. This route, with a first pitch of 150 feet (grade V/V1) and a 30 foot second pitch, was pure ice and very steep with high technical difficulty and provided an epic for Jack, who had to lead, and as he said, if he came off it would probably have been his last.



Jack Hool Great Gully Wasdale Screes

Winter climbing in the Lakes was not without its problems (mainly lack of snow and ice) but in February 1990 a Langdale Meet saw five members attend. Jack Hool, John Harrison, Colin Mc Creath, Roger Mellen and John High approached Raven Crag in poor weather. John, Roger and John High attempted Centipede (300 feet, Severe) while Jack and Colin attempted Holly Tree Traverse. The two eventually retreated to join the trio, already ensconced, in the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. This was typical of many attempts at Winter climbing.

In February 2005 a Meet led by Steve Nelson was arranged for Patterdale. Only John Harrison and Roger Mellen had the foresight to bring Winter climbing gear and duly set out for Nethermost Gully. Heather and Trevor Morgan had left theirs at home and so joined up with Steve, Colin Mc Creath and Rob Mc Fall for the 'Edges of Helvellyn. Surprisingly this was Steve's first Winter visit and Rob's first ever.



Pete Kelly on the West Wall traverse Scafell Feb 2010

That same year also saw the Chester branch of the BMSC try a bit of winter climbing. Ged Barlow and Steve and Anne Mc Intosh travelled to North Wales and Snowdonia where the trio tackled Right Hand Trinity to reach the summit of Snowdon. Apparently Steve found the cold to be a new experience. North Wales is not visited much in Winter by Barrow climbers as it seems preferable to head north to Scotland rather than south, where there is more likelihood of getting good snow conditions for climbing. On the other hand if you live in Cheshire then North Wales is the obvious place to go.

A few years later Steve Nelson was the meet leader again in Patterdale (he must like it there) and along with John Harrison, Roger Mellen and myself we set off up Grisedale. Above Ruthwaite Lodge we donned crampons and ascended a bread gully up onto Dollywagon where we met the Barrow Ramblers 'A' party en route for Helvellyn. This is the other club I belong to and so we were able to chat as we made our way along the cold ridge to the summit. We descended a steep and icy start to Swirral Edge (thank God for crampons) and made our way back to Patterdale. A few weeks later I

was ascending Swirral Edge in similar conditions and just near the steep top part our party was met by a chap who asked us if he could lower his two young daughters down to us (aged less than ten wearing wellingtons and inadequate clothing). It beggars belief that a parent would place his young children in such a dangerous situation. He would have had some serious explaining to do to their mother if either of them had slipped to their death, as others have done at this very spot and in similar conditions. He obviously did not know of easier descent routes and was lucky that we were there to help him but, of course, he should not have been there with his young kids in the first place.



Pete Kelly on Pisgagh Buttress February 2010.



The author on Bowfell 1987.

Latterly the Winters have not been ideal for snow and ice climbing in the Lakes but we all live in hope and each Meets List has opportunities to get to grips with the 'white stuff' on the odd occasion it appears. Those doubters of the theory of Global Warming would change their minds if they were climbers or hill walkers who over many years have experienced the milder Winters and the lack of snow cover in Winter. This is why most trips for Winter climbing are in Scotland and even there, there have been times when there is very little snow, if any. I was lucky enough to experience the Winter of 1962-3 when there was snow cover for a few months and I was able to enjoy many exciting and memorable mountain days, and all without an ice-axe or crampons. Those days may have gone forever but there is always a chance that a tiny shift in climatic patterns may bring us back a 'Winter wonderland'.

Chapter 5

'Rescue Me'

Climbing by its very nature has always been a risky activity, which is, perhaps, one of the reasons why young men, in particular, have been so attracted towards it. This risk has, unfortunately, led to club members being involved in a number of accidents over the decades as well as taking part in many a rescue, which have, in some cases, resulted in the saving of a life or prevention of serious injury.

The very first advertised club meet on the 14th of September 1952 saw the death of young Jimmy Sheppard and is described in the first chapter. This accident shocked the club and it was a while before members regained their confidence on rock. It was a decade later on the 7th June 1962, again on Dow Crag, that tragedy struck once more when Ross Porteous was hit on the head by a rock, possibly dislodged from above, and died from his injuries. I don't know if a helmet would have saved him but the argument is largely academic as they were not widely available at that time. I will always remember Ross as the kind man who lent me a pair of gloves on a wet and cold October day in 1960 on my second outing with Barrow Ramblers from Torver to Seatoller, as a thirteen year old with my cousin Tony Burns. Doug Wylie, also on that walk, and a close friend of Ross, told me that his death affected him so much that he gave up climbing altogether.

It seems incredible, but it happened again after another ten year gap. Another fatal accident occurred on the 19th February 1972. Jack Fisher, the brother of Tony, an active club member, was parked next to me at Patterdale. A yellow Lotus Elite is not something you easily forget. He had just finished a route on Nethermost Pike and was preparing to descend via Striding Edge when, un-ropeed by this time, he tripped on a crampon and plunged to his death.

Another young member was to die in a rock-fall in the Alps in 1970's. This was John Brazington, a lad I used to walk home with from the Grammar School in Barrow. The last time I met him was in the car park of the Queen's Head on the Kirkstone road just before he was due to go out to the Alps. He was really looking forward to the trip but, unfortunately, he was not able to return home.

The last climbing accident resulting in the death of a member was in the Winter of 1980 when John Green, whom I knew from Barrow Ramblers, was on the Aonach Eagach ridge in Glencoe when he, unselfishly, went to the aid of a member of another party who had fallen and was injured. John was also injured in his brave rescue attempt and broke a leg. He was rescued and taken to hospital in Fort William but died a few days later due to complications. This was, thank God, the last of the fatalities and we have been blessed with over thirty years without another tragedy.

The earlier accidents on Dow Crag prompted club members to push for facilities on Dow crag in the event of an accident. It was decided to provide a Mountain Rescue Box at the foot of the crags to aid climbers and rescuers to render assistance to anyone injured on the crags. A box was duly built with the help of Barrow Shipyard and carried in sections by club members in April 1964 to its present position and provisioned with a stretcher and other equipment deemed

necessary for a rescue. Mountain Rescue Teams were becoming established about this time and the Coniston Team often had the assistance of climbers and walkers to carry a casualty down from the crags.

After the death of Jack Fisher it was resolved to place another mountain rescue box at the 'Hole in the Wall' site on the path up to Helvellyn. Photographs of the time show members heavily laden with sections of the box struggling up the steep path. This work party on the 7th and 8th of October 1972 included Ian Currie, Roy Cooksey, Ian Charlesworth, Tony Gough, Jim Nesbitt, Colin Mc Creath, Brian Heslin, Jack Garstang and others with Jim Cameron in a 'supervisory' role. This box was in memory of Jack Fisher and also had John Brazington's name added to the plaque on the side of the box.



Les Bell and Allan Charlesworth or Jim Roskell carrying parts of the box to Dow Crag.



Tony Gough, Roy Cooksey, Eddie Boddington, Brian Heslin, Hugh Cameron. Allan Charlesworth, Jim Miller, Jack Hool, Colin McCreath.

In later years the Dow Crag Box began to show signs of wear and tear and it was decided to replace it. The club was prepared to do the work again but Harry Griffin (Lakeland Tiger and author as well as being the famous Guardian Country Diary writer for many years) offered to pay for the box as a memorial to his son Robin who had died in the Himalayas. The club agreed to his

proposal and the new box was installed on the 1st April 2000 with the help of club members, the Coniston Mountain Rescue Team, and a helicopter. Later, back at a Coniston pub, Harry Griffin thanked the club for its efforts. Roy Cooksey, an early club member, who helped keep the club going in its formative years and who later became club president, became involved with the Coniston Mountain Rescue Team, eventually becoming Team leader. He was rewarded for 23 years of voluntary service to the Team in the New Years Honours list of 2009 when he was awarded an M.B.E. This was a tremendous honour for Roy and also for the club to have one of its own so recognized.

The club's early forays into Scotland, particularly at Easter, for Winter climbing, often led to members being involved in the rescue of other climbers who got into difficulties sometimes because of inexperience, incompetence or a deluded sense of their own abilities. Dave Winstanley and Pete Fleming often seemed to be around when things went wrong. They often went up to Scotland in the late 1950s in preparation for their trips to the Alps. While climbing Tower Ridge, on the 'Ben' in deep snow, Pete encountered a large unstable block which a following party managed to dislodge, sending the lead climber over the edge where he ended up hanging at the end of a rope over Echo Wall. Dave and Pete reached the C.I.C. hut where they heard of the accident. They took the stretcher from the hut and headed back upwards. Dave heroically carried the stretcher on his back up Tower Ridge with tremendous determination. When the Rescue Team arrived a few ropes had to be joined together in order to lower the stranded climber down. Unfortunately, hanging by his waist caused him to stop breathing, and he was dead when recovered.

On another occasion when reaching the C.I.C. hut below Ben Nevis, they noticed a couple had not moved from their position at the bottom of Zero Gully for some time. Realising something was wrong they carried the stretcher up to discover one climber was injured. They used the stretcher to lower him down. Owing to a lack of good belay points they used a 'Deadman' snow anchor and were impressed by its capacity to hold them and the stretcher and victim as he was lowered. At the hut the Rescue Team had arrived and took over to take him to hospital in Fort William.

Yet again, while on the 'Ben' doing Tower Ridge, Dave and Pete noticed another party struggling on Observatory Buttress. They shouted across and on reaching the end of their route were able to lower a rope to the others to aid them complete the climb. By the time they all got up it was getting late. The Yorkshire Climbing Club were camping on the summit plateau and were able to collapse into their tents while our pair had to descend in the dark. Meanwhile their anxious friends had alerted the Rescue Team because of their delayed return. They managed to get down just in time to prevent the team from setting off and had some explaining to do about their part in a rescue to the Rescue Team. Dave and Pete were getting fed up with all the accidents and rescues they were encountering on the Ben and decided to avoid it at Easter in the future.

Members were not just involved in accidents but also helped on many occasions rescuing others who had got into difficulties. On the 22nd of September 1972, Alexander Peters, a 16 year old American student, staying at Coppermines Youth Hostel, fell down a mine shaft in Red Dell, while attempting to jump across it. The rescue attempt took 10 hours and Coniston, Langdale

and Ambleside Teams together with a Mines Rescue Team combined to extricate him. Jack Hool and Colin Mc Creath who had just returned from a day's climbing went to the scene of the accident and spent many hours down the shaft in the successful rescue attempt. In appreciation of the members' efforts an American Student Organisation sent \$50 to the club towards equipment. The boy was taken to North Lonsdale Hospital in Barrow where he recovered from his various injuries.



Mine Rescue 1972

A report in the club journal for 1986 tells of a trip to the Cuillins on Skye by Peter Fleming, Dave Kirby and Jack Hool where on Sgurr nan Gilleann, in winter conditions, a young man broke a leg. His friend went down for help but before a rescue team could locate him he was swept down a gully by an avalanche. It is possible he may have died of hyperthermia before the avalanche took him away. This is but one example of the dangers climbers face when they venture out.

While walking along Striding Edge one Winter a man came running towards me and told of an accident to one of his friends further along the ridge. He was heading off to get the mountain rescue team. As we approached the so called Bad Step we could see a group down in Nethermost Cove with a figure lying in the snow. It turned out to be Jim Cameron who was president of our club at the time. Fortunately he recovered and was able to continue with his mountaineering activities.

On another occasion a Winter club meet took place at the Alex Mac Intyre Hut at Onich in March 1999. On the Saturday some of us went Munro Bagging while others headed off to the Ben. Jack Hool and Peter Kelly were on Tower Ridge. This was proving rather popular and there were queues as people took their time. When a young couple got to the gap they asked if they could go past as they lacked the right equipment and the girl was beginning to suffer from hypothermia. Jack gallantly let them through only to see the girl slip. He set off to help but she recovered and was able to continue. By this time it was getting dark, and late, and those of us back at the hut were wondering where they were. They eventually got back about two o'clock in the morning after a frustrating day. Other parties from the club who were ahead of Jack and Peter on the ridge included Chris Ellwood, Russ Cannon and Ged Barlow while Dave Rothery and a friend also managed to complete the route trouble free.

While staying at the cottage one weekend in the Summer of 1999 a knock came on the door in the evening and a man described how his partner was trapped on a ledge while descending. It turned out they had made the common mistake of thinking they were on Prison Band when in fact they were on Great How Crag. I rang 999 and was put through to the Coniston Team and explained the situation to them. Meanwhile, Andy Kerr, who was staying upstairs with his son, set off up the hill with a flask and spare clothing to lend some assistance to the stranded fell-runner. The Coniston Team arrived soon after and were able to drive up to Levers Water and were quickly on the scene. They quickly lowered the ledge bound fell-runner and were all back in Coniston in no time at all. Andy Kerr did good job in supporting the 'victim' until the Rescue Team arrived. This quick rescue had a successful outcome unlike others where people had taken the wrong route down and which has occasionally led to a fatal fall.

The November Newsletter of 2002 contained the account of the heart attack suffered by one of the club's active members – Trevor Morgan. He collapsed not far from the summit of Pillar. Trevor was accompanied by his wife Heather and friend Peter Ibbetson, who had to run to the summit of the mountain, before he could get a signal on his mobile phone and call for assistance. Meanwhile Heather and a passing walker looked after Trevor keeping him as warm and comfortable as possible until he was flown to hospital by helicopter. Fortunately he made a full recovery and is back on the rock and the hills.

One day, whilst doing our warden duties at the cottage, Ian Currie and I happened to look at the Log Book and found Andy Kerr's account of his son Sean's accident in the Himalayas. On the 3rd of November 2009 Andy and Sean had just summited Mera Peak and were heading back to Lukla when disaster struck. Sean, while taking a moment, brushed against a porter as he turned and the next second he was hurtling down a 60% slope and striking his head at least three times. By the time Andy reached him he was unconscious and suffering from hypoxia induced convulsions. (Andy thought he had lost him). He opened airways, cleared blood from his mouth and nostrils and experienced the longest five minutes of his life before there was any visible sign of consciousness. A long night was spent in a lodge before a three hour climb up to a two metre square , improvised helipad, and a wait of



Sean on the road to recovery.



A helicopter comes to pick up Sean

two hours before a helicopter arrived to lift Sean off the hill. After medical checks in Kathmandu, Sean was allowed to travel home, where, he made a full recovery. Andy extolled the virtues of having good insurance with 'Snowcard' which helped when it was most needed. The Log Book can sometimes provide some very interesting reading material.

Not all accidents end in death or serious injury. Ian Currie fell off a route he was leading on a small crag

above the cottage. He didn't have enough protection in, and managed to hit the deck, and ended up in North Lonsdale Hospital with a back injury. He managed to walk down to Coniston and got the bus back to Barrow and made it to the hospital where he was diagnosed with a cracked vertebra. By co-incidence he happened to be in the same ward as another young man who had a sister called Anne. She came to visit her brother and was spotted by Ian, and the rest is, as they say, history.

Apart from our contribution to mountain rescue boxes the club has also made many donations to Mountain Rescue over the years and also allow S.A.R.D.A. (Search and Rescue Dog Association) to use the cottage free of charge for a training weekend every year as extra support to the Rescue Teams.

These are just a few of the many incidents that members have found themselves involved in and, where possible, have done their best to help others in time of difficulty.

Finally, it would be very remiss of me not to recognise Roy Cooksey, who was a founder member of the club and was instrumental in acquiring the cottage and was a very active member of the climbing and skiing activities of the club. He also found time to be a member of the Coniston Mountain Rescue Team and was team leader for many years.



Roy Cooksey, long time president of the club, a worthy recipient of an M.B.E. for his service to Mountain Rescue, particularly with the Coniston Team. Well done Roy.

Chapter 6

What's in a name ?

From its earliest beginnings the club decided on a name which included the word 'ski' in its title and the club badge reflected that interest by featuring a ski stick, or pole as it was once called. Skiing was seen as one aspect of mountaineering that members thought should be part of the club's activities. Unfortunately, it hasn't quite turned out as our founding fathers envisaged. It is extremely difficult to find any reference to a ski trip organised by the club in the archive and those that were uncovered were few and far between. Ian Currie tells me of trip to Langdale in the 1960's, which somebody apparently filmed, but it was not much of a success.



Club Badge.

An early club secretary, Fred Blundell, joined the club specifically to go on ski trips but he was disappointed when none were forthcoming. Many members did in fact go skiing but in the 1950's, in particular, foreign travel was expensive and holidays limited. By the 1960's it became easier and cheaper to travel, largely thanks to the introduction of jet aircraft. My first ski trip was in 1962, with fellow members Pete Kendal and Mike Kittley when we travelled by rail on a school trip to Engelberg, in Switzerland. Like many other members I have skied regularly over the years with friends. I recently returned from a ski trip to Switzerland and was amazed at the difference in the exchange rate from then till now. (about 12 Swiss Francs to the pound when I first went and about 1.5 now.)

Ian Currie also mentioned a trip to Norway with Roy Cooksey in the 1960's and many other members and friends have skied regularly in the Alps and further afield over the years, but not on official club meets. A few mentions of a club ski meet have been mentioned at committee meetings but nothing serious seems to have come of it.

In 1982 I found a reference to a day’s skiing arranged by John Pickthall with the Cumbria Ski School but no report of how successful it was or who participated in it was received. Minutes of the January 1983 committee meeting mentioned an invite to a Cumbria Team Ski Trophy and names were submitted to take part. These were Roy and Lillian Cooksey, Dave Winstanley, Howard McDonald and Ian Currie, but again, there was no report to say if the event occurred or how they got on.



Jim Roskell and Betty McGregor skied regularly and in 1993 Jim completed the demanding Haute Route from Chamonix to Zermatt which was quite an achievement. They were also members of the South Lakes Ski Club which operates a ski tow on the side of Raise near Sticks Pass but poor snow conditions means that it doesn’t get used as much as the members would like.

Norway 1958. Gordon Tuner, Roy Cooksey, Lillian Cooksey, Ian Currie.

While researching the club archive for this book I did find a number of references to skiing, particularly on Scottish meets, when most went climbing or walking but a few went skiing at Cairngorm, Glenshee, Glencoe and the new Nevis Range on Aonach Mor. Cross country skiing at Braemar and ski-mountaineering have all been experienced by club members on Winter meets.



Des Slavin. Verbier, 2011.

Despite the lack of official ski meets many members have continued skiing over the years and there is no suggestion that the club should ever change its name. We all live in hope that one day some new (or old) enthusiastic member will organise a ski trip so the club can live up to its name. Whether anyone will turn up is another matter.

Chapter 7

'Wild Mountain Thyme.'

Barrow mountaineers were keen to expand their horizons soon after the club was formed but transport problems often prevented some of their plans from coming to fruition. This 'Wanderlust' led many to head north, over the border, to 'Bonnie Scotland' where there were far more crags and mountains than there were in the Lake District and also better opportunities for Winter climbing. Some saw this as a chance to practise skills that would come in useful when they eventually managed to reach the Alps.

One of the earliest forays north saw young Peter Fleming and George McClure in Glencoe, where they had travelled on their motor bikes. The photograph also shows the club badge proudly displayed on George's shirt. The year was 1953 and Pete tells me they managed to do the Great Slab on Garbh Bheinn. The journey north was long and potentially hazardous, especially travelling at night up the dreaded A74, and on single track roads in the highlands. Those travelling up there these days on the M74 and the M9 and A9 have a much easier time of it, and in the comfort of much better cars than years ago.



Peter Fleming and George McClure in Glencoe in 1955



Motor bikes provided cheap and fast transport for the young.

Camping was often the main means of accommodation, which was cheap but had the disadvantage, especially in Summer, of contending with the dreaded midge. They had the potential to drive people 'round the bend' and drove some to take up smoking as a deterrent or to escape to Youth Hostels in an attempt to regain their sanity. Mountain huts were not readily available in the 1950s although the C.I.C. hut below Ben Nevis had been in existence for some years and some members were lucky enough to book into it when they headed north. As more climbing clubs were formed in England and Scotland some were able to purchase buildings near the more popular mountain areas and they became available for other clubs to book. We have been able to take advantage of these huts and have been using them for the last 50 years or so.

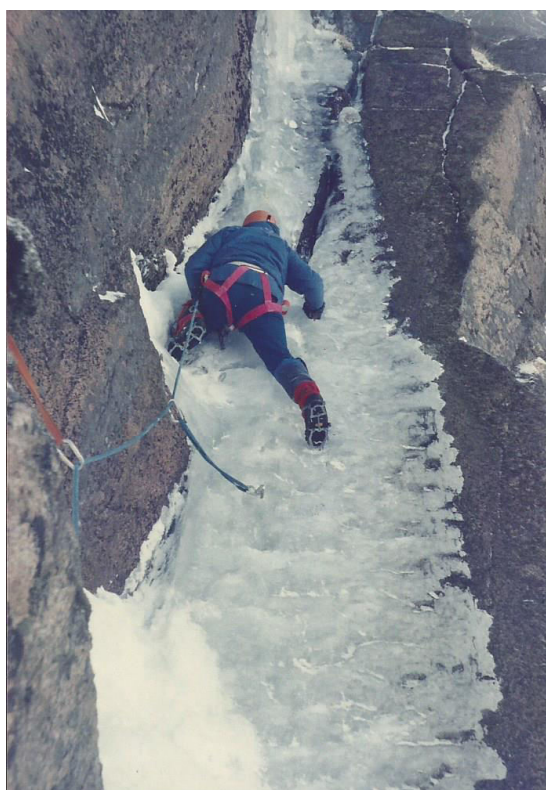
Dave Winstanley suffered another motorbike accident on his way to a club meet on Skye but this didn't stop his trips to Scotland. He travelled north on many occasions, often with Pete Fleming, with the 'Ben' being a regular venue. Camping was still the preferred method of accommodation even on the Winter climbing trips at Easter. The north face of the 'Ben' was good preparation for the Alps. Quite a number of these trips involved accidents and rescues which are described in the 'Rescue Me' chapter.

The accounts of the earlier trips to Scotland are not as well documented as those of the last thirty years but there were regular meets held both in Summer and Winter in the 1950s and onwards. In 1975 Pete Fleming, Jack Hool and Brian Heslin went to Ben Nevis and managed to do the NE Buttress and Observatory Ridge in winter conditions but when they later travelled round to Craig Meagaidh they were forced to retreat due to soft snow avalanching and making any thought of climbing out of the question.

February 1976 saw a Winter meet at the Lagangarbh Hut in Glencoe and was attended by Colin Mc Creath, John Broadhurst, Tony Fisher, Roger Burrow, Peter Palmer, J. Craig, J. Knight and J. Smith. On the Saturday morning they all headed up into the Lost Valley where four headed up a

gully on Ben Fhada. The rest climbed a ridge on soft snow and eventually reached the top as darkness was approaching. There was no sign of the other as they passed the top of their gully and so continued to where cairns marked the route back down to the Lost Valley. The others, meanwhile, were making slow progress and finally emerged as it went dark. They were fortunate to find sets of footprints which led to the cairns and the way down. They got back to the road at 7.15 and their only concern appeared to be getting to the pub on time as they closed at 10.00 p.m. in Scotland in those days.

The Sunday saw low cloud and rain and an alternative to climbing was a walk over the Devil's Staircase to Kinlochleven. On reaching it they discovered that the pub that they had hoped to visit was not there anymore. It had been washed away by the river and never re-built. John Broadhurst saved the day by turning up in his camper van to take the lads back to the pub in Glencoe. That night they visited the King's House where they met the cast of 'Sutherland's Law' who were filming there on location. The following day saw the weather deteriorate further and while some visited Fort William, the rest headed for home. (A familiar story of winter meets in Scotland.)



Jack Hool on Sticil Face, Cairngorms.

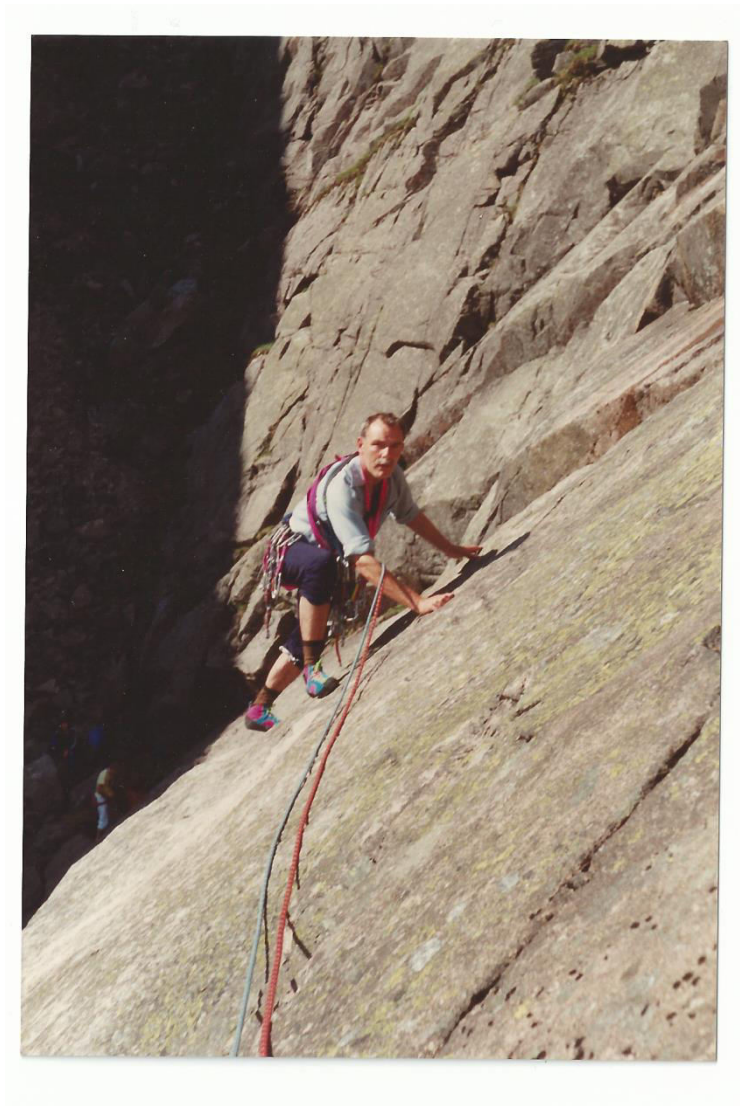
By the 1980s there were far more written accounts of trips to Scotland with newsletters and the occasional club journal to delve into. In the February of 1987 only 2 attended the Meet at Crianlarich where snow and ice were conspicuous by their absence. The Mamore Lodge was a base in March of that year, with superb weather allowing plenty of activity. One party managed the Curtain (V) on the Ben, another did North West Gully (II) on Stob Coire nam Beith and Aonach Eagach was traversed. In September 12 members attended Lagangarbh which must have made that year one of the best for trips to Scotland and unusual in that the 1980s was well known for the poor snow conditions, or lack of it, which often limited or prevented Winter climbing and was very

frustrating for those wanting to improve their Winter skills. The Mamore Lodge was again put to use in February 1988 and the North Buttress (III) on the Buchaille was climbed but mild weather and a thaw later saw an avalanche witnessed on Stob Coire nan Lochan. The Aonach Eagach ridge was traversed as the snowline receded. It was back to Lagangarbh in 1989 with 10 attending. On the Saturday 8 did the Aonach Eagach ridge, 2 on Beinn Fhionnlaidh and on the Sunday there were 6 on Buchaille Etive Beag and 4 on Sgurr Dhearg and Sgurr Dhonnaid. Later in 1989 saw a trip to Skye but no details are available.



Jack Hool on Tower Ridge, Ben Nevis.

Some members were a little more ambitious than others and the same year saw Jack Hool and a group friends set off to tackle something special in the form of the dramatic sea stack, the 'Old Man of Hoy', on the Orkneys. This is a spectacular sandstone pillar of 450 feet and, in the club Journal published the following year, Jack gives an amusing account of the 5 pitches to the top and the even more hair raising abseil out over the sea to return to the base of the stack and the causeway back to the mainland. The route was then graded E1 (5b), 460 feet and 5 to 8 hours should be allowed to complete it. There was no let up for poor old Jack as he was forced to do a route on the Etive Slabs on the long way home on a route that had 'no holds whatsoever'. Fortunately the 'Old Man from Hoy' is still going strong.



Jack Hool , Goliath, Creag an Dubh Loch

The club journal of 1989/90 with Jack's account of his climb on the Old Man of Hoy also contains Mark Scott's exploits with other members on Skye. They faced poor weather and voracious midges while camping at Sligachan and Glen Brittle. Sgurr Alasdair and Sgurr nan Gilleann were musts for mountain walkers and Pinnacle Ridge and the Inaccessible Pinnacle were high on most people's tick lists. A complete traverse of the Cuillin Ridge was a goal that many aspired to but few managed to complete. (My friend, Brian Ross and I, managed to get as far as Am Bhasteir before poor weather and fading light forced us, reluctantly, to return to Glen Brittle.) Mark and his friends experienced various levels of success over a number of trips, often during the May Bank Holiday weekend, and vowed to return as there was always 'much Mhor to Dubhs and see'. His quote from Colin Kirkus was apt when he commented – 'going to the right places, at the right time, with the right people, is what really matters. Whatever one does is purely incidental'.

The February Meet of 1990 was in the caravans of Mr Frazer at Ballachuillish, where one team was benighted on Tower Ridge, and there was an avalanche incident on the way down. This was a reminder not to under-estimate Scottish conditions. By the May there was a trip to Skye. The weather played its part for a change and Naismith's Route on the Bhasteir Tooth was climbed and

Pinnacle Ridge and Bruach na Frithe ascended. A ferry was booked in order to get round to Loch Coruisk to do one of the longest climbs in Scotland, the 900metres of the Dubhs Ridge. A trip to Lagangarbh followed with 8 members, who were blessed with fine weather, but plagued by midges. Despite this, several Munros were bagged and some classic routes snatched. These included the Long Crack (S) on Aonach Dubh in Glencoe, Arrow Ridge Direct (VD), Quiver Rib (D) and on the Buchaille, North Face Route (S), Agag's Groove (VD), and Crowberry Ridge. Creise, Meall a Buiridh and Ben Lui were also done on the way home.



Pinnacle Ridge, Sgurr nan Gilleann, Skye

The caravans at Ballachuilsh saw wet weather in February 1991 with trips to Nevis Sports on the Saturday but with some mountaineering on the Sunday on the Ben and the following day Curved Ridge on the Buchaille was managed. The September of that same year saw a return to the ever popular Lagangarbh Hut. One group headed to Rannoch Wall where Jim Roskell took Betty McGregor up the Groove, John Harrison, John High and Roger Mellen did January Jig Saw and Martin Hebbert and Rob McFall did Wappenshaw's Well. The Meet reporters have actually started using names so we know who did what and when ?

Islands have always proved popular destinations and in May 1991 Arran was chosen for the Spring Bank Holiday Meet. Good weather allowed plenty of walking and climbing. Classic climbs such as South Ridge Direct and Sou'wester Slabs were reported by Martin Hebbert. Brian Harrison managed to bag all three of the island walks in the 'Best 100 Scottish Walks' and John Harrison and Rick Gordon made a brave attempt on the E desperate 'Rhino' (E1/2 John thinks). All the children and adults agreed that it had been a superb meet.

A return was made to Arran in the May of 1995 but the weather was not so kind this time and limited any rock climbing ambitions. Staying at Lamlash, the first wet days were taken up with shoreline walks but by the Tuesday there was enough improvement to tempt scramblers up onto the ridges. From Glen Rosa the party took in Beinn a'Chliabhain, A'Chir ridge and back, despite further showers. Brodick Castle was visited and despite more wind and showers the most ambitious scramble of the week was undertaken on the Thursday. The route from Glen Sannox took in the Saddle, Cir Mhor, the Castles, Witches Step and back. On Friday a group of four ascended Goat Fell and the north ridge from Corrie. An early rise was needed for the 5.40am ferry to Ardrossan.

The journey up north in February 1992 did not look promising due to the apparent lack of snow on the hills but those with faith were rewarded when there was snow on the Ben. Rick Gordon and John Mc Keaver did Point 5 Gully (1,00 ft, grade V). Jack Hool and Pete Kelly did Green Gully (400 ft, grade 1V) and Jim and Betty did North Gully (400 ft grade 11). John High and John Harrison were in Jubilee Gully, (800 ft, grade 3). Meanwhile Munro Baggers John Paterson and Des Slavin were heading up Stob A Choire Mheadhoin and Stob Choire Eassain and Brian Harrison climbed Sgorr Dheare and Sgorr Dhonnill near Ballachuilish. Dave Rothery, Martin Ashworth and Barry Pearson crossed over to Ardgour for Garbh Bheinn via Pinnacle Ridge. John and Des did Bheinn Mhanach above Loch Lyon before heading home while Jim, Betty, and John splashed up Bheinn Dorain. In July a booking at the C.I.C. hut was made but poor conditions led to a wet ascent of Tower Ridge and very little else.

Another trip to Skye was made in 1993 where there was great variation in the weather. Mark Scott and John Mossop's attempt on the Cuillin Ridge was thwarted by hot conditions and thirst. John Harrison, Roger Mellen, Chris Ellwood, Ant Mayer and Graham Dearlove were met with downpours to restrict their activities. Chris and Ant climbed on Kilt Rock – Staffin Special (VS), Electric Bagpipe (VS) and Grey Panther (E1) – the most productive session of the trip. They also climbed Spartan Slab (VS) on Etive Slabs and had a go at Centurion on the Ben but retreated after 2 wet pitches.

The Winter Meet in February 1994 was at Carrbridge near Aviemore but poor snow conditions were experienced. John Harrison and John High had to retreat from Hell's Lum in strong winds and soft snow. By the September fine weather allowed a few days of good climbing. Chris Ellwood, John High, Richard Jewell and Roger Mellen were involved in Centurion (HVS) – a classic Don Whillan's route on the Ben, and the Pause (E1) and the Hammer (HVS).

The ever popular Isle of Skye was again visited in May and John Harrison and John High left Glen Brittle at 10.00 a.m. to do the Cuillin Ridge and made good progress until the weather 'clagged in' and they had to bivvy out over the Saturday night. The duo continued the next morning only for the weather to take another turn for the worse at Sgurr nan Gillean but the ridge was completed and they returned to Slighachan campsite in horrendous weather. Jim Roskell was accidentally knocked off the Cuillin ridge by a dislodged boulder from John Robinson and fortunately escaped serious injury but had a frightening slide down the scree.

Peter Kelly gave me an account of an ascent of Deep Cut Chimney on Coire Nam Beith which took place on a club meet in February, 1996. This route had been on Jack Hool's list for some time as it was one of W.H. Murray's finest and in its day was one of the hardest winter routes in Scotland. Russ Cannon and Peter were always keen to do a three star classic. They didn't get started as early as they had hoped but conditions were good as there had been plenty of cold weather in the

preceding weeks and the night before had been sub zero. The main part of the route was four pitches in the main chimney with hardly room to swing an axe but there was some neve and ice and they seemed to make reasonable progress. Above this was a large amphitheatre with more open climbing and several more pitches on good neve. However, time flies when you're having fun and they were still below the summit when darkness was falling. The top soon appeared and head-torches were found as the atmosphere changed to a damp mist and here they experienced a phenomena known as St Elmo's Fire, where the air is highly charged. They spent some time waving their axes in the air and watching a blue glow around the tips and listening to the crackling sound it made. Light snow started to fall which reminded them that they should be getting down. They had done their homework on the descent route and knew they had to avoid Arch Gully and find a shallow basin beyond the gully leading down into the corrie below. Dropping into the soft snow in the basin wasn't fun but they got their directions right and were soon heading down the corrie back to Glencoe. Russ remembers the descent being rather spooky and the path was very icy and the fact that John Harrison had walked up to check that they were O.K.

In March of 1996 the club had booked the Alex Mc Intyre Hut at Onich for the winter Meet. On the Saturday, some of us went Munro Bagging (John Patterson , Brian Neal and myself), while others headed for the 'Ben'. Jack Hool and Peter Kelly were on Tower Ridge which was proving very popular and queues developed as people took their time. When a young couple reached the gap they asked if they could be allowed to go past as they lacked the right equipment and the girl was beginning to suffer from hypothermia. Jack, gallantly, let them through, only to see the girl slip. He set off to help but she managed to recover and was able to continue. By this time it was getting dark and late and those of us back at the hut were wondering where they were, and about to call out the mountain rescue. We got word that they were O.K. and they eventually arrived back at about 2.00 a.m. after a very frustrating day. Other teams from the club who were ahead of Jack and Peter on the ridge included John Harrison, Chris Ellwood, Russ Cannon and Ged Barlow, while Dave Rothery and a friend also managed to complete other routes trouble free.



*Brian Neal and John Patterson,
Cairngorms.*

The bunkhouse at Kinlochewe was booked for May, 1996 but when the group of members arrived the adjoining hotel was closed and the Bunkhouse was in a mess. John, Roger and Colin cleaned it up and managed to get the cheque cancelled and so there was no great loss to the club finances. Despite the problems with the Bunkhouse the Torridon trip was quite a success and John, Roger and Colin managed a walk up Slioch on the first day in glorious weather. Day 2 saw John and Roger tackle the Cioch Nose on Sgurr a 'Chaorachain in Applecross (450 ft VD). This was a long route of pitches and scrambles in a strong wind to the 2,546 ft summit and a descent via a steep gully to retrieve sacks and a return to the car and a sunburnt Colin. The third day saw deteriorating weather and An Teallach was approached and then abandoned as wind and rain increased with altitude. The next day Beinn Eighe was traversed. John left his bike so he could cycle back to the car to pick up the others after the walk. They walked up to coire Mhic Fhearchair, one of the finest corries in

Scotland and then on to Ruadh stac Mor, the first of the 2 Munros on the ridge, and then along one of the best high level walks in the Highlands. The rest of the trip proved wet and windy and despite attempts, no further climbing was possible.

Eight members travelled to Newtonmore for this Easter meet of 1997. Russ Cannon, Chris Ellwood, Ant Meyer and Sally Vickers, with a friend walked up to Binnean Shuas, above Loch Laggan where Russ and Chris warmed up by climbing a 350 ft severe called Kubla Khan, before being joined by Ant for the day's main outing. This was the Classic Rock tick of Ardverikie Wall, a 600 ft severe of the highest quality. Brain and Jean Harrison, meanwhile completed a marathon mountain circuit of 12 hours taking in 5 Munros. Mountain biking was the choice of Jim Fullelove. The Sunday was not so good and the group dispersed to find things to do in drier conditions.

The sea crossing to Rum in the Autumn of 1999 was a long and fairly rough crossing. We arrived at Mallaig after an overnight stop at Kinlochleven and then 15 of us were treated to a cruise around Eigg, Muck and Canna before eventually arriving at Rum and embarking onto smaller boats to reach the shore. Allan Charlesworth seemed to take delight in the rough seas while poor Roger Mellen looked a bit green. We were staying in the ex-servants quarters of Kinloch Castle which had been converted into a hostel and were met by Denys Vaughan who had arrived earlier. Fine weather greeted all on the second day prompting a flurry of activity including the ascents of Hallival, Askival, Trollval and Barkival, while others trekked to the Mausoleum at Harris.

Monsoon rain for most of the next day kept most people indoors with only a few hardy souls venturing out for low level walks. Better weather the following day allowed some of us to make a coastal walk to the bothy at Bibidil while others took coastal walks in other areas. Denys was delayed by bad weather which prevented the ferry from taking him back to Mallaig. We all had a tour of the castle which northern industrialist, George Bullough had constructed with all the 'mod cons' of the day around the year 1899. The return journey proved almost as rough as the outgoing but we all agreed that this 'scaled down version of Skye' was well worth the visit and some were keen to go again.

Despite a poor forecast for the weekend thirteen members and three guests headed to Braemar in February 2000 in the hope of getting something done. Most headed for Lochnagar but it became obvious that the gullies could not be climbed owing to a large amount of fresh snow lying. This was reinforced shortly after arriving when a large avalanche crashed down one of the gullies. A mass assault was subsequently made by four teams of two on Central Buttress (1,000 ft, grade II). Another team went on to do Black Spout (800 ft, grade II), which on investigation had avalanched earlier and was not holding any loose snow or cornice. During the day the weather slowly deteriorated with the wind gaining in strength, which became apparent as the teams topped out and had to battle across the plateau to get back to the car park below. Other parties opted to walk in the area but had to cut short their chosen routes because of the prevailing conditions. A few who went skiing to Glenshee had a better time of it. The next day was also poor and most headed home although one party managed a bit of skiing before they too gave in and headed south.

The Laird's Bothy meet, at Kingussie, in February 2001 was attended by seven members who reported an excellent weekend with good climbing and even some snowboarding having taken place. Parties were climbing in Coire an-t Sneachda where Aladin's Mirror and a ridge and groove line to the right of Fiaccaill Couloir were successfully climbed. Later that month nine members

attended a meet at the Black Rock cottage, Glencoe. On the Saturday, 5 members climbed North West Gully (grade II/III) in Stob Coire nam Beith, whilst 2 others climbed a route in the Lost Valley. Other members had a day's walking with some Munros, including Creise in the area of the White Corries. The superb weather of the weekend also allowed others to undertake a long walk to Black Water Reservoirs and on for a further 16 miles to overnight accommodation in a bothy before returning on the Sunday.

Ten members braved the high winds and heavy rain to attend this meet held at the Blackwater Bunkhouse in 2002. John Patterson and Brian Neil headed for Sgurr Eilde Mor but had to change their route because of high winds. Other members had a battle on their hands as they headed for Sgurr Choinnich Mor in the Grey Corries, literally crawling their way to the summit in ferocious winds. Sunday saw no real improvement in the weather, but once again members got on with it with John and Brian climbing Stob Coire Odhair from Victoria Bridge and Jim and Betty completing Boomerang Gully (III) in Stob Coire nan Lochan. Heather and Trevor Morgan headed for Ballachulish to ascend a long ridge onto Sgurr Dhonuill but driving winds and horizontal snow forced them back.

Jim Roskell reported on the club's Winter Meet at Braemar Youth Hostel in 2002. Lochnagar was the destination on an icy road round to the Spittal of Glen Muick. The chosen route was Parallel Gully A and Jim teamed up with Trevor Morgan. A pile of avalanche debris was an unwelcome site as they approached the gully. They took turns on each pitch until the final one when Jim was to lead (being lighter) to be held by the 'Big Man' if things went wrong. By the time they reached the plateau it was snowing and getting dark. The Journal has a good picture of the pair on the plateau, suitably iced up.



Jim Roskell, Trevor Morgan on Lochnagar

The Alex MacIntyre hut at Ballachulish was used for the May weekend of 2002. Most of the group of 14 members set off for the Isle of Mull to bag Ben More. Those on the crags of Ardgour experienced less kind weather and after heading up the Great Ridge for a few pitches both parties were forced to abseil back down. Sunday was better where those choosing climbing headed for Polldubh crags and managed some good quality routes. Others managed to add some more Munros to their lists, heading for Stob coir'an Albannaich and Meall nan Eun in Glen Etive, while the Ballachullish ridge of Sgorr Bhan, Sgorr Dhearg and Sgorrr Dhonuill kept the remainder happy for the day.

A return was made to the Blackwater Bunkhouse in February 2003. Fifteen of the sixteen places had been taken but in the event, only two, John Patterson and Brian Neil, actually made it. On a wet weekend John and Brian managed to get back to bag Sgurr Eilde Mor in the Mamores and the next day they managed a Corbet called Mam Na Gualainn where the weather gradually improved. Fortunately the bunkhouse did not charge for all those who did not turn up.

I was the meet leader for the return to Kinlochleven in 2004 where I was joined by John Patterson, Dave Rothery, Brian and John Harrison, Roger Mellen and Colin McCreath. Colin and Roger had Munros in their sights and headed into the Mamores where they did Binnein Beag, Binnein Mor, Binnein Mor South Top and Sgurr Eilde Beag. John, Dave and I went in search of a Corbet above the

Blackwater Reservoir, Glas Bheinn. Meanwhile Brian was also walking in the Blackwater Reservoir area. John Harrison did a solo ascent of Bidean nam Bian up a mixed ridge on the side of Church Door Buttress. On the Sunday I did a solo ascent of a Corbet, Ben a Chrulaiste above the Kings House while John and Dave headed down Glen Etive to do the Munro, Beinn Fhionnlaidh. Colin, Roger and John Harrison spent the morning in the new Kinlochleven climbing wall centre close to the bunkhouse where, as well as the usual leading and bouldering walls, there was an ice wall.

Only nine places were available at the Topsy Laird Hostel in Kingussie for the Winter meet of 2005 but in the event only six members booked to go. The usual crew of Roger Mellon, John Harrison, John Patterson, Brain Neil, Dave Rothery and myself met up on the Friday night with light snow falling. Roger and John Harrison set off early next morning for Coire an t 'Sneachda but were forced to retreat due to unstable snow conditions. John Patterson, Brian and I parked at Glenmore Lodge to do the Corbet, Meall a Bhuachaille and set off in falling snow which got increasingly deeper as we climbed. As we about to leave Ryvoan Bothy a walker came up to us and presented me with my car keys, which unbeknown to me, I had dropped on the path after setting off. If he had not been around the snow would have quickly covered them up and we would have been stranded. Much relieved, we carried on through leg tiring heather and deep snow, but improving weather, to descend through forest back to Glenmore Lodge. Dave had a better day as he opted to hire skis and practise his Telemark technique. Looking for easier snow condition, next morning, three of us went south and ascended Ben Vrackie in much firmer snow and experienced long distance panoramic views from the summit. Roger, John and Dave parked near Dalwhinnie to bag the Munro, Meal Chhhuach.

The club travelled to the far north west to Lochinver at the end of May in 2006. All four Harrisons and Roger Mellen camped on the beach site while Pete Kelly and Chris stayed at the Youth Hostel until Dave Kyles arrived. On the Saturday Pete, Chris, Roger, John and Dave headed for Stac Polliadh while Brian, Jean and Margaret attempted to visit Cape Wrath but the ferry had been cancelled. On the Monday Chris, Pete and Dave got up Quinag between snow showers. John and Roger were able to do Suilven despite strong winds and a blizzard on their descent. Ah, the joys of Scotland in May. Later Pete and Chris also did Suilven while Roger and John climbed 4 or 5 routes at Reiff. Dave went up Beinn Alligin and the Beinn Eighe before leaving for home.



Pete Kelly, QUINAG

It was some years since Crianlarich was last visited but this was the venue for the 2007 meet. John and Roger did the classic circuit of Ben Cruachan and Stob Garbh while Rosemarie and Dave Kyles went to do Ben More from Glen Dochart. The weather was less inviting on the Sunday and Dave and Rosemarie set out to do BeinnDubhchraig and Ben Oss but had to turn back because of knee trouble. Roger managed to ascend Ben More direct from the cottage but with worsening weather it was time to go home.

Only three members attended the 2009 meet at the Alex MacIntyre Hut, Onich probably due to the poor weather forecast for the weekend. Roger Mellen and John and Margaret Harrison were that trio. In blustery and showery conditions Roger and John went to the Buchaille and made an exciting ascent of D Gully Buttress, and then continued to the summit via Curved Ridge. The pair then traversed the very windy ridge to the recently promoted Munro – Stob na Broige. On the Sunday they drove to Kinlochleven and walked out to the most easterly Mamore, Sgurr Eilde Mor.

Sometimes the Winter Meets were not very well supported and the club often lost money on the booking of huts and hostels. I remember booking a bunkhouse in Fort William and only John Patterson and Brian Neil accompanied me and on another occasion, a bunkhouse booked in Braemar, where only John Harrison and Roger Mellen arrived. As you can tell from the preceding pages it tends to be the same group of people who tend to support the meets in Scotland which I suppose is inevitable given the increasing average age of the membership. Nevertheless the trips to Scotland over the years have provided great walking, climbing, mountaineering and companionship and left us with many happy memories.

Chapter 8

'There's a ghost in our house'.

There have been several stories over the years of ghostly apparitions or feelings of a strange presence in the club's Coppermines Cottage which people have put down to a real mystery or in some cases 'spirits' of a different kind. Tony Gough was one of those who claimed to have seen a ghost of a woman and Bill Barnes also related a tale of an unworldly atmosphere one night. Bill was a resident of the cottage at that time, while he worked at a local slate quarry, and he claimed that both he and Patch, the cottage cat, felt uneasy to such an extent that the cat arched up her back and puffed up her fur in reaction to this off-putting visitation.



Patch

Colin Mc Creath described an alarming experience which occurred in the cottage one night. He had arranged to meet Tony Gough on Christmas Eve in about 1964 down at the Bull in Coniston. When Tony didn't turn up he set off up to the cottage. He decided to sleep downstairs on a bench, next to the fire, as it was such a cold night. In the early hours he was awoken by screeches and squeals. He got up, put the light on and turned in again only to be woken yet again by screams. The latch on the door lifted but no-one came in. He got up once more and looked outside but despite it having snowed overnight there was no sign of any foot prints outside the door!

On another occasion Colin told of when alterations were being carried out on the downstairs room, to remove an internal partition wall, an amulet was discovered hidden in the wall. A passing female stranger told the workers that once the amulet had been removed there would be no more trouble. This appears to be the case as in over twenty years of visiting the cottage I have had no experiences of weird happenings. Often the noises heard were referred to as 'the whistler' by members who heard them and were often put it down to the noise of the wind producing strange effects.

Jack Hool remembers a time when he was staying at the cottage with Colin at the end of a ship-yard strike in the 1980s. They were hoping to get some climbing done before they went back to work on the Monday. During the night he was awoken by the sound of nailed boots walking across the slate

flag stones of the entrance and common room before passing the dormitory where they were sleeping. In the morning he asked Colin if he had heard anything during the night. Colin said that he had but couldn't explain it as no-one he knew wore nailed boots at that time. Just another unexplained event at the cottage !

A further example of these strange goings on came to light one Saturday morning when I was listening to a Radio 4 programme called 'Home Truths' introduced by John Peel which was based largely on the input of listeners who provided the programme's content. A student named Alex May recalled a trip to the Lake District thirty years ago when he met up with a group he referred to as a 'Barrow Shipyard Walking Club'. They kindly invited him to stay in their club hut, which was described as a former ale house for the copper miners who worked in the valley. (does this sound familiar ?) They told him that the landlord in the nineteenth century had been convicted at Lancaster Castle of murdering his wife and subsequently hanged for his crime, hence the building was haunted. Apparently the ghost was called Simon and made the occasional appearance.

After a late night drinking with his new found friends Alex had a call of nature about 3 a.m. and went downstairs to where the toilet was situated. He was surprised, to say the least, to see a half naked man staring at him from the kitchen end of the corridor. He thought he was looking at his own reflection in the mirror until the figure raised his head to reveal the marks of a hangman's noose around his neck. This was supposed to be the very place where the foul deed was done.

The place sounds more than a little familiar, but Alex seems to have a few of his facts mixed up. It is more than likely that the B.M.S.C. members he met (who most likely did work in the shipyard) had told him a real good tale before sending him off to bed for a 'good night's sleep'. The alehouse did actually exist but it was a few hundred yards further down the valley in front of the row of terrace cottages where the miners used to live. It was, and still is known as 'Irish Row' and the ruins of that alehouse can still be seen if you look carefully to the left of the footbridge. The murderer, a man named Simon, was indeed convicted and hanged but seems to have forgotten where he lived or does the occasional house call. (I am informed his full name was Simon Hodsetter.) So, the next time you stay at Coppermines Cottage I hope you sleep well.

The following poem was taken from a club journal from 1989 / 90 by Bill Barnes, and is a good example of the humour and somewhat stereotypical attitude of some climbers of that era. I do like his final line which is just as appropriate today as it was then.

Fantasy (or Barry's Dream)

The crags should all be pork and steak

And all the fells cream cakes,

The tarns should all be whisky filled

And beer in all the lakes;

And all the trees should grow cigars,

And all the becks run tea,

While we with friendly ravens float

On clouds of melodie.

And here a peck, and there a sip

Wherever we set foot,

And only hailstones of creamed rice

Would drive us to the hut;

Where luscious lassies waiting on,

Would wipe away each smear

Of jam or gravy from our lips,

To kiss us most sincere.

And then to lay us in cool beds

With heather scented sheets

On long erotic Summer nights –

Full turn-outs then on Meets !

Chapter 9

'Climb Every Mountain'

I know some people don't like to be singled out for what they have achieved, but there are people in the club who have done things that deserve to be recognised. Peter Fleming, who had been our club president for many years, until 2010, had the ambition to attempt to climb all the peaks in the Alps over 4,000 metres (52 in all), and in a period of 30 years, from 1956 to 1986, he managed to complete this remarkable feat. Not only did he achieve his ambition but he did it without using guides, possibly the first Englishman to do so. On his earlier climbs he was accompanied by Doug Whyllie, Dave Winstanley and Vi Tyson (later to marry Derek Lyon). Later he was joined by friends Les and Barbara Swindin, although he did solo some peaks. Other members of the club who also took part in Peter's Alpine expeditions were Tony Gough, Ian Currie, Roy Cooksey, Colin Liversedge, Peter Blezard and Anne Danson.

Peter recorded his exploits in a book called 'One Man's Fourthousanders', a copy of which is in the club archive. I have had the pleasure of reading his unique account, which is in the club archive, and no other club could boast of having such an accomplished mountaineer amongst its ranks.



Peter Fleming (photo B.Swindin)

Another remarkable test of speed and endurance was accomplished by Russ Cannon on the 15th July, 2000, when he completed the Bob Graham Round in the Lake District. This energy sapping mountain marathon took 23 hours 13 minutes, covered 71.75 miles and included a total of 28,270 feet of ascent. He was aided by Chris Ellwood and had pacers Chris Knox and Dave Richardson to thank, amongst others, who helped out on the day. This magnificent test of stamina and navigation is, to say the least, very difficult to complete and congratulations to Russ are in order.

The 'Munro Baggers' don't quite come into the same league as the 4,000 metre Alpine peaks or the Bob Graham Round but they do, never the less, take a great deal of time and perseverance to complete. The first person I know to 'complete' them was former member Doug Whyllie, who I accompanied on many a Scottish trip and I was inspired to try and 'bag' them myself. Jack Grier and John Patterson also had the same idea and we were able to spend many memorable days on the hills together. We all managed to 'complete' within a few months of each other in 1996 ending what was, in my case, a twenty five year odyssey. A few years later Sue Allen was able to join the happy band of 'completers'.



Russ Cannon.

In 1998 Jim Roskell and Betty Mc Gregor organised an attempt on the Welsh 3000 ft hills in one day. Staying at the Bowline Club Hut nine, including Jim and Betty, Sue Allen and her daughter Minnie, her brother Mike Baddelly, John Patterson, Brian Neil and 2 guests set off at 5.40 a.m. in poor weather, to begin with but 14 hours later they finished at Pen y Pass, triumphant, but exhausted. Meanwhile over in Ireland I was completing the Irish 3000 ft mountains, although not in 24 hours. It did mean, however, that I had finished all the 3000 ft mountains in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.



Munro Bagger Des Slavin on An Teallach.

Jim Roskell and Betty McGregor only had the two tops of An Teallach to go in order to finish their round when Jim became ill, and after a long fight against cancer, he succumbed early in 2011. Jim certainly left his mark on the club, in more ways than one, as can be seen by his initials on the slate floor of the downstairs kitchen. Betty decided that a fitting tribute to Jim would be for her to 'complete' the Munros and to take some of Jim's ashes to spread on his final summit. A group of B.M.S.C. friends and close family travelled up to the north west of Scotland and on Saturday the 17th June 2011 Betty and Jim 'completed' on a fine day with extensive views. Writing from the experience of being part of that group, it was a poignant moment for all who were there.



Betty and Jim's final Munro. (An Teallach)

There is no doubt that there are other people in the club who have achieved notable feats of climbing and mountaineering and are worthy of inclusion in this chapter, but only reports of those that are recorded in the club archive or have been mentioned to the author have been included. Apologies are offered for any omissions.

Chapter 10

‘The Rocks remain’.

There was some opposition to the inclusion of this particular chapter but no history of the club could ignore the series of events which took place (not all recorded here) after Philip Johnston bought the adjoining property from Rydal Estates in 1982 and it would have been an incomplete story if this period was ignored. The information in this chapter was obtained from the records kept by Peter Fleming, who as club chairman at the time, acted on behalf of the club, liaising with the Lake District National Park Planning Board. They were the main opponents of Mr Johnston’s activities in Coppermines Valley. Some material is from a study by club member Denys Vaughan who conducted a study of the valley over the period 1982 – 2000. The rest of the information is in the public domain from newspaper reports, in the North West Evening Mail, the Westmorland Gazette and court cases.

Mr Johnston’s plan was to live on the site in the so called ‘Powderhouse’ (a building without planning consent). He also converted the old carpenter’s shop into accommodation and made the foreman’s hut into a display area. He had a collection box at his gate for contributions towards his development of the site. His idea of a low-scale ‘field study centre’ carried some weight with the board and was in keeping with the existing Youth Hostel and 2 nearby climbing huts. Mr Johnston moved to schedule the site as an ancient monument in July 1985.



The controversial development.

Mr Johnston's developments did not, however, meet with the National Park Planning Board's approval and led to a series of court cases. He had excavated trenches, erected banks, installed water, electricity, telephone and a 1,500 gallon septic tank and built himself a cabin.

An Enforcement Notice of 15th April 1983 demanded the demolition of the building and a restoration of the site. An enquiry was held in May 1984 and a Stop Notice posted. Mr Johnston failed to respond and was fined £400 with costs at Hawkshead Magistrates Court in March 1985 but the cabin remained. There followed a long period of development without Planning Permission. Subsequently the then Secretary of State for the Environment overturned the Enquiry's findings and allowed Mr Johnston to retain his carpenter's shop. He was denied his cafe, had his Powderhouse extension demolished and residence in the Carpenter's shop was conditional.

A key development was the employment of Mr Brian Barden, a planning consultant, as his agent to deal with the Planning Board. This ex-local authority planner had professional knowledge of procedures and was able to offer effective guidance through the planning maze.

The cabin was rebuilt in stone in contravention of planning permission. Mr Johnston then re-routed a footpath, much to the annoyance of BMSC members. He then put up large iron gates without planning permission and placed large boulders (on land not belonging to him) alongside the cottage which prevented our members from parking there. Mr Johnston was later fined £1,000 by Windermere magistrates on 9th December 1994 for failing to demolish an extension to the Powderhouse, although it was down before the hearing.

In the antagonistic atmosphere between these neighbours a number of Mr Johnston's actions were regarded as hostile and provocative by BMSC members. In turn, acts of petty vandalism perpetrated by a couple of members on Mr Johnston's property antagonised him and did not show the club in a good light. A turning point came in June 1985 when Bill Barnes, a BMSC member, took it upon himself to burn down the cabin. Bill Barnes was found guilty in court and was extremely fortunate not to face a prison sentence. This act of arson worsened already strained relations between the club and Mr Johnston. Local press deemed this act a serious crime and portrayed Mr Johnston as a victim.

Site functions in Coppermines Valley have changed considerably since 1982, against the intentions of the Planning Board. Mr Johnston's attempts to use the copperworks for interpretation were criticised by some, though he must take credit for its status as an ancient monument. As an archaeological resource, the carpenter's shop interior has been destroyed, clearly a failure of supervision by English Heritage. The carpenter's shop has been changed from a ruin to four high class holiday letting units in contrast to the low key commercial activities of the Youth Hostel and Coppermines Cottage, which provide inexpensive accommodation for climbers, walkers and other fell users. Mr Johnston's premises are overtly commercial. He now has a licence to hold weddings on his site and erects a marquee to cater for his guests.

The character of the site has changed from the quiet, remote valley of the 1950's. The YHA allows cars and motor cycles and mini buses. Coppermines Cottage attracts cars and the occasional minibus. Four wheel drive vehicles frequently stray up as far as Hospital Level. Day visitors use the track up the valley and heavy vehicles visit Low Brandy Crag and United Utilities use the track up to their water treatment plant. Outdoor activity centres and mine exploration groups also use

Coppermines Valley. The National Park Authority has little or no control over those who drive up the valley.

Much of this has demonstrated the limitations of the Planning Authority as guardians of the landscape. The Department of the Environment twice overturned the advice of its own Board officers and its inspectors. The High Court exposed flaws in planning conditions and a precedent was created for changing land use in a National Park and on land which is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is ironic that the Board once had the opportunity to purchase the site for £21,000 - far less than it was to spend in legal fees.

It must be mentioned that not all BMSC members were as vociferous in their opposition to Mr Johnston's activities as those, such as Peter Fleming, and others associated with mine exploration, who saw them as a desecration of an important industrial, archaeological site. The arson committed by Bill Barnes left quite a few members under police suspicion, as they were staying at the cottage on the night of the incident. After Bill Barnes was convicted it was felt, by some, that he should not be allowed to return to membership as he had brought the club into disrepute. One long time, particularly active member, resigned over this, when Bill Barnes was allowed to remain a club member.

The events recorded here happened nearly twenty years ago and since then things have calmed down and in recent years there have been no problems and Mr Johnston, for his part, has been instrumental in maintaining the track. The club has even contributed towards his expenses for clearing snow in Winter. Nonetheless, as visitors to the Cottage will notice, the rocks remain.



The Rocks Remain.

Chapter 11

'Rock On.'

Early climbing activity was severely handicapped by a lack of equipment, but nevertheless, grades crept up as standards improved. It is difficult to imagine how some HVS routes were accomplished, given the minimal amount of protection climbers had at their disposal in the early half of the twentieth century. Progress continued after the club was formed and by the time E grades were introduced it was obvious there had been a major improvement in technical ability. This was helped by better equipment such as 'camming' devices like 'Friends' which enabled protection to be placed where previously it would have been extremely risky. Longer, double climbing ropes, sticky rubber rock shoes and chalk all helped. A harness was infinitely preferable to a rope tied around the waist when it came to hanging about the rock. Many a climber would have survived in the past if they had been wearing a harness, while waiting for help to arrive. Another important contribution to this rise in standards was in training with weights in gyms, use of climbing walls and a much more serious attitude to climbing than before. Bouldering and bolted sports routes on quarries also allowed climbers to practise new techniques and increase their strength to weight ratio.

Club members were not averse to adopting these new ideas and sessions in private and local authority gyms like Holker St and Thorncliffe schools were used as well as trips to Kendal climbing wall and also to Ambleside. Barrow Leisure Centre also got a climbing wall and this is slowly being improved although is not yet ideal.

By the 1980s there was much more information about the club's climbing meets and reports were prepared for newsletters and the occasional club journal. In 1985 a meet was held in Cornwall and Martin Hebbert recorded routes at Sennon and Bosigran with Pegasus and Terriers. Tooth climbed on splendid granite. For him 'climbing is not about toiling about on pokey quarry walls but ascending a mighty cliff with magnificent scenery all around – that was the lesson I brought back to Lakeland.' I could not agree more. This is exactly how I feel about climbing but I appreciate that it is not a view that everyone takes.

June 1988 saw the 'E' barrier broken for the first time by members of the club. Guy Howie and John Holden both led the Red Edge (E1) and Gordon Love led Grand Slam (E1) on Esk Buttress. This was a major milestone in the club's climbing history.

In the mid eighties Barry Pearson, the Meets Secretary of that time, was having a hard time getting members to turn up on meets and was thinking of giving up. He was persuaded to stay on in his post. Many meets were ruined by bad weather where little serious climbing was able to take place. At the time of writing we have no Meets Secretary and all the meets are organised by the committee and leaders invited to take on particular meets and this seems to have worked well for the last few years.

The cry went up in 1989 'Where have all the climbers gone?' and members were encouraged to turn out and welcome newcomers to the club. It was said that good climbers were in danger of being lost to Ulverston and in some cases this turned out to be true. Later that year a trip to North Wales proved we still had some climbers. Staying at Helyg, a group of eight attended and had a successful meet. Jack Hool and Colin Mc Creath did Dream of White Horses. Gordon Love climbed

Diagonal on Dinas Mot and also Super Direct (E1,5b) with two partners behind him. Martin Hebbert and Rob Mc Fall did a classic ascent Great Slab/Bow Slab combination on Cloggy and then struggled up the crux 120 foot 5b pitch of Vember under the mistaken impression they were on the 70 foot 4c third pitch of Curving Crack. Martin wrote an article for the 'Climber' magazine, describing this incident on Joe Brown's route, entitled 'Remember, remember the crux of Joe's Vember'.



Jack Hool on Dream Of White Horses.

In the April newsletter of 1990 Martin Hebbert writes about the lack of new members (what's new ?) and Jack Hool asked ' where has all the young blood gone ?' (Gone to Ulverston everyone, when will they ever learn ?) Martin asks 'what will the club be like in ten or twenty years ? ' That time has come and the answer is sadly - pretty much the same. We still have few young members but we manage to survive.

The Barrow club has reciprocal rights with the Bowline Club who have a hut in North Wales and in May 1990 nine members arrived for the weekend. One party went to Gogarth and another to Tremadoc. Dream of White Horses was climbed while Gordon Love and crew whipped up Dinas Mot Direct Route and then Tremadoc classics like the Fang. Others were repulsed by a dripping Grooved Arete but managed an ascent of Nea in the Pass. A Sunday on the Moelwyns saw Asahel with the Eagle finish on Craig y Clipiau done inbetween sun-bathing.

Soon after, a Dow Crag meet saw Tony Gough and Peter Fleming out on the same crag for the first time in twenty years. C Ordinary was completed three times and many other classics including Gordon and Craig's, Giant's Crawl, Murrays's Route and Giant's Corner were ascended. Members

repaired to the Church House in to find Roy Cooksey celebrating his sixtieth birthday. A Northumberland trip was ruined by bad weather.



John Martindale in Hodge Close.

The July 1990 newsletter reported Rob Mc Fall's first E2 – Masterblaster. Rick Gordon also did his first E2 – the Gillette Direct on Neckband Crag, Bowfell. It was commented at the time – 'if we keep this up we may start attracting young climbers' (some hope !)

In October of the same year there was Peak District meet with six members attending. Numerous VS and S routes were completed at Yarncliff Quarry but wind and rain caused a rough night in the tents and terminated any further cragging on the Sunday.

This was quite a busy year and Northumberland was re- visited but the crag visited featured routes too difficult for the Barrow contingent and they retreated to the chippy agreeing that the crag had won on points. At Kyloe the routes proved harder than publicised. Cave of Kings was climbed by Hool and Mc Creath. On Sunday on Crag Lough many Diffs and V. Diffs were tried on slippery, lichen covered rock until Pete Kelly pushed the grade up to Severe.

The Bowline hut was used again in June 1992. There was a mass assault on Tryfan with Grooved Arete and done while others scrambled up the north face to Bristly Ridge before completing the Glyders skyline. Another party opted for the sun-drenched limestone of Castell Helen at Gogarth where Blanco was ascended. The Sunday saw Tremadoc very crowded with two ascents of the

classic V.S. Shadrach climbed before departing the congested crag. Those avoiding the crowds, headed for Idwal Slabs and Moel Siabod.

The Summer of 1992 proved quite poor and a water-logged meet in Wasdale was typically wet. A determined duo headed up to Kern Knotts to be met by a deluge. They then traipsed back to Wasdale Head and drove to Cockermouth only to discover that the Sports Centre was closed on a Sunday. (I remember leading a similar meet at Wasdale a few years ago when nobody turned up, which was just as well as it poured with rain and I got a good soaking before retreating.) Not deterred the intrepid pair completed their two hundred mile round trip by driving to Hodge Close. Here the rain stopped and the slate dried out enough to do Masterblaster (E2) and half an E4. Unfortunately this dynamic duo were not named in the report but I am informed that it was John Harrison and Roger Mellen. (ten out of ten for persistence.)

A family meet was held in Cornwall in 1992 where caravans provided the accommodation at Mousehole. Fortune smiled on the assembled throng with fine weather being experienced. Mass assaults on the famous Commando Ridge and gravity defying deeds on the Bosigran main face, as surf exploded beneath, gave a rousing start to the week. Martin Hebbert was condemned to six months hard labour at the McCreath torture chamber (his garage gym) for falling from the top of the notorious lay-back of Anvil Chorus. Superb classics on impeccable, skin removing , granite were completed at Sennen and Chair Ladder, under blue skies and warm sun. A final foray by a two man rope snatched an off-beat classic on the Tater Du Cliff near Lamorna Cove. It was during this meet that Chris Ellwood with Luke O' Brien and Andy Mc Inroy climbed Suicide Wall, (E1) at Bosigran and also Bishop's Rib (HVS).

A beginners meet was organised by John Harrison in May 1993 at Wallowbarrow. Such events must have held a certain amount of trepidation given the fact that the first ever organised meet to attract new members resulted in the death of Jimmy Sheppard in 1952. None the less half a dozen would be crag rats turned up and aided by experienced members completed a number of routes. The meet looks to have succeeded in providing those with little or no experience with the chance of having a go and also providing the club with prospective new blood. It's a sad indictment of the times that today we don't allow any members under eighteen and are often reluctant to take new inexperienced climbers onto the crags for fear of the consequences of litigation should something go wrong. We are fortunate that in being affiliated to the B.M.C. we have third party liability insurance in the event of an accident, provided we have not been negligent in our duties. Nobody in Jimmy Sheppard's family blamed the club for his accident, but that was a different age. This type of trip is something of a rarity and John needs help in sharing the burden of instruction in future meets.

Chris Ellwood provided me with some details of his exploits during this period and in June of 1993 he climbed Kipling Groove (HVS) with Ant Mayer, Gogarth, (E1) Craig Gogarth, with Richard Jewell, a Dream of White Horses, (HVS), North Stack with Russ Cannon and in September, Centurion (HVS) on Ben Nevis with John High. In Wales in 1994 he managed Cenotaph Corner, (E1), Dinas y Cromlech, with Ant Meyer, Diagonal, (HVS), Dinas Mot, also with Ant Meyer. By July 1995 he was on Chee Tor Girdle (VS), Chee Tor with Russ Cannon and the same partner for Sirplum, (E1), Cheedale. In August it was White Slab, (E1) Clogwyn du'r Arddu with Ant Meyer. The same month it was Valkyrie (HVS), Froggart Edge, with Jason Whotton and the next day, with Jason, it was Right Unconquerable, (HVS) on Stanage Edge. In 1996 he climbed The Needle, (E1), Shelter Stone

Crag, Cairngorm with Russ Cannon and back down south with Russ in July he did Debauchery, (E1) at High Tor. This is small selection of routes to show how active these lads were.

Rockhall Cottage was the venue at the Roaches and saw twelve members travelling to Staffordshire in October 1993. The crag had dried out by Saturday afternoon, although a greasy Saul's Crack (HVS) won a muscular encounter with one , three strong party, 2 – 1. A fine and sunny Sunday saw a five man assault on the less frequented Skyline Buttress which yielded some fine lower grade routes – not least the excellent Slab and Arete (S). At the other end of the crag one of Saul's victims from the previous day gained his revenge on the classic E1, Whillan's roof route – the Sloth. The group's veteran team romped up the crag's most famous VS, Valkyrie. With one spectacular fall from Saul's Crack the previous day, the club's Advanced Flying Licence holder could not leave without his own contribution. This consisted of parting company with a notoriously, poorly protected, VS, called Condor Slab – unfortunately above him was the only decent runner on the whole route.

The usual crew headed for Ingleton in April 1994, specifically, to the gritstone outcrop known as Crookrise, near Skipton. A number of VS routes were completed although details were not given. Rob McFall's new flexi-friend became firmly wedged in a gritstone crack and resisted the efforts of several, both inside and outside the party, before the determined efforts of John Harrison succeeded, much to Rob's relief.

In July of the same year eleven members turned up in Northumberland. On the Friday afternoon an assault on Corby Crag saw a range of routes from S up to HVS completed. The party were staying at the Windy Gyle Centre at Belford. The next day attention was directed at Kyloe Crag. A variety of routes up to 5a were tackled. A VS called Wilfred Pickles saw a twenty foot plummet for one leader, who otherwise , was on the best form of the weekend. Sunday was spend at Great Waney, a moorland outcrop with deceptive grades. A hard severe was as far as anyone got.

The Summer Coniston meet saw an advanced party do some old BMSC classics on Grey Crag. On Dow Crag, the following day, other classics were climbed, including Arete, Chimney and Crack, Eliminate C, Eliminate A, and Great Central. There was also an epic, and rather circuitous, ascent of Leopard's Crawl (HVS), which was why the Eliminate A party did not get down to the barbeque until 9.00 pm. On the Sunday some climbed on Little How Crag above Levers Water while the 'Tigers' went for the Pavey Arc classics Rake End Wall and Golden Slipper.

Froggat was the destination for the July meet of 1996 and the seven who arrived on the Friday got straight on to Stannage Edge. The day after, the 'B' Team headed for Froggat, polishing off (polish being the operative word) a string of classic V.Diffs and VS. It was destination High Tor for the 'A' Team who kept their activities secret this time around.

In the October meet, the famous Hard Rock, Joe Brown, Gogarth Extreme, Mousetrap was bagged in the rain by Russ Cannon and Richard Jewell during this North Wales meet. Considering the conditions it was a brave and very accomplished piece of climbing by the pair on a day when others were rained off climbs on the main crag. The sun shone on Tremadoc the next day as One Step in the Clouds (VS) and Christmas Curry (HS) were bagged by Colin Mc Creath and Rob Mc Fall and the extreme team impressed again with Silly Arete (E3).

The Borrowdale one day meet saw ascents of Bits and Pieces (VS 4c), Why Not (MVS), Derision Groove (MVS), Donkeys Ears (S), and Brown Slabs (D).

Only three turned up for the Roaches meet in July 1997. Colin Mc Creath, Roger Mellen and Ant Mayer made the most of a mixed weekend, completing the Upper Manifold-Dovedale Valley horseshoe walk on a weather hit Saturday. By Sunday climbing was possible and 4 classic VDs – Maud's Garden, Beckermets Slab, Inverted Staircase and Fern Crack were ascended.

On the Club Barbecue weekend in early July Ant and Sally Meyer climbed Murray's Route (S). The Sunday saw a mass assault by members with Necklace (S), Eliminate A (VS), and Gordon and Craig's (S) climbed by Rob McFall, Colin Mc Creath, Roger Mellen, Dave Winstanley, Betty Mc Gregor, John Harrison and Ant and Sally Meyer.

The August meet was the best attended for some years. Gouter Crag, Swindale was visited by Colin, Roger and John Harrison, with four newcomers and Dave Winstanley, who was back climbing again with the club. Zhivago (MVS), Scabby Horse (VS) Sam (S), the Bone (MS) and Trings Buttress (VD) were climbed while others walked the surrounding hills.

Later that August there was a Newlands meet at the Carlisle Club Hut. The regulars, Colin, Roger and John were joined by Pete Kelly and Chris Stretch and Heather and Trevor Morgan. Roger and John beat a retreat on Miners Crag Girdle after many hours of endeavour. The others walked around the Newlands hills. Sunday was such a poor day that everyone went home.

The March meet in Wasdale was unfortunately scheduled for Mother's Day, and was not a success as no one actually turned up. Now where have I heard that before ?

In 1997 the May meet at Wasdale provided a variety of activities on all three days and one new route was claimed. On Saturday two parties went to Scafell with Trevor and Heather, John Harrison and Pete Kelly ascending Moss Ghyll Grooves (HVS) and Moss Ghyll (S). Roger and Colin chose Hopkinson's Gully (MVS) on Scafell Pinnacle. Others walked over Scafell and Great Gable. On the Sunday a team headed for Pillar and were repulsed by greasy conditions on Photon (MVS) and Electron (HVS). Those on the west side of Pillar had better luck. Heather and John Harrison ascended West Wall Climb (VD) and Peters Kelly and Ibbotson did Thor (MVS). The walkers managed Pillar, Red Pike, Scoat Fell and Yewbarrow while others went over the Screes above Wastwater. On the Monday it was Buckbarrow where the new route was climbed by Trevor and Heather Morgan with Pete Kelly. It was about VS between existing claimed routes and was christened 'Piss in Boots' after a dog did just that in Mr Kelly's rock boots !

A Dow Crag meet in June 2003 turned out to be cold, wet and windy and so the four members who turned up went to Wallowbarrow in search of something to climb. John Harrison and Dave Rothery slithered up Trinity Slabs and then went home. Pete Kelly and Dave Kyles followed them up the Slabs, but being made of sterner stuff, stayed on to do Thomas, Digitation and Western wall.

In 2005 Ged Barlow described the activities of the 'Chester' branch of the BMSC, which included himself and Steve and Anne Mc Intosh. April was a productive month with an enjoyable trip to Coppermines Cottage and the excellent Black Crag at Wrynose. The superb, rough, volcanic rock gave good climbing and ascents of First Touch (E1), Anne's Agony (HVS) and Sharp as Glass (S) were made. Spring saw a series of explorations of relatively new sports climbing crags for the mid-grade

climber. First up was Robin Procter (Norber) Scar in Yorkshire. This proved a character building experience with sportingly placed bolts and many loose and disposable holds. A number of routes were climbed up to F6a+, just to show willing. Next, on the same day, was Barrow Scout Cove near Silverdale, featuring a series of scruffy, easier bolt routes on a patch of rock. May saw the re-discovery of Bamford Edge in the Peak District, after open access was achieved with the passing of the Countryside Rights of Way Act. (I am writing this piece on the 80th anniversary of the mass trespass on Kinder Scout when five ramblers were jailed for having the affrontery to want to walk up on the moors. Enough said). A number of visits have been made to sample some of the best gritstone climbing around. They included the ascents of Wrinkled World (VS), Quima Sabe (VS), Bamford Wall (S), Brown's Crack (HS), the Crack (E1) and Auriele (E).

A warm June saw further explorations of a number of Peak District bolted quarries used as sports crags. Horseshoe and Harpur Hill quarries were visited. A good number of routes were climbed up to E6b+ but the only route of any real note was Coral Sea, a 3 star F6a at Harpur Hill. Other great crags sampled were at Burbage, where Long Tall Sally (E1) and Knight's Move (HVS) were climbed, Stannage for Left Unconquered (E1) and Rivelin for Left Edge Slab (E1) and Blizzard Ridge, which all come highly recommended.

It was back to Yorkshire in 2006 where the club meet was at Rylestone and ten members attended. Some were there for walking and some for climbing. On the rocks the intrepid climbers, John , Roger, Pete and Chris Kelly did some good quality routes. Trowel Face (S4b), Chimney Slabs Route 1 (S4b) were led by John and then Roger. President's Slab (HD), Dental Slab (S), Remembered (VD) were also climbed. Pete and Chris did President's Slab, Remembered and a couple more before cold and, eventually, rain stopped play.

North Wales was the destination again in August 2007 when members Steve, Anne and Ged together with Paul Moore, Mhari Cameron and Peter and Mary Giles attended. Climbing took place at Tremadoc, Dinas Mot and Llanberis Pass. In unsettled weather Ged, Steve and Anne did 4 bolted routes in the upper slate quarries of Llanberis from 4 to 6a+ and then an E3 5c in the lower quarries. Other members climbed the Crack (HS) on Dinas Mot. On the Sunday the Chester Branch trio did Super Direct (E1), before returning home.

A meet in April 2009 was based at Froggatt in the Downes Hut and the Friday evening was spent on a sunny Froggatt edge. The best effort was a Pete Holland lead on Valkyrie. Barbage North was the venue the next day where lots of climbs were done. The 'Chester' branch arrived and went to Stannage and the day after a group went to Stannage High Neb for more gritstone. This subsidised accommodation meet was much appreciated by all who went according to Pete Kelly. It had been decided to extend the subsidy for meets, which had previously applied to only the Alpine meet and then the Winter Sun meet, to areas within Britain in order to encourage more participation by members. This appears to be having the desired effect on some meets.



Paul Moore climbing classic gritstone 2009 Almscliffe meet

At the Borrowdale one day meet in October one team ventured onto Shepherd's Crag and squirmed up 4 water-logged routes. A second team headed to Carrock Fell to try a bit of gabbro. The rock was in good condition and Pete Holland successfully completed a strenuous HVS 6a traverse.

In May 2010 Hodge Close, near Tilberthwaite, was visited. Dave Kyles, Pete Kelly and Robin Whitham did the classic Sasquatch and were joined by John Martindale for Behind the Lines. Pete Holland and Paul Moore arrived and did the Rib Route near Sasquatch, followed by a top rope ascent of Malice in Wonderland. They then went to Parrock and top roped a couple of routes before adjourning to the Black Bull in Coniston.

June found the club at Gimmer, a sunny day on a premier crag. Pete Kelly and Robin Whitham did Asterix, Samaritan Corner, Ash Tree Corner, F Route and D Route. An impressive tally in one day. Jack Hool and Pete Kendall did Ash Tree Slabs and D Route and Roger Mellen and John Harrison managed the Bracket and Slab climb.

In the September the Foredale quarry near Settle was the place to be. Roger, John, Robin and Pete Kelly climbed while Brian, Jean and Margaret Harrison walked. The climbing was done on the less shaded areas of the Bay area and the Back O' Beyond Wall. The best of the routes was Sunnyside Up, a tidy little 2 star, 6a+.



John Harrison at Foredale Quarry.



Roaches Meet 2011



Rob Mc Fall on the Right Route at the Roaches

It's significant that I should end this chapter on climbing in England and Wales over the last thirty years by the club with an account of Jack Hool's 50th anniversary climb of Kraken Wall. Jack has been omnipresent in the life of the BMSC since the 1950s and has been a loyal and active club member. In October 2010, fifty years after he first put up Kraken Wall on Sunlight Crack, on the 16th July 1960, Jack 'Booter' Hool was able to recapture the pioneering spirit that propelled him, and his somewhat reluctant second, Jimmy Kolbe, up this virgin 32 metre wall of rock. Jack managed it with better gear this time but said he felt less secure than the first time as it was slightly wet and the holds were somewhat loose. Well done Jack.



Jack Hool on the 50th anniversary of Kraken Wall.

The 1989/90 journal provided a wealth of information for this book and included the following excellent poem by Lillian Cooksey which fits very nicely into the 'Rock On' Chapter.

A First E3

He's reached the stance, your mouth turns dry. The bastard's gone and flashed it.

You watch him dance, you heard him cry 'Come on youth, we've trashed it.'

Your chalk bag's full, your rack is good, the day is warm and shining.

And all the bull, talked in the pub's forgotten, 'now I'm climbing.'

The first move's bad, the second's worse, the gear just out of reaching.

It makes you mad, you start to curse, and matey starts his preaching.

'Come on,' he says, 'grab hold that jug.' 'That smear? he must be joking!'

'A piece of cake.' His voice is smug. You'd really like to choke him.

You've reached the stance. 'Now then, your pitch looks fairly easy.'

As up you glance, you're conned again; The crux! Your stomach's queasy.

The chalky trail reveals no holds. It's hard to get the gear in.

That last move up is very bold. You make it and he's cheering.

And now it's done, this E3 climb, with tiny indentations.

You're all pumped out, you're nearly spent, but filled with great elation.

You tick the book, you coil the ropes, the bad bit's soon forgotten.

To pub and beers you'll take your hopes of E4's unbegotten.

Chapter 12

'Edelweiss.'

Most hill walkers and climbers have the ambition to travel outside the British Isles and visit higher mountain ranges such as the Alps, and in some cases to venture even further afield. Soon after the club was formed in 1951 some members found themselves heading down to the Alps with friends from the club. Peter Fleming's exploits have already been mentioned when he began his quest to complete the 4,000 metre peaks in 1956, sometimes with other club members such as Dave Winstanley. In those days travelling long distances was time consuming and holidays were shorter than nowadays. Passenger jet planes were not yet in service and so a long rail journey was often the only way to reach the Alps. I will never forget my first view of those snow covered mountains, through a train window, as dawn came up, as we entered Switzerland on a school ski trip in 1962. (Pete Kendall and Mike Kittley were on the same trip.)

The lure of the mountains drew many others to make such trips and in 1961 Tony Gough (a protégé of Jack Lancaster) and Harry Turner thought they would have a go at Mont Blanc as it was the highest in Europe and so well worth doing. The problem was that neither of this 'dynamic duo' had any real knowledge of what they were about to attempt. They arrived in Chamonix and enquired at the tourist office as to the location of the object of their desire. They were pointed in the general direction and had the good fortune to follow another party heading of their peak. They were successful in their ascent, perhaps, more by good luck than good management and lived to tell their tale. My old friend Jack Lancaster told me that when he got called up to do his National Service he volunteered to be stationed in Germany so that he would be closer to the Alps when he got leave and would be able to do some real mountaineering.



The author on Alphubel 1990.

It seems amazing, but it was forty years on from the founding of the club before I could find any record of an official club meet to an Alpine region. There were many unofficial get togethers of friends in the club who went on such trips but it wasn't until the end of May 1991 that the club organised a meet to the Picos de Europa in northern Spain. Nineteen members and friends attended and declared it to be a success. The weather to begin with was hot and sunny, with clear views over the spectacular scenery. Later in the week thunderstorms occurred in the late afternoon with light rain. Any plans to climb the major summits, including El Naranjo, were thwarted by unseasonal heavy snow, which had fallen in early May. However, two peaks of over 7,000 feet were ascended. A lot of time was spent exploring the three massifs of the Picos, which gave good insight into the complexity of the mountains. Wild life abounds with many vultures, eagles, chamois, lizards and a wild cat were seen. Some members were keen to return to the area.

It was some years before a return trip came to fruition. In order to encourage members to sign up for the trip to Spain Peter Fleming had suggested a subsidy for those taking part if they gained 'points' by attending work meets. It was pointed out that that only relatively few members would benefit from such a scheme and so the idea was not implemented. It did, however, sow the seeds for the introduction of a club subsidy for such trips in the future.



Summit team in the Picos

Late August, 1998 saw a return to the Picos but despite the presence of a local 'expert' Steve Nelson, the fortifications of the Picos refused to yield up their most sought after prizes. Never the less, there were some successes. Return visits were made to Pico Padiorna (2,319 m), Pena Vieja (2,613m) and Pena Remona (2,227m). Outside the main range Pico Jano (1,446m) and Coitscao (2,234m) to the south of Fuente De were climbed.

New ground was also covered outside the range in the shape of Pena Cebollada (2,065m) with its interesting ridge and Pico Gildar (2,078m) both south of Valdeon. In the western Massif a visit was paid to the valley of Vega Huerta and the foot of Pena Sabta de Castilla. On 'rest' days teams climbed the zig-zags to Treviso and walked the Cares Gorge, while the C.A.T. team ventured into the Pozo de Andara in the Eastern Massif – and were delighted by the extent of the workings there.

The first major highlight of the trip was the ascent of Torre de Salina (2,446m). The party climbed the Canal de Pedabejo to the pass at Collado de Remona. The guide book claimed the peak could easily be reached in 45 minutes. Two and a quarter hours later 5 of the original 9 reached the summit.

An early start was made the next day on Torre de Llambion (2,642m), the second highest peak in the range. The party crossed scree and snow slopes to the foot of the final ridge, opting for the more aesthetically pleasing, but more technical, traverse of the ridge to the summit. Four people made it to the top.

At the end of the week it was agreed that the way to get into the heart of the Picos was to have a small, strong party, probably with 4WD vehicle support.

In 1999 we had the first club subsidised Alpine meet to the Parc des Ecrins region of the French Alps. Twenty one people signed up for the trip although, sadly, the meet was marred by the late withdrawal of Steve Nelson, who was involved in a car accident shortly before the start, and the early departure of John Harrison due to the sudden death of his mother.

Despite these setbacks, the trip was a great success. Heather Morgan, on her first ever journey abroad, admitted that she didn't want to come home. The highlight was a mass ascent of the region's only 4,000 m peak, Barre des Ecrins. Another memorable outing featured a solar eclipse followed out by a bivvy out near the Ecrins Refuge. (a hut I stayed in, in 1976) Mont Brison was ascended, as was the Pic du Rif Point des Arcas and La Blanche.

Cragging was not forgotten either – one party spent a day near Ailfroide climbing bolted routes, between VS and HVS in grade and 1 to 15 pitches in length. Add to that a party on the famous via Ferrata, a trip to some mines, some cycling and even some shopping and you have a satisfying and much enjoyed fortnight.

The cast comprised Ant and Sally Meyer, Russ and the Cannon family, Andrew, Trevor and Heather Morgan, Peter and Margaret Fleming, Jim Roskell, Betty Mc Gregor, and Ian Matheson and family. In order to get the subsidy those members attending had to submit their camp site receipts to the treasurer. The newsletter describing the Alpine meet made an appeal for volunteers to attend the next work meet and it was pointed out that without the cottage there would be no Alpine subsidy.



Pete Kelly, Heather and Trevor Morgan.

The year 2000 saw an Alpine meet arranged for Randa in Switzerland and the first parties arrived to unsettled weather. Many routes in the area were not climbable due to the large amounts of fresh snow. A mystery illness also struck down five members for a short time. Despite this the first choice mountain was the Mettelhorn with Trevor, Heather, Paul, Russ, Peter, Chris, Jim, Betty and John all making the ascent. The first attempt at a 4000 metre peak was on Alphubel by Betty, Jim and John but, after a successful bivvy, the attempt was thwarted by bad weather. The Bishorn (4153m) was climbed at the second attempt by Pete, Betty, Jim and John. At the same time Heather, Trevor, Paula and Russ climbed the Breithorn (4164m). The last 4000m summit reached was the Rimpfischhorn (4198m) by Russ, Pete, Betty, Jim and John.

Heather, Trevor, Paul and Russ visited several crags in the area and climbed many routes too numerous to mention up to grade 6+. New members Mary and Peter arrived hoping to join in with the cragging but a few days of poor weather and aborted attempts prompted them to go in search of better weather down the Rhone valley and they eventually got three good days of climbing at Handegg. Brian and Jean Harrison went out nearly every day and covered many walks in the area. Betty, Jim and John managed to clock up a lot of miles on their mountain bikes.

The 2001 meet was well recorded with contributions from Pete Kelly and John Harrison. The location was Canazei in the Italian Dolomites, an area I know from a ski trip. Nineteen members camped below impressive limestone walls rising steeply from the valley floor. The over-crowded camp site was, in part, due to the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of the south face of the Marmolada and by coincidence also the 50th anniversary of the BMSC.

One of the first outing members undertook was the ascent of the Collac (2,715m) by its Via Ferrata. (later, christened Vera Ferrata by Jim Roskell) These steep routes are not the ideal place to be in a thunderstorm as was the case when Betty Mc Gregor, Jim Roskell, Heather and Trevor Morgan, John Harrison and Pete Kelly were caught out in T shirts three quarters of an hour from the summit in hailstones. The summit was buzzing and lightning striking as they made a hasty descent.

An easier Via Ferrata was chosen by 10 members including Margaret, Jean and Brian Harrison, who used a cable car to speed up access to this route. A steep snow slope had to be crossed in order to reach the start of the route, where some cables were still covered by snow. As they made their way up they discovered a bridge across a waterfall was down and they had to re-trace their steps down.

The second week's weather provided some wetter days where low level walks were enjoyed and other Via Ferrata of various grades were climbed.

The Marmolada group was the next major objective and the summit of Punta Penia (3,343m) was targeted by all the parties via its Via Ferrata on the West Ridge. The route was done in 2 days with members using the intermediate Contrin Refuge hut at 2,016 m. The next day saw a steep path lead to the Via Ferrata itself and from the top of it, less than an hour to the summit. A long descent culminated in a small cable car, used by skiers in the Winter, to reach the valley again.

The weather closed in for a day or two and while some rested others went off in search of rock climbs. Heather, Trevor and Russ did a good route at about British VS standard on the Sella Tower. Pete Kelly and Christine Stretch climbed the south east chimney on the first Sella Tower and the South Face Ramp on the Piz di Ciavazes was also completed.

Others, namely Jim, Betty and John did some cycling and decided to have a go at the Sella Ronda taking in 65 kms with 4 mountain passes and climbing a total of 1,897m – quite a ride. I've done the ski equivalent but it was not as tough as the bike ride.

Towards the end of the holiday Pete and Christine took on a two day traverse of the Brenta massif and Jim, Betty and John rounded off their stay with an ascent of La Mesola and the Via Ferrata, Della Trincee. The slide show of the trip gave other members a chance to view the breath-taking scenery and some of the flora and fauna of the region.

Chamonix was the destination for 2002 with 21 members and guests making it probably the best attended Alpine meet. Having settled in and wanting to stretch their legs, Jim, Betty, John and Paul and Emma Alalouf made a high level traverse of one of the famous 'balcon' paths – the Grand Balcon Sud – situated on the Aiguille Rouge. The teleferique from Chamonix leads up to Plan Praz where it was just under 2 hours to the summit of the Brevant at 2,525m. The reward was extensive views of the whole of the north flank of Mont Blanc.

The next day Heather, Trevor and Shaun Hubbard set out to climb L'Index via the south east ridge. Meanwhile, Jim, Betty, John and Paul headed up the valley on mountain bikes. Peter and Margaret Fleming arrived and Peter was to join friends Geoff Cram and his son John in an attempt to climb L'Eveque (3,469m), a rock peak on the southern edge of the Aiguille Verte. The soft snow made conditions difficult and on a traverse John slipped and pulled his father off his stance. His fall resulted in a broken leg but Peter was able to secure him and call for assistance. A rescue helicopter was soon on the scene and Geoff was transferred to hospital where his leg was repaired with a steel pin. The rescue was free but Peter pointed out that it was always best to fall on the French side of the mountain.

Meanwhile Heather, Trevor and Shaun made plans to approach the Petite Aiguille Verte, set up a bivvy site and tackle the climb to the summit the next day. The climb is grade PD and provided little difficulties for the party and they were soon on the top. They descended quickly to avoid the softer snow later in the day.

Jim, Betty, John and Paul headed for the peak of Aiguille de Argentiere and eventually found a good bivvy site. Paul had wrenched his knee and decided not to continue and the others went on ahead. Jim and Betty felt they were not making good progress and urged John to make for the top alone while they waited. All returned safely. Mr and Mrs Morgan and Shaun were continuing their activities and made for the south east ridge of the Tour Ronde. Despite an early start they were delayed 2 hours in catching the next cable car and by the time they got to their route the snow conditions were so poor that they had to retreat.

A day or two of poor weather led to various trips in the Chamonix valley and over to Aosta in Italy.

The Morgans and Shaun made sure they were in front of the queue for the 'Midi' telepherique as they headed for the Cosmiques Arete. Moving as quickly as a rope of three would allow they were able to complete the route and described it as even more enjoyable and impressive than the Midi Plan traverse. Some members turned their attention to the crags at Les Galliardes and la Joux on bolt-protected routes. John and Ged Barlow eventually got to grips with Les Lepidopteres (V-) 180m on Aiguille du Peigne, which was John's first foray onto a big alpine wall. Some folk managed a

good deal of walking with Jean and Brian Harrison recommending the walk to Lac Blanc from the Flegere cable car station. Others followed suit. A group of nine did the Henri-Vallot path – a high level path with outstanding views of the Aiguille du Midi above. As the weather deteriorated most members decided it was time to head for home from a very successful alpine meet.

In 2003 the destination was Grindelwald in Switzerland but the archive has very little information as to what went on during this meet. The base was the Gletcherdorf campsite and the October newsletter says it was a great success with 18 people attending over the 3 week period. It said that much was accomplished despite the difficult conditions in the mountains due to the unusually hot weather which made many routes, especially those involving glacier crossings, quite unstable. Apart from that there was no mention of who did what and where ?

A quick return was made to Chamonix in 2004 and Les Rosiers campsite. The first week had settled weather and Jim, Betty and John were active in the Aiguilles Rouges and made ascents of the Aiguilles de Charlanan and Pourrie on one day, then Aiguille de la Gilere and Aigille de Belvedere on separate days. On one of the hottest days of the meet everyone climbed at Les Galliardes just south of Chamonix. Unfortunately plans to climb on Mont Blanc du Tacul and the Pelerins/Peigne area had to be shelved as the first stage of the cable car was out of action. John, Russ and Pete Kelly set off to do the north east ridge of the Aiguille de L'M but poor weather forestalled their attempt. John, Betty, Jim, Russ and Pete found a good day out on Aiguille de Mesure on the Aiguilles Rouges. Paul, Emma, Betty and Jim were active on mountain bikes and Brain and Jean walked many of the valley's belvedere mountain paths.

Climbs were done on crags at Le Buet and Les Chesereys in the upper Chamonix valley. By the third week the weather was particularly unstable and many headed for home. However, in a brief interlude, Russ and Pete were able to return to their aborted route on L'M and were able to complete the 8 pitches in about 4 hours.

The 2005 meet was to be in Obersdorf in Bavaria and Brian and Jean Harrison booked their ferry early only to discover, later, that they were the only two interested in making the trip to southern Germany. These sole representatives of the BMSC headed south and camped in an attractive valley surrounded by the Allgau Alps. After easier walks they took on the Nebelhorn (2,224m) which has expansive views of mountains in all directions. Other summits reached were the Fellhorn (2,038m), Kanzelwand (2,058m), Geiselhorn (1,924m) and Rubihorn (1,957m). Other walks were taken through forests and by lakes in an area well worth visiting.

Brian and Jean must have felt they had been 'sent to Coventry' by other club members as yet again they turned up for a club Alpine Meet in 2006 but nobody else turned up at Vallouise in the Ecrins area of France. Hot weather was followed by a thunderstorm which tested Brian's tent pitching skills to the limit. They were able to walk in areas where Peter Fleming had taken them on the 1999 meet, up to the Glacier Blanc Refuge, where I had stayed back in 1976. More pleasant valley walks were taken plus a trip to Briancon in the Serre Chevalier ski area where I had skied just a couple of years ago. A local festival saw the end of their holiday without a sight of any other club members.

This stalwart couple must have been relieved in 2007 when they were greeted by John and Margaret Harrison and Jim Roskell and Betty Mc Gregor when they arrived at Cauterets in the Pyrenees. Before Brian and Jean arrived, Betty and John were able to do Pic du Cabaliros (2,334m) walking

from the campsite through wooded slopes to a col on the ridge. A round trip of 15 kms with 1,484 metres of ascent. Mixed weather restricted major peak bagging and Jim Roskell was handicapped by the illness that was to claim him by 2011. Despite this good walks were done by all. John and Betty set off to climb Pic d'Ardiden (2,988m). Near the top Betty declined to continue and waited for John while he finished the route and they both descended together.

In misty weather John went out, in the hope of an improvement in the visibility, to do a ridge walk and return by the GR 10 path which crossed the ridge. He was rewarded when he broke through the mist and headed along the ridge where he spotted a fine looking peak in the distance. It was, of course, just off the edge of his map. Not deterred, John pressed on along the scrambly ridge where a perched vulture viewed up John as a potential meal. Fortunately he was still alive and kicking and attained the summit and was able to retrace his steps to rejoin the GR 10 path and return to the campsite at Cabaliros. Near the end of the trip the whole group were able to walk to Lac d'Estom, which Jim was able to complete despite his illness.



Jim Roskell.

By 2008 the numbers on the Alpine meet had risen to nine with the usual Harrisons, Betty and Jim joined by Roger Mellen, Pete Kelly and Pete Holland. This time the location was Garmisch, in southern Germany with the campsite at the foot of the Wetterstein Alps and dominated by views of the Alpspitze and Zugspitze. Betty and Jim were first to arrive and experienced some wet weather. It did improve but snowed on the summits a couple of times and the campsite flooded in places. Despite this, there were some fine days, and several multi-pitched climbs were done on the Alpspitze. Petes Kelly and Holland did the 7 pitch Sonntagsausflug on the lower face. This grade V took a series of ribs and walls with a wet open chimney at half height, just to remind them of home. John and Pete Kelly did a couple of pitches on the Alpspitze lower face then scrambles to the upper

face to complete 6 slabby pitches at grade IV on the unimaginatively named BW3. Peter and Roger did 5 pitches on BW2 at around grade IV. On the same day John , Brian and Betty did the Alpspitze Via Ferrata up and down.

John and Roger upheld the alpine tradition by setting out exceptionally early and climbing the Zugspitze (2,964m) and the highest mountain in Germany. Jim, Betty, Brian , Jean and Margaret took the cable car to the summit and enjoyed panoramic views across Germany and Austria.

The 2009 meet was at Saastal in Switzerland and was a little later than usual, being in September. Mhairi Cameron reported on the trip and was accompanied by Gemma and Graham Procter. They opted to climb the Lagginhorn first which proved an easy, popular mountain but good for acclimatization. Graham and Mhairi did the Allainhorn next and emerged through cloud into bright sunshine. This was good introduction to glacier travel with easy crevasse crossings and slopes no steeper than 40 degrees. Next on the list was the Jeighorn Via Ferrata with the most exciting part being the exposed wire bridge between the adjacent and summit peaks.



*Roger Mellon on
Alpenspitze.*



John Harrison – Himmelsberg.

There wasn't an Alpine Meet in the year 2010 as, for various reasons, people were not able to attend. One being that Jim Roskell was quite ill and not able to make the trip and the other regulars probably felt it wouldn't be the same without him.

The following year, 2011, there was another return to, the ever popular, Chamonix. The nominated campsite was the Ile des Barrats and was in late August/September to avoid the crowds. Dave and Rosemary Kyles drove out while Pete Holland and Mary Giles chose to fly via Geneva.

A walk by Dave and Rosemary to Lac Blanc was followed by a trip to the Mer de Glace for a glacier walk. The glacier was 65 metres lower in the gorge than Dave's previous visit in 1991. The ladders down the steep granite walls were three to four times longer.

When Pete and Mary arrived, climbing returned to the menu and Dave and Pete were able to climb at Vallorcine. Other walks followed until Dave and Pete did the Frisson-Roche route on Le Brevant, in the Aiguilles Rouges. A cable car to the top of the Brevant was followed by a scramble down to the start and 6 pitches back up of 40 metres each. Pete led both the 6a pitches. They both agreed it was one of the best routes they have ever done. Dave and Pete were able to climb the rock Papillon ridge on the Aiguille Peigne (grade D, crux 5+, 3 other pitches of 5), twelve pitches in all. Mary was able to take the cable car up to the top of the Aiguille du Midi where fantastic views can be found. (I can testify to that, especially in Winter) Dave thought it was a thoroughly enjoyable meet with two excellent long routes, many great walks and some good cragging.

This concludes the sixtieth year of the club's activities in Alpine regions but plans are afoot for a 2012 Alpine Meet, complete with subsidy. The last twenty years have seen trips almost every year as people have been able to take advantage of better pay and holidays and having transport to reach these desirable places. Cheap flights have opened up Europe but often restrict the amount of luggage that may be carried, which is a problem if camping is on the cards. The increasing cost of driving such distances, especially the high cost of fuel, may mean that more and more people will turn to low cost airlines to reach their destinations in the future.

Chapter 13

'Viva España'

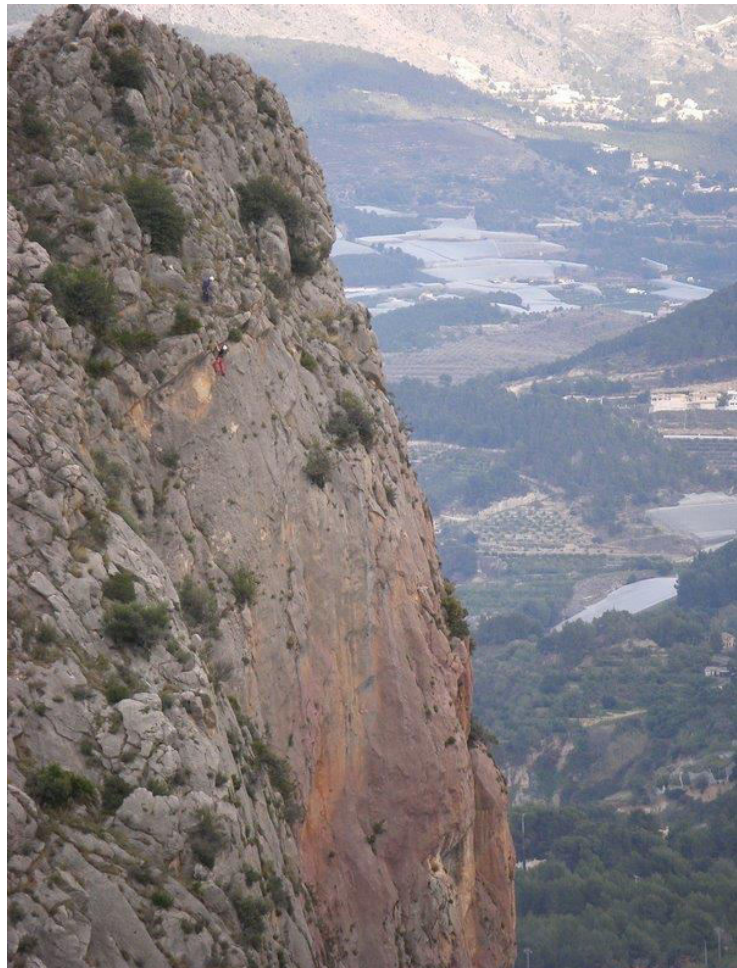
A recent introduction to the Club's Meets List has been a 'Winter Sun' trip to the Costa Blanca in Spain. In order to encourage more climbing activity the committee had recommended that a subsidy, similar to the one for Alpine meets, should be available for accommodation, to those members taking part. There was a limit to the amount payable and a fixed sum was budgeted in the annual financial statement.

The first of the winter Sun meets took place in February 2009 with five members and two prospective members staying at the Sunsea Village near Calpe. The weather proved to be mixed, although not as cold as for those of us back in 'poor old Blighty'. The changeable weather did little to reduce the volume of high quality ascents, with climbs done every day, but merely imposed an early finish to the first two days, thus avoiding early fatigue and the usual over heating at Gandia. Many of the team were regular visitors to the area during the Winter; so it was pleasing to visit three climbing areas new to all. The Mascarat Gorge, Alcalali and Roconco all proved to offer superb climbing, in addition to the usual venues of Sella, Gandi and Toix.

Those who attended climbed well, with most setting new personal standards. Mhairi Cameron and Peter Kelly formed a formidable partnership and managed to on sight 3 F6a+, F6b and F6b+ in addition to numerous easier routes. Grades are generally to be regarded as on the hard side and bore little resemblance to indoor wall grades.

The majority of the week was spent on high quality, single pitch, bolted routes. There were, however two notable exceptions. New member Derick Webster and Pete Holland climbed the classic 7 pitch HVS in the Mascarat Gorge, where they actually had to place most of their own protection (whatever next ?) .

The other notable exception was the impressive completion of the Bernia Ridge by Mhairi and Dave Kyles who knocked nearly half an hour off the usual 7 hours taken. The ridge had lots of exposure, several long abseils and a 20 m 4+ (VS) rock pitch: a good effort.



Bryan Hollowell and Dave Kyles climbing at Echo Valley

The next day was spent at Gandia with its tremendous selection of steep, often overhanging, routes. Pete Holland on-sighted one of his hardest routes, including a 3* F6b, F6b+ and top roping a classic F6c, clean, first go. Gandai proved to be the last day as most had run out of steam by this time. The trip had proved to be a superb event and was well worth repeating.



Pete Kelly on Rock Dancer Echo Valley

This proved to be the case as in January 2010 three members and two guests made the return trip to Costa Blanca on a Winter Sun meet. Peter Kelly, Paul Moore, John Martindale, Pete Kendall and Robin Whitham took Easy jet to Alicante and stayed at the Maryvilla, Calpe.

Sunday started fine and climbing was enjoyed at Echo Playa; this slabby venue has single pitch climbs on solid, grey limestone. Rain arrived late afternoon and stayed until Wednesday. The highlight of the wet days was a trip to Benidorm (what a delight). On Wednesday afternoon a short trip was taken to the crags at Toix West and following that the weather improved. A good day was had at Alcalal where lots of quality routes were done.

On the Friday, Pete Kelly and Paul Moore went to Lliber. The river between the road and the crag was in full spate and a cold wade across was necessary. They enjoyed several good routes, but were 'seen off' by the cleverly named 'Lliberpool'. John, Pete and Robin did the north part of the spectacular Bernia Ridge. The evening flight on Saturday allowed a few routes to be done in the morning at Toix and Sella. Back in Liverpool there was heavy snow falling and they had to break trail across the car park in order to reach their transport.

The 2011 trip to Spain was between the 12th and 19th of March and nine members and guests stayed again at the Maryvilla in Calpe. The attendees were John Martindale, Pete Kendall, Roger Mellen, John Harrison, Dave Kyles, Pete Kelly, Bryan Hollowell and Alan and Kath Towse. Early in the week it was cool and breezy but by Saturday temperatures had risen to 30 degrees C. Climbing took place at Sierra de Toix West and Placa, Alcala, Echo Playa, Guadalest and Olta. Mostly the routes were single pitch, sports climbs on the grey, pocketed limestone that the Costa Blanca is famous for.



John Harrison at Guadalest.

Guadalest was a new crag for everyone and all enjoyed great and scenic climbing but suspect grades on Sector del Castillo. John Harrison and Roger traversed the Bernia Ridge. A visit to the Xalo wine co-operative was one of the highlights of the week.

By the time the party returned to Alicante Airport most had sore fingers from sharp rock and sore feet following a week crammed into rock shoes. Someone remarked that they had done more climbing in a week than they had done in the whole of last Summer.

The Winter Sun meets have proved to be a success and look as though they will be continued in the future. Viva España!

Chapter 14

Socials and Celebrations

One of the earliest adverts the club had in the Barrow Evening Mail was on the 2nd April 1955 inviting members and guests to come along to a slide show at the Derby Hotel, in Dalton Road, Barrow. It seems slides shows and pie and peas played a big part in the early social life of the club. Many local pubs have been used for both committee meetings and social gatherings. The Criterion and the Derby have already been mentioned and older members will remember the Robin Hood, the Washington, the Hartington, and the Albion, all in Barrow. In Furness we used the Red Lion, the Railway and the Black Dog in Dalton, the Commercial in Newton, the Rose and Crown in Gleaston, the Anchor in Lindal, the Swan, Little Urswick and in Ulverston the King's Head and the Bee Hive. There were some complaints about meetings being held in Ulverston as it was a 'Barrow Club' but at the time a good number of committee members like Roy Cooksey, Ian Currie and Jack Garstang all lived on the other side of Ulverston so it was more convenient for them to travel there rather than go all the way to Barrow. One of the most interesting locations for our A.G.M. has been Dalton Castle which Angela McCreath was able to book for our meeting.

While interviewing Eric Montgomery, his daughter showed me some photographs and papers from her uncle Alan. He was a founder member of the club and had kept his copy of the programme of the first ever Christmas dinner held by the club. It was held on Saturday, the 20th of December 1952 at the Sun Hotel in Coniston. The front page is signed by many of those who were present and on the back was a reminder that this was a memorial to Jim Sheppard who was killed on Dow Crag only a few months before the dinner. This was the earliest document I have seen associated with the club.

Distance did not seem to be much of a problem when it came to Christmas Dinners as the Wastwater Hotel at Wasdale Head was used on a number of occasions in the 1960s, with 1962 seeming to be quite popular if the photographs of the time are anything to go by. The same venue was used again in 1965 (when Chris Bonnington was a guest) and 1969 at the grand price of twelve shillings and sixpence (62.5p) for the dinner. A good time appeared to be had by all and Roy Cooksey on guitar and Larry Johnson on piano provided accompaniment for the singing after the meal.



Signed Dinner Invitation.



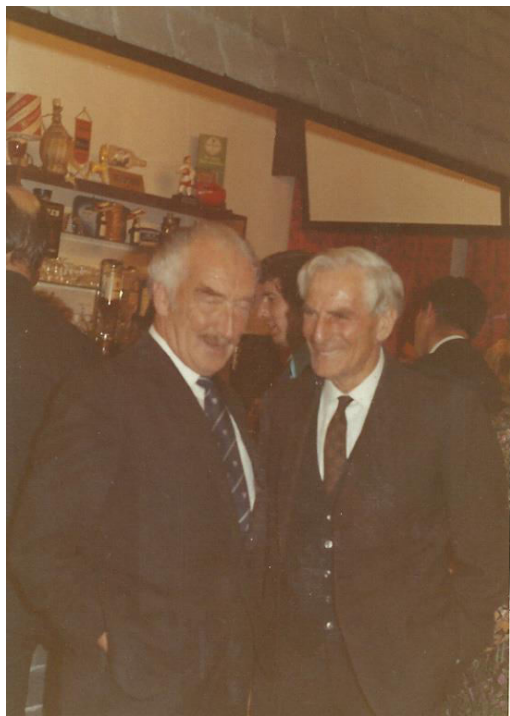
Ian Currie and Roy Cooksey, Christmas Dinner 1960's

Other venues for the Christmas dinners included the Pennington Arms at Ravenglass, The Glenridding Hotel, New Dungeon Ghyll, the Brothers Water Hotel, the High Cross in Broughton and in Coniston, the Sun, the Black Bull, the Crown and the Yewdale have been used on many occasions. It was after the dinner in 1959 that the club secretary got a letter from the police superintendent in Ulverston asking to meet with him to discuss the reports of the bad behaviour reported to him. Apparently no young members attended the dinner. (probably because they were suspended).



A well attended club dinner at Wasdale 1960s.

A big celebration occurred on September 22nd 1972 when the club had been in existence for 21 years. A dinner and dance were organised at Michaelson House in Barrow at the cost of £1.50. At that time Jim Cameron was the president, Roy Cooksey the chairman and Ian Currie the guest speaker. Harry Griffin the well known local author was one of the guests.



Harry Griffin and Jim Cameron.

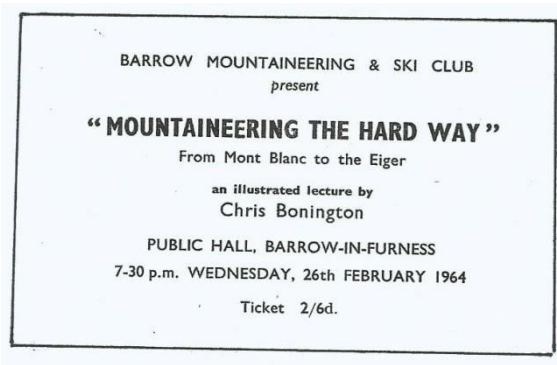


Jack and Ann Hool.

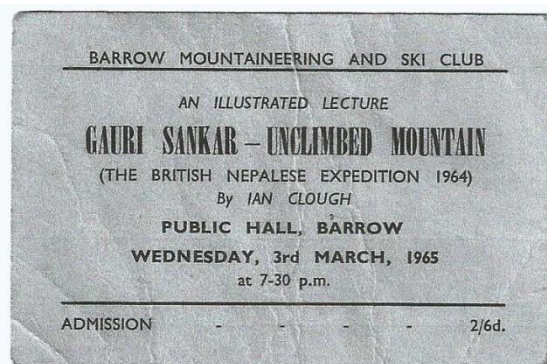


Anne Currie, Jim Cameron and Lillian Cooksey cut the cake for the 21st anniversary.

One way of raising the profile of the club and an attempt to raise money as well was to invite famous mountaineers to show slides and give a talk on their exploits. After Chris Bonnington's Eiger Direct he was invited to Barrow but it had to be postponed due to him getting frostbite. It eventually took place at the Public Hall, Barrow on the 26th of February 1964 and was entitled 'Mountaineering the Hard way' and the ticket price was 2/6p. This just about covered the costs. His ex-climbing partner, Ian Clough presented Gauri Sankar – Unclimbed Mountain on the 3rd March 1965, for the same cost. Other well known climbers such as Don Whillans, Martin Boysen and Doug Scott also gave lectures with Doug coming to Ulverston and the Crown at Coniston where he talked about Big Wall Climbing on Baffin Island in the Arctic. It has been some years since we last had a big name climber come to the area but this has probably been due to the high cost of their services these days.



Peter Fleming had been pressed to lend his slide projector to the club for shows from the early days and for many years was the club's man with the projector. Now we have gone digital a lap top can be used to show pictures on a screen. In September 1973 Jim Cameron donated a set of slides by the famous guide book writer and photographer W.A. Poucher to the club. These have been seen by club members in a slide show but have since been digitised. Jim Roskell spent many patient hours cleaning up the images on his computer before putting them on a disc which became available to those who were interested. It was thought that the Armit Museum in Ambleside would be the best place to look after them but I do not know if this is currently where they are. (They have since been given to Cumbria county Council to look after in controlled conditions).



Christmas Dinners often presented the opportunity to invite a guest speaker and Cameron Mc Neish and Jim Perrin were both invited in the early 1990s. Jim Perrin chose a hapless club member as the butt of his quips but demonstrated he had done his homework on the Barrow Club with enough background information about one or two of the longest serving members to raise the occasional smile at their expense. You don't always have to import big names to get a good after-dinner speaker and I remember Derek Lyon and our own Denys Vaughan giving very entertaining performances. Allan Charlesworth often conducted a chaotic auction to raise club funds.



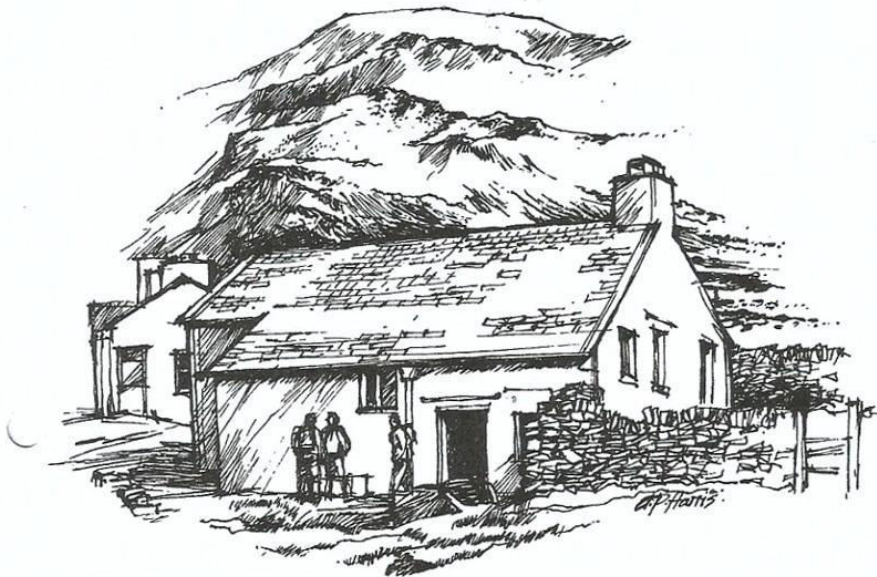
At this point special mention must be made of the efforts of Angela Mc Creath, who with her husband Colin, did a great deal to keep the club running, not only acting as club secretary and also treasurer for many years, but also organised many of the social functions and Christmas Dinners over a long period of time.

The 25th year anniversary seemed less of a big affair but a dinner and dance was again organised at Michaelson 1976 with a social at the club cottage the next day. The 30th anniversary was held at the cottage with a barrel of beer provided.

Barrow Mountaineering & Ski Club



25th Anniversary Dinner



25 March 1977

Michaelson House Hotel
Barrow-in-Furness

2001 was the golden jubilee with 50 years as a club being celebrated. This time it was less formal with a Ceilidh and a buffet at Barrow Cricket Club with music provided by Tumbling Tom. Plans to do 50 climbs in a day of celebration were thwarted by poor weather after being postponed due to the



Peter Fleming, Jack Atkinson and Graham Whiteman at the 50th anniversary.

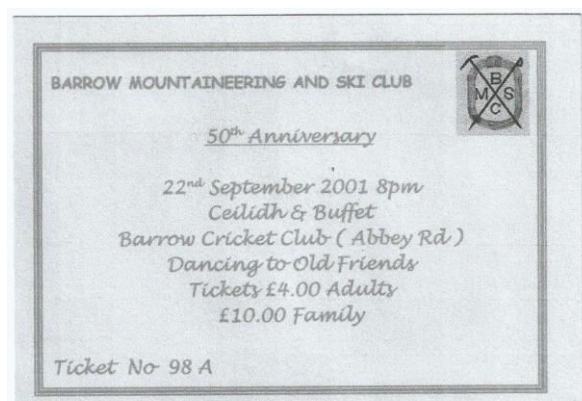
foot and mouth outbreak earlier that year. The Evening Mail did a good spread on the history of the club with photographs, thanks to former member Frank Cassidy, my brother in law and journalist at the paper.

Ten years later I had to remind the committee that it was, in fact, our 60th anniversary, as most seemed to have forgotten. How times fly when you 're enjoying yourself ! It was decided that the celebration should be held in conjunction with the Christmas Dinner at the Crown Hotel in Coniston. This was more of a low key affair but we still had a cake with our distinctive club badge which featured on all the other celebratory cakes.

Another ceilidh was held at the Malt Kiln at Baycliffe on Saturday the 21st of November 2009. About 45 members and friends danced to excellent live music provided by 'Tumbling Tom'. Good quality pie & peas were supplied by 'Baguette-me-not' and the response was to call for more such events as this in the future.

Our annual quizzes have always gone down well, apart from the fact that the same few smart Alecs always seem to win. We still have Winter socials which tend to be at Gleaston Village Hall these days, rather than a pub, but we do get free nibbles and wine courtesy of the club and provided by Betty McGregor, who now lives in Gleaston. A more recent innovation is a photographic (digital) competition organised by John Harrison which is proving popular.

The annual barbeque at the cottage in early July has had its ups and downs, with wide variations in attendance. John and Margaret Harrison have organised the proceedings for a number of years but we are having a change in 2012, with a musical evening, but with an option of a B.B.Q. for those who like outdoor cooking, as long as they are prepared to do it themselves.

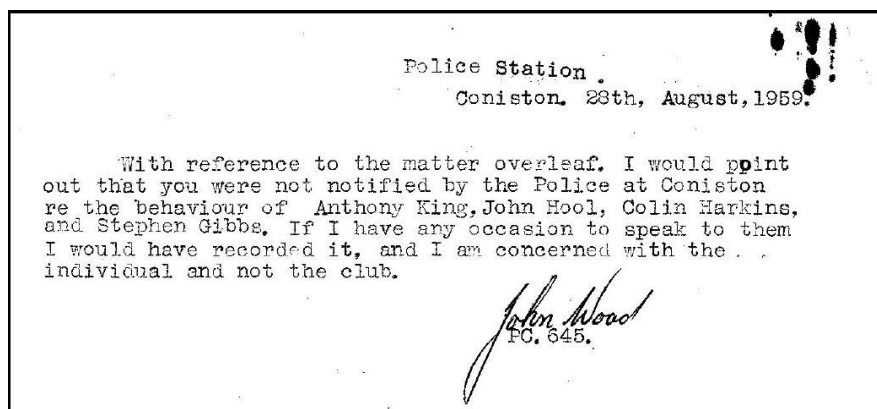


Chapter 15

'The Times They Are a' Changing'

One of the things that does seem to have changed over the years is that there are far fewer complaints about the standards of behaviour of members. This is probably due to the fact that where once there were 'angry young men' they are now 'grumpy old men' who have less energy and are not as likely to get drunk and cause trouble. In the 1960's the club was dominated by 'young bucks' who mainly worked in the shipyard, and fuelled by testosterone, alcohol and God knows what else, they saw the cottage as a refuge from work and home and where they could let their hair down (when they still had some) and enjoy themselves. In those days dances were still held on a Saturday night in Coniston and it was an opportunity for the lads to get 'fixed up'. One such occasion nearly led to the destruction of the cottage when an irate father stormed up the track to confront the 'cad' who had put his daughter in the 'family way'. He had the right surname but unfortunately, the wrong young man, who happened to be one of our members. This did not, however, deter him from his mission, as he attempted to smash down the door, and then trying to set fire to it, in an attempt to reach the perceived villain holed up within. The police were called and the angry father was arrested, hauled away, and peace restored.

On another occasion Jack Hool and a few friends received a letter from the committee telling them they were being suspended from the club for poor behaviour at the club cottage and bringing the club into disrepute by having their names taken by the police in Coniston. (a crime somewhat less serious than arson). Jack and his friends were most annoyed as they had not had any trouble with the police. They visited the officer in charge in Coniston and asked if he had any record of them being reported. When he told them he did not, they persuaded him to write a note for the committee, pointing out their mistake. They were still suspended and had to re-apply later. All this came to light many years later at a Christmas dinner when Alistair Cameron was asked to lay out some archive material for the membership and guests to peruse. The letter suspending Jack and his friends was there but no mention of its inaccuracy or the explanatory note from the police exonerating them. Jack was, should we say, not best pleased when he saw it and a series of correspondence followed until it was decided that archive material should be vetted before going on display in the future. I believe the Data Protection Act was not in force at this time. It still rankled Jack after all those years that the committee of the time accepted, what turned out to be a lie, and yet did not offer an apology to the lads who were disparaged. I am happy to put the record straight.



Police Letter.

One aspect of the change of the change of attitude of people over the years is illustrated by the fact that one of the first things that early members wanted was a club badge and this was designed very early on. A sense of identification with the club was obviously felt to be necessary in those days. Ian Curries still has his blazer badge presented to him before he left to join the Merchant Navy. The nearest we have ever come to such a badge was the modern equivalent of a tee shirt with a printed badge on it or these days we would probably term it a club logo. This lack of sense of belonging to a club is one of the problems we face in attracting new members as many young people don't seem to 'do' clubs.

The photographs in the club archive show that, through the 1950's to the 1970's, many of the members smoked. Some smoked before, during and after a climb. Social occasions were often in smoky atmospheres as both men and women were seen with cigarettes in their mouths or in their hands. Smoking was part of the culture then and during the Second World War and afterwards smoking was encouraged and cheap cigarettes were made available to servicemen and women. Films also promoted the image of smoking as cool and sophisticated and something to do in tense situations. (e.g. climbing) I wonder how they would have reacted to the banning of smoking in the cottage when at the A.G.M. when the motion was approved it was almost unanimous and seen as the right thing to do. Hardly any members still smoke and young climbers today regard it as something likely to hinder their training regime as they strive to improve their performance.



Colin McCreath and Jack Hool take a 'fag break'.

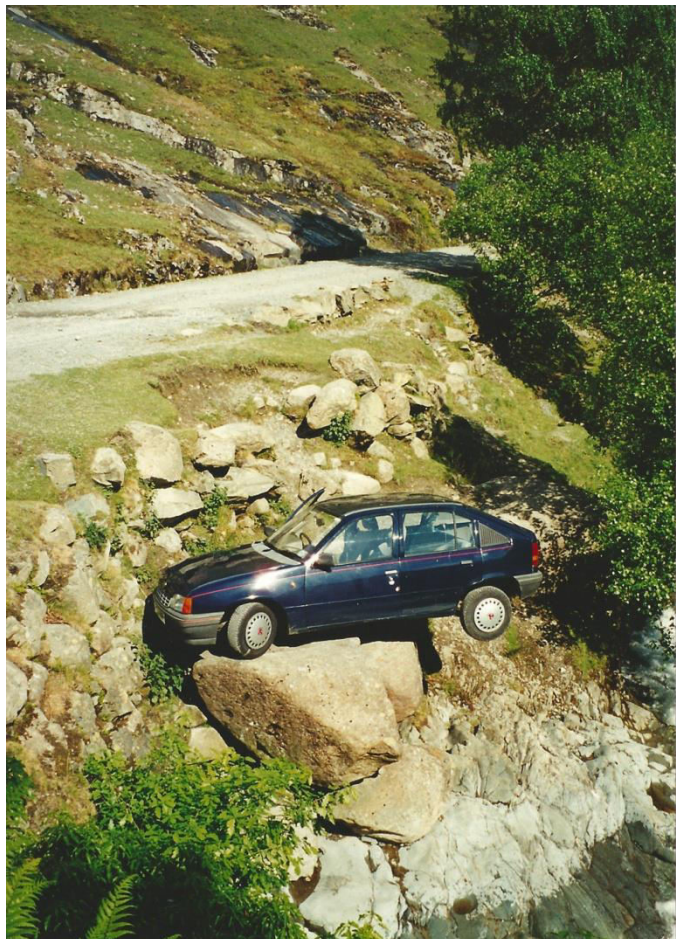
Training for climbing was something few people did in the early years but after a while it did begin to take off and I noticed references to hiring the Holker St School gym in the 1960's where there was a brick climbing wall. More climbing walls began to be built and members began to visit those in Kendal and Ambleside. Weight training was seen as a good way to build up strength and gyms were again put to good use but some members, including Colin McCreath, went so far as to create their own weight training rooms or gyms. A photograph from an old journal showed John Harrison showing off his biceps as he builds up his muscles ready for the fray. A climbing wall was eventually

established at the Barrow Leisure Centre and was used by club members but it was limited in scope. In 1993 the club donated £600 to buy holds for the wall and again in 2011 another £200 was given to buy new holds to be fitted to improve the quality of the routes. There is still some way to go to make it acceptable to many climbers but John Harrison and Jack Hool have taken an active interest in this development and further improvements are hoped for the future. An ulterior motive for the injection of club funds into this venture was that it might attract more climbers to join the club and experience climbing in the great outdoors. (it hasn't paid off yet)

The track up to the cottage has sometimes proved problematic for a few, especially before it was improved by North West Water when they were improving facilities at Levers Water dam and the treatment plant at Paddy End. One night, a merry band (Jack Grier, Ged Knight and Brian Greaseley) returning to the cottage from a night out in Coniston, had the misfortune to drive over the edge of the gill and would have landed in Church Beck below if not for the branches of a tree which saved them from a watery fate. A few screams, shouts and even prayers were heard before they managed to extricate themselves from the vehicle. They were amazed when they saw how thin the branches were that prevented them from plunging to the beck below. I believe alcohol may have played a part in this incident before the time of Drink Driving Laws and the fact that they were unlikely to be caught by the village bobby.

An amusing photograph on display in the members' kitchen and shown below shows a car perched miraculously on top of a large rock in Church Beck. A young man messing about in his friend's car had reversed it over the edge only to land on the rock. I understand it cost over £600 to hire a crane to lift it out.

In the early years of the club some of the members were, should we say, a little 'left of centre' in their political views and this provided opportunities for some of the younger members (including 'Booter' Hool, of course) to wind them up. They would find out which route the 'old lefties' were planning and nip out ahead of them in the morning, climb part of the way up the route and wait. When the others arrived Jack and Co could be found sitting on a ledge, nonchalantly reading the Daily Worker and discussing the political situation of the day, much to the annoyance of the 'old red guard'. Many of



How not to park your car.

those who worked in the shipyard held strong political views and were active trade union members and, like my elder brother Kevin, a friend of Eric Montgomery, were heavily involved in the Strikes of the 1960's in their attempt to get better working conditions for the workers. Since the 1990's much

of the workforce was made redundant and many members have retired. As a result there are fewer members who work in the 'Yard' and there is a greater range of occupations and political standpoints than there used to be.

About thirty years ago allegations of drug taking at club functions were made to the committee and the advice of a solicitor was sought to find out what the implications for the club might be should the police ever be involved. It was believed that the 'pot smokers' were not actually members at the time and it was decided that any such applications from them would not be considered. They were probably not the only ones who experimented with soft drugs in those days whereas now the only drugs taken by members seem to be blood pressure tablets or statins.

It is, perhaps, most notable in club photographs, over the passing years, how clothing and equipment has evolved. The days of ex-army and homemade gear gradually changed as the country grew more prosperous and holiday entitlement improved. New developments in design and technology and the introduction of new materials began to be seen in the new outdoor shops that began to appear in our towns. I remember well 'Kamp Kraft' in Dalton Road in the 1960's which provided a much better range of kit than the old Army and Navy Store down the road. Vibram soled climbing boots, purpose made rock boots and better ropes and protective gear became available, some imported from Europe and America, helped push up the standard of climbing in Britain. I was able to buy the first all-metal ice axe by McInnes. It weighed a ton but was advertised as being able to belay an elephant. Nylon had been around some time but found its way into waterproofs such as cagoules but other materials also had an impact. The Lifa vest from Helly Hansen, fibre pile (now fleece) and breathable materials like Gortex made a big difference to how you felt on cold wet days in the hills. The old saying that there was no such thing as bad weather, only, inappropriate clothing, finally has a ring of truth to it.

Today the club has the benefit of being affiliated to the British Mountaineering Council which provides advice and expertise over a wide range of subjects. Myself and Ian Currie regularly attend Hut Seminars which keeps us up to date on how to manage the cottage, especially with all the new rules and regulations concerning building, sewerage, gas and electricity. We also have insurance cover through them and each member has third party insurance indemnity because the club insists that all members are affiliated to the B.M.C. and actually pays the premium.

The increasing age of our membership and the lack of younger members is a situation faced by many clubs. We are trying to address this problem and our club web site has attracted some new members. I.T. has been a boon for the administration for the club with superb newsletters and journals as well as e-mails being used to communicate with the membership. We have come a long way from the hand written newsletters made on a spirit duplicator to the lap top now used to record information and show 'slide shows' and DVD's. Our past secretary, Martin Hebbert, must take some credit for first introducing this technology and it has been taken up successfully by people like John Harrison and Ian Matheson with journals and newsletters in more recent years.

There is, however, much more competition for attracting younger members than there ever was in the past. There are far more activities available than we ever imagined. Mountain biking is certainly one which attracts many, who in the past, may have been the type of people attracted to climbing. The club has organised a few mountain bike meets in recent years and it is an activity which seems

to fit in with a mountaineering club with a number of members taking part. (I found it very useful in my Munro Bagging days)

Younger people seem less inclined to join clubs than in previous times and more seem to have access to vehicles than in the past, where sharing motor bikes and old bangers was part of a common experience. (sometimes the journey being almost as exciting as the climbing.) Ian Currie tells of a trip to Skye where Dave Winstanley could not be found on arrival. It was only later that they spotted his tent behind a wall, while descending a hill. He had had an accident on his bike while coming through Glasgow but had continued, despite being injured, all the way to Skye. He had managed to pitch his tent but was too tired and injured to seek help until he was discovered two days later by the others on the climbing meet.

The role of women in the club is something that is rarely commented on. It is a fact that the sport has been dominated by men and our club is no different from others in that respect. Early records show that there has always been a female presence in the club from the 1950's onwards. They could be seen on the fells and crags as well as holding important posts in administration and organising social events. Lillian Cooksey and Win Montgomery were both early members and involved in the club in various capacities over the years. The records also show that Angela McCreath, apart from holding such posts as secretary and treasurer also organised women's meets, but since the last one mentioned in 1982 there seems to have been no others arranged. Sheila Barker was a hut warden for a number of years and more recently Betty McGregor has been very active on the climbing and social side of club activities such as being hut warden and organising the Gleaston Village Hall meets. Heather Morgan and Mhairi Cameron have also been active climbers in recent years.



Angela McCreath.



Betty McGregor and Sheila Barker.



BMSC Ladies Mine trip with Peter

There is no doubt that the club faces many challenges in the years to come but the fact that we have lasted sixty years suggests that we have staying power. We share with the Lake District National Park the same birth year and hope to be in existence as long as it is. We have a lot going for us when we look at the facts. Our membership is as high as ever and, although ageing, does provide a wealth of experience. Facilities at the cottage are better than at any time since it was acquired. An excellent meets list offers a great variety of options and caters for a wide range of abilities. We are financially sound with a good bank balance, and resources to continue improvements to the cottage as well as subsidising club events. The cottage itself is a wonderful asset in a superb location and I'm constantly surprised that members don't make more use of it. The committee is dedicated to keeping the club running as smoothly as possible and will continue to do so as long as people are drawn to the places where ravens fly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are, of course, many people to thank for their assistance in the preparation and delivery of the History of Barrow Mountaineering and Ski Club. I must, first of all, thank my wife Lynne for her help in reading, and then pointing out my errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as putting up with me 'hogging' the computer.

In the beginning it was Ian Currie and Jack Hool who helped me sort out the Club archive which was to form the basis for this work. Ian has been a member since the club's inception and has proved a useful sounding board as we made our weekly trips up to the cottage to perform our Warden's duties. His knowledge of the club over the last sixty years has been invaluable for this project. Jack has provided me with a wealth of information and photographs and has been a constant and active member of the club for most of its life and was thus a useful man to turn to, especially with his expertise in producing books which he has had published on Shipbuilding in Barrow.

It is unfortunate but it is here that I have to mention the loss of some of our members who have died during the course of me writing this book. Jack lost his wife Ann earlier this year and my old mentor, Jack Lancaster, died at the end of April. The biggest shock for me was the sudden death of Peter Fleming who was extremely helpful to me in providing his own personal archive, which he had kept, meticulously, over the years. His membership since the early days of the B.M.S.C. meant that he had a unique knowledge of the club. I met him at his home a number of times to discuss my work and I was there only a few weeks before he died, to gather information for the chapter on Winter climbing in the Lakes. Our last conversation was about the 'Time Team' visit to Coppermines Valley where they were to use the club's cottage. He had been actively involved in the preparatory work and was excited at the prospect of being involved. Sadly this was not to be.

Many other members have provided me with photographs and accounts of their exploits on the crags and in the mountains both at home and abroad and I hope I have mentioned them all in the text. Any omissions are down to me and I apologize in advance for any mistakes that I have inadvertently made. Betty Mc Gregor supplied me with many photographs taken by Jim Roskell which will show that even though he is no longer with us, he is not forgotten.

A thanks also to Tony Greenbank for allowing me to quote from his chapter in 'Classic Rock' where he describes Murray's Route and the 'Barrow Lads' contribution to climbing on Dow Crag.

John Harrison not only provided me with a wealth of information about climbing trips but also helped in selecting photographs and illustrations which make the book so presentable. He has the computing skills which I sadly lack and so many thanks are due to John. Taking over from John was my nephew, Sean Cassidy, who also happens to be the great nephew of Alan and Eric Montgomery, and possesses the computing skills which I have not been able to acquire.

Last but not least are my editors who were the first to read this work. Denys Vaughan made the initial run through and provided useful and complimentary comments. Then Martin Hebbert turned his professional eyes onto the task and spent a long time bent over a computer trying to make my words more readable.

Again, many thanks to all those who have contributed to 'Where Ravens Fly'. Des Slavin.

APPENDIX**PRESIDENTS**

Jack Blackshaw

Jim Cameron

J.D. Mc Dowell

Roy Cooksey

Peter Fleming

Peter Kelly

SECRETARIES

Graham Whiteman

Ian Currie

Roy Cooksey

Eric Montgomery

Angela Prince (Mc Creath)

Yvonne Taylor (Miller)

Bill Ashton

Colin Liversedge

Tony Fisher

Lillian Cooksey

Howard Mc Donald

Paul Shaw Hillary Bridges (Heyes)

John Broadhurst

Alastair Cameron

Ron Thompson

David Stanford

Martin Hebbert

Paul Alalouf Dave Kyles

TREASURERS

Ian Currie

Jean Holmes

Audrey Hanby

Stephen Nelson

Fred Blundell

Lenny Flay

Alan Kirby

Jim Nesbitt

Mrs G.H. Cockin

Tony Gough

John Broadhurst

Moya Mc Fall

Angela Mc Creath

John Holden

WARDENS/ASSISTANTS

Jack Garstang

Les Bell

Bill Barnes

Alan Charlesworth

Ros Broadhurst

Lillian Cooksey

Moey Charlesworth

Sheila Barker

John Broadhurst

Felicity Anderson

Betty Mc Gregor

Des Slavin

Ian Currie

B.M.S.C MEMBERSHIP 1951

Jack Blackshaw, Gordon Cockin, Roy Cooksey, Jack Cull, Tommy Cull, Ian Currie, Jack Diamond, Alan Montgomery, Bill (George) Mc Clure, J.D. Mc Dowell, Alan Scott, Jim Sheppard, Fred Shaw, Jack Thornton, Graham Whiteman, Jack Willacy.

B.M.S.C. MEMEBERSHIP 2011

Paul Alaouf, Sue Allen, Ken Arts, Marjorie Arts, Sheila Barker, Ged Barlow, Mr E. Barnes, Clive Barrow, Mark Binney, Barbara Birch, Pete Blezard, Don Borthwick, David Bridge, John Broadhurst, Mhari Cameron, Russ Cannon, Allan Charlesworth, Steve Clawson, Roy Cooksey, Ian Currie, Anne Currie, Anne Danson, Chris Ellwood, Mike Fenton, Peter Fleming, Margaret Fleming, Jack Garstang, Marjorie Garstang, Ros George, Mary Giles, John Harrison, Margaret Harrison, Brian Harrison, Jean Harrison, Martin Hebbert, Jack Hool, Pete Holland, Peter Janow, Julie Jannow, Chris Jones, Pete Kendall, Pete Kelly, Chris Kelly, Andy Kerr, Chris Kerr, Mike Kittley, Len Kittley, Dave Kyles, Francis Leone, Joanna Leone, John Martindale, Ian Matheson, Colin Mc Creath, Rob Mc Fall, Betty Mc Gregor, Steve Mc Intosh, Anne Mc Intosh, Roger Mellon, Jim Miller, Mike Mitchell, Trevor Morgan, Heather Morgan, Paul Moore, Dawn O' Brien, Luke O' Brien, John Owen, Elizabeth Owen, Gemma Oxley, Barry Pearson, Graham Procter, Jim Roskell, Dave Rothery, Kath Rowland- Smith, Mark Scott, Mark Simpson, Pauline Smith, Des Slavin, Keith Stephenson, Sandi Stevens, Bernadette (Bernie) Stewart, Gareth Taylor, Paul Tidewell, Denys Vaughan, Derick Webster, Arnold Whalley, Rob Whitham, Angela Wilson, John Wright.