

**DIARY FOR 1995**

January	13-15	Scottish Winter Meet	Newtonmore
February	3-5	Northern Dinner Meet	Patterdale
	8	London Meeting Speaker: Sidney Nowill	41 Queensgate
	24-26	Scottish Winter Meet	Fearnan
March	4-11	Cascade Ice Climbing	La Grave (Ecrin)
	17-19	Scottish Winter Meet (ABMSAC Training Meet)	Glencoe
	29	London Meeting Speaker: Steven Venables	41 Queensgate
	31-1 April	ABMSAC Hut Maintenance Meet	Patterdale
April	21-23	Scottish Spring Meet	Inveraray
May	6-8	Yorkshire Dales Meet	Mosham
	12-14	Cairngorm Trek	Strathspey
	17	London Meeting (Annual Buffet Party) Speaker: Anthony Snodgrass	41 Queensgate
	20-27	Skye Meet	Skye
June	2-4	Scottish Spring Meet	Spean Bridge
	16-18	Snowdonia Meet	Rhyd-ddu
July	1-2	Lake District Meet - George Starkey Hut	Patterdale
	1-14	Julian Alps Meet	Slovenia
	22-5 Aug	ABMSAC Alpine Meet	Pontresina
	22-5 Aug	Joint ABMSAC/AC/CC Alpine Meet	Bregaglia
August		See July for Alpine Meets	
September	13	London Meeting - Alpine Meet Reunion and Slide Show	41 Queensgate
October	7-8	TCC Hut Maintenance Meet	Patterdale
	14-15	Northern Buffet Party	Patterdale
November	4-5	Joint Alpine Meet Reunion	Patterdale
	11	AGM and Annual Dinner	London
	12	"Morning After" Walk	Venue TBA

**THE ASSOCIATION  
OF BRITISH MEMBERS  
OF THE SWISS ALPINE CLUB**

**JOURNAL 1995**

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## HONORARY MEMBER – Harry Archer

It was with pleasure that the President received the acceptance of Harry Archer to become an Honorary Member of the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club.

Since joining the club in 1967 at the Lötshental Meet, Harry has made an enormous contribution to the well being of the Association. He has been instrumental in developing the “chalet” based meets over the last 20 years or so.

Harry has climbed extensively in the Alps and in East Africa and is a fount of knowledge for climbers at the ABMSAC meets. He has participated in expeditions to the Himalayas and Morocco too.

The Committee has benefited from Harry's contribution over a period of years – 1968–70, 1972–74, 1976–78, Vice President in 1984 and President in 1985 – so has the company “ABMSAC Limited” of which he is Chairman.

The past and present Committee members and members of the Association recognise and value Harry's unstinting efforts to the ABMSAC and are delighted that he has accepted Honorary Membership.

## HONORARY MEMBER – Brooke Midgley

Brooke Midgley joined the ABMSAC in 1963. His contribution to the Association has been in matters based in the UK.

He is closely associated with the George Starkey Hut in Patterdale. He was involved in its conception and continues to take an interest in its management and future. Whenever there is a meet based at the Hut Brooke and his wife Arline and members of his family are sure to be present.

He was Chairman of the Hut Management Committee 1980–1987 and was Vice President of the Association 1986–1988.

He initiated and still organises the Northern Dinner Weekend Meet in Patterdale. This is one of our high spots of the calendar with attendance at the Dinner regularly exceeding a hundred. His skills at organising such a successful event are greatly appreciated by members. This is the twenty second year of this meet. To do it well once is good, twice very good but twenty-two times is sheer brilliance.

## A TOUCH OF THE C.A.P. OR ONE MAN'S MEAT

It started one evening (morning) in a bar, as these things tend to do. When, over a period of many years, one spends about a quarter of the year in one Italian mountain hamlet one tends to be drawn into things.

This particular evening had been an impromptu choir night when some farmers had come over from an adjacent valley and our lot had taken turns with the visitors to sing their version of local songs. They looked like a lot of grotty brigands but sang like angels. My friend, Vittorio, who looks worse than the others, was a soloist and I'd not guessed what a fantastic voice he had. I knew he could drink, but then most Val d'Aostans can and do – so when in Rome. I was attempting to keep up with one of Grivell's sons in law who originated from the village and comes home to drink – it's cheaper than Courmayeur. One gets a taste for Grappa Bianco, it takes a long time, but it can be done!

Eventually the party ended and I scrounged a lift back to the village in Vittorio's car – a Fiat 750 which was falling apart, but was better than a 20 minute walk at 3.30 am in a thunderstorm, but only just. This was early November and Vittorio is a farmer part time (the economics of living in Val d'Aosta would take up another book) and keeps a flock of sheep. He said he was going to bring them down to the village in a few days and so in a fit of solid grappa I asked if I could join him and he said yes. So now we'd both made mistakes.

Vittorio's house is only a couple of minutes stumble from mine and I turned up there just before dawn on the appointed day to help him drive his sheep from Magna Tillac which is some 1,000 m above the village and comprises a group of summer cow sheds. The snow was nearly down to Magna Tillac and the sheep couldn't remain there for many more days. On a few previous occasions I had walked up to Magna Tillac and it is wild trackless country not frequented by tourists. The plan was to drive up to Magna Tillac in Vittorio's car and walk up into the higher valleys, find the sheep and drive them down – easy. Vittorio had had news of the location of some of his flock a few days previously from a chamoix hunter, but they were expected to have moved a bit since then so I was not too sure how far we were going to walk. Vittorio is a local mountain running champion, as is his brother who was to follow up later. They had radios to keep in touch and also communicate with a sister at home, so that side was well organised.

The car ride was interesting, most of the route was on agricultural roads and uneventful. Dawn came and it was a lovely cloudless frosty morning. This gave me the opportunity to have a look around and when we branched off the main track to climb the final few hundred metres to Magna Tillac I was not too sure that being aware of the surroundings was such a good idea. In places the track was a ramp across a crag and the ramp was smooth rock, about 1:3 gradient and covered in pine needles and stones like marbles – I must have lost mine to get involved in this. It was about this time that the car first jumped out of gear. The car lost way and even after Vittorio rammed the gear level back home we came to a halt then, with the brakes on, slid back down the ramp until the gradient eased. After a few attempts one became rather more used to the situation and there were quite a few similar occurrences. Vittorio took to steering one handed and holding the gear lever in position with the other. I caught the Italian flavour and urged him on to greater things. It took me back to my motor rallying days in the 60s. We arrived at Magna Tillac and parked the car. That was when I was told it was my job to drive the car back down! That took my mind off the magical scene of the frosted grass and trees and of the clearing in the forest where the stone byres were situated.

We walked up through the forest, above the clearing and beyond the trees into the snow and rocks of the upper valley. The sun was just touching the adjacent peaks. Vittorio speaks good English and was still able to while we walked. I was struggling to keep up with him never mind conversation, so fortunately we decided on a breakfast halt. Up to now there

was no sign of sheep and looking at these vast mountain sides I wondered how we were to find them. Vittorio said we would have some breakfast and wait a while as it was too early to find them. I could not work that one out so carried on quartering the hillside with my binoculars. Eventually I had to ask "Why too early?" Obvious really – until the sun hits the sheep they lay down and keep still so their bells don't ring. When we heard the bells ringing it was still difficult to spot them and when we did they were high up above us on a large ledge between two crags. A snow ramp led up one side of the lower crag leading to the sheep so, kicking steps, we worked our way up the 200 m towards them. I was not to go too near as I was unknown to them and we didn't want to chase them for the next month. Vittorio had his pockets full of salt and he gave them a smell of this and they came down the last few metres to him. There were 25 sheep and three lambs in this flock and he decided they could stay up the hill for a few more days. This left another flock, somewhat larger, somewhere in the vicinity, hopefully this side of Mont Paramont – Torre Tonda ridge, most of it around 3,000 m with subsidiary ridges such as the one which the present flock had been found at about 2,300 m. I only had food for one day – I started to worry again (I'd nearly recovered from the car ride). Vittorio thought the flock may be in the next valley which was behind the ridge on which we had found the first flock. The sheep ledge dropped at about 30° to the left above the crag and led to a 10 m high rock wall – big holds covered in snow. The wall was followed by a rock and snow filled couloir leading to an open gully when finished at a col on the ridge. Vittorio thought there was a way down from the col into the next valley. I wished I'd brought another axe, rope and crampons. Vittorio wore lightweight (Hi Tech type) boots and had an old ski stick. He uses ski sticks from Courmayeur rubbish tip as fences for his fields – not pretty, but cheap and colourful.

We made the col (2,700 m) and decided to have a second breakfast in the sun. The viewpoint was wonderful as the whole of the Pennine Alps were spread along the horizon on the other side (S.E.) of Val d'Aosta. It was so clear one felt it possible to touch the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa – fantastic.

Whilst eating, we scanned the next valley for sheep and listened for bells – not much chance of hearing them in my case due to the thumping emanating from my chest – we'd only been going for about four hours. From this viewpoint the new valley ran from the main valley on our left to a narrow head terminating in some gulleys leading up to the main ridge. The largest gully reached up to a col just below the summit of a hill called Torre del Tighet (2,976 m). The last 50 m to the peak looked interesting – a tower of snow covered blocks on a narrow ridge. I had designs upon this hill and this was part of the reason I'd volunteered to chase Vittorio's sheep. The master shepherd told me that from the Torre col there was probably a route down to the Tillac valley and thus back to the car. At least one of these suggestions was not welcome. There was a nice sunny scramble down into the new valley and we traversed in at around 2,500 m still looking for sheep. We found them simultaneously and I didn't believe it. They were on the main ridge at about 2,900 m only a little below the col I was proposing to climb to. Vittorio decided we could not go up to them in case they panicked and fell over the crag on the other side (the suggested route down for me) so he sat at the bottom of the gully about 200 m below them, sprinkled his salt and called to them for 30 minutes or so and down they all came – 32 plus two new-born lambs only a few hours old. He'd anticipated this and had brought some plastic carrier bags in case the lambs were unable to walk the whole way back down – some 2,200 m. I noticed he had no large bag for me – so much for friendship.

With the sheep counted in I was allowed to play and Vittorio said he'd see me back home with his car as I was to take the short cut back down to Tillac. So I gave him a strong maybe and started up the gully. The sheep had come down the right hand side from their ledge and on the left hand side was a continuous snow strip leading, as far as I could see, up to the col. Above where the sheep had joined the gully it was snow filled from side to side and near the top it narrowed to about 5 m enclosed by buttresses. The snow was good and one kick produced an adequate edge. The angle was comfortable so the axe

was on my sack and I was watching my feet and considering what a great life it is – and hoping Vittorio was watching this feat of mountaineering (he wasn't of course). It came to me that the snow was rather close to my face and that the kicks were not making much impression so I had a proper look around and found I was five minutes too late in doing this. I was on a steep slab covered by an inch of hard snow and had traversed over another gully which was much steeper and disappeared over a crag. Silly me, I now could really do with a top rope – tight, plus two fancy axes and good front points. I managed to scrape a better right step and work off my sack – retrieve the axe – replace the sack – all without falling off and frightening the sheep. After traversing to the other side of the gully very gingerly I plodded up to the col and it was, to my relief, at least a metre wide, so I sat down and contemplated the situation. Firstly, Vittorio was either extremely unfriendly or he had a fantastic idea of my climbing capabilities. His suggested route down was a horrendously steep ice plastered gully which steepened 100 m or so below the col and disappeared from sight. If I took that I would not be worried about crashing his car. The way down was the one I'd come up. Vittorio and the sheep were making good progress and I didn't fancy trying to find my way down through the forest in the dark – solo. Secondly, the last bit of the peak was more than I was prepared to chew solo. So I made the mountaineering decision – beat it quick whilst I have a reasonably whole skin. The return trip down the gully was uneventful and, once over the step, quite easy. Catching Vittorio was another matter.

I was in need of food but dare not stop until I'd caught him and let him know his car was still at Tillac. I was fervently hoping the radio could be used to divert brother Leono to Tillac to bring the car down. I saw Leono dashing down a snow gully any climber could have enjoyed a day climbing. He must have seen Vittorio with the sheep. I managed to intercept him and in my best Italian (he speaks no English) con him into collecting the car – my lousy Italian has never been so convincing, desperation being the something or other.

I caught Vittorio and the sheep when I was about on my knees and managed to attract his attention when about 100 yards away. This was when I found his English was not perfect and we had a misunderstanding. He was following a stream down a gully and I was on the ridge above so we were not always in sight of each other. In response to my gasped greeting and request to wait for me he said "Are you arriving?" so I said "Yes" and sat down to grab some food. I next saw him in the distance disappearing into the forest – dense pine and trackless. I then realised that to an Italian it could easily be possible to mix up "arriving" with "coming". I make much worse errors in Italian but as far as I know I've never nearly killed someone with my mistakes.

Very thankfully I caught up with the end of the flock (Vittorio was leading them very biblically) and we arrived on the agricultural road as the light started to fail. We made it to a Tillac branch road before it was dark and, to my relief, met Leono parking his car. He'd brought both cars down and wasn't out of breath.

I enjoyed the drive down but did not envy Vittorio his walk down with the sheep. I met him a few days later – he'd come down with Leono in the car after pointing with sheep down the correct track and met them as they came into the village nearly 1,000 m lower – like setting them off from Sca-fell and meeting them in Wasdale. Only this was through dense pine forests.

Vittorio asked me if I'd been OK after the day out as he had been a bit stiff and sore. I told him I'd gone for a real walk the next day as I did not want too many easy days. He's going to buy some climbing equipment and wants me to teach him to climb. I'm keeping off the grappa from now on. He's more of a climber than I'll ever be and I take my cap off to him – I'm hoping he will put some EC cash into it.

Brooke Midgley

## THE JUNGFRAU 100 YEARS AGO

### Prologue

*The following is an account of an ascent of the Jungfrau by Penny Austin's grandfather C.E. Williams, the "Welshman", and two acquaintances, one of whom we believe later became Lord Hailsham\*. The account was written shortly after the ascent and is accompanied by a short introductory note written much later by a son of CEW: "CEW had arranged a climbing holiday with a friend who was unable to go at the last moment. CEW, aged 27, walked along the platform at Victoria, saw a carriage full of young people and asked if he could join them. The journey would have taken two days – sleeping overnight on the train – breakfast on the station at Basle – and on to Grindelwald.*

*"The party CEW joined was in the charge of the 'Minister' and his wife from Downfield near Dundee – and among the young people was 'Chrissie' Smith (later to become Penny's grandmother) aged 18, who intended taking a degree at St Andrews University and becoming a schoolteacher."*

### An Ascent of the Jungfrau

Charles Kingsley once said "There is no falser proverb than the devil's beatitude 'Blessed is he who expecteth little for verily he shall not be disappointed' say rather" he continues "Blessed is he who expecteth everything for he enjoys everything *once* at least, and if it falls out true, twice also".

In the present instance the ascent of the Jungfrau had been enjoyed more than once in imagination before the actual start was made.

The idea of attempting this particular ascent first suggested itself whilst on an expedition to the Zaesenberg, in the summer of '93; when our guide's keen eyes espied a party of two Englishmen with their guides ascending the snowy slopes and making for the Bergli Club Hut, their destination being the Jungfrau. By the aid of field glasses we were able to make out four slowly creeping black specks on the white snow, the rope between each appearing as a spider's thread.

This sight brought on the climbing fever and one evening in the summer of '94 on my return from a climb over the Wengern Alp, whence the Bernese giants are seen in all their glory, I was delightfully excited by finding a pencilled note awaiting me, saying that the guides saw no difficulty in starting for the Jungfrau on the following day. Accordingly, our party left Grindelwald about 7.00 am in order to commence the climb in the cool of the morning. An hour's walking up the mule track, which zigzags among the pine trees, brought us to the Bäregg, at an altitude of five or six thousand feet, the line at which the trees cease. We bought our stock of firewood at the chalet, and, after a few minutes' rest, descended the ladders leading to the glacier, which we easily crossed and struck at once up the precipitous cliff on its left bank.

The sun had by this time attained full force and our guides literally steamed under their heavy knapsacks. The cliff was followed by a long and tedious climb on the steep grass slopes of the Kalli, the alpine rose and gentian being easily procurable, though the edelweiss was conspicuous by its absence. About midday we had reached bare rocks, with occasional patches of snow and we camped out for lunch just below the perpetual snow line, our object being to secure fresh drinking water from the melting snows. After

our meal, half an hour was spent lying on our backs, on one of the huge rock slabs, enjoying a siesta in the warm sunshine.

A quarter of an hour from our resting place it became necessary to rope the party together, as we were crossing one of the high arms of the glacier, and crevasses were frequent. We could see before us on the further side of the glacier steep slopes of snow which, when we were close to, were found to be crevassed in every direction. The real snow climbing had now begun, and the next three hours were thoroughly enjoyable; progress was naturally very slow, often the only way of avoiding a long detour was to creep on all fours over a narrow natural ice bridge, spanning the abyss of a crevasse; the colouring as one looked down these crevasses was exquisite, the pure white surface snow being succeeded by ice which reflected blue of ever deepening hue until the depths appeared black, while huge icicles depended from the edges like a fringe.

It is an important feature in icecraft to be able to judge the strength of these ice and snow bridges. Thrusting in the shaft of his axe an experienced climber is able to tell by the resistance whether the bridge is safe or risky. It is when crossing a crevasse, whether by jumping or by a bridge that the rope is most needed, at all times it gives a feeling of security although, through the carelessness of a guide, it nearly caused an accident to our party. We were jumping a rather big crevasse; the last man was preparing to spring, when the guide, misjudging his actions, gave a pull at the rope to assist his jump, the result being that he pulled him off his balance and he disappeared into the chasm. It was an anxious moment for us all, but in a few seconds our friend's face reappeared above the surface, somewhat white and scared but quite unhurt; the rope certainly saved his life, even if it may be said to have been the cause of the accident; this was our only mishap, and by half past four in the afternoon we were shaking the snow from ourselves and safely entering the Bergli Hut.

A fire of pine logs was soon crackling merrily and a pailful of the abundant snow was being transformed to boiling water. The hut is provided with strong slippers and having put our wet boots near the stove we stepped out on the rocky platform in front of the hut to reconnoitre. The prospect was magnificent and awe inspiring, on our left rose the Eiger, in front of us lay the Mettenberg, while round its base the great icefall of the Lower Grindelwald Glacier was seen to perfection; and on our right the lofty mass of the Finsteraarhorn, the monarch of the Oberland, filled up the panorama. Perched high aloft on this narrow ridge of rock, in a very wilderness of ice and snow, one felt solemnized by the grandeur and majesty of nature, and this impression was intensified by the absolute silence which prevailed, a silence broken only by an occasional roar, as an avalanche fell from the shoulders of the Eiger and pouring over the precipices, dashed on the glacier below with a noise like thunder. The sound of the tinkling cow bells and even the echoes of the alpine horn had been left far behind; here at least we felt we were "far from the madding crowd"; truly, we had met a German and his guides descending, nevertheless we were surprised, on turning to survey the higher slopes, to see a second party also descending. We gave them a jödel of welcome, and soon two American youths, with two guides, increased the numbers within the hut. We were glad they were English speaking and gave them our boiling water from which they made coffee, in return relating their experiences; they seemed thoroughly played out and were looking scared and frightened; they certainly did not encourage us by the accounts of the difficulties they had met with in crossing from the Lauterbrunnen Valley, however, they were soon ready to depart and our porter, whom we had only engaged as far as the hut, returned to Grindelwald with them. In another ten minutes we were doing justice to our table d'hôte dinner which consisted of soup, sardines, cold fowl, cold veal, bread, cheese and chocolate meringue followed by coffee and tobacco; not a bad menu for a club hut, where everything has to be carried on the guides' backs, even to the firewood.

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\*The present Lord Hailsham has confirmed that it was his father. *Editor.*

We spent a sociable hour watching the descent of the American party and reading the visitors' book. I remember an extract being read aloud from it which had been inserted by a search party seeking six tourists who tried the Jungfrau without guides; the only discovery was one alpenstock, the six climbers were never seen or heard of more.

On adding our names to the book we discovered that curiously enough our party is made up of a Scotsman, an Irishman and a Welshman.

A brief description of the hut may be of interest. It is a wooden structure some 16 feet square built on a projecting rock platform; along the back is a raised dais or manger the full length of the hut and about seven feet wide which is filled with straw and serves for a bed, blankets being provided for a covering. An American cooking stove with cooking utensils, a table and a few three legged stools complete the furniture. When one considers the position it must be acknowledged that the hut is wonderfully complete and comfortable. We retired early to our straw couch as we were to be called at midnight, intending to start with lanterns at 1.00 am and "do" both the Mönch and the Jungfrau on the following day.

My next recollection is a sound of shuffling feet and grumbling German as our guide lights first the candle then the fire. In a short while we are breakfasting, though greatly to our disappointment it is found to be snowing heavily and the guides say it is impossible to start; philosophically we turn in once more; at various intervals one or other steps to the door to feel if it be still snowing. With daylight the weather improves and by six o'clock, as it looks quite bright, the guides inform us if we are wishful they are prepared to attempt the ascent; our first council of war is held and we agree that as we are half way up, we ought to try *one* mountain and we decide on the Jungfrau.

At a quarter to seven, having obeyed the golden rule of leaving the hut as clean as it is found we are once more roped and in marching order. First on the rope is the guide, Peter, then our three selves, while the second guide brings up the rear. We present a strange spectacle; our caps are tied down under our chins, our eyes are protected from the glare of the snow by blue goggles, and for the same reason our faces are smothered in Vinol cream; we are shod with thick boots well nailed and surmounted by snow gaiters; our hands are protected by woollen gloves; each man carries an ice-axe, the guides in addition having *knapsacks containing provisions, wine and cold tea*.

In spite of clouds and mist we have been able to take our bearings in the lucid intervals and we succeed in reaching the final slopes of the mountain. Looked at, end on, the slopes appear so steep that climbing them seemed an impossibility, and certainly they were as steep as snow can lie; we were not going to give up now, however, and a stiff struggle brought us within six or seven hundred feet of the summit, though as snow was again falling it was still invisible. We were on a ridge known as the Rothal Saddle, thirteen *thousand feet above sea level*. The *knapsacks* were left at this point, the guides wisely sticking a black bottle in the snow to enable them to find the spot again. On attacking the last slope we found it to consist of ice with a thin coating of snow lying on it; if you can imagine yourself climbing the huge steep roof of a giant's house in winter time, the angle being not less than 45 degrees, the roof of ice having a few inches of snow covering it, you can form some idea of our work during the next three hours. We had still over six hundred feet to climb; we knew that to venture on the snow was to invite the snow to start slipping on the ice beneath, and in a few seconds we should form part of an avalanche to be buried alive or dead in a crevasse a thousand feet below. We had therefore to cut steps with our axes into the solid ice below the snow and for a couple of hours the ice axes were busily employed, quite six hundred steps being cut; each member of the party enlarging the cuts of those in advance, so that we should have good safe steps for our descent. Keeping to the right of a rocky arrête we reached a narrow snow ridge, a moment later Peter shouted and at last we stood on the highest point of the Jungfrau. Time - 2.15 pm, view - nil. There was half a gale of wind blowing and a thick snowstorm, while the top of the ridge, devoid

of any cornice, was so narrow that we straddled it and sat with one half of our body on each side of the mountain.

Three minutes were enough to make us face about and commence the descent. To our horror we found our steps already filled with snow and the work of hours was lost; it is exceedingly difficult to cut steps down an ice slope, so with our faces turned to the mountain we crept down backwards striking our axes into the ice as an anchor at each step and trying to feel our old steps with our toes. I do not know to this moment *whether or not* we were really in the steps, but I know I had a feeling that if anyone slipped the whole party would be lost; by exercising the greatest caution we at last stood on the Rothal Saddle and breathed freely once more.

The snow was blinding and all trace of the knapsacks seemed obliterated; it was an uncomfortable moment, the guides peering anxiously down the slope. We were a good day's march from any provisions and unless we could discover the packs we should have nothing to eat or drink for *twenty-four hours, but with their wonderful vision the guides espied the neck of the black bottle still above the snow and soon led us to it*.

Our troubles were by no means ended, at seven o'clock that evening, Peter, who was leading, suddenly stopped, having noticed a *queer green glacier in front*. I guessed the reason, we had lost our way. It was at this time snowing so thickly that one could not see the summit of the nearest ridge and all traces of our morning's track had long since been obliterated by the fresh snowfall; there was nothing to guide us as to our line of march, we were now on the *longest glacier in Switzerland (v. Tyndale Gl. of Alps)* and we spent an hour wandering after the guides in all directions; we saw they were utterly at a loss and, calling a halt, we held our second council. To our surprise we found the guides had no compass, their only remark being "no guides can guide in such weather". We had therefore to *fall back on our own resources* but, had the Irishman not been able to produce a pocket compass, these would not have availed us much: the Scotsman suggested a route and the Welshman undertook to steer by going last and keeping the party in line. After half an hour's trudging through the ever deepening snow, we caught a glimpse for one second of the *Mönch Joch, a narrow pass, which we knew we ought to cross*. We achieved the pass about half past eight and had a new point of departure. It was, however, now dark, except for occasional flashes of lightening; and our lanterns having been left in the hut, we had to depend on the reflected light from the snow to show us where the crevasses lay.

At 9.00 pm our worst trouble was met. We were on a rising snow slope and had reached a large crevasse (or bergschrund) which seemed to run for miles directly across our line of march. It was sufficiently awkward in the morning, but *then* we were fresh, we were descending, we had daylight and especially we had the tracks leading to the best point for negotiating the difficulty; now we were tired, we were ascending, it was dark and snowing hard; no bottom could be seen to the crevasse, it was probably in no place less than two hundred feet deep, the width varied, often it was twenty feet wide and never less than five or six, the further side was a wall of ice rising fifteen feet above us, sometimes only six or seven. The guides looked at it and turning to us said it was impossible to cross it in the dark with the wind blowing the snow down into their eyes. This certainly took the heart out of us. At that very moment the weather turned for the worse, the wind increased to a violent hurricane and, sweeping down the snow slope, became a blizzard filled with particles of ice and striking us full in the face. The guides were by this time quite done up, so we hastily held our third council; the fact was stated that to stand still meant certain death; we briefly discussed the pros and cons of walking about in a circle till morning and of building a snow wall; we thought the latter would be too long a work in our fatigued condition and finally we decided to enlarge a crack in the ice, near at hand and, creeping into it, huddle together, hoping thus to survive till daylight. We asked our guides their opinion as to the probability of living through the night in such a position. Their answer was "*mann weisz nicht*" (one knows not).

The seriousness of our position may be believed when it is stated that while the Irishman worked at the crack our second guide lay down and wept, the blizzard still swept down upon us. Peter, who had had the heavy work of leading most of the day and especially at the step cutting at the last slope, was dead tired and stood stolidly at the edge of the bergschrund; the Scotsman beside them beseeching them to be quick and make room in the ice crack before he froze to death; the Welshman stood as low on the slope as the rope reached and, burying his axe as an anchor in case anyone slipped remained with his face pressed into the snow to avoid the cutting ice of the blizzard.

The ice crack was a tough affair to enlarge, and the wind dying down about ten o'clock, we decided to creep along the edge of the bergschrund and endeavour to discover a feasible crossing, at last we came to a point which seemed possible and, after some pressure, one guide commenced cutting steps with his ice axe up the wall of ice, the other guide holding him firmly by the rope, as he reached across the chasm; holes were at last cut for both hands and feet and eventually our second guide landed himself safely on the higher slope. Aided by the rope the rest of the party soon joined him and between eleven and twelve that night Peter, by wonderful instinct, led us to the hut which was completely covered with snow and quite invisible ten yards off; at last the top of the stove pipe was seen above the snow and most gratefully did we hail that inert piece of ironwork.

As soon as we entered the hut I asked for something to drink; the wine was finished but the guides produced the flask of cold tea, only to find its contents frozen solid, this was the last straw and I threw myself on the bed supperless and slept the sleep of the just, never stirring till the day was well advanced.

Snow was still falling on the following morning, and the descent from the hut to civilisation was certainly an enjoyable though serious undertaking, the snow being in very bad condition after the prolonged storm. For several hours we were in snow never below our waist, often nearly up to our armpits.

Most cheering was the first sight of the green of vegetation after the waste of snows.

About four o'clock on the third afternoon we were nearing Grindelwald, and felt thankful indeed that our troubles had not ended in disaster, especially when we passed an old guide, moving about on crutches, whose back was broken on the Jungfrau, a snow tunnel having fallen in as he crept through. Except for the results of snow glare, no ill effects were experienced by any of our party, though our guides informed us that the summit had never been ascended under such adverse conditions as attended our expedition. Certainly no one should, or would, attempt it could he foresee such a near approach to serious if not fatal disaster.

One is often asked what is the good or where is the fun in climbing? I can only answer that in most Britishers there is a natural instinct to get to the top of everything and it is I believe an instinct which tends to strengthen our national character; as to the fun, there is no pleasure so pleasurable as that which has some spice of danger.

### Epilogue

"CEW omits to mention that no one had expected the climbers to survive. The following day, face swollen by exposure, CEW proposed to Chrissie and was accepted."

Mike Austin

## REPORTS OF CLUB ACTIVITIES

### ABMSAC SUMMER ALPINE MEET - SAAS FEE 94

The 1994 Summer Alpine Meet was held at Saas-Fee from 16 July to 13 August. The first fortnight was a small pre-Meet gathering of some 18 members and guests, conducted in mainly hot, sunny weather, the high freezing level giving poor snow but otherwise pleasant conditions.

The second two weeks formed the main Meet with some 35 members and guests attending with the weather being more stormy and becoming distinctly colder at the end of the period. Numbers were down on previous years but better than expected earlier in '94.

The arrangements, breakfasts and lunches in chalets and dinner at the Allalin Hotel worked well, both the accommodation and the food meeting with unqualified approval. In this respect we were all very grateful for the good humour and helpfulness of Tobias and Peter Zurbriggen. Swiss price inflation and the rate of exchange were a shock to many and it was fortunate that the cost of accommodation and food was unchanged from that agreed in 1993.

Climbs included the Allalin for most, Mittaghorn for many, the Alphubel, Feechopf, Egginer, Fletshorn, Laggihorn and Jegihorn for assorted parties and some went further afield to the Bishorn, to claim an easy 4000er. Attempts on Taeschorn and Nadelhorn were turned back by time or weather. Walks included the old route to the Zwischbergen Pass, inspection of various hills from unusual directions, nature trails, the Gspon and Monte Moro long hikes and the 1993 flood disaster trail including bus ride (a tight fit in the tunnel) to the Mattmark Dam.

Injury and inclinations lured parties to the little-frequented Jolital, and to the Baltschiederl, where the one mile long water course tunnel provided an unusual approach, and a raging torrent created by high temperature and recent snow stopped a party just short of the hut which is reached by a six and a half hour walk.

All in all a most successful Meet, though tinged with a touch of sadness that, for a variety of reasons, the pattern of Meets to which the Club has become accustomed for some 20 years has had to come to an end. Many thanks for the letters and cards and for the article in the Journal. The Meets have been great fun and, mercifully, have been without any serious incidents. *Carpe diem.*

To return to an old custom, here is a list of all those who attended the Meet:

→ ATKINSON Vera	→ BUTLER Georgette	→ CAMERON Ross
→ CAMERON Sheila	→ JONES David	→ MAYCOCK Simon
→ WATKINS George	→ HALL Nigella	→ HALL Robert
→ IRWIN David	→ IRWIN Charlotte	→ IRWIN George
→ IRWIN Alice	→ JONES Wendell	→ REES Barbara
→ STOCK Sue	→ WELLS Elizabeth	→ BENT Trevor SAC
→ BENT Suzanne	→ BARLEN Antonia	→ BOWES Stephen
→ BROOKER David	→ CHAPMAN Margaret	→ COALES Edward
→ COLEY Sam	→ COLEY Linda	→ DILLON Keith
→ EDWARDS John	→ IRVEN Paul	→ IRVEN Lucy & William
→ IRVEN Thomas	→ IRVEN Emma	→ JAGO Anne
→ JAMES Roger & his 2 sons	→ KEARSLEY Michelle	→ KEARSLEY Andrew
→ LEGG Nigel	→ THOMPSON Ian	→ WHYTE John
→ WHYTE Joan	→ ARCHER Harry	

27 Harry Archer

## THE JOINT ALPINE MEET

**Ailefroide 23 July to 3 August 1994**

**Courmayeur 3 to 13 August 1994**

The meet was well attended, particularly the first half at Ailefroide with the large campsite able to cope with the numbers.

The traverse of Pelvoux proved a popular first route. The Coolidge couloir was in good condition and provided an easy ascent.

The descent by the Violettes Glacier which leads one back to Ailefroide, without the customary stop at a hut for lunch, was more demanding. The descent starts easily down the glacier, a couple of crevasses to cross and a bergschrund, with a wooden stake to provide some protection for the last man. The route was somewhat circuitous with a couple of short couloir to descend, generally with the help of an abseil. Finally, a hanging meadow was reached still some height above the village. The final descent was via an extended version of Jakes Rabe which led improbably back to the village and refreshment.

For those for which it was their first visit to the Dauphine the Barre des Ecrins was high on the list of peaks to climb. Huts in the park tended to be booked up several days in advance (a significant number of places taken by tourists wishing for the hut experience and with no intention of climbing!). The Ecrins Hut was no exception and members had the option of booking four to five days in advance or carrying up bivouac equipment. Most opted for the latter, finding the west ridge in good condition as reward for the effort.

Other routes included the South-East Flank and South Ridge of Les Bans from a bivouac at the road head. (We were not convinced we found the correct route onto the South Ridge!) Descent was by the more normal ENE ridge to the Pilatte Hut. The following day the Boeufs Rouges was traversed before descending the Sele Glacier.

Les Montagne des Agneaux was the other first route and ascended by several parties from the Glacier Blanc Huts. *Although an easy grade, it is a varied route with snow slopes leading to the Col du Monetier.* The upper slopes of the glacier are climbed to the Col Tuckett prior to a scramble up the South Ridge to the summit.

The local guides have produced a topo guide to the rock climbs surrounding Ailefroide. These ranged from single pitch to 10/12 pitch climbs on faces overlooking the campsite. On the Secture de la Paroi the multi pitch climbs of La Fissure and Snoopy, a more recent climb taking the slopes to its left. On the Secture de Palvour, Palvour les Flot's (first ascent 1990) was climbed with several parties getting caught out by the rain on the descent, to the amusement of those watching with binoculars from the comfort of their tent awnings. The campsite was arranged by John Brailsford who also made us welcome at his chalet at Argentiere la Bessee. (This could be of interest to members wishing to obtain accommodation in the area.)

The classic climb in the area must be the Promontowe ridge followed by the traverse of the Meije. Whilst some headed for Courmayeur, this was climbed, the Promontowe Hut being approached both from La Berarde and La Grave direct.

The Courmayeur meet was based in Val Veni at the CAI-UGET Refuge Monte Bianco on a terrace below the hut. The campsite was well up the side of the hill and although access was more difficult than to the campsites on the valley floor this was more than compensated by the views and the open aspect. The refuge also provides meals and accommodation and is particularly popular with those doing the Tour du Mont-Blanc. Routes achieved between breaks in the weather included the Geant and the Dome de Rochefort via a traverse of the Arete and Aiguille. One party traversed the Aiguille de Tre la Tete from the Estelette bivouac hut. With a favourable forecast one party went up to the Monzino Hut (for the Aig Blanche de Penterey) but with a storm at breakfast and a revised forecast (incorrect!) descent proved the order of the day! From an early cable car to the Torino rock routes were also achieved on the Pyramide and Trident du Tacul.

*Mike Pinney*

## NORTHERN DINNER 1994

The attendance this year was higher than ever and 124 members and guests dined at the Glenridding Hotel.

Members are, increasingly, coming earlier and leaving later so the weekend is turning into a week long meet.

The weather was mixed, but it was possible to have most of a day out without getting wet. Friday was sunny for some – all day. Saturday was a day for attacking gulleys – the snow was good, even in the morning's rain. It was rumoured that some returned early to watch the rugby internationals on TV. But one can't believe this of intrepid mountaineers. Sunday afternoon was dry and pleasant but many went out in the morning rain – possibly to salve TV consciences.

The official dinner guests were Jim Fotheringham and the leader of the Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team David Freebourne and his wife. Heather Eddowes presided and toasted the guests. Jim responded and proposed the toast to the Association. This was the 21st consecutive dinner organised by Arline and Brooke Midgley and an ABMSAC shield was presented to them and very happily received.

After the dinner Jim gave a slide show and talk on his climb of Shivering with Chris Bonnington. The slides were stunning and the climbing magnificent – a real alpine style ascent of a Himalayan peak. The speaker was totally unassuming and humorous in the best amateur tradition – the climbing went a little beyond that though. Jim made up for the indifferent weather by his superb presentation.

*Brooke Midgley*

## 1994 MARATHON WALK

At 5.03 am the leader was complaining about the late start; at 5.04 he had mislaid his sun-hat; by 5.10 even he was off.

Almost two miles along a traffic-free road was accomplished in good time; the road gave way to a grassy track beside Brotherswater which led in turn into the pleasant meadows of Dovedale and a steeper path under Dove Crag. Breasting the watershed and turning off towards Ambleside over High Pike and Sweden Crag, the talk turned to thoughts of bacon and egg in Ambleside, the first town ever visited on an ABMSAC Marathon. In the event we had to be content with tea, coffee and buns, but lost 40 minutes in which, allegedly, Mike Pinney and friend slipped by.

Leaving Ambleside (nine miles) a little after 10.00 we ambled over the lower hills, and across numerous rivers, first the Rothsay, then the Brathay at Skelwith Bridge, and again by Colwith Force, followed by Great Langdale Beck at Chapel Stile. Some reference to maps and even locals proved necessary. It remained overcast and oppressive and insects were active.

We welcomed cold drinks at the pub in Chapel Stile (14 miles 1.00). At this point once again committee demands (protest from Leader backed by Editor) for a meeting at 6.00 pushed Hugh Romer into top gear, and he and Terry Teemis from the RAF (prospective member) were last seen vanishing over Raven Crag, depriving the party of its fittest members. A short sharp shower necessitated waterproofs and the 400-odd feet ascent was hot and sweaty. We descended towards Grasmere meeting a mysterious party of Pakistanis engaged in spraying each other with incense or insecticide. A way through the woods and down a beck put us in sight of Grasmere, centre of the Wordsworth industry.

A little irritated at this touristic splurge, every other house a theme park or Wordsworth Stone Gnome Centre – we found another pub, where one member unwisely followed leadership recommendations and consumed an icy pint of lemon and lime.

By 3.00 (17 miles) we were shaking Wordsworth – not his fault poor fellow – from our trainers, and engaged on the long ascent to Fairfield, over Stone Arthur and Great Rigg. It was cooler on the hill, but the 2,700 feet ascent took its toll.

On the col, below Cofa Pike, roared a helicopter, waiting noisily to resume some rescue operations on Hutapple Crag; we edged round the machine avoiding whirring blades; the suggestion that it had been sent by the President to collect the Editor went out of favour.

With one of the party undone by a reactivated knee injury, and another suffering after-effects from cold lemon and lime, we staggered up St Sunday Crag in mist and gentle rain and down to Patterdale soon after 8.00 pm – 15 hours for 24.7 miles and 6,950 feet of ascent.

Features of the walk were the two major ascents (like Haweswater in 1992) but without the great heat of that day, and a surfeit of pubs, which meant that no one suffered dehydration but timekeeping went out of the window.

On a personal level trainers finally won a long battle with boots; trainers mean wet feet and smelly socks and less ankle support, but the weight off one's feet compensates all. I have also come out firmly in favour of Kendal Mint Cake which doesn't melt like chocolate, and like Mummy's Blood, reduces heights and lowers angles. It also reaches parts of the engine that other foods can't reach. So one learns something from these walks.

Those involved: Belinda Baldwin, Jenny Imeson, Graham Daniels, Hugh Romer, Terry Timmis and Mike Pinney and friend. All I think enjoyed it especially retrospectively.

*Wendell Jones*

## VERBIER FAMILY SKI MEET

(combined ABMSAC and Eagle Ski Club Meet)

**28 March – 9 April 1994**

Mark Eddowes' happy formula combining a chalet-based family ski holiday with opportunities for off-piste resort skiing, one day touring, and even more serious extended hut-based ski-mountaineering, again proved in Verbier that it satisfies a real demand. This year's exceptional weather conditions in early April, with a continual deposition of deep powder snow for 10 days over Easter, and generally poor visibility for much of this time, would likely have disrupted a hut-based tour badly. The adaptability of our chalet-based touring programme proved advantageous in these uncertain weather conditions.

The party assembled in Verbier where the spacious Chalet Mas de Niforchier, situated above the lower station of the Savoleyres telecabine at the top corner of the village, comfortably accommodated 12 persons in the first week, and 14 in the second. We self-catered, and each family group took its turn at shopping and providing dinner for us all. This worked well, and the standard of cuisine was very high.

Arriving in warm clear sunny weather, with the south-facing lower slopes of Savoleyres bare of snow and with spring flowers burgeoning, we looked forward to some good spring-snow skiing. Yet within a week these same slopes were deep under new snow; the scene was more akin to early February than to Easter. Poor visibility, with few durable "windows", considerably restricted touring plans, but the ubiquitous deep powder snow was a delight. High winds fortunately were absent, and few avalanches were seen in spite of the frequent alerts.

The touring section numbered eight – Mark (leader) and Heather Eddowes; Eric Dadey; Hugh Romer and daughter Margaret (week 1), wife Renata (week 2); Nigel and Brenda Edwards.

Monday, 28 March: Mark, Eric, Hugh, Margaret, Nigel and Brenda limbered up with an enjoyable off-piste run from the ridge north of Mont Fort to the right bank of the Lac de Cleuson, thence to Siviez and the returning lift system. The ridge was reached by a short steep climb from the Col des Gentianes, initially on skins, and finally ski-less and punching footholds in the frozen crust.

Wednesday, 30 March was fine and sunny. The day-tour party – Mark, Eric, Brenda and Nigel – was transported early in Mark's car to Champex-Lac, where we put on skins and climbed westwards up the scenic Val d'Arpette. A warm ascent of 1,300 m, often on heavy wet snow, brought us to the Col d'Arpette (2,942 m). The ski descent on rather soggy snow was generally enjoyable, as was a refreshment stop at the bar by the forest road leading down to Champex-Lac. This was our last day of entirely clear weather. The next day was overcast and humid, with poor visibility.

On Friday, 1 April we had hoped to climb to Monts-Telliens, west of Bourg St Bernard at the Swiss end of the Grand St Bernard pass and road tunnel, but the omens were not good when the party (Mark, Eric, Hugh, Brenda and Nigel) left Verbier in Mark's car at 0610, in a steady drizzle. On arrival at Bourg St Bernard (1,950 m) a strong southerly wind blew snow into our faces, and clearly Monts-Telliens were not on. Instead, we skinned up the line of the pass road into the blizzard, with visibility virtually nil at times. After 5 km we practically collided with some buildings which reared themselves up out of the gloom, and gratefully availed ourselves of the shelter and hot soup provided by the renowned hospice at the Col du Grand St Bernard (2,458 m). Easter organ music in the hospice's

beautiful chapel enhanced the atmosphere of this historic place, as we thought of the many travellers of old who had, like us, struggled to the col in snow and tempest to find refuge there. The ski descent was marginally less unpleasant with the wind at our backs.

After a heavy weekend snowfall, an off-piste party – Mark, Hugh, Renata, Brenda and Nigel – skied the Vallon d'Arbi down to Tzoumaz, on Monday, 4 April, in often very bad visibility. Nigel became airborne over an unseen cornice at Col des Mines, and did a spectacular three metre head-plant, without damage. We revelled in superb deep powder.

Wednesday, 6 April: the Eddowes and Dadey children joined the adults in the morning in some exhilarating off-piste skiing around the resort. Visibility was poor but the powder was superb. The children skied impressively in the deep and steep. Later Hugh, Renata, Brenda and Nigel rounded off an energetic day with another off-piste descent of the Vallon d'Arbi to Tzoumaz.

Thursday, 7 April started clear and bright although we knew that it would not last. Mark, Heather, Brenda and Nigel embarked on the *pièce de résistance* of the touring programme, the ascent of Rosablanche (3,336 m), using uphill transport to reach the Col des Gentianes (2,894 m). A short piste descent brought us to the foot of the first short ascent of 200 m in altitude to the Col de la Chaux (2,940 m), then a ski descent of the same magnitude before we put on skins for the final climb by way of the Col de Momin (3,003 m) on to the glacier, approaching Rosablanche from the north-west. The climb was made in pleasant conditions and hazy sunshine, but as soon as we had reached the summit ridge, the cloud enveloped us and snow fell, and so it remained for the rest of the day. It was 1400, and we regretted that we were an hour too late. The ski descent down the glacier became increasingly difficult in a near-whiteout, and when we found ourselves trudging through deep snow almost on the flat, we realised that we had missed the turn off the glacier to the right at a higher level towards the Lac de Cleuson, and instead were on the flat lower part of the Grand Desert (aptly named). Much time was spent in crossing this terrain and the Lac du Grand Desert, after which we rejoined our intended route leading to the right bank of the Lac de Cleuson and thence down to Siviez. We were not the only party to miss the uphill transport back to Verbier (closing at 1630). Our return to Verbier took us four more hours, using two buses to reach Sion in the Rhône Valley, and two trains to reach Le Chable via Martigny. The last telecabine from the valley deposited us in Verbier and we had a long walk in deep snow up to the chalet where we arrived tired, wet and hungry at 2130 – an interesting day with a lesson to be learned!

More snow fell on Friday, our last day, which was divided between piste skiing and digging the cars out of the driveway. Our thanks are due to Mark and Heather for devising and arranging this very successful meet; and to all the family groups who turn by turn fed us so well.

Present for both weeks: Mark and Heather Eddowes, Lucy (9) and Mary (7); Eric and Esther Dadey and Gemma (8); Hugh Romer; Nigel and Brenda Edwards. For week 1, Margaret Romer; Mike Pinney. For week 2, Roger James, son Gavin (8) and Shirley.

*Nigel Edwards (Eagle Ski Club)*

## A GOOD SCOTTISH WINTER

### ABMSAC Scottish Winter Meets 93/94

Saturday, 14 May 1994 is not a day which I shall easily forget. A cloudless sky, a gentle breeze, as 24 members of the ABM and other friends made their way from Corriemulzie to the summit of Seana Bhragh. The views were spectacular, even by Scottish standards, from An Teallach round to Ben Wyvis, including the Outer Isles, the Sutherland hills, Ben Hope and Ben Klibreck. We sat on the summit in short sleeves: plastic glasses were produced plus some wine of the country to drink out of them as we congratulated Alastair Andrews on completing his Munros. A solitary walker who had arrived at the summit shortly before us was repeatedly invited to partake in the festivities, but rapidly made her way off in search of solitude.

It was a fitting end to our Scottish winter season, and a deserved tribute to the organiser of five weekends a year – a tiresome task involving finding accommodation, organising transport, arranging meals and generally keeping an eye on an idiosyncratic group of individualists.

Our first weekend of the season was in early November in Appin. We woke on the Saturday to find a sunny day with a good covering of snow on the tops. Three separate parties went to Buachaille Etive by three separate routes, the most noteworthy of which was Curved Ridge, climbed by Roger James and Stephen Bowes. Other parties had a good day in the Mamores.

On the Sunday, still in reasonable weather, we found a lot of ice in the corrie above Mamore Lodge but managed to complete the traverse of Na Gruagaichean and associated top in time for a quick pint at Mamore Lodge before heading home.

We were back three weeks later, this time at Fearnan, near Loch Tay, in the cottage which has been the base for many successful weekends. Again, there was plenty of snow but conditions were more rugged and the winds were stronger. Two parties managed to make the summit of Ben Lawers, one from the car park and one by the south east ridge. But we decided that conditions were too rough to complete the traverse, and even those who had planned to ski down decided against, so we beat a tactical retreat. Meanwhile Roger James ticked off the Glen Lochay Munros.

Conditions were brisk again on the Sunday, with most parties at the head of Glen Lyon. Some went to Meall Buidhe and some to Stuchd an Lochain in what could be described as bracing conditions.

I tend to think that early January is not a good time to go to Scotland because the weather is often at its worst (the previous year we did not get beyond Edinburgh). However, the need to work off Christmas excesses saw us at Newtonmore enjoying a comfortable and convenient bunkhouse. On the Saturday parties departed in all directions: Terry McManus and Mark Eddowes did two gullies in Corrie Ant'Sneachda; others were not put off by the Monadh Liadh, despite their reputation for being the most boring hills in Scotland; Alastair made sure of Creag Pitridh while Roger and I went up to Creag Meagaidh. We didn't like the look of the snow in Easy Gully, so we climbed by the Window and returned along the east ridge over Carn Leith.

If the meet had been scattered on the Saturday, everyone decided to come to Glen Feshie on the Sunday. Parties took various routes in the Sgoran Dubh area, with Mark Eddowes on skis making by far the fastest progress. We climbed the final ridge up to the summit of Sgoran Dubh in near whiteout. Occasional glimpses of corniced cliffs reminded us of the seriousness of Scottish winter hill walking.

Our next weekend was at Onich, the one disappointment of the season. Roger and I attempted Aonach Mor spurning the ski-lift, and using the north-east ridge. But conditions worsened and we ran into a whiteout as we approached the cliffs below the main summit, so we beat a tactical retreat. Sunday was a washout, so we swelled the crowds in Nevisport.

The final weekend was at Braemar in March. Snow was down to the village and Saturday was fine but with a cold wind. Parties set out, some on foot and some on skis, to Lochnagar, the Cairnwell and to the hills to the north of Braemar. All eventually returned safely. Roger James continued his practice of travelling free on public transport by hitching a lift with no money on a bus. Those who were not completely exhausted had another good day on the Sunday.

Parties got to the top of something on nine of the ten days of our five weekends, which was not a bad record for a season marked by persistently unsettled weather.

There was a lot of press comment during the winter about the number of accidents in Scottish mountains, with particular reference to the "Surrey syndrome": some commentators pointed out that English climbers, having travelled a great distance to reach the Scottish hills feel obliged to go out to justify their journey, in conditions in which the locals would think of going no farther than the nearest bar. As one who treats himself to winter weekends in Scotland from London, this gave me pause for thought.

I have recently seen an analysis of Scottish mountain accidents over the past thirty years. The author suggests that in recent years the number of people walking or climbing in Scottish hills has been increasing by about 5% a year, making mountain walking the fastest growing sport in the UK. This must be at least a partial explanation of the increasing numbers of accidents, and it is gratifying that, while the number of incidents has increased roughly in line with the number of people on the hills, the number of fatalities has remained more or less constant over the past thirty years. But 90% of casualties were well equipped, and 75% were judged to be experienced climbers. But the most striking statistic (for me) was that 40% of casualties on Scottish hills were English climbers. There are no data on the proportion of Sassenachs on Scottish hills but I am sure it is well below 40%, giving some support to the Surrey syndrome theory. The conclusion of the report is that "experience is the sum of near misses".

Mercifully, the ABM has not featured in any recent statistics, and the worst that has happened to us is that parties have missed each other or have taken longer than they have expected to complete a route. But as one who has fallen through a cornice (not on an ABM meet), and lived to tell the tale, I am in no doubt that mountaineering in Scotland in winter is at least as serious, in its own way, as climbing in the Alps. But it can also be just as rewarding. Which is why it was such a pleasure to be drinking Alastair's health on the top of Seana Braigh.

*John Dempster*



## MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES 1994

### THE KARAKORAM – A TREK TO K2 BASE CAMP

*"A walk on the wild side" – John Barry*

*"As hard as anything I have come across which is not actually climbing" – Joe Tasker*

We knew our choice for a first Himalayan trek was jumping in at the deep end but, because my great grandfather was Colonel Godwin-Austen, the first European to approach close to K2, it was an emotional pilgrimage which I just had to make.

Penny and I went with the long established trekking company Exodus and were in a party of fourteen, plus a British leader, Peter Guzvica, and two excellent Pakistani guides, Amin and Nazir. We were supported on the trek by Balti porters and cooks, initially fifty-seven but reducing to twenty-five by the end. Exodus had warned that we should not expect as high a level of service as was normal in Nepal but this was quite unjustified; the food was fresh and plentiful and we were looked after in a friendly and efficient manner. The porters carried their heavy and often unwieldy loads with great agility and at high speed, often overtaking us at a run. They quickly earned everyone's admiration and respect.

Several days of heavy monsoon rains prior to our arrival in Islamabad meant that we could not fly to Skardu, the capital of Baltistan, instead we went by bus for two days up the Karakoram Highway. The KKH follows the Indus Gorge and is a marvel of Chinese engineering. As well as giving us a good introduction to Pakistan the journey is spectacular, passing Nanga Parbat (8,125 m) and winding through the often narrow gorge above the tumultuous River Indus. All travellers on the KKH have their horror stories, ours involved driving by the light of a small torch shone through the windscreen after the headlights failed. Fortunately the driver was prevailed upon to stop before we plunged over the edge.

From Skardu there is a day's jeep drive up the Braldu valley to the end of the road, this used to be at Dassu but it is now said to reach Sirungo about twenty miles farther up the gorge. On our approach the new part of the "road" was impassable in three places due to landslides and on the way back there were five such breaks. Exactly how Amin arranged for jeeps to be available in all the cut off sections I do not know but at least one was waiting for use each time we had to cross a broken stretch.

From our first camp at Sirungo (2,800 m) to K2 base camp (5,200 m) is about 70 miles and we covered this in seven and a half days, which included one rest day for the porters at Paiyu (3,400 m) where the last trees are available for gleaning firewood. The return journey was a little longer as several parts of our outward path had disappeared into the Braldu, necessitating high level detours. The river valley section is desert and the temperatures were very high, probably in excess of 40°C in the middle of the day, so a dawn start, lunch at 11.00 and camp at 2.00 was the usual timetable.

Highlights of this part of the trek were an entertaining 300 m cliff scramble; crossing the snout of the Biafo Glacier; and two river crossings, one in a wooden box suspended from a pulley and wire rope known locally as a *ghrari* and the second waist deep in a torrent of glacial water aided by a climbing rope and some very hardy porters. We were now passing below Paiyu Peak (6,600 m) and starting to see some famous peaks ahead, the Trango Towers (6,251 m) and, in the far distance, beyond Concordia, Broad Peak (8,047 m).

Early on the fifth day of walking we climbed onto the Baltoro Glacier where we were surprised to find large areas of ice covered by blown sand. Our camp was at Urdukas, where

a campsite was carved out of the cliffs by the Duke of Abruzzi in 1908. It was here that my great grandfather had made his famous survey of K2 (8,611 m) from a ridge about 500 m above the camp. The route lead on up the Baltoro Glacier, completely dry at this season, and for the next five nights we were camping on the ice.

The approach to Concordia must be a strong contender for the most spectacular mountain scenery in the world. One is walking on a glacier littered with blue ice seracs eroded into fantastic shapes, which contrast dramatically with the dark grey moraine covering most of the surface. Through this run enormous crevasses and streams of glacial meltwater. On the left bank of the glacier lies the Masherbrum range, rising to 7,821 m, on the right bank are many 6,000 m peaks, climaxing in the Mustagh Tower (7,273 m). All the side valleys send glaciers down to join the mighty Baltoro, often with spectacular icefalls. Ahead the peaks clustered around Concordia beckon, Marble Peak (6,238 m), Broad Peak, the Gasherbrum range, with several summits topping 8,000 m, and Mitre Peak (6,006 m).

The main objective does not come into view until Concordia (4,700 m) is reached. Wanting to appreciate the maximum impact I did not look to my left to watch K2 gradually emerge from behind Marble Peak but, lead by Penny, I walked head down until the whole mountain was visible. I was rewarded with a breathtaking sight, an almost perfect pyramid of rock and ice over two miles high soaring into a deep blue sky, only eleven miles away at the head of the Godwin-Austen Glacier.

The following day we did the 22 mile round trip from Concordia to K2 Base Camp. The route up the Godwin-Austen Glacier passes under the mighty Broad Peak on which we could see some climbers from an Italian expedition. On K2 were Korean and Japanese expeditions, we met one Korean who had been to the summit and a Japanese lady who had injured her leg in a fall. So far there had been three fatalities this season, including one from altitude sickness on the walk in. At Base Camp the presence of the mountain is even more overpowering than from Concordia and the view back down the sculptured ice of the Godwin-Austen, past Broad Peak and culminating at the Golden Throne (7,312 m), Chogolisa (7,665 m) and the Mitre is extremely beautiful.

The following day started with the only rain of the trek and although this soon cleared we all took a rest day. Except for the expected mild diarrhoea the party had been very fit on the ascent, this was now to change. Our camp on the Baltoro at Goro was marred for several by attacks of sickness and here began for me a period of extreme lassitude from which I am now only just recovered. At the time I thought that I and the other two who were similarly affected were suffering from some infection but I now believe that it must have been a combination of altitude and dehydration, which upset the fluid balance of the body. Similar symptoms are described by other climbers and travellers in the Himalayas. The worst day for me started at dawn on the glacier at Khoborsay and finished after dark fourteen hours later several miles below Paiyu. For much of this time I was dragged by the hand by Nazir, who also carried my day sack. On the following day a porter was swept away from a point where the trail involved wading along the edge of the Braldu. Much to our relief he was able to regain the shore, minus his load and clothes, and suffering only from shock.

On arrival back at Skardu we were delighted to find that we would be flying to Islamabad, even if the flight was at one time reputed to be the most dangerous in the world (I suspect this dubious honour now belongs to Aeroflot). The Pakistanis are justifiably very proud of their mountains and our pilot dipped the wings to ensure that everyone appreciated the view of Nanga Parbat as we passed, it seemed, within a few feet of the summit. A fitting end to a unique mountain experience.

*Mike Austin*

## SWISS TOUR 1994 CHUR TO ATTINGHAUSEN

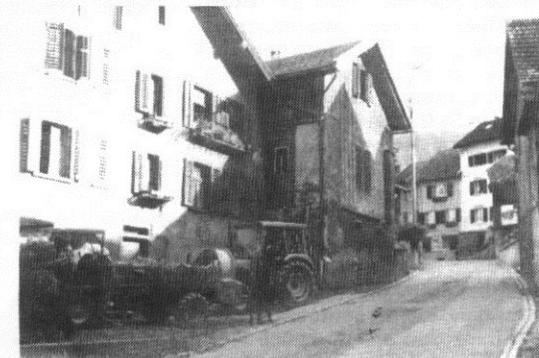
I got up in plenty of time for the 0557 tube, only to find it had been cut. I had to wait another 5 minutes at King's Cross, so, by time I got to Heathrow, I had to go straight to the gate for the 0745 to Zürich. This was not straightforward. As I had an ice-axe on my rucksack, I had to be escorted to the gate. As it happened, there were several people after me and, on the aeroplane, it was announced that there was one last passenger getting through security. At Zürich Airport, this transpired to be Princess Di, going to a Red Cross meeting. I got a train to the HauptBahnhof and then, one to Chur, where it was quite hot. Using my broly (schirm in Deutsch) as a parasol, I found the path by the Rhine and walked to Tamins, which took two and a half hours. There was no obvious hotel in Tamins, so I asked a local and was directed to the only one, the Crown. This was outrageously expensive. A single room without shower was 50fr and breakfast (the timing of which I had to argue about) was 9.40fr extra. At least, dinner was only 14fr. The proprietor had been an immigrant to South Africa (!) and had come back, as "it was no place to bring up children".

### Thursday, 26 May

I was away by 0810, steeply up into a pretty cwm like a little Leukerbad. This was road at first. The path doubles back east across the face of the rock wall into a strange dry hanging valley called the Foppaloch. This goes up increasingly steeply through the trees. About three quarters the way up, it started to rain and more or less continued all day with odd breaks. At the Kunkels Pass, the path rejoins the road, which varies in condition from tarmac to jeep track (and back) all the way down. I stopped for a beer at the first pub in Kunkels, which is a strung-out concept rather than a village. It was a long, pleasant walk to Vättis, then on by footpath past a partly drained reservoir. I had some lunch and, shortly after, saw a jet black knobby little lizard or salamander. This is the Tamina Tal, limestone cliffs and Valkyries practice area. Then, the path drops and climbs back up to Valens. This was very exhausting and it was clear at Valens that the rain was falling as heavy snow above. There would be no point in staying there and trying to go to the Pizol Hut the next day. I had more lunch and staggered down the valley in my anorak to the river bank and along to Bad Ragaz. I had to stop in a wood store hut for a while to recover part way. I eventually found the Hotel Garni (but with a restaurant) Jerger in Bad Ragaz. It took 10 hours and I should have been feeling worse, considering. The Jerger, with an en-suite shower, was cheaper and better than the Crown.

### Friday, 27 May

A long walk to Walenstadt. This was mostly on footpath along, first, the Rhine Valley and then, the Seez Valley, which runs westward, implying a watershed near Mels but the ground hardly rises between the Rhine and Mels. All the water ends up in the Rhine later, anyway. I tried the footpath from Bad Ragaz to Vilters but the farmer warned me of cowdung and I went round the aerodrome instead. The last part was path. Then, from Vilters, one does an up and over footpath to get to Wangs and another footpath to Mels. There were intermittent views through lightish rain. From Mels to Flums is a long path by



*Tamins*

the riverside and then an irritating route past the Flums Flumroc factory (which stinks horrible) and a set of footpaths across fields to avoid the motorway, eventually ending near Walenstadt Station. 6.5 hours. I booked into the Hotel Post in the High Street, which is a kilometre from the lake, because, as I found out after a shower, there is a barracks between town and lake. (Kaserne was a word I happened to know – Wozzeck?)

### Saturday, 28 May

Glorious day. I walked along the north shore of the Walensee to Weesen. It is not as simple as that. There is first, a 1,400 foot cliff which has to be negotiated by a good path and an alp on top. This is pleasant but the path down is a steep, slippery twisting schist special to the lakeside. Then, it is gently up and down to Quinten, which someone said is the nicest place in St Gallen Kanton but very twee in a Hampsteady sort of way.

None the worse for that. I had a beer, which I certainly needed on the next stretch. It is a plain straight path on the map but crosses a lot of contours. When you think you are up (1,000 feet), the old path is destroyed and you have to go up further beside the waterfall. I met a bunch of Appenzeller ladies here and chatted with them on and off to Weesen. They stopped at one point and I went on to Strahlegg (!) and stopped for another beer, where they caught me up. Weesen is a typical Swiss lakeside resort village, horse buses etc. I stayed at the Park Hotel Schwert, posh but not that expensive. There was Beethoven on the radio but I heard outside, that extraordinary sound only produced by one of those Swiss town bands with the fantastic uniforms (sort of like patchwork). It turned out, on enquiry, to have been specially hired for a wedding! A Canadian family, temporarily resident in Switzerland, were camping near the lake (camper truck brought over). Nice views along the lake in the evening. I took eight hours on this six hour walk, because of the beers and chats.



Walensee



Churfirsten from close to



Quinten on the Walensee

### Sunday, 29 May

Drizzle at first. I walked down to the Escher Kanal, which is the Linth from Glarus and along its banks. I ducked under a hotel to read the map at Näfels to be greeted from a window by a tarty-looking black girl in a silver dressing gown. Could not have been a real tart at that time in the morning. The rain stopped at Netstal, a name which rang a bell until I saw the big filter paper factory. They make all the filter paper (school and college). Towards Glarus, the intermittent industry died out. The entrance to the Klontal was very grand. It is still towering limestone country. At Schwanden, where the valley divides (the other, easterly arm going to Elm), I stopped for spaghetti carbonara at an Italian restaurant. Then, along the valley to Luchsingen, where the path goes up to Braunwald – three and a half hours, it said. It had already been a full day (five hours) and I started slogging very slowly and now in the sun up the steep forest path, thinking that this was loony. Fortunately, after 50 minutes, I saw an inn. This was Schlattberg, a so-called Feriendörfli and I booked in. It was a family-run place: the family were watching a Grand Prix which Damon Hill won. There was recent plumbing and it was very cheap. I collapsed into a bath – luxury – locking everybody else out for an hour. The landlord played the guitar and the landlady was charming in a barmaidly sort of way. I got too much to eat, as there was a good solid supper to be had.

### Monday, 30 May

My rest day. The son of the house, about 8, served me a very large breakfast very correctly. I think they thought my putting cold milk in tea very odd but they never have English people here. (In fact, this area is only touristy for big city Swiss.) It had rained all night and saw no reason to stop. I walked the two and a half hours to Braunwald, which included more of the steep wood path and meadows at the top. It was misty, so I saw no view to speak of. Braunwald is a ski resort, again for locals only but the Hotel Alpenblick was open and took a half-board booking, making it cheaper. I walked round the town while they got my room ready. It was all quiet except for the builders. The hotel was by the station and at the start of the path to Nüssbühl for tomorrow. The staff were very friendly. I spent the rest of the day reading my book (*Alan Clark's Diaries*, a fascinating picture of the plotting in the Thatcher government). At dinner, I chatted to a half-deaf Swiss Jew from somewhere on Lake Constance. I now have a rotten cold and sweated pig-wise into their duvet all night, having bad dreams about the Tree of Heaven.

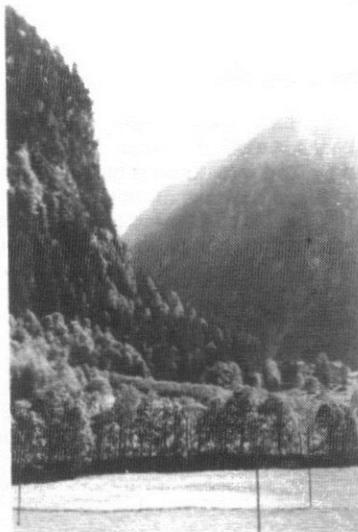
### Tuesday, 31 May

On paper, this was The Big Day, although I don't think it was any bigger than Thursday last. I set off in the mist again towards Nüssbühl and the mist cleared by the time I got there. This was a mistake, as I should have cut off towards Urnerboden on a higher path. From Nüssbühl is one of the most unpleasant paths in Switzerland. At one point, it goes under a cliff waterfall and then down the actual stream with no possible alternative. This gets you to the Klausen road and it is necessary to walk (pleasantly) up this through the Urnerboden, one of those friendly-feeling valleys. I stopped for a beer before Urnerboden village. After, it is possible to cut off the road three times, although the first is not marked on the map. The last is



Urnerboden village with the Clariden

onto snowfields and kicking steps up to the top of the pass, where there is an alcohol free café. It took less than six hours to get up. The other side is all packhorse track, the top part badly maintained and there is confusion on the map just above the steep drop. When I eventually found this, the packhorse track goes steeply down into the Schächental with the motor road miles above and quickly forgotten. It is very pretty and a sort of secret valley. A little cow village called Aesch lies at the bottom but has no pub and water was running low. But it was only an hour's stagger along the valley floor to UnterSchächen and the Hotel Alpina. Cheap, and I booked in for two nights, as I wanted to explore the Brännital which goes off to the side here.



*Brännital from the Schächental*

### **Wednesday, 1 June**

The Brännital trip. As Kev Roberts says, like the Lauterbrunnen Valley but prettier. I wound up the east side to Trogenalp and circled round to Brännialp village. No pubs but a lot of over-friendly cows after sugar lumps and sarnies. The valley has the same overhanging waterfalls as Lauterbrunnen but the end is dominated by the huge cliff of the Gross Windgallen. (It is possible to escape to the West and walk over to Erstfeld, a long trip as there is no accommodation in the valley.) I met a pair of Germans and walked down with them, getting in a lot of practice. We saw a slowworm which wriggled away then decided it had better square up to us. Another lovely, sunny day. The waitress in the hotel thinks I'm a rapist. She should be so lucky – no energy.

After dinner, I rang home. Lily answered, to my surprise, as she should have gone home days ago. Avis has pneumonia and is still in Wales on her second course of antibiotics. Lily and I will have to handle the Private View and Party on Saturday but "I was not to worry!".

### **Thursday, 2 June**

Of course, I worried all day. I set off at 9.00 mostly by the road but with some welcome stretches of path. I avoided Burgen with its phony Wilhelm Tell culture and cut across the fields to Schattdorf, where things went wrong. I expected to be able to walk along the river bank (Schächen) but it was wired off for an arms factory. Great! This is not obvious from the map. So, I had to cut around through an industrial area to get to the road to go up to Attinghausen. Cable car, 10 minutes, but when I got there, I did not recognise it. There are two and it was 500 feet up to the second one, which I did recognise. I went up the path, more snakes, and down by the road. That completes my walk from Gargellen to Chandolin. There was a road, then foot-path to Fluelen on the Lake of Lucerne and I caught the 1500 boat. It took three and a half hours to get to Luzern, calling at all the pretty lakeside villages on the way and I had some more conversations. Part of the reason for getting the boat was to stay away from



*Me in the Brännital*

telephones. If I had booked in at Fluelen as I intended, I would have hovered over the phone for hours. In Luzern, I booked into the Waldstätterhof, had a shower and phone. Avis was back and had been when I was in Fluelen! She had driven back this morning and sounded rough but game. The doctor at St Peter's Street had not even listened to her chest. Then I had dinner, and the weather, which had been mostly sunny, broke in a terrific hailstorm. Tomorrow – fly home from Zürich.

*Ken Baldry*

### *Peter Farrington*

Along with a stormy day on Lochnagar, frequent wintery conditions on the Paps of Jura provided excellent preparation for an early spring visit to the Khumbu region of Nepal, organised by Himalayan Kingdoms.

After flying from Kathmandu to Lukla (2,827 m) we walked via Namche Bazaar to the Gokyo Valley and on up Gokyo R (5,483 m). Our first climbing objective, Lobuche East (6,119 m) was approached over the Cho La (5,420 m) but not yet fully acclimatised we failed c. 5,800 m on our summit attempt. Four days later all twelve expedition members reached the top of Island Peak (6,189 m), the only disappointment being the mist and snow which obliterated the much anticipated views. The short "alpine" North Ridge of Pokalde (5,806 m) from the Kongma La provided a pleasant finale before returning to Lukla via Tengboche. An enjoyable trip in good company and well led by Simon Lowe.

Maybe still benefiting from a few extra red blood cells I recorded by best ever time for the Bens of Jura Fell Race then went on to complete a testing Glen Rosa Horseshoe Race in driving wind, mist and rain in June. Further regular running on the Islay and Jura hills enabled me to compete in the KIMM over the Southern Uplands in October.



Mike Goodyer

Well a year of mixed fortunes. After a lively start to the year at a party in Fort William on New Year's eve/day the year bumped along with a few highlights. A house move in the middle of the year down south to Wiltshire curtailed the *summer rock climbing*.

During the climbing part of my year I *managed to break my nose* in the Lakes, lose my wallet in Scotland and have a car give up the ghost in Courmayeur. All these events also involved *losing days or weekends of climbing*. I apologise to those fellow climbers with me who helped and gave comfort! I feel that those unpleasant days are to sharpen the *images of the good days*. And this year, the good days are etched into my mind.

One of the highlights of the year was competing in the London Marathon. The winter months were spent with long hours of training and several "warm up" races. I even abandoned any thought of skiing for fear of injury. On the day a quick start enabled me to get into my running stride and I completed the race 26 seconds inside my *target of three hours*. I was well pleased.

A climbing highlight was on the Snowdonia Meet in June. Terry Trundley and I met Mike Pinney for three days of *excellent rock climbing in the Pass and on Cloggy*. The weather, although dry, was very cold and windy. The memories of climbing Great Slab on Cloggy *will stay with me for a long time*. The excellent hut at Rhyd-ddu and the meals and beer at the local pub completed a good weekend.

My trip out to the Alps was delayed a week so that my climbing partner, Terry Trundley, could attend another wedding – this year in Bristol. When we arrived at Ailefroide the meet was in full swing. We camped next to the Kiwi dining shelter and were welcomed back to the campsite with a cold beer/tea/soup depending on the time of day. The Pelvoux traverse was a popular route, justly so. The climb up was *unremarkable, but the main feature of the route was the traverse and descent over the glacier*. The weather was perfect for our ascent of the *Barra des Ecrins and the Dome de Neige*. Terry and I left the hut along with 30–40 others and started the long plod along the glacier. Luckily most of the people doing the route *stopped at the edge of the glacier for a second breakfast*, so the climb up the route was enjoyable. Only a couple of teams were ahead of us. At the col Terry and I *passed the other parties, who were roping the rock pitches*. Learning from last year's experience on the Schreckhorn we covered the easy ground solo. The knife edge route and the view make the route. On the descent we popped up the snow slope to the summit of Dome de Neige. Our drive over to Courmayeur was plagued by the car overheating and finally the car stopped on the road up to the campsite. The car was abandoned in Courmayeur, where it could not be repaired, and then picked up by the RAC. Eventually Terry got his car back – three weeks after returning home! We had a good day's climbing on the *Pyramide du Tacal – warm rock, blue sky*. We even had time for a beer awaiting the last cable car down the valley. The combination of the unsettled weather and serious accidents involving members of the meet *dented our eagerness for climbing* and we slunk home in the hire car.

The week after returning from the Alps the removal men arrived and moved us lock, stock and barrel to North Wiltshire. I spent the next few weeks unpacking boxes with informative labels such as "front bedroom sundries". The next time we move we will pack up *ourselves!*

Just as I had completed the unpacking I drove up to Scotland for this year's Karrimor Mountain Marathon. I spotted a drawback to living in Wiltshire – Scotland is miles away. My regular partner, Terry, had to pull out of the event due to an injury so a short notice replacement was found. The stand-in stood up to the rigours of the weekend. Despite the journey up and down the country the weekend was a great success.

So there we have it, a fairly quiet year with a few memorable times, which outweigh the downside of the year. The move to rural Wiltshire is over and we have settled in much quicker than we had dared hoped. I am looking forward to bringing the plans for 1995 into fruition.

## PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

### SOME ODD MOMENTS AT SAAS FEE

David Jones

#### **The Feekopf – revisited**

The summer of 1994 was not a good time for glacier travel, for the thunderstorms frequently broke up the days of intense heat and made sure the snow conditions did not stabilise. We sank up to our ankles in mushy snow on the Feegletscher at five o'clock in the morning. So in the darkness it became vital we should locate the beaten track, which hopefully would lead us safely through the multitude of crevasses. Daylight on the Plateau beneath the Alphubel brought the heat, which in turn, brought the lassitude and the hard work required to break a trail through the softening snows. At the Alphubel Pass we took a breather and decided it would be a safer route if we returned to 'Sass' by way of the Feekopf.

Now, that awoke my interest and brought happy memories of the previous Saas Fee Meet when with a small ABM party we had traversed the Alphubel from the Mittel-Allalin Metro to the Längflue. On the Feekopf we had walked into our "divertissement". Six years later I was about to revisit the scene.

We had got onto the Fejoch, crossing the long ridge to the foot of the Feekopf tower. Here, however, the rocks of the gully were covered with bodies; members of a large guided party excitedly shouting instructions to each other and the guide. If there was any movement upwards, it was imperceptible to us, so we crossed to the other side of the gully and began to climb. Howls of protests swept across, startling us to attention; above all bellowed the guide. "Stop where you are, you must not climb past!" We saw his point of view and halted.

But then came complications in the form of a second large guided party coming up behind us. Their guide closed up and quietly urged us to climb on. "Go on, there's plenty of room, you can pass, elephants can climb here." Two steps upward and the cacophony of abuse returned to rain down on our heads. Once more we halted. Two minutes later our friend below renewed his urging (still quietly). "Go on, there's room for everyone, there's room for elephants to pass!. Assiduously we avoided each other's gaze, one titter and we would be doubled up with laughter, especially as he now began to croon ditties of "Everyone and elephants should pass!" We decided to wait, so everybody below waited. The wrath from above being a greater deterrent than the urging from below.

During the long snow plod up on to the Feekopf from the Alphubel Pass a thick fog had enveloped us. However, on reaching the small cairn, the confidence of hindsight made us go directly to the precipice edge and the exit of the gully. There was nothing! Even peering through the whirling mist it was obvious there was no vantage of a rock gully.

"Are we on the right peak?"  
"Don't be daft, of course we are!"  
"But where's the gully?"

Then it dawned, there was no more a well remembered gully, massive erosion had taken care of that. I felt cheated, the gully was gone, forever.

We crossed the long ridge back towards the Mittel-Allalin in mist and met nobody. No large guided parties and certainly no large five-toed proboscidian mammal, guided hypothetically or otherwise.

#### **Stones – That Hit and Miss**

The close proximity of stone fall, brings with it a tightening stomach and a feeling of fear of the same intensity however many times the clatter is heard. Paradoxically, it is the very near miss which leaves the biggest fright, the memory of what might have been, worries the mind for a long time after.

Our quick way into the Salanfe Basin and the peaks of the Dents du Midi, from the Trient Valley was always by way of the tiny Col de la Golletaz. Early summer usually found it packed with hard névé making for a good snow climb. In the upper section it took on the appearance of a couloir; steep, narrow, lined by vertical cliffs. The two of us had reached this point when the rumble of falling rock sounded out of the cliffs. With drying mouths we stood and watched a sizeable rock tumble out of a stone chute. Bursting into the hard névé, it paused, made up its mind, then began its flight downwards. Forcing ourselves to watch the rock until the last possible moment, we saw with growing horror that the unbelievable was becoming the inevitable. We were about to be skittled back down the Galletaz.

Self-preservation was a step sideways, a slip, and the start of a long slide down the frozen snow. Frantic efforts got me to a halt in a patch of snow, but instantly to be hit in the back – by my partner. Entangled with only one ice-axe now, we slid on down to near the bottom. A check of the anatomy and a limb count showed only superficial cuts and bruises. On looking up and seeing the half buried rocks here and there in the couloir which we had missed on the way down, we considered it to be our lucky day. The memory of the murderous whirr as the rock flayed past, close to the head, and the impact of displaced air on the cheek, seemed like a nightmare.

The stone which found its target on my head on the top slopes of the Mittaghorn I neither saw nor heard, but the blow was truly felt, which concentrated the mind.

I neither saw or heard, for on looking up to view the summit cross as we emerged from the shelter of the NW ridge my face and eyes were splattered and filled with grit and dust. Instinctively knowing what was coming; self preservation this time was a dive back to the shelter of the overhang. Too late!

The flood of profanities which immediately flowed did nothing – it never does – to help stem the flow of blood. Somehow, loudly working through the vocabulary seemed to bring the reeling senses under control. I was interrupted by a shout from above.

"Are you hurt? Is it bleeding much?"  
"Yes, a lot."  
"Try keeping pressure on it. Can you climb up to us?"  
"I'm not sure."  
"It's too dangerous for us to climb down to you!"  
"Hang on a minute, I'll try."  
"You'll have to come up. The first aid kit is up here!"

It had the desired effect to get up and move on, so it was not long before we were all sitting beneath the summit cross. They gave me all the sympathy I needed. Showering gifts of chocolate, sandwiches, tablets and drinks, at the same time cleaning me up and building a turban. The shock faded and slowly I realised I was enjoying the fuss and centre of attraction very much. Momentarily I had the tiniest pang of guilt that I shouldn't, but it quickly passed.

### **The Water Barrier**

We had come upon the dozen or so mini-cataracts pouring across our path so suddenly and so unexpectedly, that for a while we could only stand and look on with disbelief, we could go no further. Water courses of this force and magnitude usually happen after days of rain and torrential cloudbursts. Yet all day our party had come up the long Baltschiederteral beneath a cloudless sky and torrid heat. This heat must be melting the snows of the glaciers above at a phenomenal rate. Whatever, we still had to find a way to cross.

At the very edge of the moraine cliff, precariously balanced, was a "bendy-plank" bridge, shuddering half submerged in the surging flood. Below, jammed in the rocks were remains of former bridges; broken, splintered planks. The sight of them drained our confidence away, so alternatives to crossing the plank had to be discussed. Firstly, there was the plank; it would have to be raised out of the water, balanced and stabilised. Secondly, there was all the building materials needed all around. Thirdly, a small stick of seaside rock from Swanage was offered, its use for the moment unspecified. We set to work.

Forty minutes later we were back on the bank having had all our efforts frustrated by the torrent. Everything we tried to do, it undone. We sat and ate the last of our sandwiches and shared the "Swanage Rock" between us. The discussion at last took on an element of common sense.

"What shall we do now?"

It was getting late in the day, and even if a couple of the torrents were crossed, there would still be half a dozen others to negotiate. Nobody else had come up, or stood on the other side since we had arrived. The thought of being stuck in the middle at night did not appeal.

"We could wait and "bivi" for the night. With the colder air the force of water could drop.

The logic was right but impractical for by now a strong Foehn wind was blowing. It would be hotter than ever, the level of the water was even now higher and stronger. The disappointment pushed us into silence.

"What now?"

"Come on, let's get our sacks and go home."

Our exit from the Baltschiederteral was through the same place of entry; a mile-long, unlit low tunnel through the mountainside. The good humour and joviality of the party had returned as we marched out alongside the gurgling Bisse. Darkness was on the Rhône Valley as we came out of the tunnel and met the full heat of the Foehn wind. Sweating profusely where we stood, an overwhelming thirst took hold and the slaking of it became the priority.

Even at this late hour the hotel in Ausserberg made us very welcome and would prepare a meal for us. Meanwhile, the litres of liquid ordered and put down was exceptional even for stalwarts so well versed in the art. In the first few minutes of the new day we prepared to return to Saas Fee.

"Right then! Let's get back to 'Schonegg' ... get the kettle on and murder a few cups of tea!"

*R. Wendell Jones*

At the Northern Dinner Meet the company was more congenial than the weather; I never topped 1,600 feet. A visit to the hills East of Moffat with my younger son Michael proved more successful.

A motoring holiday in France brought views of Mont Blanc from our hotel dinner table and a second ascent of Dent D'Oche, a 7,000 feet tooth-like viewpoint overhanging Lake Geneva. Fourteen years had elapsed between the two visits, during which the peak had got higher, steeper and more slippery; alternate stretches of muddy grass and well-worn limestone may explain the latter phenomenon. Were there more fixed ropes?

In Harry's swansong, the Saas Fee Meet, we were well looked after. My personal contribution consisted of longish walks including a five minute excursion over the Antrona Pass into Italy, and a scramble up the Jagihorn, first ascended in 1958, when the Mountaineering Association tutor took me straight up the face without even one delay. On that first fortnight's visit to the then tiny village of Saas Fee we traversed the Egginer, Weissmies, Nadelhorn and Dom, ascended seven 4,000ers and did three major rock routes. The MA, ultimately sunk I suspected by subsidised State competition, deserves a mention in climbing history as original producers of organised mountain training in Britain. During a more recent visit to Saas Fee I took part in the trudge from the Britannia Hut to Tasch and Zermatt, possibly the ABM's largest ever expedition, traversing the Allalin Pass in scenes reminiscent of the Retreat from Moscow – exaggeration? Yes, but what's the harm in adding to legend?

Longer strolls included a round of the Black Mountains, 26 miles organised by the Brecon Beacons Mountain Rescue Team, and the fourth in a series of 25 mile walks from the Patterdale Hut. A plug for 1995; we may look at Long Sleddale, as part of a policy in finding parts of the Lake District that other climbers don't reach.

*Barrie Pennett*

The highlight of 1994 for me was the Settle-Carlisle long distance walk which we undertook in the summer.

It was extremely hot throughout the walk but nevertheless most enjoyable. The walk, of course, starts from the delightful market town of Settle and the route passes through some of the finest countryside in Britain and includes Horton-in-Ribblesdale, Ribbleshead, Blea Moor, Dentdale, Great Knoutberry Hill, Garsdale, Mallerstang and Appleby.

However, my year started with a walk in Wharfedale on a cold and frosty January day, with lunch at the Craven Arms, Appletrewick. Other walks in January were mainly in Wharfedale on Burley and Ilkley moors. A particularly enjoyable walk in February was from Midgehole where on a cold and frosty day we did an interesting walk which took in Hardcastle Crag.

During a day visit to the Lake District in March my wife and I took the opportunity to visit a fell which we last climbed some 20 years ago. We had a few hours in which to climb Loughrigg Fell (1,101 ft) and after spending some time on the summit we then walked round the fell. This walk affords glorious views.

Good Friday saw us in Wensleydale, North Yorkshire, where we walked from Aysgarth visiting Bolton Castle and of course the falls.

During a short visit to Dorset in May we did a couple of walks on the delightful Purbecks.

Summer was spent doing short local walks and watching cricket but then in September we stayed in Nidderdale where, with a number of friends, we completed the Nidderdale way, a 53-mile walk round the Valley of the Nidd. The weather was mixed but on the final day of the walk the heavens opened and remained open all day. It rained so heavy that we all finished the walk wet through despite our Gore-tex gear.

In an effort to keep fit during the winter we are walking the Leeds Country Way in sections. We are doing the walk, which is only 60 miles in length, once a month. It is not a particularly picturesque walk and will be glad when we have completed it. Our next long distance walk – The Ebor Way is from Helmsley in North Yorkshire to Ilkley. New Year is being spent in the Howgills.

#### *Mike Pinney*

Generally 1994 was a good year for rock climbing. For many years visits to the North Devon coast, generally in mid-August following the lifting of nesting restrictions on a day with low water near midday, were to the Sandstone Slabs at Buggy Point. As usual, an enjoyable day was had with Midnight Cowboy and Sexilegs within the day's tally.

However, following investigations in 1993, a number of visits were made to the Culm Coast, the coastline between Clovelly and Bude composed of sedimentary sandstones and shales. A number of the crags are composed of slabs giving similar character climbing to Buggy. Visits were made to Screda Point with its dramatic shark's teeth formation giving a number of 80 foot single pitch climbs and to Cornakery Cliff and the 410 foot Wreckers Slab put up by Tom Patey in 1959.

The easy angle of the above cliffs is compensated by the bizarre construction of Lower Sharpnose. Three fins 8 to 10 feet in thickness and up to 130 feet high "thrust uncompromisingly seawards at right angles to the indifferent material of the main cliff". A loose descent down the headland was rewarded by steep/overhanging climbs on surprisingly solid rock. The Bristol Channel is very tidal and having completed Lurakhod and Clairtrack on the Middle Fin, we ended up wading round the northern tip! Still, we had stayed dry on our first visit.

The temperatures for the ABM June Welsh Meet were unseasonal and although I was able to rock climb every day (with Mike Goodyer and Terry Trundle) it was too cold and hence we failed to make full use of the daylight or push the grade, with Ribstone Crack the only new route.

Invariably trips to Swanage got no further than subliminal and my 94 objective was to avoid that cliff entirely. This was achieved (mainly by parking at the Western End) with good days on Boulder Ruckle, Cormorant and Guilemot ledges. Of note Behemoth "with an exhilarating top pitch" up a steep corner before moving on to a steep wall, Quality Street and Mistaken Identity.

There is a healthy co-existence on the Dorset coast between adventure and sports climbs. The sports climbs are concentrated in quarried areas at Swanage and on the Isle of Portland.

Thus, when the tide was too strong for the adventure climbs (breaking over the top of the cliff as well as the lower ledges!) and cooler days, particularly at the ends of the season, sports climbing became the order of the day with visits to Dancing Ledge, Winspit Quarry, Swanage and Battleship Edge, the Battleship and the Lost Valley on Portland. In all a good year.

## OBITUARIES

### **Barbara Attridge**

Barbara, with husband Geoffrey and son Alexander, was a regular attender of Summer Meets. She was not into doing heroic climbs but went on many walks. She is remembered especially for her good humour and photographic skills. At the 75th Anniversary Meet at Saas Fee she was the official photographer and clicked away endlessly giving so many of us excellent photographs to remind us of the occasion.

Barbara was endlessly kind and ready with hot drinks, dry clothes and general succour to those coming in wet from the hills. She would happily mind children and give time to those of more mature years, who just wanted to be there with some company. We miss her.

Our sympathy goes to Geoffrey and Alexander.

*Belinda Baldwin*

### **Tony Husbands**

I first met Tony at Edale, when he came along to the 1969 February Meet I had organised. It was the first Northern Dinner. He arrived in style in an Alvis, which was nothing compared to the Ferrari of recent years. We spent the day, along with Freda Kemsley, on the top of Kinder in thigh deep snow and winter sunshine. It was the start of a long friendship.

Tony joined the Swiss Alpine Club – Monte Rosa section – in 1947, having been introduced to the hills and climbing during the war, whilst working in North Wales. He had a great fondness for Snowdonia and later became an officer and then a trustee of the Snowdonia National Park Society.

In the Alps Tony often climbed with a guide. A telephone call would establish the state of the route and arrangements of where to meet. These "lightning" forays ensured success on several occasions, the Grépon, the Weisshorn traverse, the Dom/Täsch and the Forbes arête.

It will be for the many happy times on the British hills that I will remember Tony. We always seemed to be having fun and adventure, giggling with sheer enjoyment or terror if Tony was driving. He was the kindest and thoughtful of men. The phrase "the quiet gentleman" was used recently to describe him. It was apt. He will be greatly missed.

*Tony Strawther*

### **Rudolf Loewy**

Rudolf Loewy was well-known in the club as he was a regular attender of meets at home and in the Alps over the last twenty years.

He served a spell on the Committee of the ABM before becoming editor in 1987 and remained in the post until 1992, combining this with editing the newsletter for part of the time. The Journal had been under financial pressure for a few years and had unavoidably become slimmer than we would have wished. The sale of the library released funds, which made it possible to expand and Rudolf proved to be the man to take the opportunity. He produced a handsome series of journals.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Throughout his time of activity in the Association he showed the same lively interest in worthy causes as in his "other" life, where Toc H and various church bodies occupied much of his time. He was usually the first to notice if anything was amiss, such as the state of the graves at Zermatt. He was always ready to act as ambassador to pursue such matters even if negotiations might be awkward.

The manner which carried him through these tasks also endeared him to his companions and none has been more highly regarded.

Many speak of his willingness to share time with him in the mountains whether they be competent, young, old, or inexperienced. This attentiveness spilled out into time back at base. During meets so may recall his kindness. We miss him.

*S M Freeman*

### John Turpin

John Turpin had a great and infectious enthusiasm for the mountains; his activities ranged from 4,000 metre peaks to energetic mountain walking, usually with his wife, Edwina.

John was a tall wiry figure with a great capacity for going uphill; even when he was over 70, he was undaunted by 1,500 metres of ascent in a day.

He read widely and had a considerable knowledge of alpine history; as an excellent linguist, he loved talking to climbers from other European countries.

For many years, John and Edwina supervised groups of young people walking on Dartmoor, giving up precious weekends to pass on navigational and survival skills; John loved the moor in all its moods, and was an ideal person to introduce others to its pleasures and problems.

In his professional life he had been an architect and chief planning officer; in retirement he was still very concerned about the environment and had a special interest in buildings in the mountains.

Our last outing in July had been a fine tour from the Swiss Binntal valley into Italy which he had been planning for months; his contribution to so many happy days in the Alps, as well as long walks in this country, will be remembered with great affection.

*Malcolm Yorston*

*Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Association held at the Rembrandt Hotel, South Kensington, London on Saturday, 12 November 1994.*

The President was in the chair with 17 members present.

1. *Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Rees, Lord Hunt, A.B. Hargreaves, D. Brooker, W.B. Midgley, M. Pinney and J.S Whyte.*
2. *The Minutes of the 1993 AGM as published in the Journal were accepted. There were no matters arising.*
3. *Election of Officers and Committee.*  
*Major Suter retires in rotation as Vice President, and Messrs Andrews and Goodyer retire as Committee members. The Committee's recommendations for their replacement were put before the meeting:*

*Vice President: Mr D.R. Hodge.*

*Proposed: Dr M.J. Eddowes. Seconded: Mrs M.I.C. Baldwin. Passed unanimously.*

*Committee Member: Mrs A. Jago.*

*Proposed: Mr A.R. Cameron. Seconded: Wing Commander H.D. Archer. Passed unanimously.*

*Committee Member: Revd J.M. Bogle.*

*Proposed: Major F.B. Suter. Seconded: Mrs E. Wells. Passed unanimously.*

All other Officers and Committee Members offered themselves for re-election and were returned unopposed.

4. *Accounts.*  
*The Hon. Treasurer having offered his apologies for absence, the Hon. Secretary presented the accounts with the Hon. Treasurer's notes.*  
*Membership was slightly down leading to a reduction in income from members. The cost of the Journal and Newsletter in total was slightly reduced, and total expenditure remained reasonably constant when the windfall profit of the May London Buffet in 1993 was discounted.*  
*Investment income was affected by the fall in interest rates, but improved by increased long term investments.*  
*New investment in Treasury Stock is timed to coincide with the expiry of the Hut lease.*

*The adoption of the accounts was proposed by Wing Commander H.D. Archer, seconded by Mr N.E.D. Walker, and passed unanimously.*

6. *Subscriptions.*  
*The Committee recommended that the subscriptions to the ABMSAC should rise by the increase in the BMC levy, namely 50p per person.*  
*The new rates would therefore be:*

Single membership:	£15.00
Joint membership:	£23.00
Junior membership:	£6.50

*Proposed: Wing Commander H.D. Archer. Seconded: Dr M.J. Eddowes. Passed unanimously.*

The SAC rates for 1995, which are fixed by the Committee, will be based on each member's Section charge in 1994 converted at a rate of SF2.00 to the pound. The new member's joining fee and first year's subscription will remain at £65, including the ABMSAC membership.

#### 7. President's Report.

This year has been yet another busy one with members being active in various parts of the world:

the Himalayas  
the European mountains of Switzerland, France, Italy and Slovakia  
and the British mountains.

However, the number of members has gone down a little over the year. After Alasdair Andrew's report from the sub-committee this year, concerning various aspects of the club and in particular membership, it is hoped that the Association will be able to take on board many of the recommendations during the next year or so, e.g. advertising for new members, being able to receive new members into the club and maintaining contact with them.

I and many others were saddened to hear of the death of Rudolf Loewy, a longstanding member and former Editor of the Journal. Many members were able to attend the funeral service. Sid Prentice, a well-known painter and former hut warden, and also John Turpin, passed away earlier this year.

There has been a full evening programme of events during the year:

- The slide evening in September was very well attended. Special thanks are due to Joan Whyte who has organised the buffet most successfully over the last few years, along with her team of helpers. She is giving up this responsibility at the end of the year.
- Lecture on the Tour de Mont Blanc.
- Lecture about the mountains of East Africa.
- and a lecture concerning the Painters and Paintings of the Alps which was held at the Swiss Embassy and was organised with the Anglo-Swiss Society.

My thanks to Peter Ledeboer who organises these events so well.

There has also been a full programme of weekend and week meets in the Lake District at the George Starkey Hut, in North Wales at the Oread Hut, in Skye, as well as day walks in Derbyshire and climbing in Yorkshire. Our thanks to Ben Suter, the outgoing Meets Secretary, for organising and co-ordinating these events.

And of course there were the Alpine Meets. Many thanks to Mike Pinney whose camping meet went to Ailefroide in the Dauphine, and then on to Courmayeur, and to Harry Archer whose chalet meet went to Saas Fee this summer.

Both were well attended, although not so many were on the chalet meet compared to previous years. (Perhaps the exchange rate between the pound and the Swiss franc had some influence!) Many good climbs as well as walks were achieved despite the lateness of the snow season this year.

Special thanks to both meet organisers.

This year ABMSAC joined the Eagle Ski Club for an Alpine Ski Meet in Valais. Thank you, Mark Eddowes.

The coming year will be a challenging one for the Association. We need new members, those with a special leaning towards Switzerland. We need more meet leaders in order that the club can continue to offer a varied programme to its members. Harry Archer is taking a well deserved rest from organising the chalet meet as from 1995. Our very

special thanks to him and his team of helpers.

Next year a smaller chalet meet, not on quite the same lines, will be open to members. However, others in the club do need to come forward and share in this challenging but rewarding task.

A thank you now to all those involved with the committee including Alasdair Andrews, Mike Pinney, Don Hodge, Hugh Romer, Mike Goodyer and new Hon. Meets Secretary and of course our outgoing Vice President Ben Suter who is also retiring from his second job of Meets Secretary, but I am glad to report will be continuing as the very capable Newsletter editor.

Thank you.

#### 8. Any Other Business.

Peter Ledeboer reported on the SAC Annual Assembly which he had attended on the Association's behalf.

The SAC structure is recognised as being top heavy, and consultants are to advise on reorganisation.

VAT is being introduced from January 1995 on hut charges at 6.5%, but not on subscriptions.

The SAC is coming to terms with climbing walls, competitive climbing, etc, and Sections will have junior members from ages 10-21, full membership from 22.

Belinda Baldwin announced the sad news that Barbara Attridge had died on the previous Wednesday.

Don Hodge reported that the George Starkey Hut fees would be increased from 1 January 1995 due to the imposition of VAT on fuel.

Ross Cameron recommended that a shield of the Association should be presented to the out-going Swiss Ambassador M. Franz Muheim, via his representative Jacques de Watteville, at the dinner following the AGM. This was approved by the members present.

There being no further business, the President declared the meeting closed at 6.45 pm.