



2016

ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH MEMBERS OF THE  
SWISS ALPINE CLUB



Journal

## ABMSAC Office Holders 2016

### Committee

OFFICE	HOLDER	ELECTED
President	M J Parsons	2015
Vice-President	J H Strachan	2013
Hon. Treasurer	J Baldwin	2005
Hon. Secretary	R W Murton	2010
Hon. Membership Secretary	E A Bramley	2014
Hon. Meets Secretary	A Burton	2013
Hon. Editor	M J Goodyer	2009
Hon. Hut Booking Secretary	M P Parsons	2014
Committee Member	H Eddowes	2014
Committee Member	P Harris-Andrews	2014

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Chairman	M J Parsons
Company Secretary	J Baldwin
Treasurer	D Buckley
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# ABMSAC JOURNAL 2016

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Journal. Last year we had a total of 8 meets in the UK and three in Europe. The UK meets varied from winter weekends up in Scotland down to autumn walks in Devon. We had a Hotel meet in Italy, a camping meet in France and a trek in Switzerland.

Staying in contact with each other is an integral part of the club. Through the website, e mail updates, Facebook and Newsletters information on meets and news updates are available. In addition, Meet Reports and photos are added to the website at frequent intervals, thank you for your contributions.

Thanks also goes to those members who send in personal accounts of trips for the Journal.

The addition of the Facebook page has been successful with over 60 'likes' and many more views on the page, particularly during the Mattertal trek. To this end we have, set up a closed Facebook group, which already has 30 members. This enables members to add their own activities and arrange trips and meetings – as we have done for a couple of trips already.

I hope you enjoy the Journal.

*Mike Goodyer,  
Editor, May 2015*

**Cover photo:  
Monte Rosa Hut by Mike Goodyer**

## MEETS PROGRAMME 2016

Date	Meet and Venue	Meet Leader
February 5 - 7	The Annual Dinner and AGM, Inn on the Lake, Glenridding	Brooke Midgley
March 11 - 14	Fassfern House, Loch Eil, Scotland	John Dempster
April 1 - 1	New Members Meet, George Starkey Hut, Patterdale	Mary Eddowes
April 29 - May 2	Bunkhouse/Camping Meet, Royal Oak, Hurdlow, Derbyshire	Andy Burton
May 15 - 20	Isle of Skye Hostel Meet	Andy Burton
June 10 - 12	Rhyd Ddu, Oread Club Hut, North Wales	Ed Bramley
July 1 - 8	Hotel based Alpine Meet, Cogne, Val d' Aosta, N Italy	Pam Harris
July 16 – August 6	Camping based Joint Alpine Meet, Ailefroide, Ecrin, France	Keith Lambley
August 17 - 21	Joint ABM/TCC Meet, George Starkey Hut, Patterdale	Andy Burton
August 31 – Sept 8	Walking in the Tatra Mountains, Poland	Paul Stock
September 16 - 18	Beer Meet, Devon	James Baldwin
September 23 - 25	Alpine Reunion Meet, George Starkey Hut, Patterdale	John Kentish
October 7 - 9	New Inn, Bwlch, Brecon Beacons	Paul Stock
October 14 - 17	Tarbet, Loch Lomond, Scotland	Philip Hands
October 21 - 23	Annual Buffet Party, George Starkey Hut, Patterdale	Mike Parsons
Dec 28 – Jan 2	Joint ABM/TCC Twixmas Meet, George Starkey Hut, Patterdale	Andy Burton

## LONDON WINTER LECTURES

January 5	Climbing all the Alpine 4000m peaks	Dave Wynne Jones (FRCC)
February 2	Falling and other Mountain Journeys	Martin Cooper (FRCC)
March 1	Ethiopia, its history and the Simien Mountains	Peter Clarkson (TCC))

## PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS



It is now one year since I was elected and within 10 minutes of my taking office on Sat 5th February 2015, John Dempster asked if I had put in place a plan to ensure our club didn't follow down the same path as the TCC.

I replied that it was having my early attention!

However as I have previously communicated to you, I realised that making the club more easily manageable in terms of systems and ensuring that we had a new hut partner took precedence over membership recruitment. Now that these two areas are moving along at various speeds, I am setting up a '*membership and marketing*' group with Mary Eddowes as 'prospective members' secretary and a few others co-opted. Expect more news from me shortly specifically on this key issue of membership recruitment which needs quite some changes to take place before we can really get moving.

The meets program has remained strong in 2015 and that continues into 2016. A Facebook page is now operational and being used as intended, in a live on-the-move way as trips are happening. If you are not yet linked up with this page please do so.

We enjoyed our AGM and Annual Dinner at a new venue, the Inn on the Lake, Glenridding. Forty four sat down for dinner, two more than last year, according to Brooke Midgley who has organised this event tirelessly for 44 years now. According to Brooke the heyday was mid 90s with 150 attending.

The possibility of moving the AGM/dinner date to autumn has been raised and was aired around. Brooke and others comment: the pros of staying with late winter are that there are no other competing club dinners, hence much easier to get a booking, with lower room and dinner rates. It is in our constitution at present to hold the AGM 'December-March', so a change in constitution would be necessary. The weather can of course be amazing, or rubbish, at any time of year. The cons: October is the very beginning of Atlantic frontal storms and it's famous for bad weather eg. KIMM Borrowdale storm was famous around the world in 2008. October is a very busy period in the Lakes so it's very difficult to get bookings, plus autumn is very popular with other UK climbing club dinners so clashes for many people who are multiple club members.

The Inn on the Lake was very good and Brooke has just booked again for 2016.

Sadly a broken leg restricted my wish to attend club meets in 2015 but 2016 should change that. As I write I am about to take off for 4 weeks skiing and hope everything holds together.

Wishing you the 'Camaraderie of the hills and fellowship of the rope'.

Mike Parsons, February 2016

## MEET REPORTS

### **Locheil Meet, Scotland – 20-23 March – Report by John Dempster**

This was our third visit to Fassfern House, which did not disappoint with its warm and comfortable facilities. The Saturday morning dawned fine, with a good covering of snow on the tops. Mike, Andy and Steve took the new path up to Coire Leis and from there gained the summit of Carn Mor Dearg. They were tempted to continue along the CMD arête and over the Ben but wisely concluded that they risked being late for dinner had they done so.



*Carn Mor Dearg in "spring conditions" Photo by Mike Goodyer*

Roger and Phil, the determined Corbett collectors, picked off a couple above Loch Arkaig.

The rest of the party swallowed their pride and took the cable car which goes up towards Aonach Mor. We climbed

up to the plateau and enjoyed spectacular views from the summit, with a panorama of peaks stretching from the Cuillin in the North to Schiehallion in the South, with the North face of Nevis in the foreground.



*On Aonach Mor looking across to the Carn Mor Dearg Arete and the Ben. Photo by Jim Strachan*

All returned safely in time for an enjoyable dinner in Fassfern's stately dining room, allegedly used by Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745.

Sunday dawned cloudy with the Met Office forecasting (with spurious accuracy) a 48% chance of rain. In the event none fell. The forecast did not deter the Corbett collectors who climbed Carn a'Chuilinn, above Fort Augustus. The rest of us chose various low level walks which demonstrated that boggy West Highland paths can be at least as arduous as Munro climbing.

Monday was a day of sunshine and showers, more of the latter than the former in the North. Mike and party headed for the Lost Valley in Glencoe but were deterred by a torrential downpour. The weather did not deter Roger who completed the Glen Roy Corbetts. Jim, Margaret and I found better weather on Ben Ledi. As has happened in the

past the weekend ended with some spirited driving by Jim which allowed me to catch the last train back to London with 10 minutes to spare. All told a pretty good weekend, and Fassfern House makes an excellent centre. Will we be making a fourth visit?

*Participants - Andy Burton, Steve Caulton, John Dempster, John and Marj Foster, Mike Goodyer, Phil Hands, Roger James, Jim and Margaret Strachan, Jay Turner.*

### **New Members Meet George Starkey Hut, Patterdale, 10-12 April – Report by Mary Eddowes**

It was an exhausted yet excited crew who arrived on Friday night in Patterdale. There were travellers from Kent, London, Bristol, Stoke on Trent, Nottingham, Derby and the North West. We descended upon the White Lion for last orders and a very tasty meal. Bad traffic on the M6 delayed half the group, but luckily there was a cosy fire (built by renowned fire maker Heather and her new apprentice Thom) to greet the late arrivals at the hut. Then for introductions all round, a night cap and an early bed to prepare for the full day on Saturday.



*The group outside the George Starkey Hut. Photo from Mary Eddowes*

We awoke to a grey morning with snow on the fells, which scuppered our original plans for a Fairfield and St Sunday Crag loop. So instead Andy, Ed and Mary led the group to ascend the old favourite Place Fell. As soon as we set off the sun shone and it was a jolly group who zigzagged up to the gusty col. Everyone enjoyed chatting with new faces in the group and playing the age old game of taking layers off and putting them back on again and again and again. We reached the summit mid morning and ate a third breakfast just beneath the trig point, with fantastic views over to High Street and the valleys below and beyond.



Then it was down past the few remaining patches of snow and to the lake for a quick pint at the pub at Howtown before the party split into two. A boat trip back to Glenridding for some and the 5 mile lakeside path for the rest in the late afternoon sunshine and chilly wind.

*Simon, Kirsty and John on summit of Place Fell  
Photo from Mary Eddowes*

On our return to the hut, we learned that there had been a visit from the local fire brigade who found some very well cooked eggs and the hut full of smoke. Luckily that was the extent of the damage and we recovered from our walk (and the smoke) thankfully with hot tea, showers and all the windows open.



The evening saw a team of capable chefs, prepare a traditional pasta bolognese dinner for the lively group of eighteen. It was followed by a delicious Eddowes apple crumble. And just when bellies were full and people were relaxing... a wild ceilidh dance began and the hut became hot, energetic and full of scottish woops and laughter. It may have been reminiscent of years gone by in the hut at the autumn buffet perhaps..? Swing dancing ensued and then whisky and cards to follow, before we took a well earned sleep.

Sunday began wet and wild. Many of the group decided to pack up and start the long journey south, so they said their goodbyes. But a merry group of seven headed to Aira Force in full waterproofs for an adventure in the rain. Parking at the top by The Royal, we made our way to the cover of the trees in the valley. Within the lush greenery and mossy banks we enjoyed shelter from the weather and a peaceful, relaxed meander down past the various gushing falls. Then it was back up to the pub for a final pint before we set off to various cities around the country and home.



*Andy, Ed, Bianca, Karen and Thom at Aira Force. Photo from Mary Eddowes*

All in all a very memorable weekend, with good friends, new and old. Many positive comments! Now to see how many new members will join the club...

Thanks again to Andy, Ed, Heather, Marian and Mike for their guidance and support over the weekend!

*Participants: John Aouad, Kirsty Arnold, Pete Bennet, Bianca Bertalot, Ed Bramley, Andy Burton, Karen Dickinson, Jonny Dixon, Heather Eddowes, Mary Eddowes, Tom Farr, Kelly Jago, Simon Palmer, Hannah Parathian, Marian Parsons, Mike Parsons, Thom Scullion, Sabrina Shirazi, Aidan Sullivan, Hannah Sullivan.*

## Derbyshire Meet, Hurdlow, 1- 3 May – Report by Andy Burton

With this year being at least our fifth consecutive Meet at The Royal, I was pleased to have sixteen attendees. We still managed to have one AC attendee, as in accordance with Mike Pinney's wishes this Meet was run again as a joint ABMSAC/AC Meet, and four ladies attended who had not been before. We also managed to sign up another new member this year as well, which is a trend I hope we can continue. Twelve slept in the Bunk Barn and four camped.

A beautiful drive up on the Friday for most, with two having stopped Thursday night, and enjoyed the day walking from the pub via Aldery Cliff and Parkhouse and Chrome Hills, a swift pint at the Royal, after pitching my tent, as most people gathered in time to migrate to the Fish and Chip Shop at Longnor, followed by real ales and a warm fire on offer at the Packhorse Arms at Crowdecote, and a return to the Royal Oak for a final glass rounded off the Friday evening.

There followed on Saturday a gentle 30 mile cycle ride from Hurdlow, through Hartington, down to Hulme End, and along the Manifold Trail, ending up at the unique hostelry that is the Yew Tree Inn at Cauldon, for real pies all round, a game of bar skittles, and music provided by the 1d/2p music machine, and returning via the same route, dodging the afternoon showers, well almost.



*Mary and Kerren enjoying the moment, photo by Mike Goodyer*

Two diehards did a 70 mile cycle ride around the Peak and were still back before us?!

Two new attendees did a walk from the pub via the Old Smithy Cafe at Monyash and back up onto the trail, and also were back long before us.

Saturday evening saw 17 of us sit down for Dinner in the Oak Room, as we were joined by our friend Tony Howard from the Oread Club, and judging by the empty plates, and convivial conversation, the staff at the pub did us proud once again.



Sunday saw both the weather and the lack of hot water in the showers conspire to put a dampener on proceedings, but most of us ventured out on foot along the High Peak trail towards Parsley Hay where we struck off across the fields, and through a hidden side valley popping out in the upper Dove valley, at the ancient Motte and Bailey site at Pilsbury, here the weather started to clear and we were treated to long views up the valley towards the river's source in the moors behind Chrome Hill.

*Ed at Pilsbury Castle, photo by Mike Goodyer*

Once again unerringly we found ourselves in the lovely back room at the Packhorse at Crowdecote, where Linda made us some bowls of chips, despite being fully booked for Sunday lunch, and Mick advised us on which beer to have. On leaving the pub in warm sunshine we made our way up via the BMC owned Aldery Cliff onto the viewpoint that is High Wheeldon, at 422 metres, where a complete 360 degree view of this part of the Derbyshire/Staffordshire border can be seen. Then back down and along the lane past Hurdlow Grange to the pub.



*After lunch on a windy High Wheeldon, photo by Andy Burton*

By teatime we were six, just as well, as the weather was not conducive to having a BBQ, and the little kitchen area and its cooker, could only really cater for six, but rest assured the six made a valiant effort on the burgers and sausages. It was apparent however that it was an all male group eating, as the only vegetables consumed were those that could be fried or grilled. There was a distinct lack of salad! Some retired to a welcome bunk bed, having struck the tent and packed it away, whilst others continued late into the night, as we pretty much had the place to ourselves.

Monday morning saw us all breakfasting in the barn, packing up and driving to the National Trust/RSPB managed car park at Birchens Edge, next door to the Robin Hood pub actually, and walking along Chatsworth Edge and through the estate, via the Hunting Lodge and the various lakes hidden in the woods above the house, that provide



the flow for the fountain, and the other water features in the gardens. We walked out and down across the fields to Beeley where as a result of an earlier power cut the Smithy Cafe was closed, but the pub was open and devoid of customers. Hence another first for me, we as walkers with muddy boots were made to feel welcome in this pub, sat in the prime window seats, and were served by the staff with food and drink, as if we were their most valued customers.

*The church at Beeley, photo by Mike Goodyer*

The return walk took us alongside the river, past the front of the house, and back out via the Northern Deer gate, past Heathy Lea, the Oread's other hut, and back to the cars, for a not too late departure for us all to the four winds.

Many thanks to everyone for attending and supporting my meet, and I hope to see you all again next year in the Peak District.

*Attendees: Myles O'Reilly, Paul Stock, Ed Bramley, Mike Goodyer, Mike and Margaret O'Dwyer, Heather, Lucy and Mary Eddowes, Kerren Kossow, Sylvia and Beach Mercer, Howard Telford, Margaret Moore, Duncan Hogg, and Andy Burton.*

## Rhyd Ddu Meet, 13 - 14 June –Report by Ed Bramley

With the summer putting in an appearance earlier in the week, a number of us made the move to also make good use of the Friday. Parties went in several directions, and the selected route for some of us was an amuse bouche around and over several of Snowdon's flanks, to ultimately arrive at Crib Goch for the main course, and a desert of the descent back to the hut. Luckily, the weather had become a little cloudier, but still warm enough for several of us to have our shorts on for the day. Our route takes us up the lower part of the Rhyd Ddu path, before crossing over Bwlch Cwm Llan and descending down to the old slate workings on the Watkin path.

Did anyone see this location on Countryfile recently? The National Trust have re-introduced shepherding to these hillsides, which means that the sheep are moved onto new areas regularly, and already the slopes are showing a much greater diversity. We then head up Lliwedd and at the top spot a pair who are scrambling up one of its ridges. A late lunch beckons at Llyn Llydaw, and with a quick scramble to briefly join the Pyg track, we are then established at the foot of Crib Goch



The ascent up to the crest of the ridge is generally straightforward, but a couple of us take a line slightly to the left, which brings us onto the ridge by the shoulder, to be greeted by the rest who have not strayed off the main route. The crest itself never fails to excite, and we are all scampering along, lapping up each individual move. We stick to the top of the ridge as much as we can, not wanting the fun to end.

Eventually the ridge comes to its natural end, joining on to Crib y Ddysgl and eventually up to the top of Snowdon itself, where a quick brew beckons.

All that remains then is a straightforward, but by this time long descent of the Rhyd Ddu path, to conclude a very successful day out.

*Duncan, Mike and Paul on the Crib Goch, photo by Ed Bramley*

We start Saturday in Beddgelert, and head out to Llyn Dinas and the Sygun copper mine. On the way, we pass the new Lancashire Mountaineering Club hut at Cae Ysgubor, and we are invited inside for a look round. Whilst some parts are just in the process of being finished off, it's still possible to get a good idea of what it will all be like. We are all impressed with how the place has been designed, including disabled access, and the standard of finishing, and several of us are making mental notes for our own hut.



*The team on the way to the copper mine, photo by Ed Bramley*

Our journey then takes us past Sygun copper mine, originally established in the Bronze Age, and producing copper for several centuries before it was finally abandoned in 1903. Renovated in 1986, the mine is now a visitor attraction, with both above and below ground excursions possible. On reaching Llyn Dinas, we pull up onto the hillside, and our track threads its way steadily upwards, eventually reaching a hidden valley at the back of Grib Ddu. Here we pick up evidence of mining again, with an old rake clearly visible on the hillside. Our descent is down Cwm Brychan, which contains more old mine workings and spoil heaps, and eventually the remnants of an aerial ropeway for carrying the ore back down to the valley.



*Aberglaslyn gorge on the way back to Beddgelert, photo by Ed Bramley*

We have lunch by the Welsh Highland railway, before we head upstream to the Aberglaslyn gorge, which makes a marvellous backdrop to the afternoon's walk. Massive boulders, rock steps and water dancing its way down the gorge. Arriving back in Beddgelert, we find the perfect conclusion to the afternoon. Welsh cream tea, complete with scone, barra brith, cream and jam – yummy.

Back at the hut, we only just have enough space for our Saturday communal meal, which is a Mexican theme this year. Cheesy nachos for starters and vegetable chilli for main course, with a variety of puddings to complete the proceedings, and a suitable amount of wine to be quaffed.

The Sunday sees the cloud thickening up a bit more, but it's still good for walking, and a group of us head up onto Mynydd Mawr. We take the forest path at the back of the village, and after picking up the left turn, arrive out on the lower flanks of the mountain. Much less of an excursion than last time we went up here. The angle of the path diminishes before long, and we make the summit in good time, with the tops dodging in and out of the low cloud.



We take the path off the summit north westwards, and eventually the path heading northeastwards through the woods to the main road at Salem.

As always, it's a long trek back along the road to the hut, but we take the track off at the campsite to pick up the trail through the forest again. Back in time for a mid-afternoon cuppa, before the road home.

*Mike, Duncan, Paul and Ed enjoying the view on Mynydd Mawr, photo by Tony Howard*

*Participants: Belinda Baldwin, James Baldwin, Antonia Barlen, Ed Bramley, Andy Burton, , Steve Gaulton, David Christmas, Mike Goodyer, Don Hodge, Duncan Hogg, Sylvia Mercer, Mike O'Dwyer, Myles O'Reilly, Judy Renshaw, Paul Stock, and Tony Howard (Oread)*

## **Alpine Hotel Meet, Madonna di Campiglio, 11– 18 July – Report by Pamela Harris-Andrews**



This year's hotel meet in Madonna di Campiglio was a great success, with 31 members and guests attending. A week seems to be a good length for a meet of this kind as participants can then visit other places before and after, and this year was no exception. The Italian Lakes proved a popular choice, with several of us relaxing on the shores of Lago di Garda, Lago Iseo or Lago Maggiore, enjoying boat trips, gentle walks on Monte Baldo, or just sipping an aperitif and watching the sunsets. Bergamo was chosen as a stop-over by six of us, and the old town on the hill was a delightful place to wander round. Others stayed in Verona or in a nearby mountain resort, while some stopped off in Switzerland, France or Germany on their drive from the UK.

We quickly saw what an attractive small town Madonna is, and why the Empress Sissi of Austria spent so many holidays here. Situated in the Val Rendena, between the soaring pinnacles of the Brenta Dolomites and the snow-covered peaks of the Adamello-Presanella range, it is in a beautiful location, with an abundance of lakes and waterfalls nearby. Our hotel, the St Raphael, was in a quiet part of town, where the only sound was that of the stream running alongside. The hotel itself was excellent, and we were made to feel very welcome by Emanuela and Walther Vidi, and by the delightful English-speaking Monica. The bedrooms were comfortable, the breakfasts and dinners copious and delicious, and the swimming pool and jacuzzi were much appreciated at the end of a hot day's walk. Whilst there, we also discovered an amazing new aperitif, Aperol Spritz, enjoyed by most of the group.

But what really made the meet so successful was the perfect weather, and we set out day after day in glorious sunshine, in complete contrast to the cloud and rain we experienced in Pontresina last summer. Indeed, on some days we found it even too hot on steep uphill sections, although the uphills were considerably helped by the use of the Dolomeet card, part of our hotel deal, which gave free transport on all lifts and buses in the area. We made the most of this, and explored a variety of walks both east and west of Madonna.

The last hotel meet in Madonna had been in July 2001, and five of us present this summer remembered it clearly. That year the snow had lingered at a low altitude until well into the month, and the weather had been rather mixed. Nevertheless, one team succeeded in climbing the 3558m Cima Presanella from the Segantini Hut in the Val Genova, and almost every day teams heavily laden with via ferrata gear headed off on the cable car to the Grostè Pass east of Madonna, on occasions spending an overnight in one of the many huts. Via ferrata routes were explored north of the pass, linking Cima Rocca, Cima Sassaro and Sasso Alta, and south, linking Cima del Grostè, Cima Falkner and Cima Sella, with the Bocca del Tuckett and Bocca di Brenta providing descent routes to the eponymous huts.



But this year, with advancing age, only Mark wandered off to do some of these routes again, accompanied by Dick on the Sentiero Vidi. Bill and Rosie were the only others to head off north of the Grostè Pass, on the Sentiero delle Palette to the Bocchetta dei Tre Sassi, where they were rewarded by seeing a herd of 60 chamois. They descended to the Rifugio Graffner along the exposed Orti della Regina, the Queen's Gardens, named after the Empress Sissi. As its name suggests, this is a veritable flower garden, with edelweiss, mountain asters, gentians and alpine rhododendron growing in abundance.

*Mark D competing with the flowers for the bees*



*Tuckett Hut and the Bocca del Tuckett, photo by Rick Saynor*

On our second day a group of us took the cable car up to the Grotte Pass and set out along the stony path to the Tuckett Hut, named after Francis Fox Tuckett, the first Alpinist to make the traverse of the Brenta group, in the 1860's. From the hut we could watch climbers descending the snow slopes of the Bocca del Tuckett, and see the jagged spires more closely. From there it was a pleasant descent over the Sella di Fredolin to the Casinei Hut, and then down through the woods, where several species of orchids grew, to the spectacular waterfalls of Vallesinella, and the bus back to Madonna.

The flower enthusiasts in the group returned to the Grotte Pass several times, for an amazing number of rock plants grew in this seemingly barren environment.

Here we found many small plants, including *Anemone Monte Baldo* and *Daphne striata*, which Italian botanists encountered en route helped to identify.



*Daphne striata* and *Dryas octopetala*, photo by Elizabeth Wells

On other occasions we used the Spinale lift to ascend to Lago Spinale and the Rifugio Graffner, another flower-studded area. From here a variety of different routes could be taken back down to Madonna, one of them linking up with Vallesinella and the waterfalls. But although the alpine flowers seemed in more profusion than in previous years, animals were less in evidence, possibly because of the heat – and certainly none of us encountered one of the recently introduced brown bears.

West of Madonna were the Five Lakes and Pradalago cable cars, both of which started near the hotel. The first day of the meet saw a large group of us catching the Five Lakes lift, from where there were stunning views across to the majestic spires and needles opposite. From there we walked up to the three lakes of Ritorto, Lambin and Serodoli, accompanied by hordes of Italians with dogs and children. None of us walked up to the fourth lake, Lago Gelato, though I have memories of going there in 2001 to find it covered by ice-bergs and surrounded by primulas, and of Wendell suddenly appearing and then heading off up the Passo di Nambrone.



From Lago Serodoli, some of the group descended to the restaurant at Lago Nambino, and thus back to Madonna, whereas most of us continued past Lago Nero and up the path to the Pradalago lift, taking the easy way down. Mark headed off on a more difficult, higher route along the Sentiero Bozzetto and Monte Zeledria, to meet us at the Pradalago lift. Put off by the crowds, Bill and Rosie had left us at Lago Ritorto to pioneer the less frequently travelled route down over the Passo della Falculotta to the south-west, climbing Monte Ritorto en route, and returning via Malga Valchestria and Malga Ritorto. Later in the week others followed them, descending to the WWI fort at Claemp to take the bus back to Madonna, or walk through woods.

*Arriving at Lago Ritorto, photo by Rick Saynor*



The Pradalago lift gave access to the lovely Lago Malghette, from where there was an easy walk down to Campo Carlo Magno. However, most of us decided to make the circular walk round the lakes of Lago Alto, Tre Laghi and Lago Scuro, and then to return on the lift. We thought there was little height gain involved, for there were few contour lines on the map, but we were much deceived! The map indicated that our route started by going round Lago Malghette on a flat path, so we were somewhat surprised to find ourselves steeply and rapidly ascending another 200 metres. This was the story of the day, and not for the first time we decided that the Italian maps left much to be desired. But even though the walk took longer than anticipated, it was a glorious day with spectacular views and hardly any people.

*Looking down on Lago Nambino, photo by*

*Rick Saynor*

Most of us agreed that the highlight of the week was our day in the beautiful Val Genova, organised by the Vidi family of the hotel at their bothy at Malga Bedole, at the end of the valley. The English alpinist Douglas Freshfield visited the area in the 1860's, and in his delightful book, *The Italian Alps*, he described it as "the most beautiful valley in the Alps". It was a long bus ride up the valley, past spectacular waterfalls, and we finally alighted at Ponte Maria to climb



up to one of these waterfalls and then make our way to Malga Bedole, where we were to join the family for lunch.

Long tables had been set up under awnings, already provided with bottles of red wine, and we sat down to a sumptuous repast of cold meats, followed by polenta cooked in a huge cauldron on an open fire, with barbecued sausages and chops. A large and varied cheese board then appeared, and plates of apfel strudel, accompanied by schnapps. The wine bottles kept appearing too, and after all this we struggled to walk the 15 minutes up to the Bedole Hut, where some were found asleep under a tree, and others collapsed on the hut terrace for more drinks, just managing the short walk back to the bus stop afterwards. It was indeed a memorable day.

And so, a good time was had by all, with good weather, good walks, good accommodation, good food, and most important of all, good company.

Participants: *Pamela Harris-Andrews & Alan Norton, Geoff & Janet Bone, Ian Brebner & Morag Macdonald, Derek Buckley & Ann Alari, Geoff & Pauline Causey, Sheila Coates, Mark Davison, John Dempster & Dinah Nichols, Niels & Guni Doble, John & Marj Foster, Pauline Hammond, Dick Murton & Lin Warriss, Roger Newson, Rick & Carol Saynor, Caroline Thonger, Jay Turner, Elizabeth Wells, Bill & Rosie Westermeyer, Brian & Ursula Woodhouse*

### **Alpine Camping Meet, Argentiere, 18 July - 8 August - Report by Keith Lambley (FRCC)**

Once again this was a joint meet with ABMSAC, Climbers' Club, FRCC, SMC, LSCC, Wayfarers and Yeovil MC.

As it has been many years since the Joint Alpine Meet was based in the Chamonix valley, Argentiere proved to be very popular with 80 people from seven clubs attending over the three week period, the numbers peaking at 65 in

the middle week. Due to the small size of the campsite and not being able to book, the numbers unfortunately had to be restricted, the first time I have known this happen. My apologies to those who were not able to get a place.

The meet coincided with end of a 5 week heat wave with regular temperatures of 35°C and above. This had a detrimental effect on the glaciers and the snow cover with a many open crevasses, impassable bergshrunds and rock fall. The Office de Haute Montagne conditions reports made sad reading as the list of mountains and routes which were out of condition increased with every report. The new Refuge du Gouter was closed for much of the season due to rock fall in the approach couloir. AC member and “local”, Gus Morton, did a good job of translating the reports into English. These were available on the Office de Haute Montagne and Alpine Club websites.



*Duncan Hogg and Paul Stock on Grand Montets glacier. Photo by Julie Jones*

The most popular Alpine routes were the Domes de Miage, Aiguille du Tour by the normal route and the Arete de la Table, Aiguille Purtcheller, Tete Blanche, Cosmiques Arete, Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Maudit. Members also travelled into Switzerland and Italy to climb the Weissmies, Dom, Grand Combin and Punta Giordani.



*Aig. du Midi and Mont Blanc du Tacal from Mont Maudit. Photo by Jonathon Halliday*

Many rock routes were climbed in the Aiguille Rouge where members took advantage of the discounted lift tickets to gain easy access via the Flegere and Brevent lift systems. More routes were climbed from the Refuge d'Argentiere, the Refuge de l'Envers des Aiguilles and the Cabane d'Orny in Switzerland. The valley crags also saw plenty of action with the Gaillands, Rocher du Saix near Vallorcine, Aiguillette d'Argentiere and Les Cheserys being the most popular.

The mountain walkers were also well catered for with an almost endless network of paths, possibly the greatest achievement being Jeremy Whitehead's ascent of Mont Buet at the age of 84.

The big events in Chamonix and Argentiere during the meet were the celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of Golden Age of Mountaineering in which the Alpine Club played a key role with the loan of about 200 items from the archives. Many attendees visited the exhibitions on rest days or bad weather days (remarkably few) this being a very rare opportunity to see “The Treasures of the Alpine Club” on display in Chamonix’s Alpine Museum. The exhibition is on until 17 April 2016 and is well worth a visit if you are in the area. Alpine Club member Peter Blair organised a fascinating exhibition in Argentiere entitled “In Jemima’s footsteps 1865 Tourism in 3D”. This was an exhibition of stereo images of Chamonix and the Alps, stereo photography was very popular 150 years ago. The stereo images were available to view on a variety of devices from simple hand held viewers through to the latest 3D television.



*Mont Blanc from Flechere to Brevant walk in Aig Rouge. Photo by David Christmas*

The end of the meet was marked with a barbeque on the campsite laid on by expats Flo and Ryan, which was enjoyed by the remaining 32 participants. Our thanks must go to Audrey and Julian from Camping du Glacier D’Argentiere who managed to accommodate everybody despite a full and maybe at times over full campsite. Also to Claire Burnet from the Chamonix Tourist Office who organised the discounted lift passes as well as the “Golden Age of Mountaineering” exhibitions.

*Editor’s note: - report published with permission from the author.*

## Mattertal Hoehenweg Trek, 4 - 13 September – Report by Andy Burton

In recognition that this year is the 150th Anniversary of the first ascent of the Matterhorn by Edward Whymper, and spurred on by the finding of a letter of acceptance of Honorary Membership of the ABMSAC from Whymper himself in among papers handed over to Mike Goodyer by Margaret Moore, Mike Pinney's sister, it was decided that the ABMSAC would visit Zermatt in September 2015 for a week long trek from hut to hut along the Hoehenweg.

Twelve people attended the Meet, eight of us flew to Geneva Airport on the Friday night, taking advantage of Dave Christmas's last minute intel that free train tickets into Geneva could be obtained from a machine situated near one of the luggage carousels, and stayed at the Geneva Youth Hostel. We enjoyed a late evening meal at the nearby Chez Remo Italian restaurant recommended and booked for us by the staff at the Hostel at a discounted set price.

The Saturday morning started after breakfast with a walk to the Jet d'Eau along lakeside and then to the train station. We boarded the train bound for Visp, using the Swiss Transfer Ticket found by Ed online, which offers substantially discounted rail travel for travellers from their point of entry into Switzerland to their destination and return within a month. A relatively quick change at Visp saw us on the train travelling up the Mattertal to Zermatt. A short walk through the town, in drizzle, to the Youth Hostel to divest ourselves of our luggage. Here we met up with others of our party who had made their own way from other parts of Europe and then off to the Station Restaurant for Kaffee und Kuchen, whilst waiting for Myles to arrive. Evening meal was taken in the Youth Hostel which also has a liquor licence, so a couple of bottles of craft beer and a chat about the next days walking rounded off the travel day quite nicely.



*Group outside YH in Zermatt, photo by Rick Snell*

Sunday morning brought us a clear view of the Matterhorn from the bunkroom windows, so the whole group were up, breakfasted and ready before I could come to terms with the leak in my new hydration bladder. With all our excess luggage safely stored at the hostel, we set off walking through the town and up to our first port of call, the Edelweissshuette, which sits perched above Zermatt at the entrance to the upper Trift gorge. Here everyone was able to take refreshment, whilst enjoying the views across the valley, before continuing on up the to the Berggasthaus Trift, at 2337m, our first overnight stop. At lunch outside the hut we were treated to an Alpenhorn solo by mein host, Hugo, accompanied by the house Roesti and a large iced tea.

In the afternoon people took short excursions either to one of the slightly higher viewpoints, or as Ed and Dave



Seddon did, up towards the Mettelhorn reaching the col at about 3000 metres before turning back. On his return Dave commented that he felt the effects of being at altitude kick in at about the 2800 metre mark, so I took heart from this as the next days destination was at 2694 metres. We then all sat in the lee of the hut in the last of the days sun whilst Fabienne and her staff sat preparing the potatoes for dinner. Dinner in the hut followed. Then people made their individual preparations for the delights of sleeping in a matratzenlager, some choosing to go to bed first, others using strong alcohol or ear defenders and in some cases probably both.

*Lunch at the Trift Hotel with Hugo on alpenhorn, photo by David Christmas*

Monday morning saw the Trift hut shrouded in an inversion, so we took our leave of the Biner-Aufdenblatten's, with Hugo's assurance that we should have good weather for our week, and that the alpine flowers would be better higher up

A steady trog up the path in the mist saw people quickly divesting themselves of layers of outer clothing, and as we turned the corner onto Hoehbalmen we were greeted with the sun, and our first view of the Matterhorn, that day.



*Gang of 3 at the Matterhornblick. Photos by Rick Snell*

We continued along the path all the way to the Schoenbiel hut, at 2694m, walking underneath the three Gabelhorn's, Unter, Mittel and Ober, but our eyes were forever being drawn back to the changing face of the Matterhorn on the opposite side of the valley. This area with its various viewpoints are aptly named Matterhornblicks, and the alpine plants were still to be seen up here, despite the lateness of the season.

A last steep pull up to the hut, and a quick introduction to Yolanda and her staff, followed by some apfelstrudel and a hot chocolate, was enough to encourage some of us back out and up along a lateral moraine top path towards the

Schoenbielgletscher. From Alison and Rick walking down in the dip below me came the shout that they had seen



some Edelweiss, and as they were sheltered from the breeze coming off the various surrounding snowfields, and in the sun, they elected to remain, whilst I carried on to within sight of some tall ice towers on the Schoenbiel glacier, where I sat on a rock and looked back at the Matterhorn. Ed was right, the mountain looks much bigger and quite different from this viewpoint. I attempted unsuccessfully to take some selfie's of the mountain and I, then suddenly the sun went behind the ridge, and it was time to head back to the hut. My thanks to Hugo for recommending this little excursion.

*Looking down on Schonbiel Hut, photo by Rick Snell*

The Schoenbiel is an SAC Hut, whereas the Trift is privately run, but the half-board prices are within 5 Swiss Francs of each other. We were provided with a substantial 3 course dinner in the company of people from many different parts of the world, and as often happens in such places, plans and ideas are exchanged either from what you have already done, or from what you are planning to do. After the two young men who had served us with dinner had eaten theirs, we settled our bill, completed the SAC Logbook, took a quick trip outside to look at the Matterhorn at night, ostensibly to see the LED light display erected all along the Hoernli ridge, but many took advantage of one last trip to the outside toilet block, in the forlorn hope of avoiding that dreaded trip in the middle of the night. Taking care to avoid the low beam on the edge of the loft hatch we retired for our second night in a matratzenlager.

Tuesday morning was a fairly relaxed affair. Knowing that you are going to walk downhill most of the day can do that. The first part of the day was spent retracing our steps down to where the Arbenbach bisects the path, where there is now a dirt road that leads you down to a cluster of HEP buildings that form part of a giant project that provides up to a fifth of Switzerland's electricity supply. At this point there is also a bus stop!



*Margaret and Alison on the way down from the Schonbiel Hut. Photo by David Christmas*

*Below L: Chapel at Schwarzsee.  
Below R: Lunch break at Hotel Schwarzsee, tomorrow's walk in the background  
Photos by Mike Goodyer*



Then the path continues up onto Stafelalp directly under the Hoernli ridge all the way to Schwarzsee, where after a visit to the little chapel, and a sighting of an eagle gliding above the lift stanchions, Myles and I finally caught up with some of our party who were resting a while enjoying live music, food and drinks at the relatively new Hotel

Schwarzsee, 2582m, before making their way down to Furi through the stone pine forest, to the Hotel Silvana, at 1900m.

Hotel Silvana was planned as a treat. A place to rest and recover before the much harder second half of the week, and in my opinion it did exactly that. I know that several members of the party took advantage of the Wellness facilities, and the evening meal was as good as I had hoped it would be.



*Setting off early from the Hotel for the big walk up to Riffelsee. Photo by Mike Goodyer*

Before dinner we took the advice of the brother of Evi, the proprietor, a local mountain guide, and decided to split the party, with the faster stronger walkers negotiating the suspension bridge across the Furggbach, and traversing over the rock wall onto the side of the Riffelberg and past the Riffelsee, onto the downward traversing path to the Gornergletscher



*The Matterhorn from Riffelsee, photo by Mike Goodyer*

The other half of the group elected to walk down to Findelnbach Station, at 1770 metres, and catch the Gornergratbahn up to Rotenboden at 2815 metres, where they were able to join the same traversing path just above the Riffelsee.

At a convenient plateau area we all put on our harnesses and had some snacks and drinks. Dave Christmas elected to go ahead from the slower party and suss out the series of metal ladders that we knew we had to climb down in

order to get onto the glacier. By the time we arrived at the top of the ladders Dave had set up a belay, and one by one we started to climb down the ladders. At this point the faster team arrived, and once the slower team were safely down Ed took over the belay from Dave.



We moved down to the side of the glacier and put on our crampons and roped up into groups of three, before crossing a horizontal aluminium ladder onto the ice proper.

*David and Mike just starting to cross the glacier.  
Photo by Ed Bramley.*



We then all made our way down and across the glacier to a point where we took off our crampons and continued to walk through this terrain of rotten rock debris and hidden patches of hard ice following and learning to trust to the blue marks and triangular pole markers that seemed to wander aimlessly around this confusing landscape, but did actually mark the best and safest path.

*Crossing the main part of the glacier.  
Photo by Mike Goodyer*

Eventually we all had crossed the glacier to the other side and began climbing the rising path up to the Gornersee, where the path through the rock band became evident as the walkers ahead showed those of us behind the way.



*Andy makes the final climb up to the hut, with the Riffelhorn in the middle distance, photo by Rick Snell*

I saw a couple of tantalising glimpses of the Monte Rosa hut as I made my way through the rock band and after dumping of some of my kit for later collection I just saw Myles reaching the hut. For those last 500 metres Rick and Alison coming down to offer help and encouragement.

I knew then we had all made it to the highest hut on the trek, at 2883 metres, and what a hut it is too.

Opened in September 2009 the new SAC Monte Rosa Hut sits on a rock spine above the Monte Rosa glacier like a shimmering silver aluminium crystal.

A clear testament to Swiss engineering if I ever saw one. Combining ultra modern materials with innovative ideas, and a beautifully prefabricated timber frame, comprising of 420 elements that were transported to the site by

helicopter, and then fastened onto a star shaped steel deck, that is fixed into the rock in ten separate outer foundations, and tied into a central core. This construction is designed to give both vertical strength to the structure to handle the interior usage, and horizontal strength to combat the up to 250 kmh winds, as well as separating this warm building from the permafrost ground it sits on. And to top it all off great grub and the best nights sleep I have ever had at such altitude.



*The new Monte Rosa Hut looking out across the glacier, photo by Mike Goodyer*

Thursday was planned as a rest day at the Monte Rosa Hut, with everyone doing their own thing gently exploring the impressive area at this altitude. Some elected to carry on a short distance uphill to the Obere Plattje so that they could say they had climbed to above 3000 metres, others explored the nearby glacier with all its rotting complexities, and another group walked back down to spend some time basking in the sun on the edge of the turquoise green Gornensee, watching the occasional Baeckfinch flitting from rock to rock near the water's edge.

On our way down to this little lake Mike O'Dwyer and I met a gentleman who introduced himself as one of the team of constructors of the new Hut, and his first question was how did we find the new Hut. He went onto explain that despite only being completed in 2009 that the Hut was still a work in progress with constant maintenance, and small tweaks and improvements being made each and every year. One of the examples he gave was the solar panels installed. Originally they had planned for 6500 bed nights per year, but in the first two years they averaged over 10000 bed nights per annum, and the system was regularly tripping out with the high demand for electricity. The solution can be seen now at the side of the Hut, a separate external array, which has upped the power supply to an average of 8500/9000 bed nights per annum, and the gentleman declared with some pride that the system now works at 110% efficiency. It was an interesting insight into the project that had clearly absorbed him and his fellow constructors for well over ten years.



*Myles at breakfast time in the hut.*



*Our bunk room. Photos by Mike Goodyer*

This Hut is run by the Rubin family, Brigitte, Peter and Jonas, ably assisted by a young Spanish lass who served us our evening meal. Whilst plying us with seconds she unashamedly promoted the chef who cooked the food for us, well he was her boyfriend.

After dinner Peter Rubin spoke to us about the weather closing in overnight and recommended an earlier start in the morning to allow everyone to get back across the glacier safely.

On the Friday morning a slight smattering of snow greeted us as we exited from the Hut, but thankfully the path down through the rock band was not unduly affected, and everyone made good time going back across the glacier, and up the vertical ladders.

From this point everyone was able to make their own way at their own pace, continuing past the Riffelsee and down to Riffelberg, where the weather brightened up again.

After a light lunch we walked along the Leiseeweg up the Findelnbach valley all the way to Flue



This upper valley was again mainly the domain of that unlikely pairing of the stone pine tree and the Nutcracker, and with three separate little lakes to visit, and tarry awhile, it was not to be missed.

*View from the Findelnbach valley.  
Photo by Mike Goodyer*

A tantalising aroma wafted from the foliage above Baerghus, or was it just our imagination playing tricks on us in anticipation of our evening meal?



Here at 2618 metres was our last Hut, the Bergrestaurant Fluhalp, and although I was last to arrive there, I knew what we were having for dinner, courtesy of a phone call earlier in the day from a member of the staff, who just wanted to make sure that everyone liked fish, and I began to realise that last would not mean least.

Some of our group had been there some considerable time, sampling both the excellent food and drink, as Fluhalp combines the charm of a traditional timber clad hut, with most modern conveniences, and a well documented gastronomic reputation, and of course another stunning longer range view of the Matterhorn.

*The early arrivals enjoying a late lunch.  
Photo by Rick Snell*



The main course was fresh trout, which the staff keep alive up here in a large aerated fish tank in one of the outbuildings, and it was delicious.

As a post dinner drink we were treated to a homemade almond flavoured fruit schnapps. We elected to try the "ladies version" because it was sweeter, but the waiter promised us we could all have "mens portions".

This proved to be a popular and equitable choice, and rounded off our last evening up high in a very convivial manner.

Not surprisingly I enjoyed another great nights sleep at altitude, so much so that I woke up before dawn, and made my way outside where I was greeted by Venus, the morning star, rising over the Adlerhorn in the east, and as I watched half a dozen shooting stars in fairly quick succession sped across that same patch of sky.

I sat listening to the gentle susurrant of the aerator in the outside fish tank that displayed some of the live Bachforellen for all to see, the sun very slowly started to light up the tip of the Matterhorn, and I had time to reflect on how lucky we had been to share this spectacular area in perfect weather for a whole week, with the people who live and work here, and that their hospitality and hard work enabled us each day to see the Matterhorn, and enjoy the Mattertal with them.

On a personal note I was also lucky to enjoy this week in the company of my two best friends from school, my two best friends from college, together with a group of people whose company I have enjoyed over many years as a member of the ABMSAC. Then the full light of the sun took hold and it was time to move and test the camera again, before thoughts of breakfast took hold as mein host came and told me the coffee was on, and it would take at least seven minutes to boil an egg!

A leisurely gathering for a group photo outside the Hut with the Matterhorn in the background, saw the group divide up again as some who had arrived later in the previous day wanted to go up a little higher, whilst others set off back down the valley to Zermatt, having already done that



A short walk into an inner meadow above the Hut revealed the abandoned former Fluhalp hut. This explained the fact that on the map the new hut is clearly shown as being at Flue, and no longer nestles in a little alp.

After another excursion along a very impressive lateral moraine to look down on the end of the Findelgletscher, we made our way back down the valley alongside the Stellisee to the lift complex at Blauherd, where Sylvia took advantage of the mechanical assistance and went down in some style to the town. Mike O'Dwyer and I made our way down to Sunegga where we enjoyed a drink on the sun terrace, and a last view of the mountain from this elevation and perspective before going down on the next funicular into town



Some retail therapy, a hot shower, and the donning of clean clothes, back at the Youth Hostel, led to a good evening meal in a traditional trattoria in the old town on the Steinmatten side of the river, and a walk round Zermatt at night, finishing with a final drink at the old favourite, the Walliserkanne, with its aspect situated at the foot of the Trift gorge, albeit in the town itself.

One hundred and fifty years on the Mattertal, the Matterhorn, and Zermatt itself did not disappoint as a destination for mountain lovers everywhere.

More information on this walk available at '[www.zermatt.ch/d/hoehenweg](http://www.zermatt.ch/d/hoehenweg)', which we used to plan for this trek, and I have the 1:25000 Zermatt Gornergrat map No. 2515 should anyone from the Club want to use it.

*Present: Andy Burton, Mike Goodyer, Ed Bramley, Dave Seddon, Anne Jago, Mike and Margaret O'Dwyer, David Christmas, Rick Snell and Alison Henry, Myles O'Reilly, and Sylvia Mercer.*

## Presidents Meet, 2 - 4 October – Club future review by Mike Parsons

This weekend was a brilliant combination of strategic decisions, good weather, plenty of hill activity, great camaraderie and a splendid gastronomic experience prepared by Andrew Hayes ( 5 courses: starter- Italian meats, sliced tomato with basil and olive oil, olives, bread, salad dishes, Chicken breast with a leek and Stilton sauce and a delicious sweet shown here.)



Thanks to all twenty one people who attended. Key decisions made were to make a significant refurbishment of the Starkey hut, called the **phase 1 project**. This was considered to be largely essential maintenance (which we have fallen behind on because we needed to be sure of achieving the new 30 year lease which was finally signed last April). Secondly, addressing issues of designing things for low maintenance as well as helping with health and safety issues. Adding to the general comfort and privacy of the facilities was also considered.

The unanimous vote by a quorum of hut directors, the general committee and other members was that we should proceed vigorously with this work, rather than being timorous and assuming that our membership demographics only pointed to the worst an early demise of our club. I personally stated that I had quoted the demographics not because I wish to be gloomy but because I wished it to be a call for action and that I assumed that the membership also wished me as President to be proactive. This '**phase 1**' hut work embraces the following:

- Repair the roof light windows.
- New front door and new lock and keys: new keys will be issued FOC to members already possessing a key.
- New men's and ladies' shower cubicles/showers up to the standard of campsites or bunkhouses today.
- Replace the current open fire in the lounge area with a multi fuel glass fronted stove.
- New 'Hospital Grade' mattresses and pillows which don't need to have covers or pillowcases and are 'wipe cleanable' (for both low maintenance and hygiene purposes).
- New bunks with safety rails for the top bunk and steps/ladder to access the top, in conjunction with a revised layout upstairs, (phase 2) to ensure that the bunks and rooms are able to be used flexibly by different types of groups. The

Members' Room needs to remain accessible at almost any time by members, (one exception being when we have an all hut booking for ABMSAC or any new hut partner, particularly in the light of a possible new hut partner)

For this an outline budget of £25,000 was set, with myself and Marian managing the project.

**Phase two** - no timescale yet set, would hopefully include the following:

The Projection Area, an area to be opened up by removing 2 pillars in the end area to enable a projector to be used against a screen placed on the back wall. A new dormitory layout upstairs, all the downstairs windows including toilets, lounge, and the end window which is visible within the dormitories and partially downstairs. Improved loft and floor insulation, a new kitchen layout to be designed by Andrew Hayes together with better ventilation extraction.

Over the weekend there were walks over the Helvellyn range, in glorious weather, Angle Tarn and Place Fell in misty weather and to Howtown and back by steamer in average weather.



*Summit of Helvellyn, photo by Marcus Tierney*

## Beer Meet, East Devon, 11 - 13 October – Report by Belinda Baldwin

The weather forecast was not good with rain promised for Saturday and Sunday. It did rain, but in the hours of darkness. We had two glorious sunny days.



*The climb up from Branscombe, photo by James Baldwin*

On Saturday we set off from the house walking down the winding chalky landslip the hope of a coffee stop at Branscombe and discussion of who wished to go further. We had coffee and all of us walked on along the coast path and back inland with Ian picking some sloes as we went. It was an up and down walk ending up at Beer Quarry Caves. All but James and I took the tour of the chilly interior. It's fascinating but it was good to be the first in the shower and we know them well.

On Sunday we drove to Stonebarrow, east of Charmouth. We did a mixture of coast and inland to reach Golden Cap the highest point on the South Coast.



*Golden Cap, photo by James Baldwin*

Ian added to his sloe harvest and as I write this maybe his sloe gin is underway. It wasn't a long walk and we went on to Lyme Regis, leaving Margaret and Nicholas at a convenient point to get back to Yeovil. A neap tide made visiting the Ammonite Graveyard a non-starter. We divided into the desperately thirsty with many places for thirst quenching and those wishing to walk on the Cob and partake of ice cream. Back at Beer Hill Antonia set off to her sister who lives not far away leaving six of us to enjoy a delicious dinner at the Dolphin. By this time the rain was coming down fast and we had to go by car the quarter mile distance.

*Present: Antonia Barlen, Ian Brebner, Dick Murton, Morag Macdonald, Margaret and Nicholas Moore, Lin Warriss, James and Belinda Baldwin.*

## **Braemar Meet, Scotland, 30 October - 2 November – Report by Philip Hands**

Six participants gathered on the Friday evening at the Invercauld Arms Hotel in Braemar. Saturday morning dawned wet and grey but by the time breakfast was over the weather had begun to brighten up so we were optimistic we could get out on the hills.

On the Saturday John and Marj went bird-watching at the Loch of Strathbeg, thinking the weather was going to be wet, which of course it wasn't!

Jim and Margaret, Roger and I drove to Glen Rinnes by which time the weather had cleared up and we were in clear blue sky and bright sunshine. From there, we climbed a Corbett, Corryhabbie Hill. The view south from the summit was particularly fine, Lochnagar being prominent in the middle distance. Corryhabbie Hill is in the middle of malt whisky country and is enclosed by the glens Livet and Fiddich.



*Roger, Jim, Margaret and Philip on the summit of Corryhabbie Hill, photo by Jim Strachan*

On Sunday, John and Marj climbed Carn Ealasaid and Beinn a' Chruinnich close to the Lecht ski area, when they saw six mountain hares!

Roger climbed Carn Mor in the Ladder Hills again, close to the Lecht ski area. Jim, Margaret and I climbed Sgor Mor from the Linn of Dee. We took the track to White Bridge and past the Chest of Dee. Another fine day with a spectacular close up views of the Cairngorm 4000'ers and the Lairig Ghru.

Monday was an especially superb day, John and Marj walked from the Linn of Dee quite a way down Glen Lui towards Derry Lodge and back before driving home.

Roger and I drove to Corgarff Castle and from there climbed Brown Cow Hill initially on a track beside the Cock Burn. Mountain hares everywhere and easily spotted in their winter coats against the brown heather!

This weekend was one of "Corbetteering" for which, the weather could not have been better. We all had a very enjoyable meet.

*Present: John and Marj Foster, Philip Hands, Roger James, Jim and Margaret Strachan.*

### **Annual Dinner, Inn on the Lake, Glenridding, 5 - 7 February 2016 - Report by Brooke Midgley**

After the floods and mayhem in Glenridding at Christmas and New Year, we were lucky to have our dinner this year. The organiser had no magic foresight, nor did he (as I overheard) have 'Dealings With Dark Forces': he's had no contact with the ABMSAC committee for years!



No; it was a combination of serendipity and economics. The Glenridding Hotel wanted £12 per head more than the Inn on the Lake: QED! But the Glenridding Hotel truly did not deserve the damage they received in the floods.

The devastation is still very visible all around the village.

*Heather and the road slip in Glenridding.  
See the digger and stone bank behind.  
Photo by Mike Goodyer*



*Ed, Duncan, Judy and Paul on a windy Place Fell*



*Judy and Steve on a snowy, misty Sheffield Pike*

Those of you who didn't come missed some dreadful wet weather which was amply compensated for by the comfort of the hotel – numerous lounges and bars with gorgeous log fires. Even the Hut was warmed by a new multi-fuel stove. Outside was very wet and with gale force winds, not hospitable. Members did go out and did get very very wet and cold. There was a sprinkling of snow on the tops – not often seen



To support the Glenridding flood appeal the locals had set up a 'pop up' café in the Village Hall. We thought that the least we could do was have Sunday lunch there. A good crowd of members turned up and enjoyed the local pie and pies.

One of the official; cafes was reopening the following week and all the best to them.

*Paul, Ed and Steve enjoying lunch.  
Photo by Mike Goodye*

The AGMs were held to a very 'full house'. They were conducted at near record speed, with both completed within an hour. Details are recorded elsewhere. We had 44 attend the Dinner. Our guest speaker was Lincoln Rowe, an artist who professed not to be a mountaineer, but has climbed to 7000m in the Himalaya, also serious hills in the Alps and elsewhere. He had brought a selection of his paintings of mountains, sea and ships which were displayed around the dining room. His talk was humorous and interesting as it covered a lot of experiences on ships as well as mountains. It was definitely entertaining.



*Lincoln regaling us with a story, photo by Mike Goodyer*

The President (Mike Parsons) responded and included thanks to the hotel staff plus others. There was no slide show – leaving time for much socialising, basically a good do! Come and join us on the next Annual Dinner Meet on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

*For more photographs of the meets visit the website [www.abmsac.org.uk](http://www.abmsac.org.uk)*

## MEMBERS ARTICLES

### ALASDAIR'S SCOTTISH MEETS – by John Dempster

In my younger days one of my great pleasures was to leave my office desk in London early on a Friday afternoon, fly to Edinburgh, reach the Clachaig Inn (or wherever) before closing time, have two good winter days on the hills, fly back on Sunday evening, and be back at my desk first thing on Monday morning. These weekends were made possible, first by an ample stock of airmiles, and second by my ABMSAC friends who provided transport from and to Edinburgh airport to allow me to attend Alasdair Andrews' meets.

When Alasdair sadly died in 2011 I said at his funeral that he had organised over 100 meets for the ABM. These were not all Scottish meets – he had organized trekking and hotel meets in the Alps and elsewhere, but his weekend Scottish winter meets must have represented a considerable portion of the total. Every year between 1983 and 1999 he used to organize at least three weekend meets in the early months of the year to allow us to enjoy the Scottish hills at their winter best.

There was a cadre of regulars on these meets – the Strachans, the Fosters, the three Geordies (Alf, Bert and Colin), Mike Scarr, Roger James, Bill Peebles, Peter Farrington (from Islay) Peter Goodwin and Phil Hands to name but a few. But Alasdair was anxious not to let us develop into a club within a club, and new faces were always made welcome, even if they subsequently decided that the acquired taste of Scottish winter conditions was not to their liking.



*Peter Farrington on Creag Meagaith, January 20 08.*

The first, and several of the subsequent meets, was at Fearnan, near Loch Tay, where a colleague of Alasdair's had a small but comfortable cottage. This was a good centre for Ben Lawers, Glen Lyon and elsewhere. I particularly remember an icy traverse of Meall nan Tarmachan in mist, and some glorious (and some less glorious) days on Lawers.

Alasdair was always on the lookout for new venues for his meets, and we used to joke about his encyclopaedic knowledge of Scottish bunkhouses. Over the years we stayed at different establishments at Newtonmore, Onich, Appin, Spean Bridge, Braemar, Glencoe and many other places. He was always anxious to keep costs down, so as not to discourage the more impecunious members of the club. This was sometimes taken to extremes. I remember

going to a newly opened hut called Jock's Spot near Laggan. It was freezing hard when we arrived and the hut was like a refrigerator. Moreover there were no beds so we slept on the hard floor with most of our outdoor clothing on. However we were rewarded by a splendid day on Creag Meagaidh. For the Saturday night we transferred to Alasdair's long suffering brother's house in Inverness where we were much more comfortably accommodated.

I recall one particularly memorable weekend in Glencoe. The Saturday dawned fine with a good covering of snow. We climbed Bidean by Coire nam Beith and followed the ridge with a view to descending via the Lost Valley. The descent from the col is quite steep and the snow didn't look too stable. Another party had put in a snow anchor and were roping down one by one. With typical panache Roger said to them "We don't intend to rope up but do you mind if we hold on to your rope as we go down?" The owner of the rope had little option but to agree.



The Sunday was another beautiful day so Roger and I decided to do the Aonach Eagach. Because it was such a good day there were a lot of parties on it and a queue had built up at the first tricky bit, the descent from the Chancellor. Following Roger's example the previous day I spoke to the person at the front of the queue and said "Excuse me I have a plane to catch, may we go next?" He agreed with rather better grace than our friend at the Lost Valley. We completed the ridge in good order. Alasdair was waiting for us at the bottom of Clachaig gully and got me back to Edinburgh just in time for my flight.

*Roger James on Bauchaille Etive Beag.  
Biden nam Bean in the background.  
Onich meet January 2011*

These trips were only possible thanks to the generosity of Club members who provided me with transport. Often it was Alasdair, but others sometimes undertook the chore. A personal motto of mine was "Keep an eye on your driver on Sunday", and I fear that I occasionally had to request a curtailment of a walk in order to catch my flight. On one of our Fearnan weekends Jim Strachan was my driver. On Sunday we had a good day on the hills at the head of Glen Lochay, which is well over two hours drive from Edinburgh. We got back to the car at about 4.00pm and I said "You do know my flight is at 7.00?" Jim's jaw dropped, but his spirited driving got me back in the nick of time. I never missed a flight.

Weekend meets inevitably involve a gamble on the weather, and we had our share of poor days – I remember one weekend when we never left Edinburgh because the forecast was so bad. But the weather in Scotland in early spring is generally not too bad, and it was unusual not to have at least one decent day in the hills.

Eventually Alasdair decided that it was time for others to do some organising, and our Scottish winter weekend meets continue to this day. Before 1983 the Club's only venture to Scotland was an annual week long hotel meet around Easter time. Alasdair's winter weekends were an innovation which did a great deal to re-vitalise the Club. When we sat down to dinner at Fassfern House last March we drank a toast to Absent Friends. Alasdair was certainly one of them.

### **ARLBERGER KLETTERSTEIG – by Don Hodge**

Judy and I had wanted to do some of the very many klettersteigs in the west of Austria for several years, but the weather had never been good. In July 2015 most of Europe was under the influence of hot Saharan air, so we headed first to a campsite near Bludenz, then later to one at Imst. Over our two weeks' holiday both locations allowed us to do many of the numerous klettersteigs close to these locations, both in the Inn valley and in the valleys which lead north and south from the main valley.

We had one day left before having to start our drive back to the UK and decided at the last moment to do a highly recommended but challenging klettersteig which ran along a mountain ridge. Because of our late decision, we didn't leave Imst as early as we should have and did not arrive at St Anton until mid morning. In winter, we had been skiing in St Anton, but had forgotten the layout of the town, and wasted some time until we found the chairlift and adjacent car park. We hadn't got a map of the area - only the map in the klettersteig guidebook<sup>1</sup>- but I had a printout of the route from the earlier version 3 book. You have to take the first two of the three lifts up the mountain, but there was quite a queue so we reached the cablecar station at 2646m, where our route started, quite late in the morning.



The route was graded D, supposed to take 5 hours, have 550m of klettersteig ascent and take 30 minutes to get back to the descent chairlift. Time was tight because the last chair down was around 4 pm. The approach to the route from the cablecar station was down a grotty loose path to a snowfield. Initially we wasted time looking for the correct ridge, but fortunately the version 5 of the guidebook not only has part of the route description in English, but also gives the Lat/Long of the start of the route. Once I had entered the coordinates into my GPS, we finally headed off in the right direction.

*Judy approaching the start of the ridge*

On reaching the start we met three chaps descending the initial moves, and they had not realised that you needed klettersteig gear and were slightly surprised when we kitted up with helmets and harnesses and klettersteig gloves. The route runs along the ridge, passing up and down over several pinnacles, with the grade varying between A and D. Progress was quite slow because of the many ups and downs and the exposure on the St Anton side was impressive.



*Judy climbing one of the pinnacles*



*Don on the ridge*

It eventually became clear that we weren't going to reach the final summit Weisseschrofenspitze at 2752 m, then descend its south ridge in time to get to the chairlift.

The two versions of the guidebook showed different escape routes on the St Anton side. We had already passed a notice to an escape route which wasn't shown on the latest version but, instead, showed one just before the final ascent to the summit. Looking for the potential route ahead, we could see no safe descent down the rocks and scree, so we retreated to the marked descent, which meant reversing nearly 30 minutes of klettersteig. At the notice, a few



metres of zig-zag descent were waymarked but these markings soon disappeared, so we hoped that we could safely descend the very steep scree, down to a path far below, running under the ridge. It was probably the steepest scree that I have ever descended, and we zig-zagged back and forth across the slope looking for smaller stoned scree. After perhaps an hour we thankfully reached the path, which led back to the chairlift but we still had quite a way to go and were not only racing to get the lift down, but were all too aware that the predicted storms were approaching fast.

The path ran close to the bottom of the summit peak ridge and we were amazed to see some people descending a route on this dangerous looking ridge, with no path visible. Near the bottom of the ridge we found a notice indicating that maintenance work was being carried out on this part of the klettersteig, and we didn't know if the people that we had seen were part of the maintenance team.

We reached the first descent chairlift with a little time to spare, and then jumped onto the second one with the weather looking increasingly threatening. Thankfully, the storm held off until we reached the car, for which we were very grateful.

*The Weisschrofenspitze, 2752m*

We didn't manage to complete the route but hope to try it again on another holiday, when we will have to start earlier. It's a spectacular route with fantastic views all round but, not having reached the summit, we don't know what challenges we will have to overcome, particularly on the decent ridge.

<sup>1</sup> Klettersteigführer, Österreich, Version 5, ISBN: 978-3-902656-12-4

## Contrasting Summits by Morag McDonald

It is always interesting when walking and mountaineering to know what is under one's feet. Guide books usually include specific geological data about walking and climbing terrain. In Scotland the situation is complex:

*The geological history of Scotland is long, varied and amazingly complicated, and the rocks of our mountains range in age from 55 million to 3,000 million years.<sup>1</sup>*

Most of us possess an elemental, theoretical geological knowledge from the Munro and Corbett books. Indeed, the former devotes nearly half a page to the geology of the Glen Feshie hills which is relevant to the rock and scenic contrasts between the last summits climbed. We recognise for example, Torridonian sandstone, the pink quartz of Beinn Eighe, the granite of the Cairngorms, the gabbro of Skye which affects magnetic variation, and Lewisian gneiss, the oldest of all Scottish rocks. Recent experience of a new summit in the Apuan Alps, 'Pania della Croce' in October 2015 and the fifth visit to Carn Ban Mor in February 2016 emphasised scenic contrasts which were visually diverse and dramatically different in topographical terms.

In February 2015, we set out on an initially good day to climb Carn Ban Mor 1052m via the foxhunter path from Achlean in Glen Feshie. There was total but not deep snow cover in the pine wood approach. The visibility was good but gradually mist, wind and snow prevailed. On reaching the large cairn at the top of the path marking the spot between our intended destination and Meall Dubhag 998m, we had to turn back. We were approximately ten minutes from the summit but due to increasingly bad weather including windblown spindrift which covered our footprints and poor visibility, this decision was inevitable. Cameron McNeish, noting that these hills were demoted and erased from the Munro list in the 1970's, recalled even worse weather in articles 'Awkward Munros' and 'A Step too Far'. He experienced unforgettable, dangerous navigation and difficult weather conditions in this featureless area.<sup>2</sup>

Hamish Brown, mountaineer, pioneer of Scottish outdoor education, and not least a member of ABMSAC, also experienced navigation difficulties on this plateau region. In the account of his first ever walking/cycling traverse of all the Munros in 112 days, he reminisces about an earlier Feshie trip in which he and a friend 'got lost' on the gentle slopes of Sgurr Gaoith. Thinking that they were walking in a straight line and believing bearings unnecessary, they were actually walking in circles as snow footprints eventually disclosed.<sup>3</sup>

Because Carn Ban lies between Munros Sgurr Gaoith, the latter known for spectacular views into the cavernous depths of Gleann Einich (a glacial trough!) and Mullach Clach a'Bhlair, it is walked over en route to claiming these hills with little thought to the summit stones which are probably the remains of a former cairn or shelter. For obvious reasons, it is not listed as a Corbett and appears to be only a spot height on the plateau. The area used to yield Ptarmigan sightings but these wonderful birds seem to have moved away, perhaps because of too much human traffic. The area has corries similar to the Northern corries of Cairngorm which hold snow for long periods and are suitable for practising winter mountaineering skill

This year, on a sunny, windless, February 2016 day of sun and total snow cover, we reached the summit via the same path to wonder at the landscape and views of peaks more than 125 miles away in all directions. The weather was a gift to the many people marvelling at a white Scotland. Even in warm sunshine and magnificent visibility, it was

good to see most walkers well equipped bearing in mind recent tragedies in the mountains. Glad to have made the summit, we descended wearing crampons on a slippery sun-exposed path.



*Summit of Cam Ban Mor, this year, looking towards Sgurr Gaoith (L) and Braeriach (R)*

Contrasting with the Cairngorm plateau, Pania della Croce 1848m in the Apuan Alps climbed in October 2015, is the highest summit achieved in these mountains. The main extensive, scenically attractive ridge is the province of climbers using ropes. However, thanks to friends, the summit was unbelievably possible. The path is way-marked all the way, initially through a forest of birch trees, before leading to the Refugio Rossi where summer concerts are held. A picnic lunch spot above the Refugio with the Mediterranean in view, indicated the last two parts of the climb: what we would call a steep coire; and an airy, narrow, small ridge leading to a typical continental huge iron cross summit.



*Pania della Croce, photo by Ian Brebner*

The rocky path up through the coire was pure white very hard, mostly solid, marble of Michelangelo fame. It was sharp but easy to climb on with some easy scrambling in places. The short ridge required concentration and provided just enough excitement. On reaching the summit, the contrast was in the view towards the jagged peaks of the slightly higher but much more difficult Apuane and the distant peaks of the Appennines. A 360 degree view with too much to absorb was the reward. Mountain contrasts indeed.



*View from summit of Pania della Croce*

## **References**

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2. McNeish, C. (October 2013) *A Step too Far?* *TGO Magazine*; (May 2015) *Awkward Munros*. *Scots Magazine*, D.C. Thomson, Dundee.
3. Brown, H. (1980) *Hamish's Mountain Walk*. Granada Publishing Ltd.

## CHINA – WALKING THE WALL AND BEYOND by Judy Renshaw

This year I was determined to go to China, as you hear so much about it these days but the culture is so different from Europe and the West. I wanted to learn more about how people really live there and to see some of the country. Since Don was equally determined *not* to go to China, I joined a trek with Exodus on the Great Wall and added a further trip to some of the other places I really wanted to see, which just happened to slot in neatly when it finished.

The trek was undoubtedly the most enjoyable, partly because it involved being in the mountains, walking a long-distance footpath on the wall, sometimes overgrown with vegetation and often very steep.



Some of the steepest sections were crumbling so they involved reasonable scrambling which was intimidating to some members of the party. The views of the Great Wall (known as the 'Long Wall' in Chinese), stretching out across mountains as far as the eye could see, were always spectacular. Other sections had been reconstructed and officially open to visitors, so these were more populated with Chinese, and occasionally foreign, tourists.

*Judy walking on the Great Wall*

The trek was also fun because the company was excellent, most people being mountaineers of some sort, and the camaraderie was great, with laughter and jokes continuing throughout the week. We had a lovely local guide who shared with us his knowledge and also his personal enthusiasms, including his hero worship of Bear Grylls!

We walked different sections each day, occasionally starting where we had left the previous night but more often going to another area, in order to see a greater variety of places and scenery. The most notable challenges included a descent on a slippery forest path in the dark on the first day, having set out late and climbed an unusually tough section known as the 'Spiderman wall'. This was not too good, especially with a group who did not know each other well at that stage. We would have carried our torches with us if we had had any idea that we were likely to finish after dark! On another memorable occasion one member of the party sprained her ankle, so the guide carried her

down on his back – quite a feat. Later we all rallied round with bandages and anti-inflammatories; fortunately there were 2 trained nurses in the group.



*The Spiderman Wall, Left – on the ascent  
Above – on the descent*

Sometimes the wall was constructed of stone blocks, sometimes bricks, always using local materials. The mortar contained a paste of sticky rice which has helped to make it strong and long lasting. In most of the places we went (Jiankou, Gubeikou, Jinshanling) it is a Ming dynasty wall (1368-1644 AD), which is fairly well preserved and some reconstructed. Further away, the Han dynasty wall is older (200 BC to 220 AD), so less of it remains.

The wall was built mainly to prevent invasion by Mongolian people but failed to do this, as eventually they went around or through it. However, I am told that most of the time (some 90%) the soldiers based along the wall lived in peace, trading with Mongols and intermixing. They mainly traded silk and salt from China in exchange for cheese, meat and leather.

We stayed in small hotel/guesthouses which were more comfortable than I had expected, with double rooms and often showers. Ironically, the nicest guest house for visitors to the wall was run by Mongolian people. Many have integrated and become an important part of society and the economy.



*View of the wall showing some of its junctions*

In China you rapidly become expert in eating with chopsticks, from a bowl, otherwise you go hungry. There were always a wide variety of dishes, including a good range of vegetables and different meats, with spices and often hot chilli. Breakfast is noodles, thick pancakes with salty tofu or dumplings, sometimes with a congee (soup) of rice or maize. Yes, they do eat dog and other unusual animals and we were even offered donkey one lunchtime. I also saw dog and cat on sale in the markets and fried scorpions on a stick on a street stall.

The second part of my trip involved more sightseeing in cities and countryside, but it did include plenty of free time to wander and explore. I had a nice couple of days exploring Beijing with people from the trek, including one who also stayed on for a while. As well as seeing the main tourist sites, we walked through the hutongs (back streets) full of small businesses and shops and ate in local noodle cafés. The parks in all the cities were full of groups of people dancing. They normally bring their own recorded music and dance for hours, just for fun and for exercise, sometimes in couples, sometimes individually, more like line dancing. Later, in Yangshuo, a few of us joined a group, rather inexpertly, but it was fun.

Other highlights in the second part included:

- The spectacular limestone 'karst' scenery along the River Li, near Yangshuo, with peaks that resemble abstract-looking Chinese paintings, but really do exist;



*River Li, Xing Pin*

- Seeing the terracotta warriors in their true setting and the huge excavations and repairs that have been continuing over 40ish years;
- Cycling by the Yulong River near Yangshuo, past fields of rice being harvested and through small villages;

- Learning to pick tea in a plantation above Yangshuo, as well as taking part in the proper tea tasting procedures;
- Cycling round the city walls of Xi'an in late afternoon sunshine;
- Being welcomed by the staff of the breakfast café as I escaped the group to have Chinese dumplings instead of the Western set menu; and
- Swimming in the South China Sea on a quiet beach, having escaped again from the group to catch a bus to the south of Hong Kong Island.

### **A few odd facts I learned along the way**

Taxes are 25-40%, similar to UK. But there is no free education or health care, except for poorer rural areas and minority ethnic groups. Much of the money goes on new buildings in Shanghai (China would like it to be the centre for exports to the West instead of Hong Kong but this has not happened so far), also the Olympic park and other major projects, such as the bullet trains.

Tibet is considered by Chinese people always to have been an integral part of China. As it is a poor area, healthcare and education are free. The destruction of temples in the cultural revolution of 1949 took place throughout China, so Tibet is not considered to have been treated any differently. The invasion or 'liberation' of Tibet in 1950 by the future leader Deng Xiaoping is considered in China to be a liberation of people from 'serfdom'. They consider that people should not be considered lower or inferior as was previously seen to be the case.

The philosophy of Feng Shui determines the location of cities, for best karma and also tombs. Locations between hills and water are supposed to be good, but this also means the pollution does not blow away, as it is stopped by the hills. So the ideas are questioned nowadays, as they do not necessarily provide the best location for people to live.

Most people (90%) have an official identity as Han (on ID card), although most of these are not genetically pure Han. The one child policy (said to have been repealed in October 2015) was only for people with Han ID who live in cities. People were not restricted to one child if they lived in a rural area, nor if both parents were sole children, even if city residents, nor if they belonged to a minority group such as Muslim, Tibetan or other ethnic minority. If Han people in a city were to have another child they had to pay the equivalent of £70,000. Changing the policy would seem a good idea, as there is a considerable imbalance in male/female ratio in the 20-30 age group and an overall lack of people of working age.

There is full employment in most sectors. The shortage of young people of working age means that people such as our guide would be very hard to replace if he left. Businesses often recruit people from Africa, India and Bangladesh, especially manual workers as the Chinese young people are well educated and want better jobs. But, in some contrast to this statement, many previous government employees such as those guarding tombs are self-employed and selling goods to visitors and tourists.

Most electric power (75%) still comes from coal but alternatives are being encouraged. The Yangtze dam to produce water power is one example (though there have been social and potentially environmental problems with this). Many wind generators are being built, also solar power developments. The Yangtze River (southern China) has been partly redirected to Northern China and a gas pipeline built from the Gobi desert. Some environmental improvements

have been made in the north, such as a major tree planting programme which has changed the climate over 30 years from being very dry and dusty to much damper, with more rain. But Hebei province around Beijing is dominated by industry (40% of the world's steel comes from here) and it is very polluted.

### A WEEKEND IN GENEVA by Mike Goodyer



It was a great delight to receive an official invitation to attend the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Geneva Section of the SAC. This was in addition to the President's invite. Mike Parsons and I decided to make a weekend of it. This was when the ABMSAC members living in the Geneva area came into their own.

Alan Norton generously offered accommodation for the weekend and Pamela Harris and Alan picked Mike and me up from the airport. ABM members Rick and Carol Saynor, and Niels and Guni Doble joined us at Alan's house for a Raclette party on the Friday evening. The Saynors have been contributors to the journal and website for some years now and it was good to finally meet them. We all had an enjoyable evening started off with Aperol cocktails.

On the Saturday Paul Everett had organised one of his official SAC walks locally. Unfortunately Mike was still recovering from his skiing accident and didn't feel comfortable with a longish walk in the hills, so he made alternative arrangements to meet a friend in town for the day. The walk was in the Jura hills so we could all get back home in reasonable time before the evening dinner. Paul had kindly arranged for me to be picked up and taken to the start of the walk at le Cure, on the Swiss French border. From here fifteen or so of us walked in autumn sunshine up through meadows and woods to reach the summit of le Noirmont (1560m).





After a short break we continued through some lovely countryside to reach the Cabane du Carroz for a late lunch. The hut is a Geneva section hut and opens at weekends at this time of year. There was an opportunity to buy soup and local beer. Paul then produced a homemade pineapple upside down cake, along with plastic spoons and plates – there was enough for all, delicious, thanks Paul! Suitably fortified we continued the walk back down the valley to the road and then back to Geneva for a quick change and off to the dinner.



Saturday evening was a grand affair with a pre-dinner reception followed by a lovely four course dinner with wines. Mike and I were on the “top table”, in the centre of the room and looked after by Paul Everett and the wine waiters!





Alpine horns featured and the speeches were pleasingly short.

Over the evening we were able to meet Christiana and Bernhard Ody, the Britannia Hut crew and the SAC President, Madame Francoise Jacuet.



On the Sunday Mike was leaving on a lunchtime flight but I was staying until a late evening flight. After taking Mike back to the airport Alan, Pam and I continued on to le Coin for a walk. Alan and Pam were researching a guidebook of walks and needed to check the route of the walk in the Saleve area. We were treated to another day of perfect sunshine, but Geneva was in the cloud.

After parking in le Coin we walked steeply up through the forest to the Grotte d' Orjobet, a natural cave which has had a wooden staircase added to assist walkers. Once out and above the cave we had great views of the mountains as we walked along the ridge of the Saleve towards la Grande Gorge. This, as the name suggests, was a steep and wide slash through the huge limestone cliffs. The going was awkward in places with short steep walls to descend. However the whole gorge was pleasantly wooded with glimpses of the valley below. We suddenly met Christiana and Bernhard Ody on their way up through the gorge – doing the same as us but in reverse. We were soon back at the car and after a quick trip back to Alans house an even quicker change I was off to the airport for my flight home.

Amazing what one can pack into a weekend.

**A CLIMB OF THE MONTE ROSA** by William Westermeyer  
**[A look back to a climb in 1990]**

The hut warden switched on the light at 1:30 am, and most of the thirty or so people in the dorm room of the Monte Rosa Hut where I lay threw off their blankets and quickly began to dress. Few had slept much that night. I certainly hadn't. How is sleep possible knowing a wakeup call is just a few hours away?

A good night's sleep at 3,000 meters is difficult in any case, but the proximity of so many strangers made sleeping even more difficult for me. I tried turning over once but came eyeball-to-eyeball with one of my eight bunk mates. And this hut was no different than others I've been in--the one person who *does* get a good night's sleep is always a champion snorer.

But the chief reason for lying awake was the anticipation. We were going to climb the Monte Rosa, Europe's second highest peak, and I had serious doubts that I could make it. Would I reach the summit? Would I endanger my friends? To experienced climbers, maybe, no big deal. But for me and most of my flatlander friends who toil for all but several weeks of the year in cities like London and Washington, D.C., this peak on the Swiss-Italian border was a significant challenge.

Nevertheless, my friends and I have a lot in common with other mountaineering enthusiasts--a love of the mountains, a sense of adventure, and the satisfaction of overcoming the obstacles a huge peak has to offer. My friends and I usually keep in pretty good shape. We stay fit most of the year by hiking, running, bicycling, or swimming. We climb when we can, but the opportunities don't arise as often as we would like. In my case, anyway, a few weeks in the Alps climbing several of the many awe-inspiring peaks is one of the highlights of my year.

After about 10 minutes spent gulping down the meagre offerings the hut warden had set out for breakfast--tea, jelly, and hard black bread--my British friends, David and Elizabeth, and I traded our hut shoes for climbing boots and gathered our packs, rope, crampons, and ice axes, all of which were stored just inside the entrance to the hut. Climbing gear is not allowed in the sleeping areas--there's simply not enough room. The last items we donned were headlamps, necessary because it was still pitch black outside.

Minutes later, as I stood in the cold night air checking gear and making last-minute adjustments, I wondered whether I would be a burden to my friends. Seven months previously I had broken my leg in a skiing accident in California. The break required major surgery, including insertion of a metal plate just below my knee. I had had the metal plate removed only one month before, and I knew that my weak leg had a long way to go before it would be as strong as my uninjured one.

I was feeling reasonably confident because I had made it up to the hut the day before with no major problems. But today was different. I would be wearing heavy boots all day, and, during most of the climb, my crampons as well. And I had no idea how difficult the obstacles would be near the summit. Would I be able to keep pace?

David, the senior member of our party, led off. He inspired confidence. His low-key approach to climbing in no way

suggested that back home in England he was a criminal defence lawyer. I came next. In a way I was on this climb to round out the party. David and Elizabeth did not want to cross glaciers without a third person along just in case one of them slipped into a crevasse.

I think I convinced them that I was strong enough for the climb during a "training hike" two days previously to the summit of the Mettelhorn, during which we ascended more than 1,800 meters. Neither they nor I knew at the time just how long I would be able to keep climbing. Elizabeth, David's wife, brought up the rear most of the day. She was the strongest of the three of us. She seemed to take great pride in her physical endurance (some years ago she had been a member of a British national tennis team and had played at Wimbledon).

The initial part of the route we followed is straightforward. It simply follows the top of the lateral moraine bordering the Grenz Glacier. There is a well beaten path up this moraine, and no need to be roped here. In any case we had reconnoitered this section the evening before, and several groups also had started out before us. Although we couldn't follow in their exact footsteps, we could see the general direction they were going, as small groups of lights slowly and eerily snaked their way up the moraine and boulder field beyond.

The going got steeper and a little tougher in the boulder field, where there is really no well defined route, but negotiating the boulders in the dark was more a nuisance than a problem. I could see well enough with the aid of my headlamp, but my gaze was fixed one meter in front of me, and except for an occasional glimpse of lights ahead, we seemed all alone in the world.

We were relieved when we finally reached the lower part of the Monte Rosa Glacier after over an hour struggling up through boulders and scree. The batteries in our headlamps were holding up reasonably well, but there was no hint of daylight yet. We paused at the edge of the glacier to put on our crampons and rope up. Hidden crevasses would now be a potential danger.

Many think this part of the climb is rather boring, since it is a "snow slog," and quite a long one at that. I found it anything but boring. The footing on the glacier was much more even than it had been through the boulder field below, so I could now afford to glance around and appreciate the star-filled night sky. I recall seeing Orion in the early morning sky. Normally, I would expect to see it in winter at a much more reasonable hour.

The possibility that I could fall into a crevasse any minute kept me alert. But beyond this, the slow change from the pitch black of night to the bright sunlight of mid-morning during the next four hours brought extraordinary and ever-changing views.

To the south, I could see the high peaks of the Mischabel Range. They were dominated by the Dom, the highest peak in the Alps entirely within Switzerland, and a peak I had climbed when in far better condition two years before. I had returned from that climb utterly exhausted, a fact that I could not help but think about as the day's first sunlight touched its summit.

To the southwest, I could see the beautiful Weisshorn. This is a proud peak in no way diminished by the close

proximity of the Matterhorn. It is a peak I hope to climb someday. Behind me to the west, solitary and beckoning, stood the Matterhorn. My French-speaking Swiss relatives prefer to call it the Cervin. From this vantage point, it wasn't the symmetrical peak seen in most photographs. It held me fascinated, and I glanced back at it numerous times as we slowly gained elevation.

We didn't have any crevasse trouble on the way up, mostly because climbing while the snow was still frozen during the early morning minimized the possibility of trouble. But we did have to cross numerous small, and a few sizable, crevasses. We stepped over the little ones but had to find firm snow bridges to cross larger ones. This we did with great caution and with the rope taut. I have never fallen into a crevasse, nor have I ever had to rescue anyone from one--but where there's a glacier, there's always a threat.

The route slowly steepened until at about 8 am we reached a saddle at the base of what is called the West Ridge. The highest point of this ridge is known as the Dufourspitze. This point, our goal, is the highest point of the Monte Rosa massif. It looked tantalizingly close at the saddle, perhaps one-half hour away. But at this point, to our surprise, the climbing got a little more difficult--and interesting.

A very steep snow slope rises from the saddle--not quite steep enough for front-pointing with crampons but only a few degrees short of it. After climbing this slope, we reached the start of the final summit ridge. Although the summit was less than one-quarter mile away at this point, this final section took us almost two hours to complete.

According to our rather dated guide book, the ridge is not difficult, and indeed it wasn't *that* difficult. However, guidebooks can be misleading. The going was much more difficult than our book suggested. Conditions change from season to season. This year there was very little snow on the ridge and consequently much exposed rock. We were forced to either climb or go around the numerous gendarmes we encountered, setting up belays for protection when necessary.

The traverses around these rock outcrops were sometimes a little "airy," and I still vividly remember traversing one ledge barely wide enough for my boot. At that point, the terrain to my left seemed to drop away forever, and there was precious little to hold on to on my right. Nevertheless, the rope attached to my climbing harness reassured me. We were so close to the summit at this point that my desire to reach it outweighed my fear. Perhaps twenty minutes after we passed this obstacle, we climbed a short chimney, and suddenly we were on the summit.

It wasn't quite that straightforward, however. I can't speak for my climbing partners, but the climb had been both more physically and technically demanding than I had bargained for--and we still had to get down.

Moreover, I was not used to being on rock wearing my crampons--even with two good legs--and I felt unsteady. While not bothered by acrophobia or vertigo, I found the exposure while crossing some of the knife-edge parts of the ridge a little unnerving.

But we were on the summit, and there was no point above us as far as we could see. Mont Blanc, obscured by clouds in the distance, was the only higher peak for over a thousand miles in any direction. The elegant Matterhorn

was completely bathed in sunlight now, and we could look *down* upon its summit some 150 meters below us.

Despite the exhilaration of reaching the summit, we stayed there less than five minutes. I regret it now, but I did not bring a camera with me. Given my uncertain physical condition, I wanted to give myself every advantage I could to reach the summit, so I left this extra weight behind. Alas, neither David nor Elizabeth had a camera either.



*View of Monte Rosa from near Rotenboten, September 2015, photo by Mike Goodyer*

Although it was barely 10 am, we paused only long enough to enter our names on the summit register and to congratulate each other for a successful climb. Even though the sun was beating down on us, it was quite cold and windy on top, where the elevation was over 4,570 meters. The bright sun had little warming effect at this height. At lower elevations, however, the hard, compact snow was already becoming soft, and, consequently, crevasses would

present a much bigger problem on the return. We could not afford to linger.

Luckily, my weak leg hadn't bothered me much up to this point. On the other hand, months of inactivity had rendered me much less fit than I otherwise might have been. Descending is always somewhat anticlimactic, but it's not necessarily *easier* than going up. Although we had reached the summit, the physically demanding second half of the climb was only just beginning.

I was just as nervous retracing my steps on the summit ridge as I had earlier been ascending it. Once I slipped and landed lightly on my injured knee. I immediately began speculating about the dire possibility of having to be helped off the summit. I only began to relax after the last rock section was passed and I could sink my crampons into the snow.

The next two hours were nothing more than a plod--but I wasn't getting any stronger. Also, what had been firm snow in the morning was now quite soft, and we had constantly to remove balled-up snow from our crampons. Then we reached the crevassed area. We had to be very careful picking our way through the now much more menacing crevasses on the Monte Rosa Glacier. Once, Elizabeth sank up to her knees in a small, hidden crevasse. She acted as if this was nothing to be concerned about. But after we pulled her out, we were all noticeably more cautious through the rest of the crevassed area.

By the time we straggled back to the hut in the late afternoon, I felt I would never walk again. Descending the loose scree and the boulder field took a special toll on my leg, and, unroped now, I could no longer keep up with my friends. Although ascending this area hadn't been difficult, my atrophied thigh muscles could no longer supply adequate braking power. I had to slow down considerably. After fourteen hours of hiking, the hut was a welcome sight.

Despite our exhaustion, we had agreed that after a short rest and water stop, we would continue to Zermatt and the many comforts below. The two-hour hike that followed to Rotenboten to catch the mountain railway back to Zermatt can best be described as a forced march--at least from my perspective. Neither of my friends, in typical British fashion, showed signs of exhaustion, but I was beyond being tired.

Somehow I found the strength I needed, but it was just enough and no more. I was actually in the lead most of the way back, but it was only because I believed that if I fell behind, I might lose my motivation to keep going and quickly lose contact with my friends.

The Monte Rosa climb turned out to be the highlight of my two weeks in the Alps. Although I climbed several minor peaks in the Zermatt area in the days that followed, I gave up any more ambitious plans for this year. I could be justly proud of having climbed the highest peak in the region, but the effort had worn me out.

The Matterhorn still beckoned, and one day I hiked to the hut at the base of its most frequently climbed ridge, the Hornli. Maybe next year, I thought, as I alternately gazed at the steep, rocky ridge just above me and across the valley at the impressive massif of the Monte Rosa.

Next year I would be stronger.

## TGOC 2015 SOLO by Marian Parsons



I simply couldn't believe my luck. The sun shone, birds sang, and I was even warm enough in a T-shirt as I climbed the rough tussocky pathless ridge above lonely Loch Beoraid. Two weeks of solo hiking C to C across the Scottish Highlands from Lochailort to Montrose lay ahead of me. My rucksack was reasonable at around 10kg, and I had a lush night in a hotel near Glenfinnan to look forward to.

*Arisaig- toe dipping scene before heading to Lochailort*

If Mike hadn't broken his leg skiing a few weeks earlier, he would have enjoyed this trip with me as usual – we have crossed Scotland together on 'The Great Outdoor Challenge' six times by various different routes, and it has become an important annual event in our calendar, building fitness ready for the Alps in the summer. Three hundred folk share in this hike every year, sorting out their own routes and starting/finishing in various different places, then heading for Montrose for a bit of a bash at the end.



Two days later, I checked into a B&B in Spean Bridge for a good scrub. Hunting down dinner proved rather tricky. I was absolutely ravenous but the only restaurant was fully booked (mostly by fellow 'Challengers'). By pure luck, the Post Office/shop was open fairly late so I stomped in to see what was on the shelves. Normally I'd turn my nose up at a £3.85 microwave ready chicken dinner, but the shopkeeper had this splendid feast hot for me in a jiffy, and I rushed back to my digs to eat in comfort on my bed in front of the TV.

*Glen Sulaig Bothy, night 2.*

The forecast was pretty bad for the next day or two, with thunderstorms, heavy rain and strong winds promised, so I abandoned my planned high route, and set off up the S side of Loch Laggan, heading for Kingussie in a three-day push. It had rained hard in the night and the burns were high, but stupid me, I made a bad decision almost immediately by deciding it would be more fun to use the old Tramway rather than the boring farm track, and climbed laboriously up the hill to meet it, only to discover that it was now barred off with barbed wire and the bridges cut. I was stuck on the northern flanks of the Grey Corries on the wrong side of a deep ravine with a raging torrent in the bottom, so I stupidly decided to risk heading on up another 200m through the plantations in the hope of fording the gorge there. Nope. Head all the blinking way back down to the farm track then.

Black skies, drenching rain turns to hail. Sudden great flash – ear-splitting crash and rumble. I threw myself down, feeling the electricity in the air. It was very exposed and open – no place to hide from the lightning, so I ran down that hill with my heavy rucksack, gasping and stumbling, praying that I wasn't yet required Up Above (or Down Below, either!) After that, I behaved myself and stuck to the main path.

The walking was easy, mostly on gravelly tracks with great scenery when visible through the clearings where they were felling the plantations. I didn't see anywhere to camp because of the mess of deep muddy tyre tracks and brash, alternating with tussock bog. Just past the little hamlet of Fersit, there's a tiny dam hidden in the forest, and I had heard it was possible to put a tent up there. Unfortunately, the farmers had let cattle into the woods, so everywhere was a filthy mess and plodged up with their heavy feet, but there was one little clean flat place snuggled into the dam wall, and I threw the tent up just in time before the rain and squalls resumed. The first violent gust whipped out several pegs, but I soon got securely double-pegged and lit the stove, feeling rather pleased with myself and looking forward to dinner. Fate had it in for me though – the dehydrated meal was off, and disgusting, and I had to sling it. The weird chemical stink spoilt my appetite, so I scoffed a couple of biscuits and left it at that.



Another couple of days, via the lovely Lochan na h-Earba and spooky Ardverikie Castle, with another very windy woodland camp in Glen Shirra, saw me reach Spey Dam, Laggan, Glen Banchor and then Kingussie. In my Kingussie B&B, I worried a bit about the next few days, as my panicky dash down the hill in the thunderstorm had strained a knee, and this was getting pretty painful going downhill. The next day should have taken me due east up into the Cairngorms, with a high camp on the Moine Mor at well over 900m. I was certainly fit enough to get up there, and the forecast was okay though windy, but I didn't trust my knee to tackle the steep descent into the Lairig Ghru on the east side. I plumped for a lower alternative, through beautiful Glen Feshie, a route I already knew well.

*Binnean Shuas*



*Ruthven Barracks*



I had a nice day wandering past Ruthven Barracks, then crossing Tromie Bridge and on to Glen Feshie, to camp close to the river on a sheltered patch of soft green herbs by some grand old Scots Pines.

*Campsite at Glen Feshie*

Gusty winds still prevailed, but the chaffinches and tits twittered all around, and sandpipers and oyster-catchers were claiming their territories on the shingle banks

The bad knee didn't like the meandering moorland path through to White Bridge across a watershed at nearly 600m, through rough peat hags and Land Rover ruts, but it got me to a little grassy woodland edge near White Bridge. I worried whether the increasingly violent wind here would finally blow my little Laser Competition to bits as I couldn't find any shelter at all.

After a noisy night with little sleep, due to the flapping tent and roaring trees, it was an easy downhill hike to Linn of Dee and Mar Lodge, where Challengers are offered hospitality and tea every year, then on to Braemar by early afternoon, a day earlier than planned, for a huge All Day Breakfast in the cafe.



Ducking out of my next planned high route over Lochnagar's Broad Cairn, due to the naughty knee, I headed round Glen Gelder to Glen Muick, then over the trackless watershed past Shielin of Mark, and up the shaggy slopes of Muckle Cairn 726m where I was overtaken by a snowstorm which clagged in and made it quite hard to find the way down into Glen Lee. My hands froze, but I had to keep hold of my compass and work the bearing in order to pick up the slippery old stalkers path down. Curiously, I couldn't get a Queen song out of my head at this point: 'Don't stop me, I'm having a good time'!

*Muckle Cairn*

Reaching the village of Tarfside at teatime, cold and damp, I was lucky to be allowed some floor space in The Retreat, which is opened up especially for us every year but has limited bedrooms, all of which were taken by the time I got there. A doughty team of volunteers slaved all evening to feed us, and from there it was a very pleasant plod down the lanes and paths of Glen Esk to the convivial cafe in Edzell where heaps of Challengers' rucksacks clogged the pavement outside, and little groups of us coalesced and hiked on down to Northwater Bridge campsite, chattering and relaxed now we were only a day from the finish.

It was at this final camp that I had my second camp food problem, when my new and expensive super-duper-lightweight stove broke and I had to scrounge around for charity from my fellow campers. Help was indeed forthcoming, so I didn't miss out on a meal, and in the morning a kind hand thrust a pan of hot water under the flysheet so I could brew some tea before the final day's walk.

There are many ways to go to the North Sea from there, and St Cyrus Bay is pretty popular, but I fancied heading for the lovely dunes of Kinnaber, the golf course just north of Montrose, from where you can walk to the sign-out point in the Park Hotel instead of having to use public transport. There were now only roads to walk, and a fair amount of commuter traffic, so I teamed up with a couple of guys and we kept up a good pace with some interesting conversations to pass the miles. Lively renditions of 'Mr Blue Sky' and 'The sun has got his hat on' were also popular.



*Montrose beach with Scurdy Ness Lighthouse*

So it was that I finally climbed through the sand dunes onto the beautiful long empty beach, and dipped my toes in the slithering waves of Montrose Bay. It was a sunny bright breezy morning, in contrast to the thick mist and pouring rain that hit many of the finishers the next day. Perhaps I should really thank the dodgy knee that gained me a day!

## **ADDENDUM: Marian's Scottish Coast-to-Coast:**

### **THE ROUTE**

- Day1. Arisaig/Lochailort – South Loch Beoraid Ridge – Glenfinnan. Hotel.
2. Glenfinnan – Gleann Fionnlighe – Glen Sulaig bothy.
  3. Glen Sulaig – Glen Loy – Caledonian Canal – Spean Bridge. B&B.
  4. Spean Bridge – S side R Spean – Monessie – Inverlair – Fersit. Camp.
  5. Fersit – Torgulbin – Lochan na H-Earba – Ardverikie - Kinloch Laggan - Glen Shirra. Camp.
  6. Glen Shirra – Spey Dam – Laggan – Cluny Castle – Glen Banchor – Kingussie. B&B.
  7. Kingussie – Tromie Bridge – Baileguish – Stronetoper – Ruigh-aiteachan. Camp.
  8. Ruigh-aiteachan – Glen Feshie – Glen Geldie – White Bridge. Camp.
  9. White Bridge – Linn of Dee – Mar Lodge – Braemar. B&B.
  10. Braemar – Invercauld Bridge – Glen Gelder – Spittal of Glenmuick – Allt Darrarie. Camp.
  11. Allt Darrarie – Shielin of Mark – Muckle Cairn - Glen Lee – Tarfside. Floor.
  12. Tarfside – R North Esk – Edzell – North Water Bridge. Camp.
  13. North Water Bridge – Hillside – Kinnaber Dunes – Montrose Bay.

### **NOTES ON GEAR**

**Tent:** Terra Nova Laser Competition. Polythene protector underneath.

**Cooking:** Fire Maple gas stove, titanium pan, home-made windshield (flattened and cut beer can).

**Water carrier:** Winebox inner.

**Sleep:** Klymit X-Frame short airbed, thin Karrimat. PHD Minim 400 Dryshell bag.

**Rucsac:** Go-Lite with drybag liner.

**Footwear:** Zamberlan Treklites, with Superfeet. Crocs for river crossings and around camp. Foot cream, applied morning and night: = no blisters!

**Waterproofs:** Rab eVent jacket, OMM stretch Kamleika overtrousers. Gaiters (against ticks as well as water ingress)

## OBITUARIES

### Les Swindin (1938 – 2015)



Les Swindin was born in north London when his father George was goalkeeper for Arsenal at that time. His parents came from the Bradford region and he returned to his Yorkshire roots on the outbreak of WW2 when his father joined the army. He lived in Pudsey with his mother and came under the considerable influence of his maternal grandparents. He attended Pudsey Grammar School from 11 – 16 and on the completion of his 'O' levels he joined his parents in Peterborough where his father was then in football management.

He worked in a chemical laboratory and studied part time at the local technical college which, ultimately, led to success at 'A' level and an external science degree, specialising in chemistry, from the University of London. At this time Les played football and cricket in the local leagues, displaying much ability, and showed a great interest in all sports which stayed with him throughout his life.

Les was first introduced to walking in the Yorkshire hills and dales along with his parents. It was in 1955 that he and friends made his first independent trip by train to Grindelwald and then the following year to Austria and the Dolomites where they spent time walking. However it took a few years before his walking interests came to the fore and he joined Peterborough and Wellingborough Mountaineering Club in the early sixties.

Les was introduced to climbing on the Isle of Skye in 1963, and by the time of his first alpine season in 1965, when he climbed the Rimpfischhorn, Zinalrothorn and Matterhorn, he was well and truly hooked!

At this time he spent a year studying for the specialised PGCE in technical education at Huddersfield and joined the Gloucester Technical College in autumn 1966, where he remained for all his career. He was now in a position to pursue his climbing interests with much more time available than previously! He joined the Gloucestershire Mountaineering Club where he remained a stalwart, active supporter, holding the offices of treasurer and president for many years; it was only recently that his attendance was marred by the onset of his debilitating illness.

I first met Les at the GMC hut in North Wales at New Year 1967 and this was the start of a long friendship on the hills. He was very keen, well organised and extremely positive about what he wanted to do and always led from the front.....it's got to be said that everyone knew Les's rear view!! He prided himself on his fitness and the style in which he completed his routes; he was never one for hanging around.

He was a climber who loved the high crags of Snowdonia and the Lake District where he was active in both summer and winter. He was also a devotee of the Cuillin of Skye where he completed the Traverse on a number of occasions including the Greater Traverse, road to road in one day. Les also completed the Munros in Scotland along with his wife, Barbara, who he had met through the GMC. They had both joined the GMC about the same time, and a common interest soon led to marriage in 1969 and a lifetime on the hills together.

From the late sixties Les's interest in the Alps grew rapidly; he joined the SAC, Grindelwald section in 1970, and organised an alpine season with Barbara and friends every year from then on. Initially he visited Switzerland where he tackled classic tours in the Oberland, the Taschhorn - Dom traverse in the Pennine Alps and the Biancograt on the Piz Bernina to name just a few. As he built up his experience and knowledge of the classic alpine areas he met more like-minded people and it was through joining the Alpine Club in 1979 that he met Peter Fleming and subsequently became a member of the FRCC too. It wasn't long before Les's natural organising ability and fastidious detailed planning was recognised and he became the editor of the Alpine Club's alpine guides, a position he held with great success for over 20 years.

Les and Barbara now climbed regularly with Peter in the 1980s and it wasn't long before they realised that in their quest for more wide and varied routes they had nearly collected all the 4000m peaks. This spurred them on and in 1985 and 1986 Les and Peter achieved their goal...a great accomplishment as it was a very early British completion. Les visited the Alps regularly and although still active he was very keen on collecting up to date information and taking photographs to illustrate the Alpine guides. One of his later experiences was representing the Alpine Club for a Swiss TV Company's recreation of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Oberland Tour. This gave him new stories, while the film proved most entertaining with Les in traditional climbing gear he'd borrowed from his local dramatic society

In the 70's Les and Barbara started skiing in Scotland. They gradually improved with downhill trips to the Alps but it was not long before Les was combining his mountaineering and skiing skills embarking on an annual ski tour which he led himself with his usual style and panache. He was extremely keen on the idea of journeying through the Alps from hut to hut, France to Austria; over the years he gathered together a group of like-minded friends for at least 20 such tours.

As the first flush of youth disappeared Les moved into Fell Running and Orienteering at which he was a great success, winning national races and representing England in his age group. He ran many mountain marathons which suited his mountaineering skills well and was very successful in the veterans' handicaps. Les's strength and drive produced some extraordinary results including a completion of the Joss Naylor Challenge.

Sadly Les's last years were marred by the onset of Parkinson's disease and his activities were prematurely curtailed even though he moved as speedily as ever. His last meet with the ABMSAC was to Saas Almagell where he visited the Britannia Hut and we were able to recall visits and climbs of the past.

He was definitely the driving force behind many of our challenges and his old mountaineering friends have much to thank him for. He is not someone who is going to be forgotten in a hurry; we must be thankful we spent so many great times together.

Geoff Causey.

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH MEMBERS OF THE SWISS ALPINE CLUB

Minutes of the meeting held at the Inn on the Lake Hotel, Patterdale on Saturday 6th February 2016  
The president Mike Parsons was in the Chair, approximately 33 members were present.

**Apologies for absence:** Pamela Harris-Andrews, Alan Norton, Peter Hammond, Jane Phoenix, Antonia Barlen, Sheila Coates, Mary Boulter, Colin Armstrong

### **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 7th February 2015**

The minutes of the previous AGM were approved. Proposed, Lin Warriss, seconded Heather Eddowes.

**Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising.

### **Election of Officers and Committee:**

All office holders and committee members indicated that they are willing to be reappointed:

Vice president –	Jim Strachan
Treasurer –	James Baldwin
Membership secretary –	Ed Bramley
Hut booking secretary –	Marian Parsons
Meets secretary –	Andy Burton
Secretary –	Dick Murton
Editor –	Mike Goodyer
Elected member –	Pamela Harris-Andrews
Hon. HMC Representative –	Marian Parsons
Co-opted member –	Heather Eddowes

All were approved together by a show of hands.

### **Hon Treasurer's report**

The report and accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting and presented by James Baldwin.

It was proposed that the subscription bands for 2016 – 2017 remain as currently. The bands are:  
Single membership £23 to £27. Actual rate £23.50. 2nd member at same address £15 to £18. Actual rate £15.50.  
Junior member £10 to £14. Actual rate £10.00.

There is a current total balance of approx. £150k, varying somewhat from day to day at present due to rapid changes in the stock market valuations.

The report and accounts were accepted. Proposed Marian Parsons, seconded Andy Burton.

## **President's report**

Last year in response to John Dempster's question as to the strategy for renewing membership to ensure we don't succumb to the same fate as the TCC, Mike replied that it was having his urgent attention, and not having served on the committee up until that evening, it was yet early days. He was familiar with a number of problems, and the discussions around them, concerning a number of items:-

- Club / GS hut operating systems  
New operating systems were needed to decrease future work loads of club officers.
- The urgent need for an alternative partner to take over from the TCC to help manage the hut.
- The need to carry out some hut refurbishment, delayed until the renewal of the lease had been confirmed.
- A drive for new members, particularly in view of the increasing age profile and diminishing numbers

Mike reported during he felt that the updating of systems and a new hut partner were the immediate priorities. He was pleased to report that some of the GS hut operating systems have been overhauled, making the control and record keeping easier and more robust but there was still much to do to reach a satisfactory level.

The new hut partnership negotiations are progressing well and have been undertaken by James Baldwin and Jim Strachan ( to avoid any potential clash of interest because Mike and Marian who are also AC members ) and this was discussed at length in the ABMSAC Ltd meeting which followed directly.

The hut refurbishment programme was agreed at the President's meeting in October, in two phases. The phase 1 project management is being undertaken by Mike and Marian and is well underway. Of the 18 listed items, most are now partially or fully complete with completion of the showers and bunks expected by March April.

A new stove fire has been fitted, to replace the open fire. The roof windows have been double glazed and refurbished and blinds fitted. Two prototype bunks have been tried, and the final version will shortly be ordered and supplied. Proposals for a revised design of the men's toilet facility have been prepared by Ian Mateer.

Phase 2 will require someone else to project manage as the scope is considerably larger in scope than phase 1, which took far more time from Mike and Marian than envisaged – not helped by the impact of 'storm Desmond' flooding on Dec 5th 2015 and subsequent storms.

## **George Starkey Hut – future administration**

James Baldwin gave the following update to the meeting on the proposed new partnership and answered questions from the members present.

The George Starkey Hut partner, the TCC, propose to disband at the end of February 2017. After consideration the committee and directors agreed that formal discussions would be held with the Alpine Club as there had already been suggestions that they might be interested if a new partner was needed. Those discussions started in September 2015 led by James Baldwin and Jim Strachan so as to avoid any potential conflict of interest as Mike Parsons, President, is an AC member.

Heads of Agreement have been drafted and approved by the committee.

Before any decisions can be taken by ABMSAC members, formal notification is needed from the TCC as to the date of their demise and the cancellation of the Heads of Agreement. It is anticipated that this will be given in late February 2016 after their AGM.

It is proposed that once the TCC have formalised their position the new Heads of Agreement will be finalised and presented to members of the ABMSAC at a SGM. Voting in person or by proxy is allowed in the Club Rules. The SGM and associated EGM of the Company will be held in London for ease of access.

It is anticipated that the majority of votes will be cast by proxy.

It is proposed that the Company name be changed from Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club Ltd to George Starkey Hut Ltd. This will reflect more accurately the purpose of the company and eliminate confusion between the ABMSAC club, and ABMSAC Ltd.

To ensure that ABMSAC members of the Company are not swamped by the AC the maximum number of members will be reduced to 200, 100 from each club.

The articles of association will be rewritten to the latest template for a Company limited by guarantee.

Part of the agreement with the AC is a cash injection into the Company to match funds held at the end of the current financial year, 30th. June. This should enable Phase 2 to be completed without the need for a cash injection from the ABMSAC and allow a margin for working capital.

The following additional comments were made by Mike Parsons

Alternatives had been considered prior to opening discussions with the AC, but none were considered compatible, or even interested.

The AC had a 70% positive response to an on-line questionnaire regarding the proposals. 53 people have offered to take an active part in the management of the hut.

On winding up the club, the TCC have agreed to donate residual funds of approximately £9,000 to the Company. In exchange the Club have offered TCC members no cost Affiliate Membership; the final details of this arrangement are to be agreed.

Don Hodge was given Honorary Membership at the AGM in 2015 for all the work he has done for the benefit of the Club and Company.

**Any other business:**

In response to a question, the SAC will not have any say in any of the negotiations, as they do not have any management interest in the hut.

**Date of next meeting:**

It is proposed the next AGM will be held in February 2017, to coincide with the Annual Dinner (4th February assuming this is the first weekend as usual).

The details will be confirmed at a later date once hotel availability, costs etc. are known.

The meeting closed at 18:44

*Dick Murton, Secretary, March 2016*

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH MEMBERS OF THE SWISS ALPINE CLUB Ltd**

Minutes of the meeting held at The Inn on the Lake, Glenridding on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup>. February 2016.

**Present:** Directors – Mike Parsons (Chairman), Ed Bramley, Marian Parsons, Don Hodge, Derek Buckley, James Baldwin (Company Secretary), and about 25 members.

**Apologies for absence:** Directors: Peter Clarkson,  
Members: Pamela Harris-Andrews, Alan Norton, Peter Hammond, Jane Phoenix,  
Antonia Barlen, Sheila Coates, Mary Boulter, Colin Armstrong

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup>. February 2015**

The minutes of the 2015 AGM were approved. Proposed by Jim Strachan and seconded by Marian Parsons. There were no matters arising.

**Director's report and accounts to 30<sup>th</sup>. September 2014**

Derek Buckley gave a brief summary of the finances and confirmed that the Company was seen by HMRC as a small trading company. The Company had met its obligations and was running a small surplus.

The Accounts were examined and approved by the Directors on 7<sup>th</sup>. September 2015. They were then laid before the AGM and accepted.

**Hut Partner.**

There had been a full discussion on the proposed partner in the Club meeting. The following is a copy of the notes from that meeting.

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Heads of Agreement have been drafted and approved by the committee.

Before any decisions can be taken by ABMSAC members, formal notification is needed from the TCC as to the date of their demise and the cancelation of the Heads of Agreement. It is anticipated that this will be given in late February 2016 after their AGM.

It is proposed that once the TCC have formalised their position the new Heads of Agreement will be finalised and presented to members of the ABMSAC at a SGM. Voting in person or by proxy is allowed in the Club Rules. The SGM and associated EGM of the Company will be held in London for ease of access. It is anticipated that the majority of votes will be cast by proxy.

It is proposed that the Company name be changed from Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club Ltd to George Starkey Hut Ltd. This will reflect more accurately the purpose of the company and eliminate confusion between the ABMSAC club, and ABMSAC Ltd.

To ensure that ABMSAC members of the Company are not swamped by the AC the maximum number of members will be reduced to 200, 100 from each club.

The articles of association will be rewritten to the latest template for a Company limited by guarantee.

Part of the agreement with the AC is a cash injection into the Company to match funds held at the end of the current financial year, 30<sup>th</sup> June. This should enable Phase 2 to be completed without the need for a cash injection from the ABMSAC and allow a margin for working capital.

Additional comments were made by Mike Parsons:

Alternatives had been considered prior to opening discussions with the AC, but none were considered compatible, or even interested.

The AC had a 70% positive response to an on-line questionnaire regarding the proposals. 53 people have offered to take an active part in the management of the hut.

On winding up the club, the TCC have agreed to donate residual funds of approximately £9,000 to the Company. In exchange the Club have offered TCC members no cost Affiliate Membership; the final details of this arrangement are to be agreed.

Don Hodge was given Honorary Membership at the AGM in 2015 for all the work he has done for the benefit of the Club and Company.

**Any other business.** There was no further business. The meeting closed at 6:49 pm.

*James Baldwin, Company secretary, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016*

# HISTORIC LIST OF OFFICERS

List of Officers since the formation of the Association

## PRESIDENTS

1909-1912 Clinton Dent  
1913-1922 A E W Mason  
1923-1926 Dr H L R Dent  
1927-1930 Brig Gen. The Hon C G Bruce C MVO  
1931-1933 W M Roberts OBE  
1934-1936 A N Andrews  
1937-1945 C T Lehmann  
1946-1948 Dr N S Finzi  
1949-1951 Gerald Steel CB  
1952-1953 Col E R Culverwell MC  
1954-1956 F R Crepin  
1957-1959 George Starkey  
1960-1962 B L Richards  
1963-1965 Dr A W Barton  
1969-1971 Frank Solari  
1966-1968 Vincent O Cohen MC

## VICE PRESIDENTS

1948 Gerald Steel CV &  
Colonel E R Culverwell MC  
1949 Colonel E R Culverwell MC & Brigadier E Gueterbock  
Colonel E R Culverwell MC, Rev G H Lancaster (died  
April 1950) & Dr C F Fothergill  
1951-1952 Dr C F Fothergill & Lieut-Colonel A E Tydeman  
1953 Lieut-Colonel A E Tydeman & J R Amphlett  
1954-1955 J R Amphlett & Robert Creg  
1956 Robert Creg & Dr J W Healy  
1957-1958 Dr J W Healy & B L Richards GM  
1959 B L Richards GM & Dr A W Barton  
1960-1961 Dr A W Barton & D G Lambley FRCS  
1962 D G Lambley, FRCS & V O Cohen MC  
1963-1964 V O Cohen MC & F Solari  
1965 F Solari & J G Broadbent  
1966-1967 J G Broadbent & J S Byam-Grounds  
1968 J S Byam-Grounds & W Kirstein  
1969-1970 W Kirstein & Dr D R Riddell  
1971 Dr D R Riddell & M Bennett  
1972-1973 M Bennett & Rev F L Jenkins  
1974 Rev F L Jenkins & P S Boulter FRCS  
1975 P S Boulter FRCS & J S Whyte  
1976-1977 J S Whyte & F E Smith

## HONORARY SECRETARIES

1909-1911 J A B Bruce & Gerald Steel  
1912-1919 E B Harris & A N Andrews  
1920-1922 A N Andrews & N E Odell  
1919-1928 A N Andrews & W M Roberts  
1929-1930 W M Roberts & M N Clarke  
1931-1944 N Clarke & F W Cavey  
1945-1948 M N Clarke & F P Crepin  
1949-1953 F R Crepin & George Starkey  
1954-1956 George Starkey & R C J Parker  
1957-1958 R C J Parker & H McArthur  
1958-1960 R C J Parker & F E Smith  
1960-1962 F E Smith & M Bennett  
1963-1970 M Bennett & J P Ledeboer

1972-1974 D G Lambley FRCS  
1975-1977 M Bennett  
1978-1980 P S Boulter FRCS  
1981-1984 J P Ledeboer  
1985-1987 Wing Commander H D Archer DFC  
1988-1990 J S Whyte CBE  
1991-1993 A Ross Cameron ARC FEng  
1994-1997 Mrs H M Eddowes  
1997-2000 W B Midgley  
2000-2003 M J Goodyer  
2003-2006 A I Andrews  
2006-2009 J W S Dempster CB  
2009-2012 M Pinney  
2012-2015 E A Bramley  
2015 M J Parsons

1978 F E Smith & J P Ledeboer  
1979 J P Ledeboer & F P French  
1980-1982 F P French & S M Freeman  
1983-1984 S M Freeman & F A W Schweitzer FRCS  
1984 F A W Schweitzer FRCS & Wing Commander H D Archer DFC  
1985 F A W Schweitzer FRCS & A I Andrews  
1986-1987 A I Andrews & W B Midgley  
1988 W B Midgley & C G Armstrong  
1989-1990 C G Armstrong & R W Jones  
1991 R W Jones & G G Watkins  
1992 G S Watkins & F B Suter  
1993-1994 F B Suter & Commander J W Chapman OBE  
1994-1995 Commander J W Chapman OBE & D R Hodge  
1996-1997 D R Hodge & R N James  
1997-1999 R N James & M Pinney  
2000-2001 M Pinney & Dr D W Watts  
2001-2003 Prof D C Watts & D F Penlington  
2003-2004 D F Penlington  
2004-2007 W L Peebles  
2007-2010 T J Shaw  
2010-2013 Mrs B Baldwin  
2013- J H Strachan

1971-1972 J P Ledeboer  
1972-1976 F A W Schweitzer FRCS  
1976-1978 R A Coatsworth  
1978-1983 S N Beare  
1984-1986 A G Partridge  
1987-1988 S M Freeman  
1989-2000 H F Romer  
2000-2001 A I Andrews  
2001-2006 J W S Dempster  
2006-2010 Mrs A M Jago  
2010 - D Murton

**HONORARY MEETS SECRETARIES**

1971-1974	S N Beare	1989-1994	F B Suter	2009-2010	J F Harris
1975-1979	A Strawther	1994-2001	M J Goodyer	2010-2013	M Parsons
1979-1983	A I Andrews	2001-2003	E A Bramley	2013-	A Burton
1984-1988	J C Berry	2004-2009	J C Foster		

**HONORARY MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES (Formerly Honorary Registrar)**

1965-1968	George Starkey	1978-1980	A N Sperry	1994-2003	Dr M J Eddowes
1969-1971	F A W Schweitzer FRCS	1980-1984	J W Eccles	2004-2012	E A Bramley
1972-1974	J E Jesson	1985-1991	T G B Howe MC	2012-2014	M Pinney
1975-1977	D J Abbott	1991-1993	H M Eddowes		

**HONORARY EDITORS**

(The following officers carried out duties of Hon. Editor until post was created in 1949: 1909-11 J A B Bruce, 1912-28 J A B Bruce & A N Andrews,

1929-48	M N Clarke).	1987-1992	M R Loewy	2002-2009	R B Winter
1949-1962	M N Clarke	1992-1995	F B Suter	2009-	M J Goodyer
1963-1964	W R H Jeurwine				
1965-1968	G A Hutcheson				
1968-1974	Graham A Daniels				
1975-1986	S M Freeman				

**HONORARY EDITOR NEWSLETTER**

1992-2002 M I C Baldwin

**HONORARY TREASURERS**

1909-1911	C E King - Church	1957-1969	F R Crepin	1997-1999	K Dillon
1912-1925	J A B Bruce	1970-1978	R Wendell Jones	1999-2005	A I Andrews
1926-1954	C T Lehmann	1978-1980	R A Coatsworth	2005-	J Baldwin
1954-1957	J A Amphlett	1980-1997	M Pinney		

**HONORARY AUDITORS**

1909-1914	A B Challis	1957-1967	R A Tyssen-Gee	1985-1999	D Bennett
1915-1922	Reginald Graham	1968-1974	A Hart	1999-2005	K N Ballantine
1923-1930	W L Adams	1975-1977	J Lwelyn - Jones	2005-2009	P McCulloch
1931-1940	F Oughton	1978-1979	G A Daniels	2009-2011	N Harding
1941-1952	J A Marsden-Neye	1979-1980	C J Sandy	2012 -	M Reynolds
1953-1956	S E Orchard	1981-1984	N Moore		

**Posts no longer in use****HON. CHAIRMAN - HUT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

1974-1977	J P Ledeboer	1987-1990	D W Edwards	1999-2005	W B Midgley
1978-1980	D R Hodge	1991-1994	D Beer (TCC)	2005-2010	S Bridge (TCC)
1980-1987	W B Midgley	1995-1998	S Maudsley (TCC)	2010-2012	D R Hodge

**HONORARY LIBRARIANS**

1909-1918	J A B Bruce	1953-1963	C J France	1975-1979	H Flook
1919-1928	C T Lehmann	1964-1966	J Kemsley	1979-1981	K J Baldry
1929-1932	A N Andrews	1966-1968	R Wendell Jones	1983-1984	Miss J Gamble
1933-1938	George Anderson	1968-1970	S N Beare	1985-1986	S N Beare
1939-1952	S de V Merriman	1971-1974	W R H Jeurwine		

**HONORARY SOCIAL SECRETARIES**

1971-1977	P S Boulter	1984	Prof. E H Sondheimer	2001-2002	Wing Commander	H D Archer
1978-1980	P V Andrews	1985-1990	Mrs P M Boulter	DFC		
1980-1983	F A W Schweitzer FRCS	1991-2001	J P Ledeboer			

**HONORARY SOLICITORS**

1909-1932	E R Taylor			1991-1995	S N Beare
1933-1973	The Lord Tangley	1974	M Bennett	1996-2003	Mrs D K Lewis (nee Midgley)

**CURRENT HONORARY MEMBERS**

Brooke Midgley, Wendell Jones, Don Hodge

## Useful Contacts

### **George Starkey Hut Warden and Hut Booking Secretary**

**Members must book beds in the Hut before the visit to ensure space is available**

Marian Parsons

Decollage, Patterdale, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 0NL

E-mail: [mpparsons1207@googlemail.com](mailto:mpparsons1207@googlemail.com)

Tel: 01768-482437

### **Tuesday Climbing Club Secretary**

Maureen Stiller

20, Parsonage Road, Henfield, West Sussex BN5 9JG

E-mail: [mo@stiller.org.uk](mailto:mo@stiller.org.uk)

Tel 01273-494210

### **Oread Mountaineering Club – we have reciprocal rights at the following Huts**

#### **Hut at Rhyd Ddu, North Wales**

Hut booking secretary – Michael Hayes

Tel: 07771700913

Email: [hayes\\_michael\\_j@cat.com](mailto:hayes_michael_j@cat.com) [hayes\\_michael\\_j@cat.com](mailto:hayes_michael_j@cat.com)

#### **Hut at Heathy Lea, Baslow (Grid Ref: SK 273722):**

Twenty places mixed, offering basic accommodation, 12 in the cottage and 8 in the barn

Hut booking secretary – as above