

FYLDE MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

(Affiliated to B.M.C.)

NEWSLETTER

October 1978

(M Tolley's edition)

GETTING UP! (April 1978)

It was 7.30 a.m. and the sun was blazing in through the window at Little Langdale, Great! Get up making just enough noise to disturb but not enough to irritate everyone's beauty sleep!! Down stairs and on with the kettle. Again enough noise but not too much like opening the front door, flushing the loo, turning on the van radio, rattling of pots and pans, The kettle starts to whistle, let it, that's not an annoying sound. Make the tea and finally stomp upstairs with trays of tea and with a bit of luck things will begin to stir and we can get out on the hill. A bonus this morning and a creep as I supply the Chairman and his scantily clad wife with tea. If I keep this up I should be good for a life membership!!

Still everyone is on the move so it's worth it. Pavey Arc is the crag of the day and the first high crag of the year. A big team runs up Mill Gyll, 35 mins from car park to Jack's Rake and we are at the foot of our first objective, an extreme called The Bracken-Clock. Martin Dale leads off and it starts to drizzle. It does this every time Martin leads all day. Paul Clarke has joined us and we climb the route in good order. A really good climb and Martin is justifiably pleased with his first 5C pitch of the year.

What next! Paul suggests Chapel Head!! or this new route is spotted. A new route for the F.M.C. in Langdale - not before bloody time. The route consists of three pitches.

1. Climb the overhang, overgrown wall, cornice of slab.
2. Climb a beautiful slab.
3. Another slab, an overhang and a finger jamming crack.

The enthusiasm is tremendous, Martin isn't bothered and I say let's see it! But the climb is climbed and seeing as it runs next to Golden Slipper we call it Desert Wolly and grade it H.V.S. Colin Green was passing at the time doing the first one footed ascent of Gwynes Chimney and suggested it should be called Plastic Sandal! The decision is Paul's, it's his climb.

It is now quite cold but still hope for more, Martin dashes off to do Roundabout Direct and Paul and I finish up Aarvark E2, another great route with some superb slab climbing.

A really good day out and perhaps I will get my name in another guide book or will Paul write it up as P Clarke and Group!

A BACK STAGGING TRIP!

One of the reasons I like going to the Thatched (a well known hostility in Poulton) on Wednesday evenings is that I never know quite what I expect to let myself in for. The normal run of things is a trip to the Lakes or Wales but on other occasions a greeting across the bar has been followed by 'I've just bought a boat, are you coming to the Isle of Man this weekend' which gave a whole new dimension to being gripped.

On this occasion John Hargreaves approached me with the idea of a few days in Scotland, these few days were extended to 10 and the following weekend saw us on our way, heading for Ullapool and all points north and west.

One of the good things about climbing with John is you always have a good time. Over the last seven or eight years that I have climbed with him I have never had a bad day, wet perhaps, but always enjoyable. Ten days with John in an area I had not really been to was a complete bonus to the summer climbing plans, and as far as objectives were concerned I wasn't bothered in the least as I knew John would have it all lined up.

This sense of euphoria lasted until about lunch-time on our first day out, we had travelled up to Kinlochbervig and walked over towards Sandwood Bay but veered off west towards Am Buachaille (approx. 200 ft. of sandstone sea stack). It was raining slightly but this was not mentioned as we had only come to rig up a line from the mainland to the foot of the stack. The channel is about 20 ft. wide and the guide book warns of a 'seaweed hazard'. The object was clear enough, as was the solution, to swim! John stripped off and pulled out of his sac a life jacket, adorned with this he plunged in and was soon on the other side where I threw a rope and we then transferred dry gear and equipment over. I then had to follow with an amused audience of puffins on the mainland cliff watching. Once across it seemed silly not to make a start on the climb itself. This we did and three pitches later of extremely steep, loose, badly protected and smelly rock, we were on top. The climbing though not technically hard (Scottish V.S.) is very intimidating with holds that break off in your hand with alarming regularity. This accounted for one of John's ropes having to be cut short after one rock fall. Also on these stacks live a great variety of sea birds who are excellent to watch but unfortunately do not take kindly to intruders! Most of the gulls if threatened just fly away and if you are too close to their offspring will fly close, shriek and eventually a bowel discharge will occur (yes, they shit on you from a great height). Now all of this is acceptable and part of the game but the Fulmar Petrels spoil this. These birds who never seem to flap their wings produce a chick that seems to be about twice the size of the parents, it sits on the ledges, no nest at all, and the parent bird leaves it to defend itself. This it does by throwing up over everything that threatens it, and not just once but several times. They seem highly skilled and have a range of about 3 or 4 feet. When nearing a ledge containing a chick it is obvious by the state of the rock and the smell. To suddenly pop ones head above the ledge level is disastrous as a stream of foul smelling regurgitated fish and bile is more than likely to catch you square between the eyes. This can be most offputting if one is also gripped. To get over this a series of decoys was arranged; a sling thrown near the chick from as far to one side as possible, a waving hand with head well below ledge level or best of the lot a detour! Having thrown up a couple of times the chick then needs time to recharge, during this period desperately quick mantle shelves are done on puke covered ledges with frightened eyes keeping a close watch on the Fulmar chick. The stench from these birds contaminated our clothes for the rest of our holiday.

Having obtained the summit the next objective was to get down - simple on abseil, except everything on the top was loose! After trundling several large blocks and still not finding anything solid we had to make do and tied off to about 4 pegs (mostly in place - just) and a few blocks and inched our way down to the base, where we had to strip off again and swim back, followed by a stroll along Sandwood Bay around the loch and back to the car. Another esoteric day out.

The main objective of the trip had been cracked, what next? Just south of Cape Wrath there are two stacks marked on the map. an investigation was called for. So the next day saw us at Cape Wrath (we met Dave Earle at the ferry) admiring steep cliffs. The two stacks were duly found and one, a mere step across a wet rock and we were on it and up it solo, easy. The other was a vertical, banana shaped, made of pink peymatite, 120' high, no where less than vertical, a very nasty swim away (not a long swim but too prone to wave surge) and to all signs UNCLIMBED. It had to be done!! We sat and looked and discussed it; perhaps an abseil down the landward cliff and then throw something across onto the base, pull oneself across, climb the stack and then tyrolean back to the mainland from the summit. Plan A laid (there was no Plan B). That night we slept at Dave Earles and borrowed a grappling hook!! (No Stack Bagger should be without one) and filled our sacs with all our hardware. The next day found us again opposite our foe with Dave along to take pictures. I set off down the abseil with the grappling hook tied on to a spare rope. At the end of the abseil about 6' above the waves I hung on a clogger and frantically hurled the grappling hook across at the stack, hoping I would knock it down and we could go home. Eventually it caught and I pulled my way across, followed by lots of gear and John. The line chosen had looked hard but went quite easily at about M.V.S. and on superb rock. The summit had no signs of any previous ascent GREAT!! Whilst I was admiring the view and sun-bathing, John had pulled in the abseil rope so it stretched the 80' from us to the mainland and said "Right it was your idea, across you go". About 15 mins. later and with a great deal of psyching up I eased my weight onto the rope and started pulling myself out over the drop. Now normal mountain exposure I can just about cope with, but this all round space and insecurity got me. It took me four or five quick looks before I could look straight down and I was definitely not happy. John followed with a great deal of whooping and with great aplomb, it did not seem to bother him one bit.

So the score so far was S.B.C.3 Sea Stacs 0

The weather was now quite good so the next day was spent doing a route on Creag Dionard, a seven mile walk in, a 900' route and a seven mile walk out. We got back down just in time for a pint.

The next day was a rest day so we had a trip to Handa Island and gaped at 400' sandstone sea cliffs and the Great Stack of Handa. You need a boat to get at this one so it will have to wait.

Another easy day followed, after a monster booze up in Ullapool, with a H.V.S. on Rhue Point (Some rest day)

The following day was again wet so off to Stoer Point to look at the Old Man of Stoer. John had already done this, but said he would like to do it again (he didn't tell me he had his eye on a new line). As on Am Buachaille there was a sea channel but after our grappling success we tried again, this time tying John's hammer on to a rope and throwing it over. On the third go it caught, we pulled it tight and tied it off, then a quick trip across clipped into the rope. We were both soon across and starting up. A fairly hard traverse got us onto a platform, followed by beautiful slab climbing and an off width crack to reach a large ledge at about half height. Above were the signs of fulmar chicks, so up detour, traverse with chick puking on legs and off onto the very steep backward face. Here the ordinary route comes from below and traverses right across the face to reach an easy ramp but John belayed part way across on a ledge (a diving board). He then went straight up an overhanging crack,

up a steep open corner and thence onto the top fulmar covered ledges. Brilliant rock and situations plus a small appreciative audience who applauded when we stood up on a very narrow summit. The descent was a 130' abseil into space, with John hanging on the end of the rope for about 10 mins. before safely landing on a 12" wide ledge. A further 50' abseil brought us to the base to find two young Swiss lads who had just Tyroleaned across our rope. Unfortunately, for them the tide had come in and one lad finished up Tyrocleaning under water. We hastily gathered our gear and using their rope rejoined the mainland.

S.B.C. #4 Sea Stack 0

The last day was spent in ascending the Nose Direct of Sgurr am Fhaidhleir, a V.S. which is spoken of with some respect (Read the SMC description in the Northern Highlands Guide, it's frightening) and is 1000' of sandstone. As we walked in it threw it down but we weren't going to let that spoil our day, the Phantom Fiddler would be done. Basil lead using all his mountaineering skill and guile (we cheated here and there) and after eight hours of continuous difficult and worrying climbing we reached the top. A few minor trundles, a great deal of whooping and a run back down the glen finished off an absolutely unforgettable few days.

I think I will pop to the Thatched now'.

M. Tolley

SUMMARY - Ten days of Midges, Loose Rock, Cold Water, Wind, Terrible Beer plus being shit and puked on in North Scotland.
THREE STAR RECOMMENDATION!

See Social Syllabus for an extension of this article.

GRADES

Rockclimbing, though perhaps only a backwater of mainstream mountaineering, is still the way that most British people are introduced to the greater ranges. Because of this it seems absurd that, despite publicity in the climbing press, the majority of people who claim to have an interest in mountaineering have little idea of the recent developments in this field.

When over two decades ago it was realised that the V.S. grade had become overcrowded and unreliable it was the result of an extensive period of development. If one could say that a Diff like say Bowfell Buttress is half as hard as a V.Diff like Gordon and Craigs then a similar increase in difficulty is a Severe like Murray Route. A further increase on the same scale should make a VS of the character of say "E" route. Obviously then climbs like Kipling Groove deserved a higher grade and with the coming of climbs like Sword of Danodes and Deer Beild Buttress a further grade was required. Hence, though it was established elsewhere, the development of classic routes in the Southern Lakes gives an ample illustration of how the HVS and XS grades were established.

However by 1960 the Extreme grade was getting just as confused as the VS grade had been. There was as much variation in difficulty between E.G. and Deer Beild Buttress as between the latter and Phoenix established in 1957 and Ichabod established in 1960. By 1969 routes like Iago and The Vikings had appeared yet another full grade harder. More and more climbs of this grade were established until by 1974 very audacious routes like Bitter Oasis and Eastern Hanser arrived.

These routes provided the basis for the next step forward and soon two more full grades were added with the coming of Dry Gasp and Footless Crow. We have come to a point therefore where as much variation in difficulty is encompassed within the extreme grade as within the whole of the other grades i.e. from Diff to HVS. One must no longer be keen to climb the hard routes fairly; one must be dedicated.

Recently a further grading system has evolved which has now been well documented and even used in this rag although half the people who read it seem never to have heard of it. Briefly this is the "E" grading system whereby the present Extreme grade is split into five grades, each meant to be a constant development relateable to the old adjective system.

i.e. HVS Kipling Groove
E1 Deer Beild Buttress White Slab
E2 Ichabod, Phoenix, Rat Race
E3 Eastern Hammer (a direct route up the overhanging rock below K.G.)
Bitter Oasis (skirts the overhangs of Goat Crags great buttress)
E4 Dry Gasp (the centre of the smooth wall of upper Falcon Crag)
E5 Footless Crow (the centre of Goat Crags great Buttress)

These grades are purely impression grades and having nothing to do with the purely technical grades developed by Crew and Wilson. They are therefore meant to be an extension of the existing system without going to the ludicrous scheme of having Very, very, very, hard extremes or the more ludicrous grade Mild Extremely Severe. I should be extremely suspicious of anyone who tries to tell you any extreme is mild.

Paul Clark

A MESSAGE FROM RICK

The following extracts are taken from "Mountain" and the recent Troll booklet on Tapes and Slings. They may be of interest to all contemplating taking up falling, the fastest growing, not-so-popular sport of 1978.

1. Maximum falls cannot be held by hip or shoulder belay methods - use a sticht plate or similar modern dynamic belay method.
2. During a fall the greatest impact force is put on the highest running belay and not on the belayer.
3. Use a crab to connect 2.5mm wire (and less) to sling.
4. Where a crab is not used on small gauge wire a 1" standard flat (not tubular - which tears easily) tape sling should be used in conjunction with the wire. The tape sling should be passed through the wire loop and united with a crab; this provides 2 thicknesses of tape against the wire. Rule: where a crab is not used the thinner the wire the thicker the tape sling.
5. A plastic sheath on 4 mm wire using a doubled tape sling raised the fail figure of the sling. With sheath - 1640kg; without - 1183kg.

6. Never use the Lark's Foot method of attaching slings to wires. In any situation (e.g. as a belay to tree branches) the Lark's Foot constricts the tape - it is lethal.
7. Placing tapes around sharp edges is lethal. The breaking strain of a 1" sling so placed is 450kg. On a one-sixteenth inch blunt 25 degree edge the breaking strain of 1" tape is 1400kg.
8. A knotted 1" sling breaks at 1650 kg when placed over a crab; sewn slings break at 2300 kg.
9. The impact force on runners decreases the longer the run-out; this is because the climbing rope absorbs much of the energy in a fall. A 12½ stone climber produces an impact force on a runner placed at 5 feet in a 10 foot fall of 760kg.
10. The breaking strain of 1" standard tape sling doubled around 2.5 mm wire is 540 kg. For such a running belay to survive the 12½ stone climber falling 10 feet the climber must have first run out at least 20 feet on the pitch for his impact force to be less than 540 kg. The force of a 10 foot fall at 100 feet by 12½ stone climber is 304kg.
11. Troll advise that where a crab is not used in conjunction with a wire of 4.2mm thickness it is best to use the five-eighths wide Blue Super Tape.
12. A minimum of 3" tape ends at knots; tighten all knots under body weight - loosened knots can constrict and fail for below normal breaking figures.
13. These figures are for new slings. Strength decreases through exposure to sunlight (300 hrs - 4%); abrasion; and wet conditions (up to 20%)

Rick Reeves

ODDS & SCDS

Found at Stair - cagoule (state colour and make to claim)

SWEAT SHIRTS-- A limited number of sweat shirts with club motif are available price £4.50 approx. See Chairman.

Secretary's New Address - 10 Rudyard Place. Tel. St Annes 729050

FOR SALE - 190 Fan 2000 SKIS and Rotomat Bindings £60. O.N.O. (J.D.S.)

The Treasurer hopes to update the list of members' names and addresses in the near future. If anyone is aware of any errors or omissions on the present list please telephone Treasurer with correct information. Cleveleys 6426.

Wednesday nights - For some time the Committee has been conscious of the short comings of Rangers Clubhouse as a meeting place. In an attempt to improve the situation it has been decided to meet henceforth at the Raikes Hotel, Liverpool Road on Wednesdays. See Social Syllabus for venue for other functions.

PAST AND PRESENT

Postponed from September now November 11th at The Three Shires Little Langdale. Hot Pot Supper £2 per head. Anyone interested please Telephone J.J. Cleveleys 3039.