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## Chairman's Chat

Greetings all, I don't want to detract from the entertaining stuff but the 'Chairman's chat' is my opportunity to update you all on the committee's activities and to fill you in on any other developments (in other words, chunner on for a bit..) so here it is;

The committee is focussing itself on one major initiative this year, and that is to recruit new members into the club. Last year it seems we lost more than we gained so we must at least redress the balance. A steady supply of new characters is vital to the club long term, keeping the social side fresh bringing in new ideas and enthusiasm. To this end we renewed the advertising at the walls, revamped the website (the biggest source of enquiries by far) and assembled New Members Packs (so that when someone does join we can get a membership card to them with some club information in a professional and efficient way). We are trying to give the impression of being well organised as well as relaxed (this kind of thing works less well on the existing membership!). We are also working on some new T-shirts to raise our profile a bit and to help potential new members identify us (if anyone has a flash of creative genius drop a line to the newsletter editor). I would also appreciate any help people can give with befriending new members and being open and inclusive.

We have of course set an exciting program of meets and events, and if you consult your EGCC meets listing card, which you should find in your wallet (efficient, n'est ce pas?), you will see the next trip is North Wales on the Witsun B/H weekend (28-30 May), Dave is organising this and will be in contact shortly. For the socials – the Tuesday before the meet (last weekend of the month) – remember, we have Trevor talking about his Alpine explorations (maybe this has already happened, I am probably expecting miracles of the Newsletter Editor!).

You may be aware that the ownership situation of Harrison's rocks has been under debate recently and a BMC meeting in Groombridge decided that the BMC will claim back the ownership of the rocks (held for us by Sport England (govt. quango) who want 'out'). This means that we no longer benefit from the Sport England money for maintenance. (The decision will prevent a Forestry Commission plan to turn the area into a money making family leisure area, they will take ownership of the car park and the toilets however and we may soon see Pay and Display in there). The bottom line is far more maintenance work will have to be undertaken by climbers in the crag area itself. We therefore expect that the Harrison's Rocks management group (HRMG) maybe calling on us for help with this in years to come (as they are with Stone Farm).

Final thing is there is a strong rumour going round that Ag and I are off to Germany, now that the air transport safety business has gone all European. I had an interview in February and I still have not received anything in writing confirming the verbal nod (gives you some idea of the bureaucracy of an EU organisation!) but the likelihood is now pretty high. I am sorry to leave you all in the lurch needing a new chairman and social sec but a mid term vanishing act does actually have some precedent in this club. This is a classic situation for an Extraordinary General Meeting, in accordance

with the Constitution, to vote in the replacement posts. So, as soon as I know for sure, we will send out an e-mail confirming the date for an EGM, with 3 weeks notice (good excuse for a beer!). So it's apologies from me and good luck to you with your climbing this summer and to the new chairman with the challenging task of ... being in charge. See you all in Wales, or Cornwall, Peaks, Lundy, - there's not much to match it around Cologne!

**Tony**

### **Ed's Bit**

Once again folks I can only apologise for the delay in issuing this edition of the newsletter. I hope that it meets with your approval.

Remember, this will be upladed to the web soon, so if I've printed it off too small then you can look at it on the web site in extra large font.

Happy Climbing

**Phil**

### **Harrisons Sleepover 21-22 Aug 2004**

Isn't it always the same? Rain all week and come the climbing trip out comes the sun!

So what was the Harrison's Sleepover all about? To climb and not to have to drive, to eat drink and sleep and climb again and not to have to drive. (And then (eventually) to have to drive.)

Not a big turnout I have to say, all a bit sandy after the rainy week I admit, but a really great work-out! Reminded me of a Font trip!

By 7pm Saturday evening my arms were completely spent and Sosblitz had bitten my finger. So we retired to the campsite. A team of sherpas were busily chopping wood for the fire. Mark and Celia has opened a bottle of port (promising new members!). Ag and Heather seemed to empty two bottles of wine. Young James slipped away from the group and was seen edging towards the Czech girls. A guitar appeared and then some fire juggling started (most impressively!). It was Covent Garden in the woods with Bohemian flavours.

The campsite is lovely, individual flat pitches in their own little clearings in the woodland. I had envisaged a rough old slopey field. If only it were a bit bigger we might be able to get a club meet in there. The perfect peace that night was only disturbed by Gatwick Air Traffic Control switching on their screens at about 5am. But that's the price we pay for the mobility we demand, we drive, we fly, we live with

noise.

Breakfast was the delicious leftovers from the barbeque and then it was back to the rocks for another session.

**Tony**

## **Scotland Feb 05**

The plan was really, really good, right up to the point where it all went wrong. Others detected the flaw in the plan and took advantage, and so Easyjet relieved us of £150 to change the name 'Eddie' to 'Stu' on a ticket. Eventually, Big Stu and I (and my newly-chewed thumb nails) headed north to Scotland, leaving Eddie behind to find a job.

The sports plan was this: day 1, walk up the Ben, take Stu up his first ice climb and see how he coped. Day 2, 3 and 4, same as day 1, adjusted for experience and exhaustion as necessary. I like plans like that – nice and simple.

We had a fairly brisk start on Friday morning and the obligatory ploiter through the bog through the Allt a Mhuillin. All standard miserable stuff, but beyond the dam things perked up, as much repair work has been done to the path. We poled up at the foot of Comb Gully, as high a route on the Ben as we could find as conditions were a tad lean. Naturally someone else got there just before us, but no big deal really. It is not a long route and so the more the merrier! Stu was in full learning mode – front points, ice screws, leashes, pegs, spindrift, frozen slings, frozen fingers, snow down the neck, other parties dropping gear – all the joys of winter climbing.

In due course we popped out onto the top, but I was disgusted by the state of Britain's highest mountain as I walked off. It is a well known fact that one slides on one's backside off the Ben in February - one does not walk every step of the way, picking a way through bare rocks. Snow cover? What snow cover? Bah humbug.

On Saturday, the weather forecast was fierce – gales and snow, and so we opted for somewhere closer to the road – Stob Coire na Lochan in Glencoe.

One very adverse side effect of early starts is that you get to break trail, and then you get tired and then everyone else catches up and passes when you're wheezing and panting and wishing you had stayed at home. The snow was knee deep and powdery and pouring off the crag everywhere, and so all thoughts of doing a gully were abandoned in favour of a buttress.

However, others were not so easily dissuaded and forged on up their gullies. Whoomph! Out came a powder avalanche. Whoomph! Out came another avalanche, followed by two wee men cantering as fast as their little legs would carry

them. More people stepped over the bodies of the fallen (figuratively speaking) and stepped into the breach of the gullies. More avalanches spat them back out again – as a detached on-looker it was really quite surreal.

Our route was nice and safe, although any useful features were concealed below a blanket of powder and ice. Much digging was required but we steadily made our way up with the fine company of others on the route. It snowed all the while, blowing in all directions. Periodically it cleared, and wide views opened up across Glen Coe to the Ben and beyond.

On Sunday we were knackered. There were three inches of snow lying at the bunkhouse and we decided that we weren't going to do anything. By late morning, we had the bright idea of going skiing, after a spot of lunch at Nevisport café. Strangely for a cafe, it couldn't serve food other than the worst bacon sandwiches in Europe and tepid tea. The afternoon was spent skiing, in the sunshine, on dry, new snow, with a view. Call me a liar if you will, for everyone knows that Scottish skiing involves rocks, ice, rain and cloud, but I'll say it again – fresh, dry snow, sunshine, view.



By Monday, we had recovered, and set off for a standard Aonach Mor short 'airport day'. There were piles of snow in Easy Gully, but careful inspection revealed it to be more stable than expected. Then as we started to assemble the belay, the pick fell off my ice axe.....

**Adrian**

A rare sighting in the wild of Axars courting

## **Club Trip, Lake District, 1 –3 May 04**

The rain lashed down, the road was underwater and teeming with bouncing droplets. Time to get out of the South East. There was a big secret to protect, the BBC forecast nearly gave it away, one little corner of the British Isles was going to have a fabulous bank holiday weekend – it was the Lake District!!

At 9-30pm we checked-in with each other on the mobiles, we were closing in nicely on the Sticklebarn Bunkhouse in Great Langdale. Sure enough, by last orders we were ensconced. Amid the lively chat some plans were set for Saturday. We would walk the mile down the valley to Raven Crag on the pleasant and slightly friendlier routes there and tune-in and get used to the new partnerships. Ag with Steve (an unknown quantity at that time), James (the lad) with me, Heather and Kate and Will and Anne (was there a little electricity in the air or was it just me?).

Dawn broke and it was wall to wall blue sky! The Full English on the patio. The team was a coiled spring waiting to be unleashed at the climbing (but somehow

Steve managed to fit in a shopping trip, emptying a small gear shop!).

I had seen the cover of the guide book so it was 'Pluto' (HVS) for me. "Now James, one thing at a time otherwise you'll be dropping gear..." Half way across the traverse, sure enough, a little sparkly metallic waterfall. The route got more serious on the top pitch, "stay right James!", next thing he's dropped himself, and pulled me off my ledge as well; two of us swinging for a moment off the two meagre anchor placements.

Ag and Steve executed a clockwork like ascent of 'Revolution' (HS), then upped the anti with 'Bilberry Buttress' (VS, 4c) in the afternoon. Heather & Kate, Will & Ann also got busy, and by the end of a hot day eight ascents had been made. Time for a drop of Jennings at the Old Dungeon Gill. We basked in the warm evening sun outside the pub, and took hundreds of photographs of each other (don't let Heather loose with a professional camera!). In the relaxed atmosphere I forgot to keep an eye on James (the lad) and before you knew it, he had consumed two pints of scrumpy, what a barrage of off-the-wall questions and strange points of view we were subjected to on the walk back!

Later that evening in the Sticklebarn pub, between bouts of loud rock & roll, the big Sunday plan was hatched. Steve (keen as mustard) would be first up, check the weather and if good would wake the party with a cup of tea (each) at 7.30am. We would have to leave by 9.00am for the walk into Esk Buttress, to allow for enough time for four pitches up the buttress, and the walk back out again. The chance to experience true mountain cragging does not come often and must be seized whenever possible. If everyone was feeling as excited as I was, then we were all very excited at the morrow's prospects as we retired to bed that night.

Something warm by my nose, blurry yellow out-of-focus object, with wispy clouds above, my God a cup of tea, get the ear plugs out! Blue sky, sun coming up, game on!

The walk in was a delight, reminding me of what I used to enjoy before starting climbing. The first views of the buttress were awe inspiring and I have no doubt there were some trepidated souls amongst us. The mood was levitated though as we laughed at Anne's expense, collecting a sample from a boggy bit.

The buttress is dominated by the central pillar, a huge sweep of smooth compact rock 30 meters wide and 150 meters high steepening impossibly at three quarters height into serious E3/E4 terrain. The wonderfully exposed 'Medusa Wall' (VS) finishes, at a slightly better angle, up the left arete of this section. Ag decided upon 'Medusa Wall' this time climbing with Kate. Heather and Steve picked 'Bridges Route' (HS) which took a line of weakness across the central pillar and topped out at it's left shoulder. James and I went for 'Trepassers Groove' (HVS) to the right of the pillar and Will and Anne tackled 'Bowers Route' (S) right again, the original classic.

Trespasser's proved to be a hard fight up a series of daunting features in the groove, repeatedly forcing one onto the frighteningly blank right wall. The most unpleasant moment was a poorly protected mantle where I managed to lock out my elbows and get one foot up but then found inadequate space, due to the width of the ledge, to rock forwards and bring up the second foot. For a moment it was checkmate. A more pleasant moment followed taking in the view from the belay ledge above with a huge fan of boulders way below spreading from the foot of the crag across the lower slopes and out into the savannah grass of the wide valley with its snaking river, dominated by the bulk of Bowfell, with gentle wilderness all around. A slight build up of cloud was just detectable out to the west beyond Morecombe Bay, but that was not going to threaten this ascent.

Anne and Will were close by to our right and occasionally visible and were making steady progress. The other two parties were out of sight round the big arete on the main face.

As we picked our way down the steep grass by the stream later that afternoon I was anxious to confirm everyone was okay. Heather and Steve were already down, and had been for an hour, and Heather was wearing Steve's trousers (very strange I thought) and Steve was inside his survival bag! There was some kind of explanation but I cannot now imagine what it was. Anne and Will soon appeared but there was no sign of Ag and Kate. Another pair of climbers, who were next down, were able to fill us in a little on a story of cat's cradles and crossed routes and fractiousness. This was a relief for me! Despite this Ag hung out for her glory pitch finale which she had well earned.

Mosedale had stretched to double the length for our walk back but we did eventually arrive at the cars. As we did so the rain began to fall. Perfect!

We treated ourselves to some proper food that night in the New Dungeon Gill and felt it would have been hard to better that day!

On the Monday morning, with slightly thick heads, we went through the motions but our weak climbing plans were quickly extinguished by a sweep of heavy drizzle. A walk over Lingmoor Fell with stiff legs and sore hands was the outcome which was a very pleasant end to an excellent trip. Freedom from ropes and belays seemed to free some more of that electricity and a certain 'sparky' is not going to forget that walk for a while. Another pair seemed to be getting on pretty well aswell.

A traffic free drive home was the final act of our blessed weekend!

**Tony**

## **Steve's Alicante Tour**

I had just put down the paint brush, after a long winter's refurbishment of my humble hovel, to step back and admire my handy work when the phone went.

'Al, Steve here. Fancy Alicante in ten days time?'

'Err, what's the cost?'

'Flights are F.A. and the accommo is luxury, across the street from me folks!'

'Done. I'm in. Email me the details'.

We met on Wednesday at Gatwick. Steve, Darren, myself and Rin. With impeccable, unshakeable, unswayable confidence the airports negotiated and the hire car was loaded and before I knew it, my head was on the pillow of a luxurious mattress in a palatial house.

First day, to Steve's familiar crag. He doesn't get to his folks much. When he does this is his 'home' venue. Very nice too but it rained. The rain was a break to my own incredibly below par, wobbly ascensions attempts. On the other side of the crag, which hangs wildly the wrong side of vertical Darren and Rin were already making hay (3\* pumpy F7a first day!). Steve and I joined them. Myself in haste, wrong routing up F6c+ and getting a due kicking.

Day drawn to a conclusion, to Carrefour we headed. Men in a supermarket; a very revealing experience! You are what you eat. Darren brought the nuts, cereal, yogurt and meats. Rin got the bread, cheese, milk, butter and fruit juices. Steve got the Gin and Vodka. I got the pork scratchings. Job done.

The next day Rin who is a master of at least four (dozen) languages came into his own, navigating us to the crag to over come the Rockfax's short comings. This time around Steve and myself got the better draw, as the face Darren and Rin attempted was conglomerate choss. Steve lead a bold and lonely, long route, which I was thoroughly chuffed for him about. Darren and Rin appeared on the top from their ascent face only too glad to hear our reports of good rock and great lines on our side. The view from the top was superb, overlooking the plains to the south of Alicante. A lush, fertile range of land and cool blue coast line, under a cloudless sky. I felt on holiday. That evening the Gin and Vodka under Darren's apt mixing took a thirst quenching kicking, as the conversation reverted to subjugating half the world's population. The curvy half.

Next day Darren had a mission. Insistent on experiencing the sea cliffs. This was a dream proposal for myself. The banter by now was maturing pleasantly. Before a wild ab the game was who's stuck with Al. Sod the lot of ya, I'm down that rope first. A wild ab, I was suspicious that the rope would be raised leaving the local's rickety egg collecting ladders as my only means of escape. My paranoia subsided when the other three were down and my relief completed when the ropes did retrieve successfully. Phew. The route Mystery Tour was incredible good on its last three pitches. What was amazingly good was Darren's cool leads under taken having made the decision to chuck his wires into the ocean. What was certifiable was my own uncontrollable, incessant giggling on the last pitch. A pitch worth travelling all the distance for alone!

That night Steve's folks invited us across for drinks. We got.... Err. Still, we were

climbing only six hours later in Echo Valley. I don't know whether the valley was giving off the echo or the low impedance hum within my own boiled sweed. Rin and Darren were at it again, pulling 7a's with aplomb. Steve and me couldn't pull the lid off a milk bottle. A sea swim refresher was had from Benidorm beach before Steve curtailed for home and the pressures of his first million.

Next day I was Rin and Darren's fodder. They were at it again. What chance stood me? Actually, they made the day my own. Red hot pokering me up F6a, 6a+ then a 6b, before the dash to the airport.

Funny how climber's get along. It is a game of confidence and total reliance, we all know. I did not know Rin before the trip, as I hardly knew Darren. Beyond the bounds of the other three personalities there isn't much more worth having. I was spoilt rotten and enjoyed myself to hedonistic heights.

Returning to the paint brush, late Monday night, was a real Mr. Benn experience. Now where's my hat? No.16 Fishers Road, Totton. So40 9JA. All very welcome.

**AI**

## **Canadian Ice**

It was with some trepidation that I agreed to go to Canada ice climbing. It is always a bit nerve wracking committing to a two week holiday doing something you've never done before, but everyone kept telling me I'd love it so I kept my fingers crossed and trusted that Stuart would look after me. We had a bit of a practice on the indoor ice wall at Kinlochleven in Scotland which was fun – but that was on a top rope!

We had arranged to meet up with some other Climbers Club members who go to Canmore every year, hoping to take advantage of their knowledge of the area. We actually did very well out of this as one couple were due to get married over there so we got champagne on the flight on the way over to celebrate and an invite to the wedding reception.

We flew into a very snowy Calgary, picked up our hire car and headed straight for the Mountain Equipment Coop for some last minute gear shopping. I could have spent hours in there but jet lag and heavy snow made us keen to get to Canmore asap.

The next day we headed to Junkyards, a well known 'training' area just outside Canmore so Stuart could show me the ropes. It was easy to get to, had ice at every angle, well placed tree belays at the top and you could walk back down - perfect. It took me a bit of time getting used to making good axe placements, trusting my crampons and getting ice screws placed before my calf muscles died, but by the end of the day I was really enjoying it. The rest of the holiday just got better and better after that as we went to more and more impressive places.

One of my favourite places early on was Grotto Falls (55 m II [commitment grade], 3 [technical grade]). We walked up a canyon with a stream in it frozen from wall to wall, past some Indian pictographs to a beautiful little frozen waterfall. It didn't feel that small when we climbed it, but as the holiday went on we saw larger and larger icefalls which put it into perspective.

We climbed all sorts of ice, from the really brittle ice at Junkyards at the beginning of the holiday, to lovely plastic ice that you could really bury an axe in (sometimes a little too secure, I had to hang on an ice screw one day to retrieve my ice axe which really didn't want to come out), to slush puppy ice – the only bad climb of the holiday where we both backed off due to rapidly disintegrating ice.

We had one rather long day on a brilliant 350 m grade III, 2 climb called Sinatra Falls. The climb itself was lovely, however we followed the guidebook's instructions to walk off the top – rather than abseiling off the obvious tree at the top of the climb. The 'walk out' entailed about another 300 m of wading up through thigh deep snow, rather like walking up a down escalator, over the occasional ice step, until we couldn't go any higher, then a traverse across equally treacherous snow slopes and through trees, only to then descend through more thigh deep snow to where we could finally walk back to the path. The moral of the tale – don't ignore abseil tat – if its there its usually the easiest way down.

We had a few days when we didn't climb, and went skiing instead, Stuart had a day snowboarding and we also spent one afternoon cross-country skiing across a frozen lake. Canada was having a heatwave while we were there, with daytime 'highs' going from -7 at the start of the holiday to +10 by the end, and some of the ice was suffering, but due to the good advice of others the places we went just seemed to get better and better. My two favourite climbs came near the end of the holiday. Two O'clock Falls (120 m II, 3) entailed a 2 hour drive to get to (our longest of the trip), but was worth it. The climb is above the Kootenay Plains which are an Indian Reserve, and the route to it passes ceremonial sundance sites which look a bit like tepees. The falls themselves were a huge expanse of ice with a variety of routes available. We could have spent hours there but only had time for one route as we had to rush back for dinner at a local guide's house – another perk of meeting up with the CC guys.

Dave had cunningly planned his trip to overlap with ours by a few days so on our last day of climbing we went to a tiny place called Field which still had good ice as it was all north facing to do a route called Masseys (140 m III, 4). From the ground it looked steep but mighty impressive, I was practically climbed out by this stage so Stuart and Dave swapped leads and I went along as photographer. The first pitch was steep and long, but had been so extensively climbed that we only needed to place axes into the existing pockets. It was still hard work though as it seemed to go on forever and the ice wasn't very good for screws.

The second pitch didn't look too bad but once Dave started on it we realised it was rather foreshortened from where we were and was much longer and steeper than we realised. Dave did a grand job of it despite it only being his second day. We hadn't been able to see any higher than the top of this pitch, so didn't know what was above, but it ended with another two long pitches over always improving ice (I think most people skip the top two pitches). We learnt from our Sinatra Falls experience

and ignored the guidebook's advice to walk off, instead abbing off a tree and then two abbs off abalakovs – which was a good move as I spoke to someone else who had walked off and it sounded desperate. It was a long day as we'd arrived early, but were just behind another party and had to wait for ages, but definitely one of my favourite climbs.

Overall it was a brilliant holiday, there is so much ice in Canada we were spoilt for choice. We mainly concentrated on easy to get to climbs, usually a 1 hour drive plus a 1 hour walk, and found plenty to keep us busy. Some of the others travelled further a field and into more remote areas such as the Ghost valley which required 4 wheel drive and off road driving experience to get too but is reputedly a fantastic place. There are also all the other winter sports to enjoy with several ski resorts in the area, plus cross country tracks, and finally the more touristy things – frozen canyon walks, dog sled rides and the hot springs in Banff although we didn't have time to visit these. Canada really is a wonderful winter playground which I would highly recommend.

**Jo Campbell**

### **Costa Blanca** long weekend in October

Fancy climbing in the sun in October? Want to climb somewhere hot when the British "summer" has ended? Or just laze about by the pool (on your rest day of course)?

I am organising a trip to Costa Blanca in October this year. It will be a 4-day long weekend over the 8/9

October. You'll just need to use up 2 days of your annual leave, for 4 days holiday. Last time I checked flights were £60 return. This is not an official club trip. Partners, friends etc are welcome, just let me know. You're very welcome whatever your climbing ability.

We will be staying in a villa with a pool near the craggs (near either Calpe, Finstadt or Javea). So far 10 people are interested in this trip. When numbers are finalised I will book the villa (in a few weeks time). I've not climbed in this area before, so any input you have would be welcome.



If you are intested let me know!

**Lianne**

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