

SHREWSBURY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB: COMMITTEE LIST


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HOUSENOTES

With Christmas and seasonal illnesses behind us, we have a winter of climbing to look forward to, with meets in Scotland, The Lakes, and Snowdonia - and it might even be a good one this year, as the Highlands are currently packed with snow, according to Martin Moran who drove south to Shrewsbury the other day to give a talk for High Sports. Anyway, things you might need to know.

- The big event this January is of course the clubs AGM, to be held as before, at the **Cock Inn, Hanwood**. Make sure you are there by 7.30pm for a drink before the start – and bring with you the copy of the **Agenda**, and last years **Minutes**, which are pinned to the back of this months Newsletter.
- Also, bring your **subs for 2008** if you haven't paid them already. Its still **£20**, and includes BMC public liability insurance. (The 31st of January is the cut off point for subscriptions, as to do otherwise, makes it very complicated for Jackie and Frank. After that date, if you haven't paid, you will be uninsured, and you wont get any more Newsletters.)
- Steph Williams Rope Course at Albrighton Hall Hotel will be open for the clubs exclusive use from 1.00 to 4.00pm on Saturday the 26th of January. It sounds a lot of fun, with a range of thrills from rope walks to climbs and jumps. We will, in a way, be helping him out as it's a good opportunity for it, and his staff, to be tested, before the paying public are allowed in. Bring hat and harness if you want to use your own kit. See you there!
- On the back of your annual membership card is the code to use if you buy anything from Cotswold in Bettws Y Coed. It's not quite right. It SHOULD be ****, not . There are a few places left for the **Scottish Week at Loch Tay** if you fancy Scotland in winter, and meets on the **Costa Blanca, Pembroke, and Arran**, that will need some pre booking, so put a note in your diary, or contact the meet organisers **NOW!**

- Don't forget the BMC Summer Essentials presentation that we are hosting on the 28th January, at the Albrighton Hall Hotel. Come and support it if you can.
- Finally, a big thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Newsletter in the last twelve months by writing articles, meet reports, providing photos, information, help, songs and poetry. Keep it all coming please. I can't do it without you!

Finally, some plugs for several special away meets in early 2008

- First is Jan's Scottish week at **Killin/Loch Tay 9-16 February**. Get a weeks winter climbing and walking in, from a seriously comfortable and cheap self-catering base by Loch Tay. This week always gets its regulars, but it's a big house and there are still a number of places left, so speak to Jan if you are at all interested.
- Spain is a great spring venue for climbing and walking, so come along to **Calpe** on the **5-12 April**. If you haven't been before, you wouldn't guess how extensive and varied is the climbing and hill walking. If interested, speak to me, Dave Laddiman.
- On the **Mayday weekend** the club is meeting at **Lawrenny, in Pembroke**, which is where Tim Tindle keeps a rather nice yacht, and from where, we can sail, rock climb, or do coastal walking. Speak to Tim on 01691 774554.
- For the **Spring Bank Holiday week**, we will be on **Arran**, probably staying at Lamlash campsite, or in nearby caravans. It's a rather special island that must be visited. Lots of mountaineering, climbing and walking on the doorstep. You will need to book a ferry!

Dave Laddiman

SOME STORIES AND MEET REPORTS

Starting with the adventures of a junior climber . . .

TRAVELS WITH THE 'WEE CHAP' – PART ONE OF AN OCCASIONAL SERIES

TOM CAVE

Those of you who were privileged enough to attend the Club's 40th anniversary meet in Braemar in 2000 may recall a certain "wee chap" of tender years (7 months) being backpacked up his first Corbett by the author/his Dad on a clear Cairngorm day. Well, they grow up fast, don't they! So it was decided that, after a Shropshire hills "apprenticeship", it was time to introduce James, now an energetic football-mad 6 ½ year old, to some real mountains. There was also the promise of a night in a mountain refuge. We were a little anxious though — children of 6 are too heavy to carry (at least very far) but apt to "tire" easily! Careful planning was necessary.



And so it was, we booked a weeks stay in Briancon, the main town in the Dauphine Alps (and at 1400 metres the highest town in France), and packed Rosie happily off to Hope House for her own weeks holiday. Briancon is ideally situated at the junction of 5 valleys and the old town of Vauban; and with its hill-top fort, is certainly worth a visit on its own account. We began the week with some gentle valley walks and a drive to the Col de l'Izoard (one of the Tour de France cols) - Barbara insisted, of course, on being dropped off and running the "scenic" route to the col through the forest!

While the weather held, we booked 3 places at the Refuge Cezanne, reachable by road at the head of the Vallouise and, at 1850 metres, the starting point for the southerly approach to Mont Pelvoux and the Barre des Ecrins. En-route up the Vallouise, we stopped off for an afternoon's play on a via ferrata. This was situated in a narrow gorge and involved more rope-bridge crossing than actual climbing but it was beautifully shaded from the hot southern sun. James did very well, except for failing to remind his forgetful parents that his right walking boot was sitting in the lay-by when we left!

We drove further up the valley into increasingly spectacular scenery, dominated by the towering Mont Pelvoux on the left with its summit snows glittering in the evening sun. The village of Ailefroide was practically deserted and we reached the Refuge, situated on the flat moraine plateau formed by the old junction of the Glaciers Noir and Blanc, about 6.30.p.m. Looking at the old photos in the refuge that night made you appreciate the effects of glacial retreat - one photo from the 1920's showed the glacier junction about 400 yards above the refuge. Neither glacier could now be seen. The weather was perfect - a clear cool starlit evening, with a good forecast for tomorrow.!

After James's first experience of a night on a "mattresslager" (with Teddy of course), and a suitably fortifying breakfast, we set off up the valley at 9 a.m. - not exactly an "Alpine" start! Our objective was the Refuge Glacier Blanc at 2550m, perched on an outcrop above the glacier and with hopefully good views of the surrounding peaks. The good path zig-zagged up the steep grassy spur separating the two glaciers, before traversing right and dropping into the smooth-slabbed bowl beneath the snout of the Glacier Blanc. James was kept entertained by a meeting with a very friendly marmot (he was virtually eating out of our hands), running through our fairly brief list of identifiable Alpine flowers, watching the French Army's finest at play on the glacier and, as a last resort, playing innumerable games of "20 Questions". Despite this, James energy was flagging after an hour but the promise of a brew of hot chocolate by the glacier stream and the encouraging words of passing French grandparents helped.

The path then became more "scrambly" as we climbed onto the glaciers lateral moraine and we stopped briefly at the (now disused) Refuge Tuckett, basically an old cowshed used by the early pioneers but now renovated as a small informal museum. We arrived at the Glacier Blanc refuge at 12.30, 3 ½ hours and 675 metres from our starting point - not bad for a 6 year old (in trainers) and all under his own steam. We enjoyed our picnic lunch on the Refuge balcony, shared with the Alpine choughs and with wonderful views of Mt Pelvoux and the glacier, though the Barre des Ecrins remained veiled by high cloud. Several parties arriving back from a long day on the "voie normale", provoking just a touch of envy!

After photos by the Refuge door and a scramble on the nearby slabs, we descended in good order by the same route, James encouraged by promises of "mountainous" ice-creams back at the Refuge Cezanne. Mum and Dad made do with several beers and coffee! Needless to say, it was a very sleepy "wee chap" who had to be carried to his bed that night. Altogether, a great success and he can't wait to get back in the hills, though the next trip will probably be on skis.

MORE SNIPPETS FROM THE COSTA BLANCA - ALLAN DAY

Croissants, avalanches, rude Brits, and the amazing power of modern adhesives

8.30am. Breakfast on the east balcony. Nineteen floors up overlooking the Med and the mighty Penôn rock. Shorts, t-shirts, bare feet. Already it's sunny and warm, and Dave and Clare have

been swimming in the sea. Now we're tucking into fruit, yoghurt and fresh chocolate **croissants**. Welcome to the rigours of November climbing on the Costa Blanca!

We're back in the eternal building site that is Calpe, our winter home from home, and our base for another eight days of finger-shredding climbing on sun-drenched limestone. Mind you, if we'd arrived a week before we might have been washed into the sea instead. Everywhere there are clear signs of there having been massive flash floods, with river-beds, terraces, retaining walls and tarmac ripped apart, trees and car-sized boulders flung around, and mud **avalanche** gullies scarring the hillsides. This must have been the mother of all storms. We are suitably impressed, and mightily relieved that we have come this week instead.



The first couple of days' action is on the local Sierra de Toix cliffs, overlooking the sea, which provide a great range of climbing styles on single and multi-pitch routes. We have been here on many occasions, but there are still whole sectors where I have climbed very little. We find several really good new routes on Toix Oeste, then move up to Toix Placa and do the classic grade 5 Oma Sus, with its airy top pitch traverse, and twelve new starred routes on the upper Placa crag, including several at 6b and 6b+. It feels good to know that we have rapidly upped our grades from our last trip, and this bodes well for the rest of the week.

On day three we drive inland to climb at Alcalali, a compact crag overlooking a bend in the road in the beautiful although ominously urbanising Jalón Valley. Alcalali boasts a range of sustained, steep 30m grade 6a+ routes on its left half, and an even more impressive series of upper 6 and grade 7s on

the right. We start on the left and gradually work our way rightwards along the cliff until by mid-afternoon our fingers are very sore and beer on the balcony is calling. Before we go, Roger and I decide to recce one or two of the harder routes on the right, and proceed to scramble across through the bushes and cacti. Suddenly, a disembodied voice is heard roaring loudly, "F*** off! F*** off!". We look around bewildered. Then again -- "F*** off! We don't want you in our back garden! F*** off!" Suddenly we see that the torrent of obscenities is pouring out of the mouth of a large red-faced gentleman of clearly British extraction leaning over the balcony of a house up on the hillside overlooking the crag, and he is referring to us. Then his charming wife chips in, urging him to turn the fire hose on us. We reassure them that we don't intend to traverse another hundred metres into their back garden, but it becomes clear that they think the whole hillside **is** their back garden. Fortunately we have finished climbing for the day, and the whole incident fizzles out with mutual mutterings, rather than a fire-hose lubricated scrap! How odd to fly to southern Spain and visit a delightful backwater, only to be greeted by yet more **uncouth Brits**. (Or was that what they were thinking about us?).

A fourth day begins with mist rolling around the coast and hills, but we hope to get out of this by driving a fair way inland and up into the mountains to try our luck at Salem. The strategy luckily pays off, and soon the mists are burning off to reveal another scorcher. Appropriately enough, we head for the south-facing Sector Sol I Bon Temps. (Sector Frigorifico doesn't somehow sound too attractive). These routes also turn out to be very steep and fingery, but we manage to drag ourselves up five of them from grade 5 to 6b. By now finger ends are getting seriously sore, and we need to give them some respite tomorrow.

A project which we have been talking about for a long time, but never managed in full, is the complete traverse of the magnificent, jagged Bernia Ridge, which rears up behind Calpe and stretches inland in a long series of pinnacles and big drops. The ridge is so thin that there are holes through it in several places. However, there is a fierce gale in the night and the wind is still cold and strong in the morning. Reluctantly, we decide its too risky for a knife-edged ridge and settle for a lesser objective -- the Penon ridge up near Murla at the head of the Jalón Valley. Needless to say, by the time we get there the wind has dropped to a complete calm and its very hot, but its now too late to go back to the Bernia. In the event, our ridge to its modest 830m high point proves to be a good day out in perfect Costa Blanca weather, and a welcome counterbalance to the fingery climbing of the rest of the week.

The next day finds us a long way inland at Bellus, another fierce crag yielding many hard routes, and on our final day we find our way to Pego. Pego is a more recently developed crag in the northeast of the area. It is a place where you learn many things, such as **the amazing power of modern adhesives**. At Pego you have the main crag up a sheltered side-valley, and the smaller so-called Sector d'Iniciacio down by the road. We think the Sector d'Iniciacio looks a bit scruffy, so we plod up to the main crag. Here we start on four sandbagging 5+ routes, which are really 6a and 6a+, then move over to a cluster of 6bs and a 6c, which break through the leaning main face. Surprisingly, the really steep sections up these overhangs and bulges are on good jugs, so you romp up the leaning wall whooping with delight, only to be brought up short just over the bulge at about 20m where the angle eases back, but the holds disappear. On one of the 6bs, Cabra Loca, the upper wall is truly blank, so the locals have solved the problem by glueing on two tiny limestone holds which just allow you to complete this otherwise impossible route. If you haven't led up a blank wall 20m up on tiny bits of araldite, you should try it! It's a very insecure feeling, waiting for something to snap off at any moment. We decide to finish up with a couple of climbs on the 'easy' Iniciacio sector. But when we get up to the rock it becomes horribly clear that it's much steeper and harder than it looks from the road. And so we struggle up a couple of 5+ routes which are really 6a and finally get totally wasted on the 6a+ which is harder than the 6bs on the main cliff. At Pego, grades are definitely all in the mind.

So that was it -- 38 brilliant climbs and a ridge walk in an eight-day break. We'll be back!

(Allan Day and Dave Laddiman climbed with Roger and Clare from Derbyshire)

KINDER MEET – 2 – 4 NOVEMBER – ALENKA TOINKO



Having survived a ridiculously cold YHA camping barn in Derbyshire the previous weekend with Luke and Holly, I wasn't altogether sure I wanted to stay in anything with 'barn' in its name ever again...but I needn't have worried. The Ranger Inn camping barn at Rowarth was in a different league – warm and dry with bunk beds, a proper kitchen, cosy chairs...luxury! (Despite sounding like a pub it is actually run by the Girl Guide Association). Gareth and I arrived on the Friday evening to find Geoff, Jan, Jenny and John

already comfortably installed – the wine was shared round and we enjoyed a pleasant evening with the anticipation of a sunny weekend's walking as it had been clear and bright for most of the week.

A bit disappointing then to wake up to no view, not even of the car park! We set off as planned to do a circuit of Kinder Scout, by the time we reached the car park at Bowden Bridge (site of the

1932 Mass Trespass) 'no view' had turned into rain. Waterproofs on and off we went, in fact the rain didn't last long and it turned into a nice day. Kinder was not as boggy as I'd remembered and there were some very impressive stone pitched paths. We lunched near the 'summit' then decided to add an extra loop, as the views were now lovely.

Back to the Ranger Inn for tea, cake, hot chocolate, more cake and hot showers, before strolling down to the Little Mill Inn for dinner and a few beers (this one is a pub!). Geoff's brother Ken, a retired sea captain, lives just up the road from our accommodation and we were invited round to his 'bar in a barn' for a nightcap. I was expecting a few bottles and a couple of bales of hay to sit on, in fact the place was a surreal collection of sea-faring memorabilia and souvenirs from around the world, decorated with hops, flower garlands and a variety of other stuff, and complete with a proper bar and stools!

Sunday morning dawned sunny and bright and at Geoff's suggestion we headed off to Ladybower Reservoir, along with Ken but, without John and Magic who stayed behind to explore more locally. We saw practically no one else on the walk up to Alport Castles, an interesting looking old sandstone quarry. Resisting the temptation to go and play on the rocks, we settled for lunch with a view. The woodland on the way back down was in full autumn glory so we stopped for a few arty leaf shots before taking the road back along Howden, Derwent and Ladybower Reservoirs - no cars but busy with bikes. Some lovely reflections on the water as it was such a still day. At the southern end of Derwent Reservoir is a museum dedicated to the 'Dam Busters', which was well worth a visit.

Back at the Ranger Inn we caught up with John, more cake appeared (and promptly disappeared!) and after a quick clear up we were off home.

VRYNWY – 18 NOVEMBER – ANON – with a sincere apology to Shakespeare

It was the eighteenth day of November
When to Lake Vyrnwy eleven did head
Jon and Anne planned a route to remember
Through woods and along rivers we were led.

We rambled from Vyrnwy to Dolanog
Under grey cloud or in fine rain we went
At a farm we were joined by a loose dog
And on staying with us he was hell bent.

An open church porch gave shelter for food
And for sunshine or some snow did we pray
Then back to the start where those in the mood
Scoffed jam and cream scones to finish the day.

Oh, and the dogs owner at last we met
 And the name of the dog was of course – Sonnet!



WINTER / SPRING EVENTS

5 FEBRUARY	WINTER LECTURES – THE GATEWAY	HIGH SPORTS
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PAT WINTERTON	(Featured in the BBCs Coast programme) A unique opportunity to witness the gutsy exploits of a solo ocean kayaker, padding along in the Hebrides, St Kilda, the Faroes . . . amazing self shot film footage and photography.
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9/16 FEBRUARY	SCOTLAND, KILLIN/LOCH TAY	Jan Campbell 01743 236692
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Join Jan for the second Scottish winter meet in the luxury of Morenish House, just below Ben Lawers, the Tarmachan Ridge, and close to about 20+ Munro's. These weeks are very convivial, surprisingly cheap and are a good opportunity to get to know the Scottish Hills at their best, from a warm and comfortable base. It can be addictive.

24 FEBRUARY	SNOWDONIA	Dave Laddiman 01964 771439
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Another good opportunity for a day out in the winter North Wales hills, whatever the weather! But lets hope for sun and snow.

4 MARCH	WINTER LECTURES – THE GATEWAY	HIGH SPORTS
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PETER CLAUZA	3000kms in Tibet on a bike, many first ascents of 5000m peaks, and lock ups in remote jails for overstaying his permit. .
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7-9 MARCH	COTTAGE WORK WEEKEND	Mike Jones 01743 884592
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The annual and vital weekend where we clean, mend, replace and improve and have a good time at Clwt y Bel. Incentives include getting fed by Rose and the promise of a day out in the hills on the Sunday with Jan.

9 MARCH

Y GARN

Jan Campbell 01743 236692

A day out in Ogwen for anyone up in Wales on the Sunday and those already at Clwt y Bel (if they have completed their tasks!!)

29 MARCH

MEOLWYNS

Kevin Knott 01743 259582

NOTE – THIS IS A SATURDAY!!!

The Moelwyns, although a bit lower than some of the other hills in North Wales, cover a large area and are quite complex, thus making for an interesting and possibly exploratory day. Also opportunities for climbing on some of the more friendly Moelwynion crags, or, if you are into adventures, explorations in the old slate mines!

5-12 APRIL

COSTA BLANCA – SPAIN

**Dave Laddiman 01694
771439**

This is getting to be a regular event. As before, it is hoped that we can have a base at the seaside in Calpe, in order to access the almost endless climbing and hill walking opportunities in one of the most sunsure locations in the Med. If you are interested contact me as soon as you can, so that accommodation and flights can be booked well in advance.

18-20 APRIL

SOUTH WALES

**Steph Williams 01743
232561**

Meet at the Castle Inn (01874 711353) www.thecastleinn.co.uk (which has campsite, bunkhouse and B&B), on the Saturday pm or at the pub car park on the Sunday morning, for a day walk in the Black Mountains. The venue is on the A479 between Cwmdru and Talgarth (grid ref 317229)

2-5 MAY

LAWRENNY, PEMBROKESHIRE

Tim Tindle 01691 774554

Walking, climbing and sailing on Tim's boat. More details later on.

24-31 MAY

ARRAN

Jan Campbell 01743 236692

Camping at Lamlash. Book your ferry. More details later on.