


the Fellfarer

JANUARY 2001

Number 20



A Happy New Year To All Fellfarers



Ed's Bit

First of all a complaint:

I was delighted when, in the last issue, I was able to print so many letters from readers who had genuine points to make. I'm even more delighted when the letters continue to flood in. As you can see, we have another full page. Keep writing, you Fellfarers!

There is one letter however, that aroused my suspicions about its veracity: the one purporting to come from one Alec Reynolds. While the point made seems perfectly reasonable to me (and that's why I printed it), I had reason to doubt its authenticity. I checked with our membership secretary and found that Alec Reynolds is a completely fictitious person!

You readers, both of you, rely on me, as editor, to deliver the TRUTH. I will not tolerate this kind of deception in a publication as prestigious as the Fellfarer (I hope I'm not being boastful). Whoever you are out there, please have the courage to write under your real name. What would your mother think? - let's have no more of this Alec Reynolds nonsense!

P.S. Thank you to June Hogarth for help with the typing in this issue.

Cumberland Dialect Competition

What do the following words and phrases mean in the Queen's English?

The dialect is Cumberland/Borrowdale (According to Mr. Withers):

1. Clip't an Heel't
2. Dirlin'
3. Edge o'dark
4. Fairly good ta nowt
5. Girt
6. Hugger Muggerin'
7. Jimmerly
8. Lairy
9. Mair din nor dow
10. Nowder says giss nor sty
11. Ratch
12. Speatt o'rain
13. Thrummel't
14. Whidderin'
15. Yammer

I hope you don't find it *nowder mak end nor side** because there'll be a bottle of Chateau Dialectenord for the person who gets the most right before the February Committee meeting. Offerings to the Ed. The judges opinion, in case of disagreement on meaning, will be final.

**entirely puzzling*

Incidentally one of them can be found by running it through a spell checker, which gives a completely different, but correct, word.

Only one of them though.

The winner of the last competition was our Caving Queen, Rose East.

A bottle of the (well, according to Mr RJM, fairly disgusting) wine is being manhandled on its way to Arnside by the last, sad remnants of Her Majesties Postal Service and we all hope, I'm know, that the contents will survive long enough to be consumed by our victorious victor to celebrate her victory.

I assume the poor respons meant that no-one was intrested in the anser, or that itt was so lauffably simpel that iot weasn't wouyrth answqerimngg. Fairt enoughn. Io diont care. II Ythink it's a CrTYing shhammeER THARtt NOuOBDT wRItEs ANY-HGtyJHIMBNg FOR tHe FeLLFRDARWERRE

Perhaphs you disagreee/M ? Tell MnE ...Pleaser sumboidie wRUIOrt to Mmee

Oh, and Mike W. hasn't got his prize plonk yet from the last FF. It's on it's way Mike.

I have to say it:

Isn't great to live in a place where the big story of the week on the front of the local newspaper is that all the local shops have sold out of sledges (Westmorland Gazette 29th December)?

Stop press: and front page this week (5th January): 'Prince Charles to visit Chutney Factory' Makes you feel kind of proud, don't it?

I CAME ACROSS THIS IN MY READING THE OTHER DAY. NOW WHY DID IT SEEM TO STRIKE A CHORD ?

"The frequenters of Pen-y-Gwryd have a strange aversion to putting their experiences into writing...and although persistent enquiries will sometimes result in a verbal description being given, all efforts to obtain a detailed account are usually futile."

Anon. Climbers Club Journal 1899

ANSWERS ON A POSTCARD PLEASE.

THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH FELLFARERS BUT:

My dentist was surveying the wreck of a tooth after a nut-biting incident:

"It's not possible to save it. Shall we have it out now then?"

"You're the expert." I mumbled through numbed lips.

He replied: "My mother once asked me if I knew what an expert was. I said I didn't and she told me : the ex means a has-been and a spurt is a wet drip under pressure.....so now you know....."

I looked at the gigantic pipe wrench in his hand and the gleam in his eye and realised that, of the two of us, I was the ex spurt.

Cover Picture : Stob Choire nan Lochan, Glen Coe, as it will be for the Clachaig Meet. *Honest!*

Dear Ed.

Can you put something in that 'lost & found' column which you did once?

I left my chewing gum under the seat of my mountain bike at the High House a couple of weeks ago (The chairs there looked a bit unhygienic for the purpose). Later, Lanson and myself rode all the way to Seatoller for lunch at the Yew Tree. Lanson kept buying me drinks called 'moult's' which tasted of whisky. I don't remember the ride back although afterwards Lanson kept grinning and saying that it's the best one he's ever had. Now I don't know where I lost it but it seems to be gone for good. I don't ever expect to get it back again. Have any members seen it?

Miss P. Weakly
Beds

PS - It was Spearmint flavoured.

PPS -Keep up the good work. The newsletters looks great.

I hope to read one of them one day.



Dear Ed,

I read your article about Millie the Mountain Dog and ,being an animal lover, I thought it was the best bit of the newsletter, although I don't much like dogs.

Your appeal for stories of similar heroic deeds by animals has spurred me into writing about the exploits of my own pet, Bobby.

In fact, Bobby is more than a pet. He's my best friend and constant companion. We never have a dull moment together, Bobby and me.

He flutters about his little cage and then stands looking at me with his head on one side, just as if he understands every word I say. When he's feeling really frisky he gets noisy and fights his reflection in his little mirror. He's quite a character!

I've never taken him for walks on the hills, of course.

Miss Lolita Winthrop

Dear sir,

I write with horror, as a longstanding member, on the subject of the microwave oven that has been installed at High House, which I noticed during my Millennium visit. Are the Committee so out of touch that they are unaware that such a devilish device interferes with the use of cellular mobile phones, thus adversely affecting the safety of modernists on the fell?

I respectfully request that the Committee be asked to think again and subsequently remove the utensil forthwith. Do we have members who are unable to use a saucepan?

Yours sincerely,
Alec Reynolds

PS. Cavers have never been known to use microwaves other than as small futile hand gestures in extremis.

PPS. On the other hand does this mean I can telephone my Mother from the High House armchair? If so please ignore this letter.

(In answer to your second question: yes we do....Ed)

Dear Chairman

Please pass this letter on to the committee. In common with other members, I receive the 'Fellfarer' 4 times a year, although I notice that your Editor seems to be unable to produce it consistently on the proscribed day (the first of each third month, I believe) as a professional editor should.

I don't know what he does during the rest of his time but surely it is not too much to ask that one little newsletter be on time every 3 months, for goodness sake. Perhaps he needs to look at his priorities, eliminate some of the superfluous activities in his life, and concentrate on delivering the first class information service that a club like ours deserves rather than the third rate, hit-or-miss, very amateurish, newsletter that is produced at present.

Please get your act together Mr So-Called-Editor!

D. D. Gripe
Kendal

Dear Ed,

What a delightfully informal name for someone in such a powerful and exalted position as yours! May I ask if it is your real name? It sounds so strong and manly and ...American.

Oh Ed, I wonder if I could assist you in some way in achieving your quarterly *tour de force*; that sublime communion of art and physical endeavour and science that constitutes the Fellfarer?

I believe I have so much to give you. Perhaps more than you can imagine! I confess that in my excitement at the prospect of working closely with you on your delectable publication, I have prepared material enough for several years.

If you do accede to my desires, I think my first contribution will be a nice traditional recipe for sticky toffee pudding. Its so lovely and I want to share its secrets with your members.

Please please please say yes!!!

Yours in eager and rather damp anticipation
Miss Violet Shy

Dear Editor,

What the hell are you doing, printing vapid, puerile drivel from mindless female morons like 'Miss Shy' above?

Surely Fellfaring is for men! Keep women and their emotional problems off our pages please.

Yours ... O. So Wilde

The Secretary's Walk Potter Fell 1st. October

Five of us, hardy Foxes & Fords, turned up. The forecast was for *storms and gale force winds* later in the day so the walk was planned with a few low-level escapes in mind. We travelled from County Hall in one car and parked beyond Bowston. The wander up to Potter Tarn was enlivened by fun on the rope-swing. Kevin's go was the most amusing to watch and he claimed to have rope-burns between his legs afterwards. We didn't ask to look.

The summit of Potter Fell and then of Brunt Knott brought us into a cold wind but otherwise the weather seemed to be improving. Early mist was burning off and the sun was fighting to reach us through the cloud. K and T seemed surprised at the wildness of the terrain so close to Kendal and promised themselves to return.

We dropped down towards Longsleddale, pausing by a babbling beck for lunch. A little footbridge took us across a picturesque miniature ravine by a shooting box and we were soon descending through farmland to the River Sprint. We wandered through fields on the flat valley floor, past whitewashed cottages and farmhouses, finding interest in everything around us; slate fences,

woodland, buildings, and the strange exuberant sweep of some trees which had long ago given up being a hedge-row. The sun shone brightly now from a blue sky streaked with the remains of clouds ripped apart by high-level winds. K managed to fill a boot with liquid mud while trying to avoid some apparently wet but quite benign pathway. We turned off the bridleway just before Garnett Bridge and climbed steep fields by waymarked footpaths to the Occupation Road. The women, chatting constantly, were slowing and K and I were forced to wait repeatedly on the slow amble up to Gurnal Dubbs. Potter Tarn glittered in the sunlight as we topped the stile on the boulder-strewn fellside and we realised that we were going to complete the walk, against all expectations, in the dry.

We wandered down, satisfied, to the waiting car.

Extract from the Mission Statement of Clark's Shoes, year 2002:

'Somehow the people who made tennis shoes knew what boys needed and wanted. They put marshmallows and coiled springs in the soles and they wove the rest out of grasses bleached and fired in the wilderness. Somewhere deep in the soft loam of the shoes the thin hard sinews of the buck deer were hidden. The people that made the shoes must have watched a lot of winds blow the trees and a lot of rivers going down to the lakes. Whatever it was, it was in the shoes, and it was summer.'

Well, ok, it's from 'Dandelion Wine', by Ray Bradbury, but if only.....

RHYD DDU.....Ohh ddearr! Noboddy wwent

Darts and Dominoes

Club Officials Named After Match- Fixing Scandal

The Darts and Dominoes evening started well enough. The number of participants, always difficult to remember the day after, was in the mid-teens...probably. Their average age was not.

Bottles of alcoholic beverage, always much sought after in our club, were the prizes, and the organisers were the joint Social Secretaries, Mr. And Mrs. Smallwood... Little did we know.

Darts is always a much better spectator sport when played by people of such diverse levels of skill as ours. For some the hitting of the right double to finish was achievable in a mere handful of shots. For others the main objective was to keep the 'arrrs' out of the fire. When two of the latter category came together a finish be-

fore last orders (even in the Rifleman's !) seemed to be a very remote, and accidental, possibility. The jeering of the crowd in such cases resulted in combatants agreeing to a 'nearest the bull' finish. Thankfully. The evening wore on and the whittling down of names in the knockout competition proceeded... We were all unsuspecting.

The dominoes competition took place quietly around the corner. Spectators rushed back and forth, one minute hurtling insults at some poor ill-trained dart-player, and the next cheering over a cunningly placed dom ... No-one realised.

Both competitions drew towards their conclusions; hard-fought semi-finals were finished. Just the finals to go...Perhaps we were all too naïve.

The first result came up. The winner of the dominoes was Mrs. Smallwood. How we cheered. She looked so pleased (and so plump!) We wished her well. Everyone

smiled... If only we had known.

The darts final began. Jason versus Val. Our treasurer battled gamely on, played brilliantly, in fact. But brilliance is no defence against the forces of corruption and inevitably the result was announced: the victor was... Mr. Smallwood...

**We were duped-
tearful contestant
blubbed-after
hopes of success
were dashed.**

Now we knew. It's painful to record the fact that the whole farrago was staged so that *the Smallwoods* could keep the booze themselves. We have no proof, of course, and haven't yet worked out how they managed the scam but the committee is conducting an internal investigation into the whole affair.

Unfortunately, on past evidence, it's doubtful if the committee will be able to remain sober long enough to come to a decision.

ARMISTICE SUNDAY - 12TH NOVEMBER 2000

Armistice Sunday is an event on the social calendar that every year I think I must do that one year. Through my early years in the club I was also an officer in the Kendal Boys Brigade which of course meant I was on parade in Kendal every Armistice Sunday.

On the Friday afternoon Hugh Taylor popped into my office at work and mentioned that he was thinking of going up on the Sunday morning if the weather looked any more promising than the continuous rain that we had been having. I mentioned that climbing Gable for the Armistice Memorial Ceremony was something I kept promising myself I would do and so it was arranged that he would pick me up early on Sunday morning.

Sunday morning dawned dark and damp as I crept out of bed leaving Steve dead to the world. I washed my hair (heavens knows why!) filled a flask, packed some edible goodies into my rucksack and had a very large mug of tea which I cannot start the day without.

Hugh arrived and we set off through the Lakes in light rain hoping that the weather would improve but the nearer we got to Borrowdale the wetter it also got. We arrived to find High House a hive of activity and decided a brew was called for before we donned our water-proofs and set off up the valley in the company of Kryisia.

The ground was very wet and the paths in places were just like streams. Progress for me was pretty slow as I hadn't been out for a decent walk to test my foot since my little accident at the climbing wall at the end of August so I had already warned Hugh that I was totally out of condition but I found that I was having to think about the position I placed my left foot on every step. Kryisia and Hugh were very patient and kept waiting for me.

Just after the thousand foot stone a large strung our party stated to overtake me so I tagged onto the back of them. I don't know if they each other very well but when a mug of water was passed down the line and then to me I took a drink gladly before it stated it's return journey.

By the time we got to the bottom of Aaron Slack I knew I was holding Hugh and Kryisia back and told them to go on without me and if I made it to the top good, but if not they could pick me up on the way down, but no they refused to abandon me.

The progress for me up Aaron Slack was slow and to put it bluntly I was knackered, for K & H it must have been painful and I bet they wished they had left me. The weather by now had gone from rain to hail and now snow and visibility was very poor.

At last I reached Windy Gap and found H & K had met up with Pete Goff. We had a warm drink and a bite to eat before joining the slow moving queue of people snaking up towards the summit. I was following a bloke with this poor boxer dog whose eyes just said "I

am not enjoying this and I do not want to be here!"

When we got to the part that was causing the blockage (you will know the bit I mean) where the path scrambles upwards over rocks Pete Goff quietly said "follow me" and he stated to contour off left across the almost pure snow. Because there was no crowds on this route we were able to go at our own pace, stopping whenever we wanted and we arrived just below the summit cairn at about three minutes to eleven.

The summit was covered with people all stood heads bowed against the weather. Someone made a comment that we all looked like the penguins on that advert where the plane flies over and they all fall over looking up at it.

Eleven o'clock came and the two minutes silence was observed. As soon as it was over Pete Goff was off across the snow faster than a terrier after a rabbit, he wasn't waiting around to have to queue to get back down. Hugh and I made our way to the summit cairn to see if we could find any other Fellfarers, and to look at the wreathes before starting our return journey.

The snow had become slushy and progress was slow, we eventually came to the end of the queue waiting to get back down that rocky bit. Hugh decided that if Pete and I could detour this on the way up it must be possible on the way down. So we again struck off from the main path and soon found ourselves below the obstruction and on our way down to Windy Gap. We had a quick descent down Aaron Slack to Styhead Tarn where we joined the throngs of people who had descended down the breast route.

The paths were even wetter and the water deeper than on our way up and we were so relieved when we eventually reached Stockley Bridge and now just had the walk back down the valley.

As if by magic the rain had stopped and somewhere on the horizon we could see signs of weak sunshine. As we raced down the valley back to the warmth of High House we overtook that poor boxer dog with that same look on his face.

I don't think I have ever had boots so wet, but with them removed and a mug of hot tea it felt like heaven.

Because I got to the summit too late for a ringside view at the summit cairn I don't actually know what takes place, which means I will have to go back again next year to find out won't I !!!

Val Calder

The Discount Evening—A Personal View

I hate shopping. It's not a snobby 'I've got better things to do with my time' point of view. I just get terminally bored with it. Even in shops I like. I can go into a second-hand bookshop (my all-time favourite sort of shop) with a few spare quid in my pocket, determined to get rid of the money and then..... come away empty handed. I have wandered round climbing shops aimlessly for hours in different parts of the country and walked out with my wallet intact.

Not so on DISCOUNT EVENING.

I don't know if it's Mike's persuasive air of expertise (He's tried every bit of gear personally and will tell you the best is always the stuff that's ridiculously expensive) or John's sense of fun (Yeah that hat looks just right on you! Ridiculous but just right!) but I always come out of the Kentdale Rambler with full carrier bags and a dented Visa account. And I've never regretted a purchase yet. I only wanted some tent pegs this year and I came away with two bags bulging.

I note that other members have developed an immunity. Many stay away. Shame on you!

I tried hard this year, as I always do, to spend the money saved on the discounts on drinky stuff in the wine bar but failed again. I still came away, a little unsteady, but with cash in hand.

Nevisport eat your heart out.

AGM. 14th December 2000

Notes from the minutes of the 68th Annual General Meeting held at the Cock & Dolphin Inn, Kendal

20 members attended

Chairman's Report

Thanks to the officers and the committee for dedication and hard work during the past year. Special thanks to Tina, Val and Hugh for the huge amount of largely unseen work they put in; without them the Club could not function. Thanks are also due to Cheryl and Jason, for producing the social programme; they really deserve more support than we give them at times.

We've joined the 20th century with a website, but other than that it's been a slow year. There has been protracted correspondence with the National Trust regarding the bridge - do we renew it, strengthen it or leave it as it is? - we've also been in discussion about boundaries and the planting of trees to form a new shelter belt behind the hut.

The water system has been a victim of the foul weather, as was a lot of the social programme, the one notable exception being the Millennium Party, which was the highlight of my very enjoyable Fellfarer year. Who ordered the weather for that?

Secretary's Report

During the year membership increased from 89 to 91

Breakdown of current membership is:

38	Family
43	Single
10	Life

The NT have the right to review the rent on High House every seven years, and the next review will occur in March 2001

Treasurer's Report

Expenditure over income for the year was £452.67. In terms of the social programme, this equates to a cost per member of nearly £5, £2.50 of which is directly attributable to walk-meal events. The loss attributable to the hut itself was £58 in the year. Certain improvements have been carried out, including new curtains and an automatic switching valve for the gas cylinders. Unscheduled maintenance expenses included a £300 charge for getting blocked water pipes flushed out shortly before a group were due in, members' own efforts over several hours having failed to clear the problem. The services of a woodworm contractor were also called upon to treat an infestation in the beams in the men's dormitory (£400). Problems with the septic tank set us back a further £130.

The Millennium party cost £175 for food and wine.

Proposals agreed by the AGM:

1. An increase in membership fees effective 1.1.2002 family membership from £20 to £24; unwaged family membership from

£10 to £12; single membership from £10 to £12 and unwaged single membership from £5 to £6.

- An increase of £5/night in hut booking fees effective 1.1.2002. This would result in hut booking fees of £90/night for 2002
- To move the timing of Fellfarers summer booking of the hut by one week to bring availability into what is traditionally the holiday period for the majority of current members. This change would not become effective until 2002.

Hut Booking Secretary's Report

Last years figures in brackets - ()

Nights booked	-	96	(102)
Nights booked for next year	-	67	(70)
Nights reserved for members	-	84	(81)

14 nights were reserved for use by the National Trust during June/July. This is an annual fixture, for which we receive a sum to cover expenses only.

One of our members - Tony Watts - has developed a new web site, www.k-fellfarers.co.uk. It shows the availability of High House (updated each month) and includes an on-line booking form. It is proving attractive to clubs, and is becoming a frequent means of booking High House.

Many thanks Tony.

At the suggestion of your committee, I am now including a sheet when sending out the key. This is then returned with the key with any comments on coal and coke availability, general cleanliness etc.

I would like to thank the help and professionalism given by Val this year. It makes my job a lot easier when I can rely on Val knowing exactly who has paid and who hasn't.

Election of the Officers and Committee

Chairperson	Roger Atkinson
Vice Chairperson	Olga Niepokojczycka
Treasurer	Val Calder
Bookings Secy	Hugh Taylor
Social Secy	Peter Goff
Secretary	Tina Ford
Committee Mbr	Mick Fox
Committee Mbr	Rose East
Committee Mbr	Bill Hogarth

Committee Mbr
Committee Mbr

Krysia Niepokojczycka (co-opted)
Charlie Birkett

Cheryl & Jason Smallwood, Margaret Parker and Hilary Robinson were unable to continue their committee membership for 2001

Confirmation of Trustees Alan Bryan, Mick Fox, Gordon Pitt and Mike Crawford had all confirmed their willingness to continue.

Any Other Business

Impending rent review negotiations: Gordon Pitt indicated his willingness to conduct the negotiations if required.

There was a great deal of discussion regarding the water system at High House. Peter Goff also suggested possible DIY improvements to the septic tank to ease winter maintenance.

Following prolonged difficulties in legally disposing of the contents of the septic tank during the year, it was necessary to approach the National Trust about the possibility of having the bridge strengthened. We have found a contractor who can deal with the waste legally and it is now felt unlikely that any works would be required to the bridge.

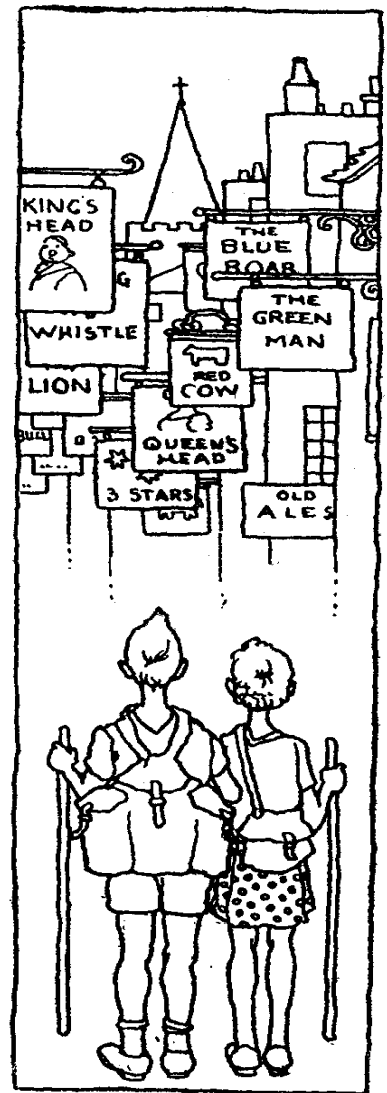
Peter Goff advised that some works to the roof would be needed in the near future. He will contact suitable local firms to obtain relevant information for consideration in due course. He will also get estimates for dealing with the dampness problem in the men's dormitory.

Club Archivist: Fred Underhill agreed to take on the task on an informal basis for an initial period of six months.

The "Members' Room". It was confirmed that this room is for the use of members when other clubs are in. When only Fellfarers are in, its use is as an overflow from the ladies dormitory and as a place for mothers to sleep with their young children. Members agreed that at no time should men use the ladies' washroom. A suitable note should be included in the next edition of Fellfarer, clarifying the use of the "Members' Room". **(Is that clarified enough? Ed.)**

It was agreed that, *if the Committee felt it appropriate*, what is now the "Members' Room" can become the ladies dormitory, with that room becoming the members' room (direct swap). This is to help alleviate the noise problem often experienced by the ladies with the current arrangements.

It was agreed that, as the Millennium Party had been a great success there should be a summer party at High House each year if possible.



Aaah! Fellfarer Heaven !

Christmas Eve Carol Singing

Nearly twenty familiar faces, mostly Fellfarers, were gathered around the fire in the Rifleman's Arms on Christmas Eve.

The retiring social secretaries distributed songsheets and smiles and, when larynxes were suitably lubricated, the singing began. It would be nice to report that we sang tunefully and word-perfectly but I cannot tell a lie. We sang with more gusto than harmony and some members, disdaining the use of the songsheets, introduced an element of randomness into the selection of verses that sometimes left the others blinking, open-mouthed, in silence.

We generally got along pretty well, though, and the singing, interrupted only occasionally for refuelling, got louder, if not more melodious, as the evening progressed.

The event was a last-minute inspiration of Cheryl's so the turn-out, relying on word-of-mouth, was pretty good. If you would have liked to have come but didn't get to hear of it let someone on the committee know. There's always next year.....

CLIMBING WITH THE FELLFARERS, 1958.....Roger Atkinson

Once upon a time, way back in 1958, the Fellfarers organised an 'Introduction to Climbing' weekend based at the Hut. Five of us, John Keats, Roland Hutton, Frank Booth and myself, the pupils, met with Myers Ferguson at the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel on a half decent Saturday morning and walked over to the Hut via Rosset Ghyll, where we joined Bruce Greenbank, Peter Walker and Roy Warner, the other three instructors, who were already staying at the Hut.

The next day, Sunday, the team of eight left the Hut and set off heading for the stretcher box on Sty Head by way of Stockley Beck Bridge. Once at the stretcher box, we stopped to plan our intended assault on Needle Ridge. I remember, even now, the feeling of apprehension that came over me as the instructors described the route and the techniques we would need to use to make a safe ascent of the climb. I don't think I was the only nervous pupil at Sty Head that day. John and Roland were both, like me, first timers and I think Frank had climbed once before. Anyway, girding our loins, we made our way along the Climbers Traverse under Kern Knotts to eventually stop again at the foot of Great Hell Gate, where we changed from boots to gymshoes, and left behind our rucksacks to be collected later. From here we made good speed to the little col behind the Needle from where our route started, but what a grand place to be. I was in awe. I'd never been in so much close proximity to so much rock in my life before. But the sightseeing came to an abrupt end when Myers threw the end of a rope at me and told me it was our turn to climb.

I can not, for the life of me, remember who went with who or in what order, but I remember well Myers, Myers, who was my instructor for the day, leading off up the steepish start and disappearing from view fairly quickly and in even less time than I thought possible came the shout for me to climb.

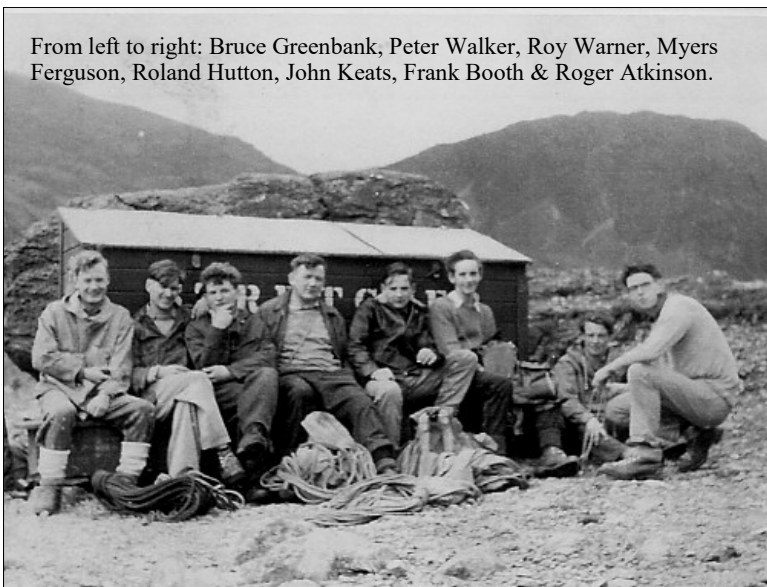
I set off on a good tight rope from Myers and eventually, after a fair old thrutch, got up to the ledge where Myers was belayed. Pitch then followed pitch, all led by Myers, but they seemed to get a little easier as we gained height and I gained enough confidence to start admiring the scenery, which Myers was able to put names to. It was magical. All too soon we were at the end of the route. We unroped and made the descent of Great Hell Gate to retrieve our rucksacks and change out of our gymshoes back into boots. It was all high-tech in those days. When the rest of the climbers, well we thought we were climbers now, had joined us, we made our way back to the Stretcher Box, where Bruce, Peter and Roy made their way back to the Hut to continue their holiday. The remaining five set off on our return journey over Esk Hause and down Rosset Ghyll, heading back to the O.D.G., and a chattering excited party we were, reliving our route over and over and over again until we reached the hotel.

Here Myers and Frank caught the bus for Amble (photograph: Bruce Greenbank)

side, leaving just the three of us to have a cuppa and reflect on the end of a great adventure.

But it wasn't to be like that at all, oh no, one sip of tea and Sid Cross appeared with what was to become, over the ensuing years, an all too familiar statement: "Hey lads, there's been an accident on Pavey. Come and give us a hand. So off we went, helping to carry the stretcher at what seemed like breakneck speed to the screes below Pavey, where we found the victim, a Dutchman, who had the misfortune to fall well over a hundred feet whilst making a descent of Jacks Rake, with fatal consequences. The poor bloke was eventually loaded onto the stretcher and carried, with some difficulty, back to the O.D.G., where we were met by police and a

From left to right: Bruce Greenbank, Peter Walker, Roy Warner, Myers Ferguson, Roland Hutton, John Keats, Frank Booth & Roger Atkinson.



chap representing the Dutch Embassy, who took charge of the victim, leaving us, the three new climbers, with much food for thought.

Some members may have seen the following notice displayed at the 60th. Birthday Party. Indeed I suspect that some members may recollect seeing it when it first appeared in the London Gazette :

Extracted from the LONDON GAZETTE
of the 11th of December, 1770.

St. James's, December 11, 1770.

WHEREAS it has been humbly represented to the KING, That a Number of desperate Men, armed with Fire Arms, whose Names are at present unknown, did on the 13th Day of *October*, and on the 20th Day of *November* last, break open the GUARD HOUSE, erected at the Entrance of the BLACK LEAD MINE, near *Seathwait*, in the County of *Cumberland*, and did forcibly enter into a Part of the said Mine, with Intent to take and carry away Black Lead from thence, and did also threaten the Lives of the Persons who had the Care of the said Mines. His Majesty, for the better discovering and bringing to Justice the Persons concerned in the said Offences, is hereby pleased to Promise his most Gracious Pardon to any one of them who shall discover his Accomplice or Accomplices therein, so that he or they may be apprehended and convicted thereof.

WEYMOUTH.

And as a farther Encouragement, the PROPRIETORS of the said BLACK LEAD MINE, do hereby Promise a Reward of FIFTY POUNDS to any Person or Persons making such Discovery as aforesaid, to be paid on the Conviction of any one or more of the Offenders. *By Mr. Thomas Webster
at Cockermouth in Cumberland Attorney at Law.*

Autumn begins early in Lakeland. Bracken is already beginning to be touched with brown in August, by Michaelmas the early mornings are nicely iced, and days of brilliant sun only come in between the days of wind and rain. The swifts have gone, but a few swallows are still to be seen and quite a lot of house-martins. The sky is so full of them some days that one feels there is no need to think of losing them yet. Then suddenly they are gone, anstage is set for the pageant of autumn, and if the weather be kind, there will be a grand performance. Birches go yellow from inside outwards, the leaves near the trunk change colour first, while the outer ones are still green. Horse chestnuts do it the other way round, and hang festoons of yellow, pink, and orange down the outside against a background of deep green leaves. Oaks sprout little patches of d one hasn't even said good-bye. By the beginning of October the gold all through, and sycamores acquire a burnished look, as shades of dark bronze and old rose creep over their blue-green leaves before they all turn bright orange. Beeches simply glow with colour, every shade of yellow, gold and orange.

But the wild cherries are the best! Going down Windermere in autumn one sees them flaming out amongst the other trees all through the woods on the western shore, just pure crimson, more brilliant than all the other trees in autumn dress.

The Lure of Lakeland E. D. Tinne

Back, by popular demand, is more stuff from the 1944 Fellfarer Journal:

A Ten Days trip in the Himalayas from Darjeeling

By Dr. T. Howard Somervell

We three ⁽¹⁾ started from Darjeeling with a couple of ponies, ten porters and a Sirdar ⁽²⁾ cook, on the 13th January, 1943, to see the magnificent views of the Eastern Himalayas from the Singulib ridge, which divides Siknim from Nepal and runs due North and South, from the foot of Kanchenjunga on the North, over Singalila (nearly 13,000 feet), Phabut (12,000 feet), to the plains of Bangal 60 or 70 miles to the South.

The first day, after collecting our personnel (who had been got ready by Karma Paul, interpreter to all the Everest Expeditions, except the first one in 1921), we started along the road to Gaum in the rain, mist and very cold wind. The rain soon changed to sleet, and the wind kept us moving to keep warm as we went along the road to Jorpokin, 14 miles from our starting point.

Our porters ⁽³⁾ were 3 women and 6 men, several of them Everest veterans, including Nim Tondup, who was Irvine's servant in 1924 – a dear old chap now, as dirty, untidy and willing and cheerful as ever. Our Sirdar, Gyalgen, had gone high on several Everest shows, and was an excellent cook, and managed the party with good humour and efficiency.

On the 14th January the clouds lifted in the early morning to show a stormy view of Kanchenjunga all silver white and grey, very beautiful with drifting clouds, which, by 10.00 am had obscured all the high peaks.

On we went to Tongho, 10,000 feet, after a descent to 6,000 ft. Where we left the road and took to the pony truck which zig-zags up the hillside among forest trees, then bamboos, and finally rhododendrons, until the jungle suddenly opens out on the grassy ridge-top, where a very comfortable bungalow ⁽⁴⁾ gave us a good warm fire, and tea; later the clouds rolled away, and we feasted on the ever-widening views of hundreds of snowy and rocky peaks.

After a fine, frosty night, a gorgeous sunrise with lovely views gave us a good start; but the biting wind soon blew up clouds from Nepal, and the long rise of 2,000 feet to Sandakphu was done in a snowstorm.

This lovely place was not at its best, though the snow-clouds soon blew over, and one of the coldest of imaginable evenings gave us some grand views here and there.

We awoke before sunrise to a completely clear morning, with all the mountains clear from 100 miles West of Everest to 100 miles East of Kanchenjunga. My wife and I got up to see the sunrise on Everest some minutes after it had been tingeing the tops of Kanchenjunga with orange, and together we worshipped, with the most marvellous view before us, quite unproducible. Yet I vigorously sketched it in sections, as soon as the sun allowed me to do watercolours without the brush, paints and the sketch itself freezing hard instead of drying.

We stayed a day at Sandakphu in the cosy, well-built bungalow, while Hugh recovered from an attack of altitude sickness. His pulse, 160 on arrival, became 140, 120, 100 and by evening, it was obvious that he would be fit for travel on the morrow. A cloudy afternoon, but the wind dropping and veering towards the North gave us hopes. And truly the next day, 17th January, was the most marvellous day I have ever seen in the Himalayas. All day long, travelling (with frequent stops to admire the colossal panorama) along the 14 miles of ridge to Phabut, one of the worlds most magnificent marches on one of the worlds finest days.

We basked in the sun for lunch in January at 12,000 feet, sitting on a slope of grass, and snowballing the stumps of storm-broken trees, for every tiny patch of shade was filled with snow, and the unshaded parts were as warm as the sands of the Lido.



Kanchenjunga

Phabut is a big pull up, at the end of a long march, but there we were, treated to the most wonderful evening I have ever seen, with the sun sinking over beyond Gaurisankar, and lighting up the ridges of Everest and Makalu; quite near us towered Jannu, the colossal tower that flanks the Western Ridge of Kanchenjunga.

At Phabut the cold and lovely bungalow with its long glassed-in veranda kept us comfortable, and the watcher and his family of jolly Nepalese children kept us amused, while round the corner at either end were wonderful views of the near-by giants; seven out of the twelve highest mountains in the world are visible from here.

The valleys filled with cloud, and the ridges were intense blue, picked out with streaks of orange when the sun hit their rocky tops. What a day we had had.

19th January saw us on the downward path, away from our beloved snowy peaks, but in an enchanted land of cedars

and pines, some of them in the majesty of growth, others victims of the great forest fire of 1920. Down we went; down 6,000 feet or more to a river, and then up 2,000 feet to the lovely forest bungalow of Ramam. Here we had much needed hot baths, and got some real milk and fresh eggs.

Next day, down again through the forest to a lovely lunching place, and then again down to 4,000 feet where we crossed a river, and went up 3,000 feet to Rimbik, a most pleasant spot with a forest bungalow well-built and comfortable, and a quaint Buddhist Temple, where a dear old Monk let us turn the largest prayer-wheel ⁽⁵⁾ I have ever seen, and then prayed to his deities for our safe journey.

Down again next day to 4,000 feet where we stayed contouring the steep slopes for 10 miles to Jhapi, in a horrid little tin bungalow with no fireplace. A bit more forest walking and a long slope down to civilization – Pul Bazar, where the ropeway to Darjeeling took on our baggage, and the porters took on a well-deserved load less day. They had to go up 5,000 feet to Darjeeling; we only had 3,000 feet to do to our Tea Estate, where an ample lunch of roast mutton and fresh fruit salad gave a fitting end to our trek. A lovely 10 days, and a memory to last all our lives.

And how nice it was to be away all that time from all the newspapers, wireless and everything else that makes for nervous strain. For 10 days I don't believe we had ever given the war a thought. War can only kill bodies; it can't touch the big snowy mountains, nor the souls that find in them their uplift to God who made them all bright and beautiful.

Ed Notes

1. The party referred to as "we three" consisted of Dr and Mrs Somervell and their youngest son, Hugh.
2. Sirdar: Porter supervisor. In this case he served a double purpose, as he also acted as cook
3. Porters: Local people who can carry tremendous loads over mountainous country and to high altitudes.
4. Dak Bungalows of Sikkim are theoretically run by the Government of that State, but actually it is the British Government that is primarily responsible for their upkeep. They were built originally for the use of Government Officials visiting these remote districts. Permission to stay at such Bungalows is given to travellers quite freely by the Local Government Officials.
5. Prayer Wheel: A metal cylinder which revolves on a wooden handle. Inside is a roll of paper or parchment on which a great number of prayers are written. Every complete turn of the cylinder is equivalent to reciting all the prayers inside the wheel. In some districts the prayer wheels are turned by waterpower, similar to the water wheels used at Corn Mills in this country.

High House

*In the midst of Lakeland Fells,
Far away from towns and smells,
There a little building dwells,
Called "High House" – our Hostel.*

*And in 1934,
Before a crowd of folk galore'
The key was placed inside the door,
And opened our Hostel.*

*William Somervell did turn the key
And John Edmondson and he
Were first to enter for some tea
In "High House" – our Hostel*

*It's ten years since that opening day,
And hundreds have been there to stay,
But war has taken lots away,
From "High house" – our Hostel.*

*When these hostilities do cease,
And we are once again at peace,
Our membership will soon increase
At "High House" – our Hostel.*

*William Ingall must ne'er be forgot,
To him we owe an awful lot
For foundling such a beauty spot
As "High House" – our Hostel.*

*Sally Hine
1944*



Below Hindscarth

Fred Underhill

LEARNING THE WINTER WAY

Kevin Ford

"To get to the pub you go through the back door of the hotel and follow the path through the woods. Using a torch or the road is considered bad form". That was the end of the introduction to our winter mountaineering course and set the scene.

We had often seen outdoor courses advertised and as we knew little about venturing safely onto the hills during winter, decided that this was the one for us. Members of the Fellfarers had willingly offered to take us out and 'show us the ropes' but in fairness to them, we could initially be but only a burden. And besides, an intensive course seemingly covering everything, plus a weeks holiday in a country house just outside Glen Coe in the middle of winter seemed very attractive.

In the fortnight leading up to the course the weather was playing its usual tricks - you want good weather, you get bad. You want bad weather, ie snow, ice, freezing temperatures etc, what do you get - you get sunshine and 'uncommonly mild for the time of year'. What good's a winter mountaineering course without snow!

But our prayers were answered and the weather changed for the worse the day before we left. Problem now was would the snow gates leading to Rannoch Moor be open. Fortunately yes, as we motored up the M8 the constant stream of big yellow gritters on the other carriageway were doing their job, despite the near blizzard conditions.

Anything to do with the outdoors and I have a bit of a preconception as to what to expect. Walking holidays, for me, normally mean basic, clean enough but a bit rough, not too comfortable etc, etc - just a few notches up from living in a tent. But this accommodation was good, very good - a big Victorian country pile. Plenty of comfy seating; sofas, winged back chairs etc, filled the large panelled reception hall. Toasty as well, as a fire was roaring away in the fireplace. Mmm, decent looking bar through there and a shop with outdoor bits and bobs over here - not bad at all.

We found our names on a list which also told us which room we were in. From the list we could see that there were twenty of us on the course in all. In addition, there was also a Winter Mountain Leaders course being run as well as a Mountain Instructors course. The house was full.

On the way to our room we poked our heads around a door to check out the shared bathroom and loo. Pass mark duly awarded, we entered our room. Wow, king-size bed, an inglenook fireplace with room for at least four, sofa, loads of built-in cupboards and a dressing table, all in real wood. And space-I could fit a dozen of my tents in here. The view from our second-floor window was across Loch Leven to the Ballachulish Horseshoe with Sgorr Dhonuill clearly visible cloaked in white. And not forgetting our private en suite which was the final surprise.

The following morning everyone assembled so as to be divided into groups and meet their instructors. On our course it transpired that out of the twenty people, only eight were couples. Therefore the couples formed one group and the rest another. We were introduced to our instructors, Mark and Martin and went off to get our gear for an equipment check. Any gear that you don't have can be borrowed. This ranges from outer layers of clothing (including plastic or leather boots) to rucksacks, crampons, head torches etc.

Out of our two instructors, Martin was the senior. About 28 years old, short dark hair, a cheeky grin and *very* self assured. Mark was a similar age, short ginger hair with piercing blue eyes, the quieter of the two and just completing his Mountain Instructor training. Course instructors are normally MI qualified so Mark was on a temporary contract. Martin, however, was permanent staff and normally based in Wales. Both had given up 'the day jobs' to become instructors and spend their days doing what they loved best. Office jobs in London came up frequently when discussing histories when out in the hills.

Day 1, Sunday After the equipment check we all piled into a minibus and set off for Glen Coe. The weather was sunny with little wind and snow cover down to 350m. The forecast was for -2C at 900m. The drive into the Glen was fantastic. Deer were grazing in small groups wherever there was distance from the road and they seemed to be enjoying the early morning sunshine. The Aonach Eagach ridge stood out starkly, its white walls contrasting against the blue sky. We parked at the foot of Bauchaille Etive Beag at around 10.30 and set off for our ascent.

The prevailing winds had deposited most of the previous days fresh snow on the eastern side of the hill so we approached from the east, the going being quite easy as trail had already been broken. It still took a couple of hours to reach the ridge at the col at around 750m as none of the group were used to carrying such heavy packs and some were still breaking in new boots. From the col we headed southwest to climb the highest Munro on Bauchaille Etive Beag, Stob Dubh 958m.

The day was spent getting used to using unfamiliar equipment - how to walk in crampons, different types of steps, cutting steps with an ice axe and digging a snow pit to evaluate the condition of the snow for avalanche assessment. It was a great first day and everyone was keen to congratulate themselves on achieving their first Munro in winter conditions.

In the evening, before dinner, Martin gave a lecture to all groups attending the various courses on Avalanche Assessment and the weather. Statistics on the number of fatalities in the Scottish hills due to avalanche over recent years brought home how important it is to properly assess conditions, and realise just how prone, given certain conditions, any body of snow on a slope is to avalanche.

Day 2, Monday Our group met at 08.15 to discuss the plan for the day. The weather forecast was less favourable with temperatures climbing to +2C at 900m with low cloud and sleet. If we were to be attempting more demanding walks as the week progressed, it was vital that we all had plenty of practice at ice axe self-arrest and to do this we needed to go where the snow was guaranteed. The rising temperatures were causing the snow to recede. Initially the intention was to go to Aonach Mor via the Gondala but by 08.30 the Gondala was not running due to poor weather. We all agreed that 'topping out' was not our main priority on the course so headed off at around 08.40 for Coire Leis, the huge corrie beneath the northeastern flanks of Ben Nevis.

The view of the Ben, as we followed the Allt a' Mhuillinn towards its watershed, was obscured by thick steel-grey cloud. Rain and sleet battered us from our left and eventually the side of the SMC hut gave some welcomed protection as we stopped for a brief, early lunch. As we moved on, the cloud was lifting and we were offered tantalising glimpses of the huge snow covered flanks of the Ben. The weather eased and the wind dropped and light snow fell.

High up in Coire Leis, below a decent slope, we stopped and dug a snow pit to check the avalanche risk. All okay so the instructors carried on up the slope of Carn Mor Dearg and at just over 900m stopped at an area that had a good run-out into deep firm snow. They then set about creating two slides on the steeply angled slopes while we went about practising digging snow pits and assessing the snow some way below them. When they had finished it was helmets on and the fun could begin.

The principles and techniques of self-arrest were explained and demonstrations given - head first, feet first, on your back, on your front. After each demonstration of each combination we had numerous goes. Tina, while laying in the snow, managed to cut the bridge of her nose quite deeply with the adze of her axe. This caused her to lose all of her enthusiasm for trying self-arrest in the head first, on your back position - not that we had much enthusiasm for that in the

first place!

After we had spent some time getting thoroughly wet, we made our way back down the slope again, heading towards the head of Coire Leis. The snow was very deep and at times we were sinking up to our waists but mainly it was firm enough and we didn't sink lower than knee level. By now it had stopped snowing and the cloud had lifted to reveal all but the very top of the Ben. Avalanche debris could be clearly seen in some gullies as could large overhanging cornices on the arete. On the way the instructors took time to point out the climbing gullies on the Ben; Point Five, Zero etc., the two of them being keen ice climbers.

It was getting dark by the time we were back at the minibus and were too late for tea and cake back at the hotel. We were not too bothered though, as it had been another brilliant day despite the poor weather. After a mad rush we just missed the first part of the evenings lecture on winter navigation. The lecture proved to be really interesting and included boxing, dog legs, pacing etc.

Day 3, Tuesday The weather was again a problem this morning. At our 08.15 meeting, the instructors suggested that we again attempt Aonach Mor via the Gondala, so that we could continue learning ice axe belays and some other rope techniques such as find-



N.E. Buttress Ben Nevis

ing an edge in a white out. The weather forecast was for some sun with low cloud with the temperature at 900m -3C - not forgetting of course the strong winds on the tops and poor visibility in snow showers.

The instruction groups that were formed on the first day were shuffled around slightly today in order to enable people that were either tiring or having problems to form slower groups and do less strenuous activities. Additionally, our large group split into two and ended up as a small group of three, plus Mark, the instructor.

I had a feeling that it was going to be 'one of those days' when my rucksack, which had been lashed with others to the top of the van, went crashing to the tarmac when being 'passed' down. That in itself wasn't a problem but a couple of minutes after hoisting the sack onto my back - steam, why was I steaming from between the legs? Had I suddenly become incontinent or had one of my worst nightmares come to life - visible farts. But it smelled fruity, no, not like that but really fruity, like hot fruit tea. By now I was starting to attract concerned attention and felt like a bit of an outcast as people began to edge away. 'It's my flask, it's broken', I cried to a very relieved group. Fortunately, when I pack a rucksack, I only put what needs to remain dry inside the liner, so only the sack itself was wet and other equip-

ment was above the flask and so remained relatively dry. I was wearing my waterproofs and only suffered the slight indignity of some staining.

The Gondala journey was uneventful and our small group of four issued forth into a white world, totally remote from the black tarmac of the car park below. We consulted maps and determined a distant point on the skyline and headed out across the ski runs. Our initial objective was the lower slopes of Aonach an Nid, southeast of the Gondola terminus. After about forty minutes we stopped at a level platform on the slope and deposited our rucksacks.

The views from here weren't too good as there was a lot of mist and patchy cloud. It had been similar for the Gondala trip but most of the poor visibility then had been due to condensation on the glass.

We were on good firm snow and climbing a little way up the slope we were shown how to dig bucket seats in the snow with our ice axes for snow belays. After some hacking and a little practice, we were ready to put theory to the test and ascended the steepening slope by some thirty metres, climbing by punching the pick of the ice axe into the snow to help with the steepness of the angle. We spent a good hour or so on this and all the while the wind was getting up. Occasionally, big gusts would bring down showers of spindrift, stinging our faces and forcing us to flatten ourselves against the slope for protection.

Above us, the top of the ridge that led to Aonach Mor was in mist that was ever moving, occasionally lifting to give views higher up the hill side. Some forty metres below us two more groups had arrived and were practising ice axe self arrest. They had placed their rucksacks haphazardly around ours and created a form of base camp. It felt quite warm and secure to be sitting in a cosy and close fitting snow seat, watching the small bodies sliding away and crawling back up again for another turn. Suddenly we were hit by yet another huge gust of wind and the accompanying spindrift. Through the swirling shower I saw rucksacks lift and move but one lifted higher than the rest and began cartwheeling down the slope. Occasionally it would slow, only to pick up momentum again, down and down. Eventually it came to a stop far below along side one of the Ski Tows. "Knowing my luck that's mine", I said to one of our group. But I was sure it couldn't be as I had been so careful to flatten out a platform for the sack before I put mine down. No one from the groups went to collect the sack, although most had stopped what they were doing to watch its progress.

Ten minutes later the rucksack was still there, threatening to move further should it be hit by another gust of wind. "I bet it's mine", I reiterated and set-off to find out.

A few minutes later I had zig zagged down to the 'sack stack' and sure enough, no sign of mine. Well, there was a sign of mine, some seventy odd metres further below. I found a good rhythm to my stride and ran straight down the slope. By the time I had retrieved the sack and made my way back up, the rest of the group had come down and were having some lunch. I just collapsed exhausted from my efforts and gladly accepted a proffered drink. "You can rest your conscience, Mark", I said. "If you hadn't had broken my flask earlier when you dropped it off the van, that fall would have done it". He just grinned and gave me a wet rope to carry.

We set off again up the slope of Aonach Nid and into the clag, roping up so as to practice moving together and learning the principles of the leader looking for an edge in white-out conditions. Crampons were on so as to cope with the increasing amount of surface ice found on some areas of exposed rock. Looking over the edge of the ridge to the east and down into the massive bowl-shaped corrie, stretching almost one and a half kilometres across, Mark reminded us of the ac-

cident that had occurred there the previous year when four people had lost their lives in a huge avalanche. They had been a group like ourselves, an instructor and his charges. In a smaller corrie the avalanche wouldn't have amounted to much as only a shallow layer of snow had slipped, but in this enormous corrie, with possibly a square kilometre of snow all moving at once, the concentration had been too much and had swamped the group in the relatively flat area at its base.

We continued upwards picking a course between the rocks in deteriorating conditions, having unroped as the gradient eased. We stopped to look at riming that had formed on a post. The ice was standing out at a right angle some 60 centimetres long and was the best example I have ever seen. Martin decided that the conditions were ideal to practice our navigation and find the housing for the Ski Tow at around 1190 metres. Because of the poor visibility and the conditions we practised 'boxing' so as to avoid the 600 metre drop to our left. The wind was continuous now and was driving snow straight into our faces, so we stopped to put snow goggles on and immediately felt the relief.

Navigation was difficult because as soon as you fixed a point in the near distance to aim for, the snowfall would intensify and white-out everything except for about three metres in front. On the final leg of our box and aiming for the top of the Ski Tow, we formed a huddle to discuss the distance and direction. It was amazing to see the groups' faces. Everyone had ice on their noses, but one, Stuart had ice on his cheeks as well and looked in a bad way. In a few minutes we reached the Ski Tow motor house and sheltered from the driving wind. Stuart pulled on a balaclava and after a hot drink looked a lot better. We were hoping to reach the summit cairn of Aonach Mor but in the deteriorating conditions decided to call it a day and head back down with the Ski Tow acting as a handrail. The summit cairn was only another kilometre further on with around 30 metres of ascent. Thirty minutes tops, there and back in summer but in these conditions who knows. It would be pacing, dog legs and compass bearings all the way and chances were that we wouldn't even find the cairn.

That evening our lecture was on cold injuries including frostbite, hypothermia etc. Working on the figures quoted during the lecture, the wind chill on the summit plateau that day would have been about -23C - and I only wore a base and top layer! What a brilliant day it had been.

Throughout that evening and into the night it snowed.

Day 4, Wednesday Everything was white - except Loch Leven. Except Loch Leven and the sky that is which was tinged blue and gold. And the weather forecast was for -6C at 900 metres with sunny spells and light winds. What a start to the day. We had our morning meeting and agreed to set off for Ballachulish village and the Ballachulish Horseshoe. The morning was perfect. As we drove across the Ballachulish bridge the sun was high enough to caress the tops of the hills and everyone in the minibus was in high spirits.

We piled out of the van by the Ballachulish school and trekked off into Gleann an Fhiodh. After about a kilometre we zig-zagged up to our right to gain the north-east ridge of Sgorr Dhearg 1024m. The going was quite hard as beneath the fresh snow we were walking on thick heather. In my group of four I was the only one without trekking poles and lost my balance on several occasions. I had to work hard to keep up with the others. Leading up to the course I had realised that I needed to be fitter than I was to get the most out of the course so had been out running regularly for about a fortnight - the first time I had done that sort of thing since leaving school. Boy, was I glad of that training now. Leading up to the first top we donned crampons to cope with the increasing amount of icy rock. As the angle increased to a scramble (Grade I winter climb), one of the group felt rather unhappy and exposed and felt the benefit of being roped up and encouraged over the steeper sections.

As we reached the first top the views in all directions opened up. It was absolutely spectacular - snow cover from mountain top to loch side in every direction. And it was so clear as well, snow covered peaks against clear blue sky as far as the eye could see. As we settled down for lunch other groups arrived and in the end there were four-

teen of us crowded around the small cairn, jostling for position to have lunch. Those of you who have been on this top will realise that this is quite a crowd. We soon moved off and down to gain the ridge leading up to Sgorr Dhearg. Ridge walking is fantastic at the best of times, but in these conditions under crisp clear skies it's the tops.

When we reached the triangulation point on Sgorr Dhearg, Sgorr Dhonuill the second Munro, looked in easy walking distance. But it wasn't to be. Mark, doing his best to keep us on our toes, got us to calculate the time to reach the summit and then find our way back down. Because of the short days we wouldn't have been back down until a while after sunset. A deal was done that in compensation we would pay the Clachaig a visit on the way back to the hotel - just a slight detour from Ballachulish seeing that we were staying in North Ballachulish!

The descent down the ridge had us looking north across the head of Loch Leven to our hotel. With the warmth of the sun, the snow on the south facing slopes across the loch was receding but on our north facing ridge there were plenty of drifts to jump into and slide down short banks on. On reaching the Clachaig it was as packed as ever - and the beer as good as ever. That evenings lecture was a general talk and slide show by a couple of instructors on their real-life experiences in the Alps and in Scotland.

After dinner we met up with our instructors to discuss the next days options. As the weather forecast for the following day was for more good weather we settled for Curved Ridge on Buachaille Etive Mòr.

Day 5, Thursday Those who know Curved Ridge will know it as a Grade 2 summer scramble. In winter conditions the winter grading can vary depending on the snow and ice conditions. More snow had fallen during the night and as we drove into Glen Coe saw that many deer had been forced to shelter in the glen. The skies looked heavy and hung low over the tops as we parked at Altnafeadh. The forecast was for sunny spells, light winds, and -3C at 900 metres.

We were all feeling apprehensive as we set off past the cottage at Lagangarbh for the one and a half kilometre trek around the foot of Stob Dearg to gradually ascend to the foot of Curved Ridge. None of us new what we were really letting ourselves in for. Climbing harnesses had been issued to us and at least half of us knew what to do with them. We knew this was definitely going to be a testing day for some - even one of the instructors was carrying two ice axes.

After a gradual ascent on an easy path we came to a small platform on the side of the hill, probably about a third of the way up. Here we stopped to put on helmets, harnesses and crampons and a brief opportunity to stuff some food in our mouths before the ascent proper. We were roped up and I was second in line behind Mark our instructor. Senior instructor Martin had set off first with the three older members of the group. As we started to climb so it began to lightly snow.

As we climbed the cloud dropped and visibility was soon reduced to a few hundred metres. Pitches came and went and I found climbing using an axe and crampons very straightforward, the pick on the axe so useful for hooking onto small ledges that were out of reach to the hands and the crampons would catch onto small flakes that boots would not even bother sniffing at. At one point, high up, the clouds did briefly part to give a view towards Rannoch Moor and the Kings House Hotel. All this time the jabbering was coming from below me and I looked forward to the longer pitches where I could enjoy a 'long rope' and the solitude of my fantastic surroundings.

I was standing on a ledge, clipped into a sling, waiting for Mark to give me the signal from above to climb. Out of the corner of my eye I saw movement to my right and turned to see a slab of wind-blown snow, about 3 - 4 metres square and 5 centimetres thick, move as one and disappear down a gully. A sort of mini avalanche that was fascinating to watch but also underlined the seriousness of the environment we were in. I asked Mark what grade we were climbing at as I was very comfortable and would happily have led. Winter II to III he replied, so I was quite content.

We traversed around the foot of Crowberry Tower and were approaching the end of the climb. We had seen a few other groups do-

ing the route and had to wait here while the route cleared. Further on and we were in steep, deep snow and on a very short rope, moving together. Mark told us not to hang around and to carefully place our feet in the existing foot-holes that brought the snow up to knee level. This brought us to a point where the deep, snow-filled gully that we had just climbed the top part of, dropped away behind us and another dropped away even more steeply in front of us. One by one we had to tip-toe across the top of this ridge of snow to make the final ascent to the summit of Stob Dearg at 1022m. Mark moved off first, keeping to the existing footprints, and was soon across the snow ridge. I moved next, pausing briefly to peer down into oblivion and swirling cloud. I may have sighted the far away ground but could not be certain. But boy, did I feel exposed. After days of warnings of ava-



Buachaille Etive Mor and Jacksonville

lanche being drummed into my head I did not feel safe crossing this ridge. I would not have felt comfortable leading this.

We were brought back onto a short rope and Mark repeated what he had said to me about not moving around and planting our axes deep. We were standing in what was, seemingly, a deep sloping snow bank which dropped away to the top of the gully that we had just ascended. The precariousness of our stance was obvious.

We were still waiting for the tug on the rope to come that meant we could move off. It transpired that Mark had had to dig a snow belay from which to bring us up. Eventually the tug on the rope came and off I moved to the left. Mark had moved to the right to avoid this face but the rope was still positioned okay. A few minutes later and we were at the summit cairn, five hours after setting off.

Although we were still in the clag, visibility wasn't too bad and after stopping for a quick bite, strode off towards Coire na Tuliach for our descent. Although it had now stopped snowing, a biting wind was

blowing in our faces which occasionally brought up clouds of stinging spindrift from the side of the mountain. After about twenty or so minutes we were at the top of the very steep corrie. The snow was all fresh and there were no signs of anyone else descending this way. Fortunately, there was no cornice on this side and Martin immediately set about weighing up the avalanche risk. The alternative, if it proved too hazardous, would be to descend the northern ridge of the corrie, which would prove very slow as we would have to rope up.

After descending about two metres over the lip of the corrie and digging a snow pit, Martin announced the snow safe and looked for a volunteer to follow him over. It was steep, very steep and the runoff to the corrie below looked a very long way away. It felt as though I could sit back against the snow and rest against my pack in a standing position. Through the mist I could make out the corrie walls on either side of me, mottled black and white where bare rock showed through. Below me the snow funnelled downwards, eventually disappearing into the clag. The angle started to ease after some 15 metres and I stopped to look back at the others. They were some way behind, looking quite high up and the last was only just stepping over the lip. I hurried on to catch up with Martin.

As the angle eased, the snow became deeper and the effort became more intense as we had to wade through the soft snow. We stopped to wait for the others to catch up and Martin suggested I dig a pit to check the snow. My pit evidenced that the snow here was less stable than at the top of the corrie but although the snow layers separated fairly easily, the surfaces between the layers were very rough and created a good key.

"I didn't expect to be climbing Curved Ridge on this course", I said. "Neither did I", replied Martin, "We'll have a good laugh about this tonight in the staffroom". He went on to explain how he had received strange looks when he was drawing the climbing harnesses from the stores that morning. "Don't ask" had been his simple response.

As we reached the lower part of the corrie, the spectacular snow laden sides soared up around us. Looking back, the lip of the corrie looked a long way away and impossibly steep. The clag was now lifting but we were still hit by occasional snow flurries. The snow here was very deep and required a lot of effort to break trail. On one occasion, I turned head over heels as the weight of my sack carried me forward as my legs became stuck in the waist-deep snow. The snow was very deceptive. You could sometimes manage a few steps on the surface and then, without warning, the surface would give and you would find yourself practically up to the armpits with one leg stretched out beneath you and not being much use, while the other was bent at the knee in a somewhat contorted position.

We regrouped once more before passing through the narrowing exit of the corrie and making the final descent towards the road. The cottage at Lagangarbh gave a clear indication as to the direction in which we should be heading and the line of the path could be seen through the snow in the distance. It had taken almost an hour to descend the corrie, a very tiring and long hour.

I now strode out ahead of the rest of the group, enjoying the solitude and opportunity to reflect on the experiences of the day. And what a day. Around me were beautiful hills and where I walked there was pure fresh snow. The clouds had started to lift as they often do at the end of the day, revealing all the snow-clad tops, some known to me and others yet to be discovered. I stood awhile at the bridge over the River Coupall just watching and listening to the sound of the fast-flowing water. Approaching voices, still distant, brought me back to this world and I set off once more, a long way ahead of the rest. Back at the bus, the road was surprisingly quiet, so I sat and finished my food while watching the others as they approached. I quickly cooled down and was glad when Mark arrived to open up the bus. Instead of going to the door he went to one of the wheel arches and retrieved the key. If only I had known.

Later that day, back at the hotel, our original group of eight met up with our two instructors to discuss our experiences of the week. Those that had just climbed Curved Ridge concurred that this day was the best. Everyone agreed, however, that no other experience

was less enjoyable, whether it was learning the art of ice axe self-arrest in Coire Leis, or facing the freezing wind-chill of Aonach Mor. Later that evening, some ventured through the back door for a drink at the local. The majority of us decided to opt for the cosiness of the fire and reflect on the week. Heavy rain had arrived on a warm front which would be pushing the snow-line way up the hillsides. Those returning from the pub looked very wet and were glad to find the bar still open.

The next morning was dry as we loaded up the car for the drive home. On their one day a week off the instructors did what they loved best. Martin was off to the ski slopes below Aonach Mor and Mark would be climbing, probably on Nevis.

Many months on, as winter approaches, I can't wait for the snow to arrive. Although I have these new-found skills, I still have a degree of apprehension as to how well I will cope in certain conditions. How well will I be able to read the snow and make the correct judgement? Hopefully, I will not learn the hard way. Best of all, every day out this winter will be in perfect winter conditions - firm, crisp snow under azure blue skies. But then again, how will I hone my skills and be prepared for the imperfect conditions? Maybe just the odd foul day then - but not too many.

Books on winter skills were recommended by Martin which included:

- 1) The Handbook of Climbing by Allen Fyffe & Iain Peter
- 2) Scotland's Winter Mountains by Martin Moran.

- 3) Snow Sense by Jill Fredston & Doug Fesler.

What's On at  2001

Speciality Nights ~ all Fridays

February 2nd ~ Mexican
 February 16th ~ Greek
 March 2nd ~ Thai
 March 16th ~ Irish
 March 30th ~ Scandinavian

Slide & Supper Eves ~ all Wednesdays

January 31st ~ Steve Razetti
Mountain Biking in Bhutan a once 'closed' country.

February 7th ~ David Rosen
Walking the Inca Trail & the lost city Machu Pichu

February 28th ~ Stephen Greenwood
'New Zealand, A Glance at the Other Side' ~ Impressions of this spectacular land of lavish natural beauty & it's great variety of scenery in both North & South Islands.

March 7th ~ Dave Manby
'Tiptoeing into the gorges of Dez river, Iran.' A kayaking adventure & a look at an amazingly beautiful country

March 21st ~ Ingrid Hobba
Paddling with Bears, Whales & Sean!
Kayaking along the Alaskan coastline

April 4th ~ Bill Birkett
His new book ~ Exploring Lakes & Low Fells

Speciality Nights cost £15.95 for 4/5 courses
 Arrive between 7.30 - 9pm. Bring your own wine etc.!

Slide & Supper Evenings cost £6. Incl. a light supper & start at 7.30pm.
 Contact the Café for further details & bookings

☎ **01539 822329** or E-mail - **food@wilfs-cafe.co.uk**
 All details on our web-site : **www.wilfs-cafe.co.uk**
 We now take credit / debit cards .The Café is a non-smoking area inside.
Please take a copy from the counter

In Borrowdale

Old Woodsman : ".....afore Aa go heamm-ward, Aa maistly comes oot o' the wood, ayder here or there, to look round. Aa'm nivver in haste to be away" - he lingered over the words - "not these days. Aa just looks round, and then goes ma way."

Visitor : "Well, I suppose you find nothing has happened?"

Old Woodsman: "Naw,.....Naw, nothing exactly *has* happened, leastways not ivvry time; but Aa generally think that something *is* happenin'."

In A Cumberland Dale
Percy Withers
 1940

Social Calendar

WELCOME TO THE SOCIAL CALENDAR FOR JANUARY, FEBRUARY AND MARCH, at least...

jAnUaRy

COMMITTEE MEETING 9th JANUARY AT THE RIFLEMANS ARMS.
COME AND JOIN US FOR A PINT AFTERWARDS – APPROX 9.30



January 2001

Winter Glencoe Meet – 12th. to 14th. January
The (3 luxury) Clachaig Chalets

Brilliant location, good crack, who cares about the weather?

£5 deposit essential to secure your place.

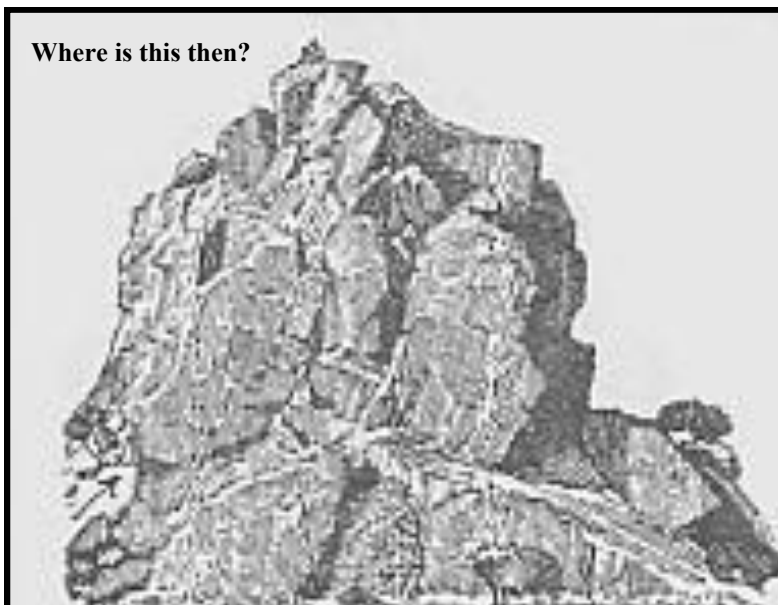
Bookings to Cheryl & Jason

Shared transport can be arranged if needed

Contact the Editor if you're interested in extending the weekend.....

SATURDAY 20TH JANUARY 2001

Where is this then?



A Walk-Meal from High House

The following will be decided over breakfast on the morning of the 20th by the assembled participants.

- Time of departure
- Direction of travel
- Destination
- Speed of travel
- Contingency Plans
- Health + Safety Officer
- Whether or not to bother at all

Finish at the Scafell Hotel Rothwaite for a meal.....Yeeeeee-Haaaagh

February,

COMMITTEE MEETING 6TH FEBRUARY AT THE RIFLEMANS ARMS.
COME AND JOIN US FOR A PINT AFTERWARDS – APPROX 9.30

10th. — 11th. February
HIGH HOUSE is booked for Fellfarers

SATURDAY 24TH. FEBRUARY

An appetite enhancing walk in the
Arnside-Silverdale Area

Start and finish at The Ship, Sandside at 10 am

Approximately 10 miles with refreshment/ lunch stop en route

Return in plenty of time to prepare for:

The Annual Dinner

Is to be held at Kendal's Premier Dining Establishment :

'Paulo Gianni's'

Time : 7.30 for 8.00

Before you book a seat you should be warned of the strictly enforced rules that

Paulo insists upon:

1. Full attire must be worn for at least the first two courses.
2. Underclothes may not be removed before coffee and After-Eights are served.
3. When clothing is removed, it must be done aesthetically (eg socks before trousers).

Don't be worried. They are simple rules but experience shows that, in the heat of the moment, they can be forgotten. Those who were there will never forget the dinner, years ago, when the Chairman of that time, in a moment of frenzy tore off his trousers and danced in his psychedelic long johns and crazy, crazy hippy hair to the underground sounds of Frank Zappa .

The Mad Fool.

He will probably read this this and have no memory of that time.

He only remembers the climbing days and the fellowship of the fells.

The important stuff.

Not so Mad.



Dinner is served at Gianni's

See enclosed menu.

Please ring Val. on 01539 727109

before 10th Feb.

To book your seats and place your order for
starter and main course.

See you all at Gianni's

MARCH

, a good month for birthdays – the Ed.

COMMITTEE MEETING 6TH MARCH AT THE RIFLEMANS ARMS.

9th—10th March 2001

WORKING WEEKEND

Loads to do, as always.

Good scran, good company, good crack, goes without saying.
Don't miss it, there's a good chap, er.. member.

'There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour.'

Ecclesiastes II 18

23rd—24th March Skirfare Bridge



Moderate climbing on Kilnsey crag

In Wharfedale
North Yorkshire

24 places, excellent facilities, showers etc.

Sleeping Bags Required

Don't know how much per night but it wont be expensive

£5 deposit to Peter Goff

Situated: B6265 from Skipton to Threshfield then B6160 to Kilnsey.

Farmhouse located 0.5 miles Kettlewell side of Pub.

Gentle walking, climbing both gentle and fierce, caving of all degrees of ferocity, and a 1000 foot 3 star gill scramble are all here, or nearby.....Oh Limestone Country, it's the best!

**High House is booked for Fellfarers
31st March-1st April 2001**

CLUB OFFICIALS		1
President:	John Peat Tel: 015395 32244	
Trustees:	Alan Bryan Tel: 01458 446499	
	Gordon Pitt Tel: 015395 68210	
	Mike Crawford Tel: 015395 60736	
	Mick Fox Tel: 01539 727531	
Committee:		
Chair:	Roger Atkinson Tel: 01539 732490 1 Mountain View Kendal LA9 4QT	
Secretary:	Tina Ford Tel: 01539 734293 4, South Road, Kendal LA9 5QH	
Treasurer:	Val Calder Tel: 01539 815126 (work) Tel: 01539 727109 (home) 86, Vicarage Drive Kendal LA9 5BA	
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	Brian Birkett Tel: 01539 726895	
	Bill Hogarth Tel: 01539 728569	
	Krysia Niepokojczycka Tel: 015395 60523	

Other Information		2
Seathwaite Farm (for <i>Emergencies</i> only) Stan Edmondson Tel: 017687 77284		
High House Website	www.k-fellfarers.co.uk	
OREAD HUTS (cost £2.75p. per night.) Heathy Lea Cottage, Baslow, Derbyshire.		
Tan-y-Wyddfa Rhyd-Ddu, North Wales. O.S. Ref. 570527		
Oread booking secretary Colin Hobday 28, Cornhill Allestree Derby DE22 2FS Tel: 01332 551594		

Next Edition of ^{the} Fellfarer:
End of March so all contributions before
15th. March please.

