



2024

## ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH MEMBERS OF THE SWISS ALPINE CLUB



Journal

## MEETS PROGRAMME 2024

Date	Meet and Venue	Meet Leader
09 January 2023	North/South Day Meet	P Stock/A Burton
February 2 - 4	Annual Dinner and AGM, Glenridding	Julie Freemantle
February 13	North/South Day Meet	P Stock/A Burton
March 12	North/South Day Meet	P Stock/A Burton
April 5 - 7	Refresh/Improve Your Skills Meet, George Starkey Hut, Patterdale	Mary Eddowes
April 9	North/South Day Meet	P Stock/A Burton
May 3 - 6	Peak District Meet Ilam Hall YH	Andy Burton
May 18 - 24	Scottish Spring Meet, Crianlarich YH	Judy Renshaw
June 7 - 9	Rhyd Ddu. Oread Hut, N Wales	Ed Bramley
June 15 - July 16	Joint Alpine Camping Meet, Ailfroide, France	P McWhinney
July 14 - 11	Alpine Hotel Meet, Hotel de Moiry, Grimentz, Switzerland	Pam Harris
July 29 - August 2	Mid Wales Meet -George Starkey Hut	Paul Stock
August 21 - 23	George Starkey Hut Maintenance Meet	Marian Parsons
Aug 31 - Sept 5	Tatra Mountains Trek, Slovakia	Paul Stock
September 27 - 29	Roving Meet, Plume of Feathers Bunkhouse, Dartmoor	David Matthews
October 18 - 20	Star Inn, Bwlch, Brecon Beacons	Paul Stock
November 1 - 3	Presidents Meet, GSH, Patterdale	Daniel Albert
November 14	North/South Day Meet	P Stock/A Burton
December 12	North/South Day Meet	P Stock/A Burton
Dec 27 - Jan 1	ABM Twixmas/New Year Meet, George Starkey Hut, Patterdale	Judy Renshaw



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**2024 Meets Programme** - inside front cover

**Current Office Holders** - back cover

**Cover photo:** Panorama Platz, in the Saas Valley by Pamela Harris, July 2023

## EDITORIAL

This year the ABMSAC is 115 years old. As this year's Journal shows there is still a full programme of mountain activities and visits to Switzerland and other European mountains. Despite our numbers dropping to under 170 this year there is still a good hard core of members coming along on meets. It would be great to see a few members join us on the planned meets.

At this year's Annual General Meeting Andy Burton handed over the Presidency to Daniel Albert, our Vice President. Many thanks to Andy for his contributions over the last three years. The new President, Daniel, joined the club about 6 years ago, at a new members meet. However he has almost a life time association with Switzerland, first visiting as a young child. He was in the Hull University mountaineering club and subsequently dabbled in hill walking, rock climbing and a bit of ski-touring. Daniel is a member of the Montana-Vermala section of the Swiss Alpine Club and enjoys frequent visits. Daniel is a retired GP and during the Covid pandemic took on the role of ABMSAC Covid-19 Officer. At the AGM in 2023 he was elected Vice President. In addition, he was appointed a Director of George Starkey Hut Limited on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Also at the AGM Paul Stock stood down as Meet Secretary, a job he'd done since 2019. During this time he had to cope with keeping the club active during the Covid pandemic and introduced the day walks, which are now a successful part of our programme. In addition, Paul introduced the 'Roving Meet' and we have visited new areas. Many thanks also go to Paul for his efforts.

As the Meet Secretary post is vacant Andy has taken it on temporarily (a post he held several years ago!). If any member is interested in taking on this role please let a Committee member know on your next meet.

At last year's Alpine trip a group of us were lucky enough to make the journey to the Britannia Hut to see the new stove that we bought for them. We were made very welcome. We should thank Andy and Pam for bringing this project to members attention. It is a great addition to the hut.



To commemorate our 115<sup>th</sup> Anniversary we have commissioned a 'beanie hat', free to members.

Several members have availed themselves of the cosy hat. If you haven't claimed your hat yet please let me or the Membership Secretary know.

I would like to thank everybody who over the year has sent me news and reports and photos of meets, which I add to the website and/or Facebook. Don't forget that you can post your own activities on the group Facebook page, let me know if you want to join. The Journal uses the reports and a selection of photos from the website to record the year's activities.

I hope you enjoy the Journal.

*Mike Goodyer, Editor*

*3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024*

## PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS



As the new President of ABMSAC, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2024 club journal. Putting these journals together is no trivial matter. Mike Goodyer, our honorary editor, has been doing this for some years now and has kindly agreed to continue for the time being. It takes a special kind of person to do this work year after year and my thanks go out to Mike for the excellent work that he does. My thanks also to all the meet leaders who send in reports. Without them, the journal would be very thin indeed.

For a national club like ours, the journal is an important part of the whole membership deal. I recently received an email from a member who had not yet got around to going on his first meet. I did, of course, encourage him to take the plunge. But, in the meantime, he has had the journal to keep him informed of what he has been missing – for the past 40 years! For people thinking of maybe joining, it gives an idea of what to expect. Perhaps meet leaders would consider bringing their copies along to their meets to show to anyone who asks about

the club. Encouraging new membership is good for us as many of us are getting a bit long in the tooth.

As you will read on the following pages, the club continues to have a busy programme of meets throughout the year and across the UK as well as into the Alps. This year will be no different. A few of the meets are already booked up, but most have space. Like so many members, I have my usual meets that I tend to go to. I have resolved to try to join some of the others, for a change. I think it is good to mix things up a bit to see new places and new faces. Perhaps you would like to join me in trying this.

This is perhaps a good place to thank Andy Burton, our previous president, for leaving the organisation of the club in excellent shape after his three years of dedicated hard work. It makes my life much easier. Andy continues now to support the George Starkey Hut Limited and as interim meets secretary.

It will not have escaped the notice of members that the world is going through a difficult phase just now. Ideologies, both ancient and new, have taken over from rational thought and caring for both humanity and the rest of the planet. It is beyond the scope of the club to fix this, but it can help us fix ourselves and weather the storm. Time spent on the hills together restores perspective, and connection to what is important. Do enjoy reading how we did this last year. And let's live this year with plenty of focus on wild places and gentle friends.

*Daniel Albert*  
*3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024*



## Meet Reports

### **Northern day walk, Lathkill Dale & Bradford Dale round, February - Steve Caulton**

With the weather promising to be kind, the adventure began with Ed and I partaking of a formidable breakfast cob in the Aisseford Tea Room on the main street in Ashford in the Water. We were joined by Michelle and Marcus and when suitably fortified for the exertions of the day we travelled across country the few miles to the meet start proper at Moor Lane car park just west of Youlgreave. There we joined Heather, Dave, Lynne and Dick, all raring to go, especially Dick astride his magnificent machine, all toggled up and di rigueur for his solo biking escapade.

With the bike rearing up enthusiastically and a wave worthy of the Lone Ranger himself, he was off in a splatter of mud and gravel, never to be seen again that day.

It was crisp and sunny as we headed northwest across the fields, skirting the trees of Low Moor Plantation and on towards the farm buildings at Calling Low. This was our first glimpse of the land beyond Lathkill Dale. With Monyash distant on our left and seemingly nothing but countryside stretching to the horizon, it was a marvellous, sunlit vista.

The obvious footpath led to the numerous and steep stone steps leading down to the little footbridge straddling the River Lathkill. Once all safely across, we turned right along the path leading to the Nature Reserve area and Palmerston Wood. The Dale has a less open aspect in places but the walk through sparse woodland is not an arduous one.



The River was flowing abundantly for the time of year but various weirs and other obstacles nature herself has put in her way has provided quiet, languid pools and backwaters where coots and moorhens have ensconced themselves, safe from those creatures of the night looking for a supper.

Ed took the opportunity at suitably scenic locations to take photos of the group, as is his want, whilst we strolled on through this Limestone area, trying to imagine what the Dale must have looked and sounded like 200 years ago. Dilapidated stonework and roofless little buildings, natural sinkholes and evidence of sunken shafts are all apparent along the Dale and are testament to the hand

of man having shaped this now tranquil and picturesque landscape, returning inevitably to nature with a little help.

We soon came across a little arching bridge, reminiscent I thought of those to be found in Monet's artworks. Once across we explored the skeleton of a once substantial building known locally as 'Bateman's House'. Built in 1830 by The Lathkill Dale Mining Company to drain the many surrounding mine tunnels, it housed a very novel design of water pump called a 'Disc' pump. It was primitive and experimental for the time and there is debate still whether or not it was the success expected of it. It was apparently regarded as working satisfactorily enough in 1833 but had had its day by 1842. The house name refers to James Bateman, an agent for the mining company who occupied the building as a family home from 1836.



Having read the information boards I have to say 'rather him than me!' because the house straddles a forty foot deep shaft which can be viewed by descending a metal stairway to a railed off viewing platform. You can peer into the murky depths aided by an electric light which illuminates the dark and dank shaft.

We found this out only after seven people from various professions requiring a certain level of intelligence and with a combined age of around 450 years, finally managed to figure out what the crank handle on the box next to the railing was for!

Moving swiftly on.

Now thirsty for more architectural wonders we visited the cold, stark remains of the once solidly built Mandale Mine. Built by The Mandale Mine Company the tall and impressive structure remaining is a tower of massive stone blocks of sandstone and limestone twenty feet high, erected in 1839. How they manoeuvred these into place in 1839 is hard to imagine. It eventually had a massive beam engine sat on the top driven by steam engines. All of this was of course to pump out water from the mine workings. Always an enormous problem to the mining industry it had been so in the Dale since the middle ages. Various primitive water management systems had been applied over the centuries requiring ditches and tunnels and even a form of aqueduct over the river, the pillars of which you pass by even today. All efforts to get topside the problem had proved to be to no avail and the marvellous technology of the Victorian era was the last resort. It too was not up to the job and the boilers went cold in 1851 due to the all familiar problem of rising costs.

Today the building is a Scheduled Monument and the visible entrances to old workings are a favourite haunt of cavers and other troglodyte inclined oddbods.

We continued along the Dale to the outskirts of Over Haddon and the lovely waterside path along the Lathkill. This is a true riverside walk. The river here is wider and free flowing with the usual inhabitants of ducks and geese effortlessly and peacefully gracing the scene. A Dipper was spotted which is always a good indicator of water quality. Another opportunity for Ed and his camera.

A little further along this all too short a pathway and we emerged on the famous and amusingly named 'Conksbury Bridge'. It's a three arched structure of simple design, unsurprisingly built of limestone and dating from the eighteenth century. It crosses the Lathkill carrying the road between Bakewell and Youlgreave and is unusual in that it has a pronounced curve to cope with the topography there.

Apparently the name Conksbury is a reference to a medieval village that once lay between nearby Over Haddon and Youlgreave. It was recorded in the Domesday book of 1086 but disappeared sometime during the 17th Century. (Derbyshire, it appears, had a high crime even then, but it was reported as missing and so the Police have promised to look into it when they have someone available).

Now I had the scent of The George Hotel at Youlgreave in the nostrils and found myself picking up the pace, which as you all know, is unusual for me. It was a nice stroll into the village and always a pleasure. We arrived at the George and having exchanged niceties with the hostess seated ourselves to peruse the menu. It was never going to be a hard decision and all of us chose something commensurate with our varying appetites. Some even had a beer I'm told.



An hour later, and satisfyingly replete we set off down the main street of Youlgreave and took the lane past the Community Centre to cross the River Bradford via the old footbridge. It was by now a lovely afternoon of bright sunshine and once by the riverside we found ourselves walking along a dappled pathway with open patches of sunshine to aim for.

The River Bradford flows eastwards passing Youlgreave and the pretty village of Alport where the gardens go down to the river's edge. It joins the River Lathkill here and flows onwards to merge with the River Wye. Its water quality is well known for being very clear and the bottom is clearly visible in most places. Beds of

watercress and reeds are common, together with other plants that favour a watery environment. There are various weirs and structures along the river which give rise to pools and ponds of still water. I believe these were constructed to encourage fish populations and no doubt still do.

There are a number of bridges spanning the Bradford. Some are old pack horse bridges.

Marcus had a moments anxiety on one of these when he very nearly had a much closer inspection of the water quality than he bargained for. I thought he was up for a spot of wild swimming but he had too much gear festooned about his person for such an impulsive decision. So, when he seemed about to slide off the parapet Michelle grabbed him by the bag in a wifely fashion while I grabbed him far more carefully in a more instinctive and manly manner. Whilst I was pulling I swear Michelle was pushing. Could be wrong!





The whole dale is a delight to walk through. A rare place of genuine peace and quiet when it's respected by its visitors.

We crossed Marcus' little bridge and began the not too steep ascent up to Weddow Lane, running between Middleton and Youlgreave. Turning right here towards Youlgreave we passed the very enviable Lomberdale Hall, a mid 19th Century house set in lovely gardens and standing well back from the road itself. Not too ostentatious it's the type of architecture favoured by the successful Victorian entrepreneur and lottery winners. I'm still hoping.

You can have a holiday in the accommodation formerly the stables if you can afford it. The views from up there are very good.

We were soon across the fields on a bit of The Limestone Way walk and back at the car park.

Another great day out with good company in convivial circumstances and a chance for Ed and I to do a walk we have done before, but this time staying dry and in the sunshine.

Thanks to all for your company. We really must do this again sometime!

*Attendees: Ed, Marcus, Michelle, Heather, Dave, Lynne, Dick and Steve*

### **Northern day walk, Whatstandwell, March - Marcus Tierney**

Only a small group turned out for the latest walk, heavy snow on the west side of the Peak District made travelling difficult for some and were others unable to attend. Andy, Steve, Michele and Marcus met at the Family Tree cafe at Whatstandwell. The car park was already full on the Cromford canal side but there was room in the fisherman's car park by the river.

After a very nice breakfast the group set off along the canal side with Marcus Pike spotting (three small jacks) heading in the direction of Ambergate. The route continued through Crich Chase woods and onto the ridge known as The Tors. At this point it became a bit black over Bills Mothers as they say. Snow and graupel began to fall. This unfortunately spoiled the usual fine 360 degrees views at this point, however the precipitation was short lived and had stopped by the time Crich was reached.



As the weather improved the walk continued up to the Regimental Memorial. The monument here is in form of a lighthouse. The Regimental Memorial Crich is a Mercian Regiment War Memorial dedicated to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the Mercian Regiment and its antecedents; the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters and the Sherwood Foresters. The views from the memorial are superb and the area is very well maintained by the resident warden and is a great tribute to those who fell in the Great wars. Those who have lost their lives in later conflicts are also remembered here. If you are in this area a visit is highly recommended and on a day when the tower is open it is possible to see seven counties and even Lincoln Cathedral 50 miles away although you would need binoculars for that.



The walk continued and after a short descent crossed the Tram lines of the nearby Crich Tram museum. As arranged by the walk organiser the last tram used in Sheffield did a drive by for us loaded with enthusiastic waving schoolchildren. As the tram stopped at the terminus the driver got out and with a long bamboo pole reversed the wire connection before heading back down the line.



The weather continued to threaten as the walk continued down through the Dukes Quarries. There are some really impressive walls of Gritstone which would be a very popular climbing area if it wasn't such a dank north facing area shrouded in trees. There are a few minor classics here including Great Crack which is superb when dry. A very interesting area to explore with evidence remaining of the original quarry work done here.



The route finished back along the canal and by the time the car park was reached it was snowing quite steadily. It was at this point that Marcus decided it would be really clever to lock the car and house keys in the boot of his car. It did however mean that the cafe had to be again visited for a variety of sweet things and tea whilst the problem was fortunately sorted. It is not known how Michele managed to get into the locked car. Michele seemed to use some sort of mysterious energy to open the drivers door, clamber through the car and into the boot to recover the keys. Anyhow, Michele either won't or can't tell the three retired Police Officers how she got into a locked Audi.

A very nice walk which defied the weather which threatened all day.

*Attendees: Marcus, Michelle, Andy and Steve*



## Southern day walk, Test Valley walk, March - Mike O'Dwyer

We gathered in the village of Overton in the Test Valley Hampshire, it was initially cool and with some light rain, several members of the group took full advantage of the Honesty Cafe in Overton to enjoy a hot cup of coffee.

The route took us through the side streets of Overton before we ascended onto the rolling Test Valley Hills with great views over Brandon Copse to the east and Abra Barrow an accent burial mound.



*Looking across to the Downs*

The next 4 miles was cross country on a mix of farm tracks, woodland paths with stunning views of the Hampshire Downs. We took a slight deviation to avoid as much tarmac roads as possible as we descended into the River Test Valley itself -the premier chalk fishing in England -I am told by Paul Stock-no doubt Marcus would agree.

Walking along the River Test until spending sometime at Lynch Hill Weir to see at least 20 fish swimming against the river flow, the water was absolutely crystal clear and made for one great photographs.

The lunch stop was at the 19th century Whitchurch Water Mill still in operation today producing high quality woven clothing attire, rugs, throws etc.

The afternoon saw us return to follow the River Test up stream on the opposite bank to the morning, stopping at Bere Mill before ascending to the Harrow Way also known as the Old Way, which has been in existence since 600-450 BC but according to the local archaeologists probably in existence since the Stone Age.

Finally descending from the Harrow Way through a single track woodland path, crossing the main Salisbury to London railway back into Overton with a well earned drink at the White Hart.

*Group at Bere Mill*



Distance 13.6 miles and 760 feet of gentle ascent- a great days walking!

*Attendees: Mike & Maggie, Margaret M, Mike G, Judy, Paul, Mitch, Steve, Fi and Helen.*

## Skills Meet, GSH, April - Mary Eddowes (with a contribution from Heather)

On the Friday Sonja and Celine arrived early and had a rainy day's walk up to the Angle Tarn area, whilst everyone else joined later for the pub dinner at the Travellers Rest in Glenridding (our usual haunt the White Lion, Patterdale was not yet serving food for the season). We convened with photographer, Tim Taphouse and his young family ahead of the Sunday workshop and it was a jolly affair with ages spanning seven decades. Most people were in bed early after long journeys and in anticipation of the skills training day the next morning.

**Saturday - Skills Day** Led by leaders Robin, Kristine and Sam from Mammut mountain school and funded by the club, two groups of six ventured off up Grisedale valley to cover various mountain skills in the cold mizzly morning.



*Group ready for the off*

Robin's group made their way with ropes, harnesses and lots of layers to Thornhow crag to cover steep ground skills and crevasse rescue technique. Whilst Kristine took her group up the main Helvellyn path to Brownend Plantation to look at steep ground and micro navigation skills.

**Robin's group** - The group began the morning with simple steep ground techniques, including basic rope tying/taking in coils and useful knots.

Tying together 'on a leash' we used a rope 'to aid a walker who has lost confidence on steep or difficult terrain' and practiced anchoring/stopping a fall.





After lunch we moved with ropes in pairs over rocky ground, practicing hooking on and keeping safe in alpine terrain. We checked suitable rocks to secure to and navigated safe routes up and down the steep ground.

We then moved onto crevasse rescue theory and techniques higher up the rock face. Robin talked about buried ice axe anchoring (T-slot) and demonstrated using a prussic to secure a fall.

We then tried out a crevasse rescue by anchoring a partner to a belay point and pulling them up with pulleys and friction devices.

**Kristine's group** - The group discussed ascending steep ground technique and then walked up past Brownend Plantation to ridge wall paying attention to false summits, maintaining good foot placement and zigzags, use of poles, direction of travel and observing landmarks to/from map.

The group continued along the wall on towards the main footpath on Birkhouse Moor. Before the path was reached a practical rope work exercise of walking together and securing to a belay point was attempted.

The group learned the importance of testing that the rock is firmly embedded so that the rope does not pull up and over the top surface



of the boulder. After various scenarios were trailed by all, the group ascended to “Hole in Wall’ during which time we micro managed our route by: Working out height to be gained, Time it would take from point to point, Direction of travel and Features en route that should be observed.

All these things should ensure that the correct route is maintained. If not observed then a reassessment should be done as probably off route!

Next was ‘Pacing’ - how many paces an individual would take to cover 100m. The techniques is to count only 1 foot i.e R step=1, R step=2, R step=3 and so on. Thus counting one’s steps enables the distance to be observed which again assists in knowing whether or not one is in the right place; important when visibility is poor.

Micro navigation - observing features in the landscape, on the map - distance, height, direction Simple use of compass for general direction of travel, direction of observable feature eg summit, lake, gap/point on a ridge etc.

From the ridge the group descended the main footpath to Grisedale and stopped for a late lunch and a discussion about GPS and other navigational equipment available to walkers in the hills. The pros and cons of the various products were discussed.

The descent back to the hut was completed and some very valuable lessons had been learnt - one hopes!!



Back at the hut, post cake and showers, Mike Parsons gave a talk on textiles through the history of mountaineering expeditions and shared important points from his book, Keeping Dry and Staying Warm.

This was whilst a spicy veggie curry was being prepared by Jonny T and Mary, and of course the fine creation that was Jonny D’s famous apple crumble. Simon provided some tasty honey rum to finish the dining experience, before board games and relaxing ensued.

Thanks to all who cooked, washed up and ate the meal and to Mike for his interesting and informative talk.



**Sunday - Photography Walk** The majority of the group joined Tim Taphouse for a morning of slow meandering and photographing the local area around Patterdale and the west side of Ullswater lake. Mike showed us new lesser known paths up to Silver Crag via Rooking, past disused quarries, streams and with beautiful views across the valley. It was so lovely to pootle along, taking photographs and to really take time to see small details in the landscape. Quite a contrast to the steady pace of hill walking and covering ground.



*Break time on Sunday - photo by Tim Taphouse*

*Photos from the day*



We closed the morning just near Silver Bay with a demonstration of the brand new LOFI stove from Jonny T. He has been developing this biofuel camping stove for the last 5 years and having been funded on Kickstarter in October 2022 is now at the assembly and distribution stage.

As it was Louise and Simon's first time to the area they instead chose to get up high in more promising weather and took the Striding Edge route up to Helvellyn, enjoying impressive cloud formations shaped by the ridge. Staying on a third night, Mary and Jonny followed this same route on Monday, and were gifted with blue skies, sunshine and incredible views all day (and a cup of tea on the LOFI stove on the summit of Nethermost Pike).

It was yet another successful and enjoyable skills meet, where we welcomed newer and less experienced members as well as the trusty veterans who shared their knowledge and experience with generosity and patience. At least five members of the group are looking forward to testing out these new skills at the Saas Almagell meet later in summer 2023.

A big thank you on behalf of everyone who was at the meet, to the ABMSAC committee for agreeing to fund the skills training day, to Tim Taphouse for leading the first photography walk, to Heather Eddowes and Daniel Albert for their general support and to Mammut Mountain School for their training guides.

*Meet attendees: Jonny Dixon, Anna Kaszuba, Sonja Hoffman, Celine Gagnon, Nanette Archer, Will Priestley, Jonny Taphouse, Mary Eddowes, Heather Eddowes, Daniel Albert, Louise Mundy, Simon Coleman, Mike Parsons.*



## North(ish) day walk, White Peak, April - Andy Burton

The second Tuesday in April provided the five attendees with a classic Spring Day in the White Peak.

After a Yonderman cafe start we set off across the main road through the adjacent farm complex and across the fields to Foolow with long views over the limestone walled enclosures up to the Barrel at Bretton where Hucklow Edge and Eyam Edge meet up on the ridge above us.

The way that the footpath pops you out by the little duck pond in the middle of Follow is always a treat. Continuing a little way along the road before striking diagonally right across several more green fields and past hidden dry valleys and the occasional farm lane we emerge among the first houses in Eyam.



*On the way to Wardlow*

With the Nook cafés (National Trust) inviting gateway and inner courtyard in the sun beckoning we elected to tarry a little while in the heart of the place where in the summer of 1665 the Plague arrived, and the villagers imposed on themselves a quarantine to prevent any further spread.

This they successfully did but not before 273 individuals succumbed to the bubonic plague over 14 months as the disease ran its course. This was out of an estimated total population of less than 800 inhabitants. It is no wonder with this stark historical example that during the recent Covid-19 pandemic similar echoes of self-isolation to prevent the spread of infection were felt necessary.

look into the tops of a couple of the many quarries that dot the landscape either side of the A623 as it runs through Stoney Middleton, whilst looking at the newborn lambs and their accompanying ewes in the fields closest to us.

Crossing the A623 at Housley House we headed up towards Longstone Moor with the larks rising and singing as they climbed skywards above us, and the call of the curlew becoming ever stronger as we reached the old mining rakes and the higher moorland above, that they love to frequent.

Here we cut back to the southern end of Wardlow village, crossing the B6465 and taking the grassy lane and track that pops out at the northern end of Cressbrook Dale, where the spits of rain encouraged us to descend and make our way past the Peters Stone back to Wardlow Mires, just in time to avail ourselves of a pot of tea, and a toasted teacake before setting off back home.



This nine miler was enjoyed by Michele and Marcus Tierney, Steve Caulton, Ed Bramley and Andy Burton.



## Peak Meet at Hartington Hall YHA, May - Andy Burton

The weekend of the Kings Coronation saw eight of us arrive on the Friday at Hartington Hall YHA.



*Dave at the Hall*

An interesting building in its own right, the Tudor manor house was built for the Bateman family in 1611.

Bonnie Prince Charles is thought to have stayed there on his ill-fated mission in 1745, and it is said the hall is haunted by a woman who was hung in the village square for being a witch.

With a working farm adjacent, and different types of accommodations from glamping pods in the gardens to ensuite rooms to suit most groups, and an all-day kitchen, and licensed bar, as well as secure lockups for bikes, it was easy to see why this hostel is considered to be one of the feathers in the YHA crown.

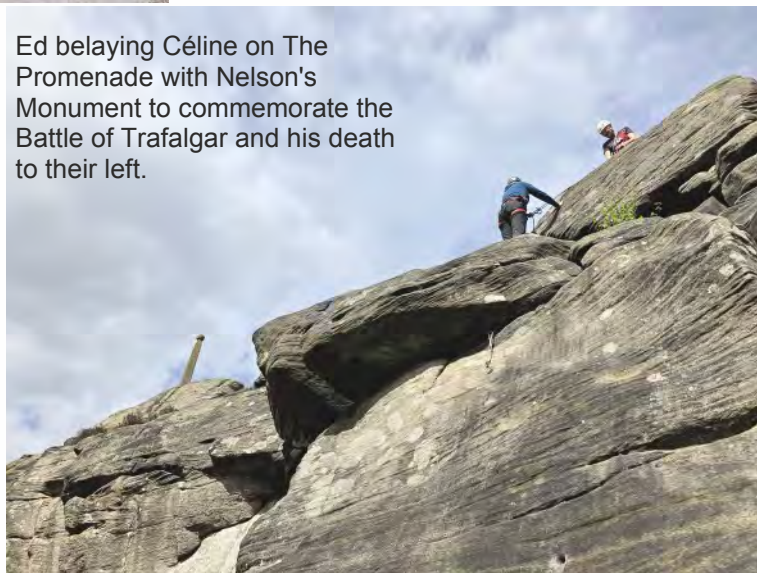
Ed, Celine and I had an afternoon on Birchens Edge, before booking in, basically learning to get to know our ropes again, as it was before the pandemic that we last climbed together. We managed one climb, The Promenade, a two star Diff.

With its unprotected start, the route provided enough of a challenge for all three of us.

It was just good to feel the warm rock through our hands and the grippy, when not too polished, gritstone beneath our feet once more, on this delightful edge with its numerous short routes and its many references to Lord Nelson in their names, as well as the simple monument to him on top.

By then the forecast heavy rain clouds made their ominously dark presence felt sufficient enough for us to skedaddle back to the car, and head over to Hartington.

Ed belaying Céline on The Promenade with Nelson's Monument to commemorate the Battle of Trafalgar and his death to their left.



Friday's fish and chip supper was booked for six of us at the Longnor chippy and enjoyed as ever, but visitors should be aware there are currently no public toilet facilities available in Longnor, and the nearest pub is now the Packhorse at Crowdecote. I knew I should not have had that pot of tea! But at least a stop at the pub on the way back was guaranteed.

On Saturday morning Judy and Celine set off on an uphill and down dale walk heading south from the hostel. Here is Celine's account of the day:

*Judy and I left the youth hostel by foot through the town, finding our way to a path opposite the farm shop onto a field just on the edge of Hartington. We reached the pretty village of Hulme End after walking a couple of miles on a mixture of busy road and quiet fields. From there we went southwards to Weston Hill via Ecton, a few fields and some farmland. The 358m top of Wetton Hill gave us great views, despite low clouds and a grey sky. Descending the hill down to the valley, we noticed a large cave from a distance, but were not curious enough to deviate from our original route! We stopped at a busy Wetton Mill for lunch (and coffee for me), then started our loop back on the Manifold Trail, where we were slowly overtaken by a group of aging cyclists (!) as we were walking back to Hulme End then to the youth hostel with a bit of rain on our tail. A lovely 10ish-mile day under our belt.*



The rest of us cycled down into the village to meet Lin and Dick for a day's cycling along the Manifold Trail. Even with a walk up to the preserved copper mine workings in Ecton Hill we managed to arrive at the Yew Tree Inn at Cauldon before they opened.

Pork pies and pints all-round and a quick game of bar skittles, and then back the way we came, with a final tea and cake stop at the Hulme End café housed in the revamped old engine shed at the northern end of the trail.

Here we donned rain gear and cycled back along the road to the hostel with Lin showing the power of electric as she set off to overtake Ed.

Saturday's evening meal was enjoyed back in the Oak Room at the Royal Oak at Hurdlow.

Sunday's day walk was also direct from the hostel gates, once we were joined by our one day visitor. Walking around Wolfscote Hill, 1272 feet, an Ethel, with its large well preserved bowl barrow on the highest point, we entered Biggin Dale and followed it down into Wolfscote Dale.

Here we turned left and walked along the bank of the River Dove all the way to Milldale where we sat a while by the river and its old packhorse bridge and had lunch in the sun. Taking the steep path up Sunny Bank, not the best choice after the heavy rains of the night before.

Wet limestone and its accompanying soggy cement like soil made for an interesting ascent. I think we would all take the short walk up the road to the connecting footpath next time.

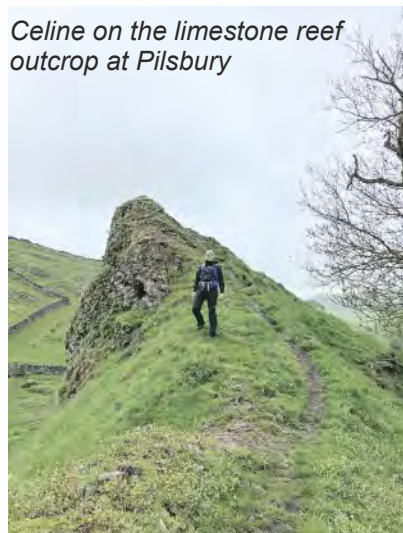




This path continued steadily up out of Milldale and led to the village of Stanshope, and into Hopedale where we happened upon the Watts Russell Arms. After a leisurely pint we continued across the field systems around Alstonefield, crossing the road into the area known as The Rakes and made our way towards Narrowdale Hill where we were treated to a fine aerial display by two biplanes, before descending into Narrowdale itself.

At the entrance to Beresford House, we turned right back to the River Dove and into Beresford Dale itself, past the Pike Pool and the free-standing pinnacle in the river close by, before exiting the woodland and continuing onto Hartington village and back up to the hostel.

Evening meal was enjoyed, pre-booked in the hostel, and we all agreed it was good wholesome grub at a reasonable price. Good local beers from the Wincle brewery were also enjoyed.



On the Bank Holiday Monday we all vacated the hostel, with Myles and Don and Judy with their respective longer car journeys setting off on their way, and Dave making his way into the village to get a paper.

The remaining four of us walked up the upper Dove valley towards Crowdecote, visiting the motte and bailey fort at Pilsbury, another well preserved ancient monument site. At Crowdecote we found the Packhorse Arms open and serving food.

After lunch Dave and Heather made their way back home by car, and Ed, Celine and I crossed over the river onto the Staffordshire side and made our way up and along the ridge with views out to the Staffordshire moorland on one side and back across the Dove valley to the White Peak on the other.

The path makes its way through the woods at the end of the ridge and back down to the footbridge over the river just before Bridgend. Where the Cheese factory once stood there is now a new quality housing development well underway, but the Cheese shop itself remains where it always was by the village duck pond.

Thanks to everyone for making it another great weekend in the Peak District.

This years attendees were Myles O'Reilly, Heather Eddowes and Dave Matthews, Judy Renshaw and Don Hodge, Ed Bramley, Celine Gagnon, Andy Burton, with day visitors Lin Warriss, Dick Murton, and Steve Caulton.

## Torridon Meet, 21-26 May - Judy Rendshaw

This year's Scotland meet was very successful, despite late changes of plan over the accommodation and the attendance of several members but, in the end, 5 of us made it for the full meet. The bunkhouse I had booked the previous summer experienced a disastrous flood in the Spring, putting it out of use for the foreseeable future, so I booked places in the youth hostel in Torridon for the 8 people who had expressed interest. We had to reduce the number of days, due to lack of availability, but were still lucky enough to get 5 nights for all of us. Then 4 of the potential attendees had to cancel but later one of them had a further change of situation and was able to join us after all! We ended up arriving on the Sunday, which was less good for public transport, but we all made it in the end, although Celine and Andy had a long train delay which meant they only just managed to reach the hostel before the 10pm deadline.



*Sunset over Loch Maree from Queen Victorias' viewpoint on the A832*

The weather forecast for the first day looked the best of the week, so Max and I decided to go for the traverse of Liathach. This was the only one of the Big 3 mountains in this area that neither of us had done before, so was top of both of our agendas. The others, understandably, felt it was too much for a first day, especially after the late arrival for Andy and Celine and Roger's rapid recovery from a serious health problem and wish to try himself out on something less committing.

We had planned to go from West to East along the ridge, as recommended in the latest guidebook, so I suggested taking the car to the far end to avoid a long road walk back at the end of the day. The main problem was that we did not check the location sufficiently thoroughly and ended up in a further car park, which gave us an even longer walk in and out! I was very annoyed with myself for a while but got over it once we started. But it did mean that our actual start on the hill was not until 10am. The ascent path was very well made, though steep, on good solid rock



but seemed quite long. It was picturesque, with waterfalls on the way and views at the top of the first Munro, Mullach an Rathain (1023m) towards Loch Torridon and the surrounding giants, with Beinn Alligin and Beinn Dearg to the north west

*Am Fasarinen Ridge*



After a quick lunch stop, we started on the Am Fasarinen ridge of sandstone pinnacles. This is usually described as a grade 1.5 scramble, which seems accurate. Although exposed, the rock is mainly pretty solid and has good friction. Just a few slightly tricky moves are involved but it is mainly straightforward. There is a path to avoid the pinnacles but it is not recommended as it is very exposed and crumbling in places.

We took something over an hour to do the traverse and were on top of the second Munro (Spidean a Choire Leith, 1055m) around 2.30 or so. It was quite sunny, but with haze in the distance and enough wind to make it cool. We met 2 or 3 other parties along the ridge and one person on the last top, where we lingered to rest and chat. From there you could see good views of the

complex massif of Beinn Eighe. The way down looked obvious from the top but it took longer than expected to descend, over 2 minor tops (with a surprise further scramble move) and fields of small boulders. After turning right towards the valley, the path was clear but loose, not as solid as the ascent path, so concentration was needed to avoid slipping.

We made it down to the final car park well before 5 and I guarded the rucksacks while Max very kindly went to fetch the car, so we were back at the hostel in good time for tea and cake, with tired legs but much satisfaction.

*Judy on Spidean a Choire Leith*





*Roger and Celine on the bridge over the Abhainn Choire Mhic Nobaill, with one of the many waterfalls in the background.*

Celine, Andy and Roger had walked along the north side of Loch Torridon towards Inveralligin, with a diversion for part of the way up the Choire Mhic Nobaill path alongside the Abhainn of the same name towards Sgurr Mor to test out their abilities for future days. This is the path that leads up to a series of pinnacles known as the Horns of Alligin by hanging a left at the footbridge, and can be part of a much longer ridge round over Beinn Alligin. Alternatively following the main riverside path leads up to Loch Grobaig and down into Coire Dubh Mor and back to the A896 with good views up into the northern faces of the Liathach massif.

They finished off down the side of the gorge and waterfalls that lead into the back of Torridon House, with a sighting of a red deer doe up in the big trees that shadowed them all the way out of the estate.

In the evening we all went to the pretty village of Shildaig to eat local seafood in a restaurant, with great views over the bay in late evening sunlight. The restaurant had changed significantly since I was last there, when it had been a bar attached to the hotel, but it was nice.

The next day there was very low cloud and a few spots of rain at times. Max and I wanted to do a more relaxing walk without going up into the cloud, so we took a similar route to that done by the others the day before. In contrast, they wanted to go up something, so took a car to the car park below Beinn Alligin and went all the way up to the top of Tom na Gruagaich (recently designated a Munro at 922m) via the good path to the left of the bridge over the river above Torridon House. Though it was cloudy they had the satisfaction of getting up and back the same way.

Max and I started along paths and road from Torridon, with a diversion onto an interesting headland with an outdoor 'church', which had lines of rock at seat height, like pews, looking out to the south. We wandered around the rocks of the headland until stopped by a fence and notices of private property, then went back to a higher path above the road. Then we did much meandering to find a path from Torridon House and grounds through to holiday homes in Rechullin and the village of Inveralligin. The way back was quicker, as we knew the way, so we were in time to stop in at the shop and reach the hostel early. This hostel did allow you in at any time, once you had registered and been

*Roger and Celine*



given the door code, which was far more hospitable than others in the past. On previous occasions I can remember being locked out of youth hostels until 5pm and waiting outside the door.

That evening we went to the Kinlochewe hotel (where I had originally booked the bunkhouse) for a very good dinner, with some people enjoying local venison. On the way back along the road we saw a red deer, the only one seen on this trip.

The following day started with some rain and even lower cloud, covering all the minor tops as well as the high ones, although the forecast was for clear weather later on. Max had a scrambles guidebook and the idea of a low level scramble was more appealing than going up into the cloud, so we headed off to the village of Diabaig, further along the coast on the North side of Loch Torridon. This was along a narrow, winding road with a steep descent to the harbour. Most surprisingly, there was a huge articulated truck down at the front, delivering supplies to an exclusive restaurant near the jetty, which later ground its way back up the hill, looking quite surreal.

Unfortunately the tide times were just wrong for us, as it was just coming to high tide when we arrived and the scramble starts on the beach. We started to make our way across the uncovered rocks until it became impossible, so retreated and looked for the upper part via a path at a higher level. We were still unable to identify the scramble and realised later we had definitely been looking in the wrong place, so no wonder that it seemed too steep and overhanging for a scramble.

So we continued on the path and around the hill above, finding masses of lovely crags higher up for good scrambling on nice rock. Some were pleasant slabs and others had the odd challenging move to add interest. So many of these crags had to be done, taking us over to a headland via numerous interim tops. We eventually arrived at the final top for a lunch stop and headed down to a small bay with a boat moored off shore and a ruined building that looked like an abandoned croft. There had clearly been fields for livestock and cultivation there in the past. One bonus was the sighting of a white tailed eagle. Later we found out that a pair were nesting on an island just off Sheildaig and one of the hostel staff had been looking out for them most days.

After stumbling through bracken and heather we made it back to the original path, went down to the (now uncovered) beach and easily identified the scramble once we were looking in the right place! It began on 'easy angled slabs' as described, so we did the first few sections. Some changes in the 20 years since the guidebook was written meant it was overgrown in places and the 'small trees' were now large. By the time we reached the path again we were just about 'scrambled out', so we decided to call it a day and return to the hostel for a welcome tea break.

Andy, Celine and Roger had decided to do the Liathach traverse, despite the initial weather, as there was promise of better later. Roger took his car to the nearer car park and they all set out together. I had a text from Andy some time after 5pm to say they were just across the pinnacles and would be back quite late, so I kept the phone close to keep in touch with their progress. Since Andy had offered his home-made shepherd's pie for us all for dinner I checked out the details with him and did some preparations. Much later we heard they were getting close to the finish, so Max went out to bring back Andy and Celine from the further car park and drop Roger at his car.

We were all set up for a late dinner when a call to Roger indicated some problem. Eventually he turned up, having locked his keys and rucksack with all his possessions into the boot of his car. (I blame new car technology which allows the boot to close automatically when a button is touched accidentally - all too easy to do when you are changing your boots at the back, with everything beside you.) So first we all sat down to enjoy Andy's excellent pie,



then much discussion went on about what to do about the car key. Eventually the problem was resolved by a family member sending a spare key by first class post to the Post Office at Kinlochewe, which arrived after one day!

The last day was forecast to be sunny and clear, so Max and I went for the Eastern ridges of Beinn Eighe, including a scramble along the Bodaich Dubh ridge. On the map this looks straightforward but with a fair walk in, though the route did take a full day. We started from a car park near to Kinlochewe, taking a clear path straight towards the hill. It followed a river which soon turned into an impressive deep gorge filled with trees. We had to cross the river later to get to a minor ridge above the confluence of this and another river to ascend a small ridge. Looking across to the descent route, we realised that we would need to cross the further river at a high enough point to gain the main path this side of the deep gorge. Fortunately the rivers were low, due to the dry spring in Scotland, otherwise we would have had to cross much higher up.



It took almost 3 hours to gain the ridge and the top of the first peak, Creag Dhubh. Though it was sunny and sheltered on the way up, the wind was strong so there was nowhere suitable to stop for refuelling before the main scramble. We ended up teetering on the very steep side of the ridge, just below the top. I was crouching sideways, balanced above the drop with my rucksack carefully balanced behind me. Although Max looked more comfortable, he gave up and went back to the windy ridge and I joined him later. Soon we were at the start of the pinnacles.

*Max ascending Creag Dhubh*

In contrast to those on Liathach, the pinnacles of Bodaich Dubh were a very different type of rock which had far less friction and felt cold to the touch, like marble. It was also quite unstable, as I found on one of the first pinnacles where a very tempting juggy handhold came away in my hand. It was so loose that I let it fall as there was no one around and it was safer out of the way. After that I treated all the holds with extra caution, especially as there was less friction for the feet. However, the ridge was shorter than that on Liathach and soon we were at the top of Sgurr nan Fhir Duibhe (963m). This would have been a much nicer place for lunch but came just too late.



After looking around and taking photos, we descended on scree and boulders to a minor top and shoulder before going down towards the second river. The guidebook recommended crossing into the corrie fairly high up but we were tempted to stay high to avoid yet more scree and to cross lower down. Although the river was low, so it was not difficult to cross, the vegetation was deep, so we had to flounder around through heather and trees before reaching the confluence of the rivers and the original crossing to the main path. We finally reached the car not much less than 7 hours after setting out, so were glad we had not been tempted to take in any of the other tops of Beinn Eighe.

While Roger had had to spend much of the day making phone calls and sorting out arrangements to retrieve his car, Andy and Celine went to Diabaig to walk along the coast to Craig in sunshine.

They had a good day, with a surprise sighting of the PS Waverley sailing from the direction of Gairloch on its 6 day Inner Hebrides tour, but not the white-tailed sea eagle they originally set out to look for.



*Upper Loch Torridon from the Bealach na Gaiothe viewpoint*

Nevertheless the Bealach na Gaiothe pass with its glorious wide angle view of Torridon and its surrounding mountains and the roadless area beyond Diabaig allowed some beautiful photo opportunities.

In the evening Celine provided a lovely chickpea curry and all of us shared various other food and drink we had brought, making a convivial evening

We agreed that it had been a great meet in a wonderful location. As it turned out, the hostel was excellent, well equipped, with good views, conveniently located and staffed by very helpful people. I think we would all have liked to stay longer if it had been possible.

Present: Andy Burton, Celine Gagnon, Judy Renshaw, Max Peacock, Roger James.

## Mendips Meet, June - Mike Goodyer

Up to 8 members attended this 'roving meet' in the Mendips, based at the Mendip Bunkhouse at Larkhall in Somerset. Seven of us stayed at the bunkhouse with a member joining us for day walks. Overall we were blessed with good weather and braved the traffic of the Glastonbury Festival attendees.



The bunkhouse was in good order and tidy and very roomy.

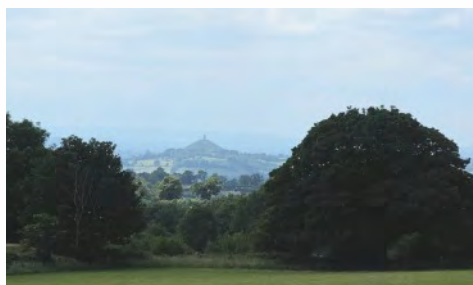
We were able to have communal evening meals enjoying Mikes' homemade Chilli con carne and Mitchs' luxury Mac&Cheese with

everybody else supplying starters, desserts and cheese and nibbles. No one went hungry!

On the Tuesday the seven of us arrived late morning, unpacked refreshed and set off for a walk around the local countryside. To get the meet off to good start the Waggon and Horses was our lunchtime stop within the first 2 miles.



*Tuesday walking team*



The walk continued along country lanes and fields, often braving the tall nettles on infrequently walked footpaths, passing an Alpaca farm. As we climbed up to Maesbury Castle, an iron age hill fort, the Somerset views opened up with glimpses of Glastonbury Tor. The walk returned to the bunkhouse through the pretty village of Oakhill. A gentle walk of 9 miles and around 800' of ascent - it the Somerset levels after all.

Afternoon tea and cake was taken on the rear patio of the bunkhouse.

On Wednesday we travelled up to Cheddar and met up with Margaret. Leaving the centre of town we headed up the hill to the top of Jacobs ladder - a good viewpoint.



*Views from top of the Gorge*

This part of the walk was quite busy but after we dropped down into the Gorge and crossed over the road walking towards Charterhouse we virtually saw nobody for the rest of the day. Our highpoint today was Beacon Batch on Black Down. There were amazing views across the Bristol Channel into Wales. Steve spotted planes in the far distance, using binoculars we could the comings and goings from Bristol Airport.

At lunch time light rain started and we decided to shorten the walk.

After lunch we returned to Cheddar via the West Mendip Way and the Warren Hill Road (with go-cart race track).

Finding a cafe open on a Wednesday afternoon was a challenge, but we managed it and cream teas were enjoyed.

A 10 mile walk with extensive views and around 1500' of ascent.



*Beacon Batch*



On the Thursday we travelled to Nunney and met up with Margaret again.



*Thursday walking team*

Nunney is the site of a magnificent moated castle and after exploring the castle we followed the riverside through woods, across fields and country lanes.

At one point, much to Pauls discomfort, we crossed fields with cows. We all got across safely!

Crossing the river we climbed steeply up the valley side to the church at Great Elm where we had lunch.

After lunch we returned to the river side and walked along the disused train/tram way past old quarries and ruined lime kilns. All this area has now been turned into a nature reserve after the quarry company has moved on.

We returned to Nunney across fields via Frome Football Club ground. Perhaps the eight of us were more than their normal crowd??

Finishing the 8 mile walk in the pretty village of Nunney we were dismayed to find the cafes not open on Thursdays.

We said our goodbyes and headed off home, hoping to miss the Glastonbury traffic.

This was enjoyable meet and in new area and we all enjoyed exploring the different types of walking available.

Present: Mike, Andy, Paul, Mitch, Margaret, Fi, Steve and Helen.



*Nunney castle*

## Turned out nice again - North Wales, June - Ed Bramley

Being retired has its advantages, so when Andy and I met up on Thursday night for fish and chips at the Anglesey Arms in Caernarfon, we had the added bonus of watching the sun go slowly down over the Menai Straits.

With a sunny day in prospect on Friday, we, along with Paul Stock and his friend Mark, headed round early to the Ogwen valley, only to find that Marcus and Michele had just parked up after journeying across from Nottinghamshire that morning. Whilst their plans involved climbing Grooved Arete on Tryfan, our plan was a more modest round of the Carneddau. From our parking spot near the campsite at Gwern Gof Isaf, we had an easy start, heading east along the Snowdonia slate trail for about a mile, before crossing the A5 near Helyg.

From there, a farmers track then footpath takes you up onto the ridge of Y Braich, crossing over a catchwater for the nearby reservoir, which was undergoing a few repairs. The ascent to Pen yr Helgi Du (833m) is straightforward, gaining us the height over perhaps a mile. Then comes one of the more interesting sections of the route – descent onto Bwlch Eryl Farchog down a section of mixed rocks, grass and soil, before an easier ascent onto Carnedd Llewelyn (1,064m), which we made our lunch stop. Despite the sun being out, there was a decided increase in wind and drop in temperature on the tops, so a mix of sunscreen and thermals was required.



*The team on the top*

There is then a simple wide ridge route to Carnedd Dafydd (1,044m) and Pen yr Ole Wen (978m), with great views all along the ridge, from the Snowdon massif to out towards the coast. Tryfan is continually standing out as a mini Matterhorn, even in the afternoon haze. The descent from Pen yr Ole Wen is down the easterly ridge, with a couple of rock steps on the way down to Afon Lloer to add a little spice, but after that it is a straightforward descent back to the road.



The weather on Saturday follows the same hot and humid pattern, and a group of us opt for a simple round of Moel Eilio. The route out through the quarries at Chwareli, just to the north of the hut, is now well established, but the massive mounds of slate, skeletons of buildings and embankments supporting old trackways always impress.



Before long, we have reached the Ranger path and cross it, to then pick up the ridge ascending to Moel Eilio. In contrast with Friday, the air today is even stiller, and the horse flies are making the most of it, but our tally seems to be better than theirs. It's straightforward grass slopes up both Foel Goch (605m) and Moel Eilio (726m), and the view and welcome breeze on top to Moel Eilio makes it the perfect place for lunch. Even despite the haze, the quarries at Dinorwic stand starkly out, and the railway and route up Snowdon are equally easy to spot.

*On the way to Moel Eilio*

After lunch, we descend the northern path off Moel Eilio, before picking up a great track round back to the start of the 'Telegraph Road' – as the route back over to the Ranger path is called, because it used to be the route for the cables out of the Llanberis valley, and there are still remnants of cable poles there today. Beyond the Ranger path, we retrace our route out and get ready for evening meal.

This year, it's a return to some old favourites, melon with Parma ham for starters, pasta Neapolitan for mains and a range of pre prepared summer puddings, including a mango, which all go down well, especially when accompanied by an assortment of wines.

Sunday is trying to be more downcast than the previous two days, so our plan is to follow the usual track into Beddgelert, have a spot of lunch and the obligatory ice cream, and then decide on how we get back.







Thinking that the trains are not running following a fire on the track yesterday, we opt to leg it back. (Editors note: Judy reported - On Saturday there was a fire on the line towards Caernarvon, so the trains were stuck for ages and had to send people home in taxis) Part way we are greeted by the familiar rumbling of rails and a diesel busy pulling the train back to Rhyd Ddu. Never mind, we needed the exercise.

As ever, a great weekend away with friends and the chance to both enjoy the hills and swap memories. Long may it continue.

### **Alpine Hotel Meet - Monte Moro Hotel, Saas Almagell, Switzerland July - Pamela Harris**

On a sunny Saturday afternoon, 33 ABMSAC members, including our President Andy Burton and most of the committee, as well as a younger contingent, gathered at the Hotel Monte Moro in Saas-Almagell on what to prove yet another exceptional week in the Swiss mountains. Apart from an occasional thunderstorm the good weather stayed with us all week and we were out in the hills every day, making the most of our free bus and lift passes and assisted in our route-finding by the Cicerone guidebook "Walking in Zermatt and Saas-Fee".

The club had first stayed at the Monte Moro on our centenary meet in 2009, and again in 2012 and 2013, although the only ones present on all four occasions were myself and Bill and Rosie Westermeyer. However, since our last visit the hotel had been taken over by Fabian and Esther Zurbriggen who owned the neighbouring hotel, named after Esther's brother Pirmin Zurbriggen, one of Switzerland's greatest downhill skiers. Annette, the previous owner, still worked part time at the Monte Moro, and both she and Fabian went out of their way to make our stay a success. Fabian had hidden talents for one evening there was a concert where he entertained us with rock 'n' roll and Beatles songs. Our younger contingent joined in the fun with Mary Eddowes leading a demonstration of Morris Dancing.

But it was the meals that made our stay exceptional, with four-course gourmet dinners every evening and afternoon tea and cake at 4 o'clock, which most of us managed to get back for. The special "Gala Britannia" dinner in the middle of the week was even more splendid, with five courses each more delicious than the one before. Fabian offered us an aperitif of white wine and nibbles beforehand, and Annette had prepared a special menu card and had helped decorate the room with Swiss flags, Union Jacks and the ABMSAC banner, brought over by Heather Eddowes.



*Gala Britannia dinner*

The Britannia Hut has been an important part of our history since it was donated by the club to the SAC Geneva Section in 1912 and has always been central to club anniversaries (see the updated "History of the Britannia Hut: 1912 – 2023"). So we had invited three Britannia Hut representatives to the dinner as our special guests: Thérèse Andenmatten-Renaud who had been warden of the hut for 35 years and is the mother of Dario, the present warden; her husband Marc Renaud, President of the Geneva Section Huts Committee; and Jacques Bondallaz, Geneva Section representative for the Britannia Hut. Dario himself was sadly unable to be with us after a serious ski-mountaineering accident in the spring had left him with two damaged Achilles' tendons. It was Marc and Jacques who were to accompany the group to the hut the following day.

As on past meets in the Saastal, the focus of the meet was to have been a lunchtime visit to the hut for the whole group, this time to see the eco-friendly storage-heater donated by the club for the hut's 110th anniversary last year. But a day trip was no longer possible since the easy path we had taken on all previous occasions is now indefinitely closed due to rockfall and the recession of the glacier, as shown by photos of those who went up the Felskinn lift.







The only viable option was to take the lift from Plattjen, a longer and more exposed route necessitating an overnight at the hut to avoid missing the last lift down. In the end only 12 opted to do this, some who had never been to the hut before.

Alan and I went up to Plattjen with them to see them off on a cloudy morning and wished them luck as they disappeared over the boulders into the mist, some wearing their new beanies, brought over by Mike Goodyer for our 115th anniversary next year.

A separate account of the time at the hut is presented in the journal.

*Britannia Hut group at Plattjen*

Many of us began the meet by taking the cable-car from Saas-Grund up to Hohsaas at 3100m for what is arguably the best viewpoint of all 18 summits in the Saastal.

From here we set out on the rocky "4000m Peaks Trail" which led up to a series of cairns representing each mountain, with information boards detailing their first ascent.





This prompted much reminiscing by Geoff Causey and Richard Heery who had climbed many of these peaks as long ago as the 1960s. From Hohsaas we watched teams descending the nearby Weissmies, noticing the lack of snow and how much the route has changed with glacier recession since a large group climbed it during the 2009 Meet.

A bonus for me and the other flower lovers was finding the rare King of the Alps (*Eritrichium nanum*) growing in the rocks in profusion, together with moss campion and a tiny saxifrage.

From Hohsaas we took the lift down to Kreuzboden and set out on the lovely “Blumenweg” or Flower Trail, with 240 boards enumerating each flower. Some of the loveliest were black vanilla orchids and pale blue perforated bellflowers, only found in this part of Switzerland, with edelweiss growing by the avalanche barriers in the same place as on my last visit in 2021.



*Perforated bellflowers*



*King of the Alps*

Some of us spent so much time looking at the flowers that we didn't get very far, but the more energetic continued along a balcony path high above the valley all the way to Almagellalp, giving splendid views across to the Strahlhorn, Allalinhorn and Rimpfischhorn, and south to the Mattmark lake and Monte Moro pass. They made the descent to Saas-Almagell on the Erlebnisweg “Adventure Trail”, an exciting path protected by cables, with metal ladders set into the rock and narrow rope suspension bridges.



Others took this same route later in the week, while some did it in reverse, walking up from Saas-Almagell.

In a lovely location high above Allmagelleralp is the Almageller Hut, though only Don Hardy and Mervyn Powell made the 1200-metre ascent to reach it. As the oldest member on the meet Don deserves a special mention, for not only was he out every day but he did the most challenging routes, seemingly with no effort.

Another popular destination was the Mattmark dam, just a short bus ride up the valley. The only one to walk there from the hotel was Alan, who set off on the first day to test his recovery from a recent heart operation. After a 520-metre ascent over 7kms he decided that he was fit enough for the rest of the meet!



*Mattmark dam and lake*

Mike Parsons cycled up on his e-bike later in the week and reported that it was no mean feat. Once at the dam the walk round the lake was a delightful stroll, the path on the eastern side beneath hillsides covered with alpenrose.



*Monte Rosa from the pass*

From the far end of the lake the Britannia Hut was just visible on the skyline above, the nearest sight of it for those who did not make the two-day visit. Only the fittest headed for the Monte Moro Pass and the golden Madonna high above, on a track which became steep and rocky as it neared the top of the pass and the border with Italy.

The pass is an ancient trade route which we had crossed from Macugnagna on the 1999 Tour of Monte Rosa, my first trek with the ABMSAC. On that occasion we had walked over the pass all the way down to





Saas-Grund, which I am sure I would not be capable of doing today. For Bill and Rosie this was also a trip down memory lane, for it was the first hike they made together after meeting on an ABMSAC Meet 35 years ago.



Heading into the clouds on the Schwarzberg moraine

Towards the end of the week they returned to the lake, along with Richard and Rick Saynor, to explore the Schwarzberg Gletscher on the west side, a route recommended by Annette. Unfortunately, as they climbed higher it got cloudier until eventually the rain and sleet got worse and the visibility deteriorated so much that they were forced to turn back. But they had walked high enough to see the dramatic recession of the glacier below the moraine.



*Looking up to the Antrona Pass*

The Furggtalli to the south-east of Saas-Almagell was another favourite destination for our walks, a lovely unspoilt valley with few other hikers. This could be accessed either by walking from the hotel up to Furggu at the start of the valley or, as Alan and I did, by taking the chairlift to the tiny hamlet of Furggstalden, where there were two attractive mountain restaurants. After a short section through pine and larch trees, the valley opened out and became a lovely natural rock garden of all colours, with alpenrose, carthusian pinks, alpine asters, bellflowers and many others growing in profusion. High above was the Antrona Pass on the Italian border, a trade route used since Roman times.

As we gained height, the grassy track became stonier and we finally climbed up steep boulders onto the moraine to reach the bridge at Bitzbrunnen, our highest point. From there we descended on the other side of the stream through low scrub and grassy meadows used by farmers to graze their cows and goats.





After meeting a herd of large black cows blocking our path, we were then overtaken by a herd of goats heading down for milking. Goats cheese was on sale at the farm, and some of our group stopped for the local delicacy of coffee with goats milk.

*Goats heading down the Furggtälli*

From here a steep path zig-zagged down through the trees to the chapel at Zermeiggern, a place of memorial for the 1965 Mattmark disaster. In August that year an enormous avalanche of ice and rock from the Allalingsletscher engulfed the construction site, killing 88 of the dam workers. Their bodies were kept in this chapel until they could be taken to their final resting place, and on the walls inside are two panels recording the names of those who lost their lives, most of them Italians.

By far the most challenging hike of the week was that taken on the second day by Bill and Rosie, Don, Mervyn and Roger James. This was a long 8-hour traverse from Mattmark up to the Jazzilücke and Antrona passes, then along a high-level route above the Furggtälli to the top of the Heidbodme lift, with a total ascent of 1100 metres over 21 kms. Described by the Cicerone Guide as “a fine and committing day-long walk, one of the best in the Saastal”, it was indeed challenging. With exactly 8 hours between the arrival of the bus at Mattmark and the departure of the last lift at Heidbodme, they were always conscious of having to keep to the guidebook times for if they missed this lift, they would have an extra two hours of descent.



*Nearing the Jazzilücke*

The route started by crossing the dam wall and then climbed into the remote and flower filled Ofental to reach the high cliffs of the Jazzilücke, 3081m.

They stayed close together on the next section, which was the most demanding, on a narrow exposed ledge protected by cables, with steep drop-offs. Fortunately this did not last long, and the path became wider and easier, though still rocky, and they eventually came down to the Antrona Pass 240m below.

There were two possible routes from here, that taken by Roger descending directly down the Furggtälli, while the high-level route to Heidbodme was taken by the others. This involved a further steep ascent through rocks before the descent began, taking a lot longer than anticipated. They only just managed to catch the last lift from Heidbodme, although they all missed the lower lift from Furggstalden so had to walk back to the hotel after what had been a long but memorable day.



*Panorama Platz*

On the same day, Alan and I took the chairlift to Heidbodme, hoping we might meet them on their descent. From the top of the lift we walked up the steep path to the Panorama Platz 370 metres above, marked by a red and white Valaisian flag fluttering in the breeze.

It was a splendid viewpoint, this time over Monte Rosa and down the valley as well as across to the other peaks, and we even found King of the Alps growing in the rocks at the foot of a via ferrata route. Several others in the group walked up to this viewpoint later in the week, when Mary and Jonny had a closer look at the via ferrata route, and Ed Bramley and Mike G. hiked further along the high-level route towards the Antrona Pass.

There were also plenty of lower walks, one of which was the Suonenweg or “Bisse trail” between Saas-Almagell and Saas-Grund, taken by Jay Turner and Caroline Thonger.

*Walking beside the Bisse*

This was a narrow and uneven path which followed alongside the water-channel, at times vertiginously close to the edge of the forest.

Once at Saas-Grund they left the bisse and crossed the Saaservispa stream, climbing up through larch and pine woods to the hamlet of Sengg with its traditional old wooden chalets. The path then levelled off to reach the Waldhotel Fletschhorn on the way into Saas-Fee where they stopped for a welcome cup of tea, to their delight served in a very English way with a white china teapot and white china cups.

One of the easier walks we all took was from Saas-Almagell up to Saas Fee, past the Restaurant Waldhüs Bodmen. This had a large terrace with a spectacular view of the lower Saastal, the perfect place for a relaxed lunch or afternoon drink, with the added interest of an inside enclosure full of guinea pigs, rabbits and chickens.

A variation of this was to walk from Saas-Grund up the steep “Kappellenweg”, past 15 small shrines depicting the life of Christ, ending at a chapel at the edge







of Saas-Fee. Alan and I discovered a small track leading down from here to a narrow bridge over the Feevispa gorge, with dramatic views into the rushing torrent below, and then climbed up to join the wide path from Saas-Fee at Waldhüs Bodmen again, necessitating another beer stop.

Surprisingly few walks were taken from Saas-Fee itself, partly due to the closure of the Hannig lift this summer which meant we could not do the “Gemschweg”, one of my favourite routes. Instead, we found a shorter walk beneath the Spielboden lift which climbed up through larch trees to Gletschersee and on to the superbly sited restaurant at Gletschergrotte. Part of this was on a nature trail past a series of information boards on glaciation and glacier recession, making us even more aware of the effect of global warming in the Saastal.

### *Feegletscher at Längfluh*

But even though we didn't walk much from Saas-Fee, we all made good use of our free lift passes, riding up to Spielboden and Längfluh, Felskinn and Plattjen for closer views of the glaciers and high peaks, and for some to indulge in a leisurely high-altitude lunch.

And back in Saas-Almagell there was always the spa of the neighbouring Wellness Hotel Pirmin Zurbriggen for a relaxing afternoon in the sauna and jacuzzi, although only Bill and Rosie took advantage of this luxury, surprised that no one else seemed interested in joining them.

As the week drew to a close, we reflected that even though some of us are slowing down with age, we had all found plenty to do, and agreed that the Saastal had once again proved an excellent centre for a club meet.



Participants: Pamela Harris & Alan Norton, Daniel Albert, Andy Burton, Ed Bramley, Derek Buckley & Ann Alari, Geoff & Pauline Causey, Heather Eddowes, Mary Eddowes & Jonny Taphouse, John & Marj Foster, Celine Gagnan, Mike Goodyer, Don Hardy, Richard & Katherine Heery, Roger James, Margaret Moore, Dinah Nichols, Mike & Marian Parsons, Mervyn Powell, Rick & Carol Saynor, Jim & Margaret Strachan, Caroline Thonger, Jay Turner, Bill & Rosie Westermeyer

Photo contributions from Pamela, Alan, Rick, Carol, Caroline, Bill and Mike G.



## Visit to the Britannia Hut, 13 - 14 July - Andy Burton

After a rather excellent Gala Britannia Dinner on Wednesday evening in the company of our three guests from the SAC Geneva Section SAC, Therese, Marc and Jacques, and all thirty-three Meet attendees, twelve of us caught the 8.42am Postbus up to Saas Fee so we could meet our guides Marc et Jacques and wend our way through the village to the Plattjen gondola station.



Pam and Alan accompanied us up onto the platform that formed the base of the old Plattjen top station at 2569 metres. Here Alan took the obligatory group photos and waved us goodbye as we set off into the all-embracing brouillard following Marc and Jacques as they set a slow steady guides pace into the mist.

Initially the route winds its way through a boulder field before becoming a classic belvedere path, as the large tumble of rocks finishes. With Marc leading and Margaret keeping his bright orange boots clearly in her sights, and Jacques walking among us chatting and pointing out things of interest, they made sure everyone remained in contact and walking steadily together.

The path passed underneath the mist shrouded Mithaghorn and Egginer peaks, the narrower parts of the way being helped by a series of handrail chains and a few rocks bolted into place, before crossing the rock-strewn remains of the Chessjengletscher, threading its way around the remnant glacial pools.

Here the mist let slip its grip enough for us all to be able to see the Britannia Hut up on the ridge above us.



With our destination now in sight everyone made steady uphill progress, arriving in good order on the new terrace at the Britannia Hut, shaking hands with our two guides, taking stock of our unique location.



We were then shown into the room where the “fourneau a bois”, the wood burning stove that was an integral part of this year’s Saas Almagell meet because the ABMSAC had gifted the funds for the huts 110th anniversary in 2022. The stove was lit and warming the whole room in readiness for our arrival.

Very quickly we were enjoying Swiss alpine hospitality in the form of traditional Walliser platter of cured meats, cheese and pickles followed by raclette with potatoes and gherkins, all accompanied by a very quaffable local white wine, selected by Jacques.



Andy duly thanked our gracious guides/hosts, and the Geneva section of the SAC, for all their efforts on our behalf in the time-honoured manner.

After coffee for most of us and a couple of hot chocolates, plus a Toblerone triangle each, we were treated to a whistle stop tour of the Hut, with Marc and Jacques pointing out the various plaques and signs, both inside and out of the building, marking our long-standing connection with and support of the Britannia Hut.

Marc and Margaret went to see her brother Mike’s ice axe that she bought up and presented to the Hut Guardian on her last visit in 2014, clearly visible in the main foyer. An emotional reminder for Margaret of how important the mountains of Switzerland were to Mike, and how grateful she was to Dario for displaying it.

Marc and Jacques were very pleased and proud to be able to show us the water collection system, from the collection trough outside by the insulated large patch of snow, to its new internal stainless-steel settling and filtering system, which enabled us and everyone else visiting the Hut to enjoy fresh drinking water on arrival. The solar array that was the ABMSAC’s last donation prior to the stove, has played a major part in allowing the Hut to function all year round, and to make these latest costly improvements work well into the future for everyone who visits to enjoy.

All too soon it was time for Marc and Jacques to set off back down in order for them to safely make the last lift down from Morenia, leaving us in the very capable hands of the hut staff. We were shown our rooms, and started to settle in.



By this time the weather had cleared up massively and everyone was able to explore the surroundings close to the rock promontory that the Hut sits on, in company with the resident Steinbock/Boquetin/Ibex population staying close to the Hut courtesy of the placement of a saltlick nearby, and the many alpine choughs swirling around us, plus some snow buntings that were also taking advantage of the new terrace and the possibility of an easy snack.

All the various paths off very quickly allowed you to enjoy a variety of high alpine plants thriving in this now predominantly summer rock garden, should you choose to do so.



Several of us climbed up the little rocky Klein Allalin summit at the side of the Hut to take photos, as it offers a perfect 360-degree viewing platform of the surrounding mountains and down onto the Hut itself and was by chance home to several patches of the beautiful azure blue gentians that were in full bloom.



Jonny and Mary took advantage of the beautifully lit backdrop of the Strahlhorn, Rimpfischhorn and Taeschhorn peaks with their attendant glacier remnants and the Britannia Hut below to test and video Jonny's clever new wood burning titanium stove, which in four minutes boiled a large mug of water and enabled us all to enjoy a fresh brew at a little over 3000 metres.

Celine and I went to have a look at the start of the Britannia Klettersteig in readiness for having a go at it in the morning. We met a group of young climbers practicing various rappelling and belaying techniques at the base of the wires whilst enjoying the early evening sun.

Dinner was a simple but tasty three course meal taken in the company of over 75 guests staying the night and enjoyed with a beer or two. No one in our group elected for the 5am breakfast option,

but it wasn't long before a final walk around outside, for some just looking for where the phone signal was best, and for all an early night beckoned. Some slept better than others.



Once we'd made the most of the lovely breakfast goodies laid out for everyone, we split into smaller groups to take different return journeys in the sunshine.



Margaret, Heather, Mike and Ed went back the way we came the previous day, catching the views we'd missed on the ascent.

**Margaret** reports that after watching the helicopter make several visits, Mike, Ed, Heather and I set off to retrace our steps back to the Plattjen lift. Visibility was much improved, and I enjoyed the return walk. We were able to see the routes we had been on earlier in the week; at various times seeing the Mattmark reservoir, our walk to viewpoints from the Heidbodmen lift, a bird's eye view of Saas-Almagell and our walk round from Kreuzboden.

On reaching the lift station we had drinks and cake before going down the gondola. Heather and I, ever keen to use our lift passes, decided to go up the Felskinn lift. Looking down we were very glad that the plan to get off the lift at the midway Morenia station and walk up the scree slope had been shelved.

*descending to the snow field*

Roger, Don, Daniel and Mervyn took the opposite direction towards the Glacier Trail and Mattmark having spoken to Marc and Jacques and confirmed that the route was a good option for them.



*on the Glacier trail*

**Daniel** reports that the four of them found that the route was well marked – blue/white, including on poles across two glaciers. The glaciers were deemed to be safe from crevasses. We went unroped.

The glacier surface was covered with so much gravel that it probably formed the grippiest part of the route, at least on the flat parts. Beside these were steep scree slopes that turned out to be just one stone deep, over sheet ice. One step up and two sliding down. It was however beautiful.

In 7.5km and 3¾ hours the four of them were down. 'Strava' told Daniel that it had cost him 1,763 Calories. They began putting this right at the nice café at the dam, whilst waiting for Postbus back to the village.

**Celine reports** that she Mary, Jonny and Andy took up Marc's kind offer to borrow VF equipment and try the new Britannia via ferrata, beautifully and cleverly designed by the hut's warden Dario Andenmatten. It promised "thrills and unique views on the Saas Mountains" and certainly delivered.



Under Andy's calm and clear guidance, we climbed through a few tricky K-3 and K-4 sections relatively seamlessly – even though I must confess to having to having to catch my breath for a moment. The track culminates on the ridge of the Hinter Allalin, with a spectacular 360 degree of view.

The descent follows the blue and white alpine route down to the Hohlaub glacier and back to the hut. We returned our borrowed equipment to the kind and helpful staff, shared a potluck lunch between us before starting on our return journey by the Glacier Trail.

The route started from the way we came down from the via ferrata and continued south towards the Hohlaub glacier. It was strange, for an alpine novice, to walk over ice in the middle of summer. We were able to look underneath the ice sheet

and see the water running furiously down as the ice was melting in the mid-afternoon sun. After walking over a





*mixture of boulders and moraine, on the well sign-posted route, we reached the Allalin glacier which was bigger but less impressive somehow. It also had black ice covered by moraine, making it very tricky to walk over without slipping.*

*The blue alpine route ends and the red path starts at the top of Schwarzbergchopf (2,868m). Here we stopped for a quick drink, snacks and enjoyed the views over the Mattmark dam towards the paths that we enjoyed at the start of the week.*

*We made the Postbus to Saas Almagell, arriving in time for kaffee und kuchen at the Monte Moro and a well-earned beer. What a fantastic journey to end our week in the Saastal.*

*on the glacier*

The twelve attendees were Margaret Moore, Celine Gagnon, Mary Eddowes, Jonny Taphouse, Daniel Albert, Mervyn Powell, Heather Eddowes, Don Hardy, Roger James, Ed Bramley, Mike Goodyer and Andy Burton.

Thanks to Margaret, Celine and Daniel in helping compile this report of our visit to the Britannia Hut in July 2023 and Pamela for organising another great week at the Monte Moro, which enabled all of the above to take place. In addition, Pamela has updated the history of the Hut, which can be found on the website.

## **Rhinogs and Cadair Idris Meet - August - Report by Paul Stock**

We arrived at the Bunkorama at Barmouth on Friday at 2pm. The bunkhouse was a late replacement for the Corris Hut due to a double booking by the owning club.



After quickly settling in we undertook a short walk from the bunkhouse up the nearby ridge to see the tremendous views of the surrounding hills and Barmouth bay sweeping around.

We reached a altitude of 412m at the nearest trig point and then back to the bunkhouse by a different path along the ridge.

*cosy bunkhouse*





*Summit of Rhinog Fach*

On Wednesday our walk involved a short drive to the car park at Graigddu-isaf and then a boggy approach through the woodland to Bwlch Drws-Ardudwy cairn.

The path from the cairn to the summit of Rhinog Fach was initially very steep and then easing off before stepping up for the final section. Views from the summit were again very extensive.

Lunch was taken by the side of Llyn Hywel after the descent. After lunch we made our way around the bottom of Rhinog Fach back to Bwlch Drws-Ardudwy.

At this point half of the attendees made their way back to the car park and the other half started their ascent of Rhinog Fawr.

The path was very steep and narrow eventually joining the Cambrian Way to the summit.

We descended by the most direct route across heathered terraces and woodland tracks to the car park.



*top of Rhinog Fawr*



On the following day, Thursday, we made our way to Minffordd to undertake our the circuit of Cadair Idris.

The walk starts with an ascent of the Fairy Steps through woodland next to a cascading waterfall.

The walk up to Lynn Cau saw the summit of Cadair Idris covered in cloud. But just as we arrived at the summit the cloud started to gradually lift and we gained some glimpses of the Barmouth Bay.

After lunch at the summit shelter we carried on to the summit of Mynydd Model. By this point the cloud had lifted and the sunshine lit up the whole hillside.

*On the way up*



*Cadiar Idris view*

The descent back to the top of the Fairy Steps was warm on a newly engineered mountain path. Well earned tea and cake was taken at the café by the car park.

In evenings we did 'mass catering' at the bunkhouse, which was just as well as the cooking facilities were minimal. The bunkhouse was very good but cosy!

We departed for home on Friday morning from the Bunkorama after another successful meet.

Attendees: Ed Bramley, Andy Burton, Steve Caulton, Mike Goodyer, Mitch Snedden, Paul Stock, Fi Tomlinson and Steve Wood.

Photos contributions: Ed, Andy, Mike, Mitch and Steve.



## Tour of Mont Blanc Trek - September - Andy Burton

On Friday 1st September eight of us made our way to Chamonix. Five of us met up in time to watch the 170-kilometre Ultra TMB runners start their epic challenge. Sobering to think we would see some of them during the first two days of our trek round the mountain, when they would nearly have completed their circuit.



*Group at the start*

As Judy and Catriona and George were first out of the starting blocks every day and the fastest walkers here are **Judy's reflections** on their TMB experience.

We were super lucky with the weather, as we had warm sunshine every day and no rain at all. Although it did feel too hot at times, we really couldn't complain about that! The paths were good and usually well signposted, though getting from the accommodation to the main path was sometimes a little challenging, even with the maps and GPS tracks. We were fortunate to have enough route maps and GPS information to allow us to separate into smaller groups to suit our different speeds. All this was largely due to Paul's initial gpx mapping of the route and Mitch's careful marking up of the printed maps. Each day we ascended and descended on average around 1000m.



*coffee stop with Erin, Catriona and George*



The route is certainly popular! Many of our fellow trekkers had had to book accommodation at least a year in advance. We were never long without company, mainly coming in the other direction, as we were going clockwise and most people seem to go anti-clockwise. The popularity had its pluses and minuses. At the times when we were uncertain of the way, it was reassuring to see fellow TMBers on the track.

However, at times it did feel a bit too busy, especially on narrow paths where you either had to wait or divert to let people through. Another plus was meeting people from different countries, each with their own story to tell. George, Catriona and I spent a day walking with Erin, a young nurse from New Zealand whose friends were due to join her for the last 3 days. We had interesting conversations with her throughout the day and learned about her experiences on a Covid ward as a trainee.



*George and Catriona at the Fenetre d'Arpete*



*Judy at the Col de Grand Ferret*

The scenery was superb throughout and the walking was satisfying. Day 2 was particularly notable, in which we took the higher option of going over the Fenetre d'Arpete rather than following the Bovine route outlined in the guidebook. We all started together but agreed to go at our own pace, making sure that each group had sufficient maps and information. George, Catriona and I went ahead, taking frequent rest stops as it became steeper and made the top by lunchtime. We were up among the giants, with views of many of the famous 4000ers all around us. The descent was also steep, with a long boulder field followed by a loose rocky path. We were glad to see the umbrellas of the hut, Relais d'Arpete, in the valley and checking in for an early shower and drinks.



*Reflections on the way up Val Veni towards Col de la Seine*

Some of the stops along the way were equally beautiful and, in some ways, more enjoyable than the main mountains. One particularly nice stop was at the refuge of La Peule, a converted farmhouse which had cows, sheep and pigs on the hillside below and a mobile milking parlour. George and Catriona enjoyed glasses of milk, fresh from the morning milking, while I took in the views and the sunshine. The music of the cow bells in the valley was lovely, though recording it and playing it back would not be the same without the rest of the setting.

Overall, the refuges were efficient, managing to feed dozens of people with excellent meals, including vegetarian options for those who wanted them. The facilities were variable and generally rather too few for the number of people using them, but we managed OK. The bedrooms were also variable but always comfortable and surprisingly quieter than I expected. Altogether a wonderful and memorable trip.

**Mitch Sneddon who was enjoying his first ABMSAC trek**, wrote a daily blog on Facebook which he has kindly shared with us all.

**Day 1** The collection of our additional 10kg bags of luggage at the Montroc le Planet SNCF station car park this morning had to take place before we could get on with our walking tour around the world-famous Mont Blanc (TMB)

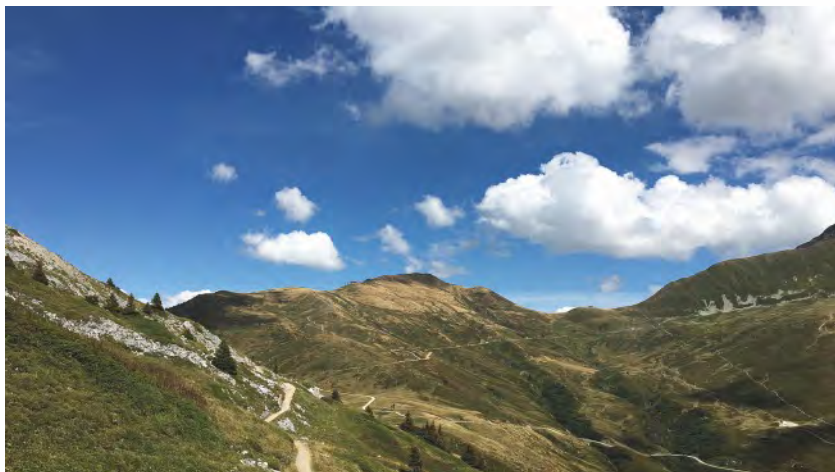
which would take us through those parts of France, Switzerland and Italy that embrace this unique mountain massif before returning us to Les Houches and Chamonix in France once more.

Our baggage was transported ahead to our Day 1 overnight stop at the Gite de la Grande Ourse, Trient in Switzerland, as will be done every day to our overnight stops. Our bespoke tour of Mont Blanc is unguided, meaning we rely on paper maps, and guide pamphlets supplied by a local travel company, Altitude Mont Blanc, plus digital maps on our phones and more importantly on the experience of fellow club members.

We left Montroc in the Chamonix Valley at 11am with gorgeous blue skies overhead in sunny warm middle teen temperatures wearing short sleeved base layers and shorts. We followed an easy trail up a wooded valley and over into the neighbouring village of Le Tour.

From Le Tour, we headed up the hillside strewn with edible Bilberry (similar to blueberries but with red juice) plants via a zig zag Alpine path (or laces as the French translate it) to the Col des Posettes at 1997 metres. A col is a saddle (lowest point) between two peaks. The hill was busy with hikers who passed us as I struggled up the mountain. Behind us on the opposite side of the Chamonix valley we had fantastic views of the Le Tour Glacier above Le Tour, which is retreating very quickly. To our left we had views down the valley to Mont Blanc and its range, the highest mountain in Western Europe.

The col offered us fantastic views of the mountains beyond including the Emosson Hydro Electric Dam. We quickly dropped down into a shallow valley which was criss-crossed with ski lift towers and cables for the ski slopes that form here during the winter snows. We headed up the other side of the valley to the Col de Balme at 2191 metres.



*View towards Col de Balme*

We stopped at the Refuge De Balme, to top up our water sacks and grab a quick snack of cake and hot/cold drinks. The air was noticeably cooler at this time of the day and altitude, requiring us to put on another layer of clothing.

From here we dropped over into Switzerland on rough boulder strewn paths, eventually entered the tree line and into a thick forest which in total took us almost 2 hours to clear.

The UTMB trail running finals (part of a world series) are on this weekend which vary in distance from the Ultra TMB which is 171km (100 miles) long to the CCC at 100k and a few other shorter races. We were passing them at different points on today's trek especially as we entered Trient. I was tired after my efforts, but I couldn't help but feel a tad guilty when I saw the condition of these competitors as they struggled past us. They had been running continually since 1800 the night before and were still a long way from the finish line. We cheered and applauded them as they passed us, but many were concentrating hard and exhausted, so much so they couldn't even lift their heads from the route in front of them to make eye contact with us.



We arrived at our hotel/dormitory at 1840, after close to eight hours on the trails just in time for our supper which is served to the whole hotel in one sitting at 1900. The Hotel Grand Ourse is a very clean and well equipped traditional built modernised hotel with a mix of rooms and dormitories.

**Day 2** An earlier start today saw us clear of the Hotel Grand Ourse by 0830. Up the wooded hillside onto a track through the forest that was originally built for a business that used to harvest ice from glaciers that were then obviously much closer to Trient. The ice was transported down the hillside in wooden built sluice boxes or chutes that had water running through them to lubricate the ice.

From the end of this path through the forest, we started to climb up the side of the valley opposite the Glacier De Trient which has badly receded over the years. The valley paths were busy with hikers and were a mix of boulder stones and scree and turf which is really hard going.

### *Remains of the Trient glacier*

We were heading up to the Fenetre d'Arpette at a height of 2665m, 950 metres higher than the start point at the Hotel Grand Ourse. It was a tough climb but easier than the previous days climb which was good news. We passed a family of 4 perched on an outcrop, the two youngsters merrily colouring in some drawings of the local landscape. An hour later they passed us and watched as they stopped to pick and eat the bilberries growing by the path up the hillside.



We eventually reached the col window after four hours, where we took in the views from either side before setting off down into the Val d'Arpette to our overnight accommodation at Relais de Arpette, which was very good and very friendly.



If the climb up was tough, the descent was tougher as there was a very large boulder field created by glacier moraine which had rocks ranging from the height of a double decker bus to the size of a fist. This has to be traversed by following a marked path and climbing over, or jumping between the rocks which after a day's hiking is jarring on the knees. It took us about an hour and a half to clear the bigger stuff and then it was a two hour walk down a further rock stepped path to the Relais itself.

*Mitch descends the boulder field below Fenetre d' Arpette*

**Day 3** Struggling for phone and internet access in this part of the mountains, so everything was delayed. It was an early start to catch a local bus to Orsieres from the bottom of the ski lift below our accommodation, and then onto La Fouly where our hike would continue. We started our hike initially not using the TMB trail, instead cutting inland and followed a more challenging trail, rejoining the TMB on its approach to the Grand Col Ferret which forms a natural border between Switzerland and Italy. Another tough constant climb of around 1000 metres on busy trails, passing lots of senior US citizens on their bucket list.



*Retrospect towards la Fouly*

It should have taken six hours but for us mere mortals a wee bit longer. Once over the col at 2536m we dropped down quickly on a tough boulder and stone track to our overnight stay at the Refuge Elena at 2062m.

Elena is a big refuge, dorms of 20 plus people, so its like being back in basic RN training accommodation standards. Food was good, pasta as expected.

**Day 4** We left Refuge Elena and continued our hike down the valley leaving the border into Switzerland behind us. An easier start to the day although once in the bottom of the valley we started climbing up onto the balcony trail



called the Mont de la Saxe which gave us some fantastic views of the glaciers on the opposite side and also of Monte Bianco which we were approaching in the distance. We were now virtually on the opposite side of Mont Blanc from where we started almost 4 days earlier.

*Ferret valley and  
Mont Blanc*



A bug appeared to be going through a couple of the group members which was causing obvious discomfort when hiking.

There were a few Refuges on our valley side where we could stop and take on refreshments and food. The speciality in the valleys around Mont Blanc is Myrtille Pie made up of Bilberries or Wild Blueberries as they are known locally. It's delicious and if you ever come across it, try it.



The weather was again bright blue skies and hot temperatures in the mid to high 20's. Our destination was the ski resort of Courmayeur where we would catch a local bus to our Refuge Monte Bianco which was nestled in the hills above and opposite Monte Bianco and its glaciers on the Italian side.

We continued down the valley side on the balcony trail eventually passing the entrance to the Mont Blanc road tunnel with queues of trucks lined up to pass through it, reaching the Refugio Bertone at 2000m overlooking Courmayeur where we had to descend 700 metres very quickly. It was another tough boulder strewn stepped track which some very brave (or crazy) mountain bikers were also descending towards Courmayeur.

Courmayeur in the Aosta Valley is a small town, fairly quiet in summer but in winter it comes alive with skiers.

**Day 5** We left our overnight accommodation, the Refugio Monte Bianco (5450 feet altitude) near Courmayeur and headed down the hillside trail through the dense forest to the village of La Visaille and joined the road climbing towards the Col de la Seigne at 2516 metres and just under 8 miles distant from Monte Bianco. As it was tarmac road for a lot of this section there were a lot of cyclists on expensive electric rental bikes on the route complete with solar powered chargers.

We climbed till we reached and passed the Refugio Combal at 1971m which overlooks a flat marshy flood plain complete with ponds filled with fish! It was very hot up here and we continued on the flat dusty track before beginning our ascent towards the Refugio Elisabetta Soldini a further 600 metres up the mountain. The Elisabetta was very busy with travellers/hikers the majority of which were travelling the TMB in the opposite direction to us. A quick stop here to fill up our water bottles and bladders before pushing onwards towards the top of the Col de la Seigne, some 2 miles further up the trail and 1200 feet higher.

*Steve, Ed and Mitch at the Col*





The types of trails we hiked varied greatly, from proper wide tarmac roads to dusty boulder littered Alpine paths, no greater than 18 inches in width with steep drops of many hundreds of feet to the valley below. The rule of the road here is if you are going up a track, you have priority over travellers coming down but always ensure if you have to stop to let travellers or cyclists pass you that you are stopped on the higher hillside of the path so that you do not get bumped by passing hikers or cyclists with possibly serious consequences!

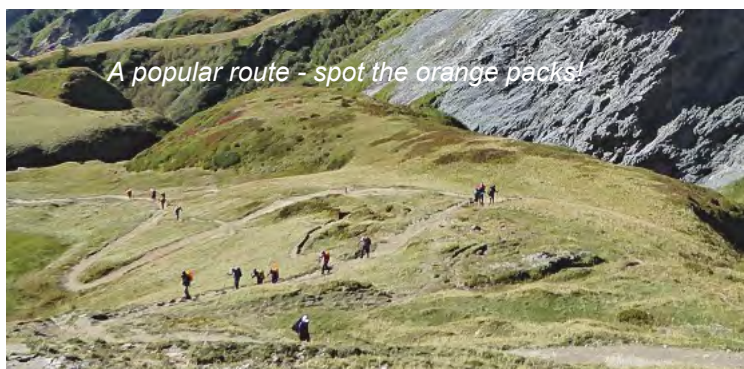
We summited the Col de la Seigne and were treated to some amazing views looking back over the old customs house, recently renovated and modernised, and forwards towards our accommodation at Les Mottets, some 2.5 miles away down a steep drop off boulder path some 1200 feet below.



*Descending from Col Seigne towards refuge des Mottets*

**Day 6** We left the Refuge Les Mottets nice and early but I was still struggling a bit with the bug, not so much the cramps but the lack of energy from not eating as much on the previous day. It was going to be another tough day as we were climbing to the Col Du Bonhomme, we decided to jump on a local shuttle bus to get us down the mountain some 6km nearer the start of the climb at Les Chapieux (1550m). We would climb from there up towards the Refuge et Col de la Croix du Bonhomme which sits at an altitude of 2450m.

Initially I was okay but before long I was taking regular breaks and Andy thankfully would take breaks to allow me



to catch up. There was a large guided Taiwanese group snaking ahead of us and all them had bright orange covers on their rucksacks for identification purposes and thankfully a couple of them were struggling in the heat, this gave me a target to aim for or at least keep up with! The hill was busy with lots of trekkers, quite a site to see so many people on a mountain, but the TMB is one of the most famous hikes in the world. Once at the Refuge du Col de la Croix du Bonhomme, we caught up with the Taiwanese party and eventually we decided that as the track up here was really narrow and very hard to pass people, we would take a break to allow them to get further

ahead and hopefully pass them when they had their break a bit further down the path.



*Judy and Catriona on the path from Les Chapieux up to the Col du Bonhomme*

There is little change in altitude between the Col du Bonhomme and the Col de la Croix du Bonhomme but the path is very rocky and uneven and not to be rushed plus there are some sheer drops off the path. We reached the Col Du Bonhomme at 2329m and from there the track goes steeply downhill towards our overnight accommodation in Les Contamines, still quite some distance away, and you have to keep your wits about you (I have the bruises to prove I didn't do that very well)!

During World War 1 the Col Du Bonhomme was the scene of fighting between French and German soldiers. On 8 September 1914, the commander of the French 41st Infantry Division, 69-year-old General Bataille, and six

of his men were killed in a German artillery attack. A memorial to the General and his men stands at the pass.

We started downhill and caught up with a couple of our party, Ed and Steve at the Refuge de la Balme, not surprisingly Myrtille Tart was on their menu but with my dodgy condition, a cold drink and an ice cream was a safer option for me. We pressed on heading further down this mountain valley, the sky crossed with power lines that had been installed to bring power to this remote area.

We passed the Refuge Nant Borrant which led us onto a Roman Road (not surprising in this part of the world - French / Italy border region!) and into a gorge with an amazing church called the Notre-Dame de la Gorge, where we were collected by our travel company van and taken to our overnight stop at the Chalet Caf hostel in Les Contamines - Montjoie. Another 4 double bunk dormitory which was basic but clean, with very friendly staff, especially Joe the barman and cook. Probably the best meal of the trip starting with delicious French Onion soup, locally sourced oven cooked sausages with creme caramel to finish, oh and a couple of cold ones!

**Day 7** I woke and felt immediately better than I had all week, my energy was back and the effects of the bug had disappeared thankfully.

An early start from Chalet CAF at an altitude of 3770 feet and a route initially heading for the Chalets du Truc at 1705m and then dropping down to the Refuge di Miage 1559 metres. From there, it was a steep climb up to the Col de Tricot (where Mitch returned the favour and waited for me so we could top out together at our highest point of the day just shy of 7000 feet, some 5 miles from our start point). Once over this col, we were essentially heading to the end of the trek at Les Houches near Chamonix.





*Col de Tricot*

We left the refuge and a short walk through a section of Les Contamines - Montjoie and up the valley side through a heavily wooded forest passing a beautiful log cabin set in the edge of the woods overlooking the valley and mountain beyond.

Once over the Col de Tricot, we dropped down the opposite side with the amazing view of the Glacier de Bionnassay on our right. From here it was a narrow rock filled path to a narrow ravine with a wobbly wire rope bridge heading on a narrow alpine path to the Col de Voza and the Prarion gondola down to the finish at Les Houches just in time to collect our bags that had been left there for us. We had a bit of a sweat at the end, trying to make the last cable car of the day at 1700 but we managed it with 20 minutes to spare, otherwise it was another long downhill slog to Les Houches.



*Bionnassay Glacier*

A 45-minute local bus ride followed to our Hostel in Chamonix followed and some welcome pizzas and beer on our last night.

I'd lost a stone in weight during the 8 days in the Alps which was a combination of the exercise and the bug. Personally I would recommend trying a diet!



Ed was the only one of the four of us who was not affected by the bug, and this may have prompted the following:

### **Bring me Sunshine – A musical (?) interlude on the TMB**

I can't sing or hold a tune. My school music teacher had established that very quickly. My musicality is probably best described by the late Eric Morecambe – "All the right notes – not necessarily in the right order". So you might ask why I was singing, humming or otherwise creating what I took for music on a regular basis as Steve (McCain) and I wended our way along the Tour de Mont Blanc.

Firstly, I was enjoying myself. But secondly, Steve and I were having a bout of what might loosely be described as a Popmaster session, naming tunes and artists as we went along the trail. The songs varied from the relevant – "River Deep, Mountain High" (Ike & Tina Turner) or "Here comes the sun" (George Harrison), to the ridiculous "ça plane pour moi" (Plastic Bertrand) or "My old man's a dustman" (Lonnie Donegan). And the time span was from the 60's to occasionally this millennium, probably reflecting our ages and musical tastes.



*An interlude....*

Surprisingly, as we passed people, some of them actually wanted us to keep singing, or joined in themselves. Particularly the timeless classics and the uplifting songs. Hopefully we didn't cause any diplomatic incidents or distress to small children as we travelled our merry way. And the miles just seemed to melt away as we thought of yet more obscure records to tax one another with, or even create the tune to – Try whistling any Ennio Morricone tune from the spaghetti westerns and you'll know what I mean!

So there you have it another Club trek completed and I think you can tell enjoyed by all who took part.

This years cast were Judy Renshaw, Catriona Archer, George Harper, Ed Bramley, Steve McCain, Mike O'Dwyer, Mitch Sneddon and Andy Burton.

Report compiled by Andy Burton with contributions and photos from Judy, Mitch, Ed (and Andy).

## Llangollen Roving Meet - September - Dave Matthews

This September we held a roving meet in Llangollen for the first time, from Friday 22nd to Sunday 24th September. (For those unfamiliar, Llangollen is that town with the traffic lights hold up on the A5 that you usually bypass on your way to Snowdonia). It was organised by Dave Matthews who grew up locally.



Llangollen is a pretty little town, on the River Dee, surrounded by hills rather than mountains.

We stayed at the independent Llangollen Hostel, in the town itself. It is based in a former house with 31 beds in 8 shared rooms over 3 floors plus lounge, kitchen/diner, and drying room. We found it comfortable and well maintained. There is parking to the rear (charges apply) plus other options.

We booked 2 rooms which conveniently accommodated 4 males and 4 females for the weekend, and we were joined by 3 others for the day walk on Saturday. On Friday night most of us dined out at the Three Eagles public house (old building with its own well!), within easy walking distance.

On Saturday we set off from the hostel at 9.30am, walked down the high street (100 yards!) and across the River Dee bridge with views of the river in full spate and Llangollen heritage railway station to one side. We were joined by John and Sarah- walkers and long time friends of Don and Judy -and shortly afterwards by ABM member Sondja, who incidentally, had travelled from Bangor by train to Ruabon, cycled to Llangollen, and crammed in a 30 minutes park run before joining us!

We then crossed the Llangollen canal and passed Ysgol Dinas Bran (Dave's old school) to climb the hill to Castell Dinas Bran, ruined castle and former hill fort on a near conical hill overlooking the Llangollen valley, Eglwyseg Rocks (limestone escarpment), and Berwyn hills. Descending the other side brought us to the "Panorama Walk" scenic road. Then a narrow path up the hillside brought us to the "ridge" above the road, with extensive views over the Cheshire plain towards the Mersey Estuary, Peckforton hills, (Sandstone Trail) and the Wrekin near Shrewsbury.



*Group on the scenic road with Castle behind*



Descending through Trevor Hall wood (forestry plantation) – we met a minor road then took a path leading to the Llangollen canal at Trevor. This was our half way point (6 miles, 3 hours) and lunch stop at Trevor canal basin, with convenient seating and a gongoozlers view of canal boat activity.



After lunch we crossed the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, Telford's masterpiece, 220 years old, 1007 feet long, 126 feet high above the Dee-great views.

*Lunch at Trevor Basin*





We then crossed the A5 at Froncysyllte and walked up the challengingly steep Methodist Hill to access the path above. (Here Dave bowed out with heel pain and returned by bus!). This path skirted the former Pen y Graig / Pisgah limestone quarry (once employed over 1,000 men) and climbed to a view point on the summit road before a gradual descent via a track (Ceiriog trail) then pathways to Llangollen. Unsurprisingly another 6 miles and 3 hours to return.



The weather, incidentally, was surprisingly good all day, with sunshine and clouds and no rain!

We rounded off the day with pre booked dinner at The Cornmill pub, (you've guessed it, a former corn mill!) right beside the river Dee's dramatic waters, and a good time was had by all.

*Froncysyllte Summit*

*The Corn Mill*

Sunday's weather was less good and some had far to travel so a smaller group took a stroll along the Llangollen canal to its source from the river Dee at Horseshoe Falls. Here there were brave parties of rafters starting their white water descent to Llangollen. We had a walk across the Chain Bridge at Berwyn and were minded to return by train but the times didn't suit, so we walked back by towpath.

A final lunch al fresco at the little café beside the canal wharf then it was time to depart.

All in all, an enjoyable weekend in a different location, which seemed to go down well!



Participants: Dave Matthews, Heather Eddowes, Andy Burton, Celine Gagnon, Don Hodge, Judy Renshaw, Margaret Moore, Jas Phugura, plus Sondja Hoffman, John and Sarah on Saturday.

Photos by Andy and Dave.

## October day walks

### North Day Walk - Ed Bramley

The ABMSAC north walk began with some serious refuelling at Bank View Café, otherwise known as “the Dotty Café” after its role in the 2014 Tour de France (and bits of Yorkshire).



*Hearty breakfast before the off!*

First thing the weather was misty, but soon cleared, although a noticeably chilly wind all day.

We head out on Langsett Bank, above the north shore of the reservoir. At its western end, we then head south, to follow a great path, often flagged, up Mickleden Edge and Cut Gate, eventually arriving at the top of Margery Hill, which is at the watershed of the Derwent and Little Don rivers. (Descending on the same path would take you to Slippery Stones, at the head of Howden reservoir).

There are great views and we can clearly pick out places such as Win Hill in the Derwent Valley, whilst looking north, there are views all the way to Emley Moor TV mast. At the top the wind is making its presence felt, so we shelter behind the rocks at Margery Stones for our lunch, before heading off on the next leg of our journey.

The terrain to Outer Edge now changes to bog trotting for the next couple of miles, necessitating a few serious detours or gymnastics to get round the soggiest parts. The sun has put in an appearance now and there are great and far views in all directions. Beyond Outer Edge, our path drops down Near Cat Clough into the Little Don valley. The valley and associated woodland provides a good respite from the wind, and we are soon round at the head of the reservoir. For our return leg, we take the path nearer the shore, watching the afternoon light and wind on the water.



*Boggy terrain*

Attendees: Ed Bramley, Andy Burton, Marcus and Michelle Tierney.

## South Day Walk - Mike Goodyer

The autumn day walks got off to a misty start today down at Longbridge Deverill. Margaret, Paul and I enjoyed a lovely walk over the small hills around the Deverills.

*Margaret and Paul on Cold Kitchen Hill*



The 9 mile walk took in Cold Kitchen Hill, which had elusive views across the misty hills and valleys, with red kites swirling overhead.

This area, just south of Warminster and the Longleat Estate, isn't an area that any of us had visited before. The area is steeped in history with ancient roads to the North and South (following the River Wylfe) of the Deverills.

It is reputed to be close to the site of Iley Oak (Crockerton) where King Alfred met up with his armies around Easter of 879ad before the Battle of Edington. Here Alfred comprehensively defeated the Viking King Guthrum and, as they say, "the rest is history"!

We finished off the walk in sunshine and enjoyed a drink in the beer garden of the George Inn.

## Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecons) Meet - October

Despite having to change the dates from early to late October this year the New Inn at Bwlch with its unique charms sitting on the A40 road pass between the Black Mountains and the Beacons themselves provided the focus for eleven of us to meet up and complete the following walks over the weekend.

Mitch and Steve met at Llanthony Priory in the Black Mountains for a full day walk as described by Mitch here below.

The hike started at the ruins of the 12th Century Priory in the village of Llanthony in the Vale of Ewyas, some twelve miles north of Abergavenny, where there was free parking with public conveniences, adjacent to the lovely Llanthony Priory Hotel.

It was a four seasons type of day (sunshine, heavy rain squalls including some hail) thankfully with little wind, the route taking us directly up a muddy and at time slippery path onto Offas Dyke which sat at a height of 2227 feet, some 1440 feet above the car park.

Offa's Dyke is named after King Offa of Mercia who reportedly built the dyke in the 8th Century to mark the boundary of his Kingdom. The Dyke roughly runs along the English/ Welsh Border.



Once up onto the Dyke, the landscape is open flat moorland with good trails and paths along with magnificent views towards Hereford in the east and the Black Mountains to the west. Red Kites and herds of Welsh Ponies and sheep abound on the Dyke top.

I navigated north on the Offa's Dyke Path, to a point where I could descend back down into the Vale of Ewyas and head to the village of Capel-Y-ffin. Once in the valley, the trail starts as a tarmac road but quickly became a muddy ancient country lane which probably hasn't changed in centuries.



*The Baptist Chapel*

At the village of Capel-Y-ffin, I came across two seats of religion on either side of the river (Afon) Honddu (both sit within a hundred metres of each other). The first was the Welsh Baptist chapel dating back to the 17th Century and on the other side of the river was the more modern Church of St Mary the Virgin which was built in the 18th Century.

At this point the trail starts to head back up the hillside on the opposite side of the valley onto the Hills called Chwarel-Y-Fan & Bal Mwar at 679 and 609 feet respectively which form a section of the Cambrian Way. This point in the hike was noticeable for the views through the heavy horizontal rain and hail!

At Bal Mawr, I turned off the Cambrian way and descended back down into Llanthony and its ancient Priory and made my way to Bwlch to join everyone else.



*Looking down on the Priory*

Ed and Andy parked up at the New Inn car park in time to check in with Neil, the licensee, and for Don and Judy to arrive too. Judy joined us for a late afternoon walk up to the trig point on Mynydd Llangorse at 515 metres. Ed and I continued to Cockit Hill at the end of the ridge, which is marked with the word 'fort' on the map.



*Ed and Judy at the trig point*

Here we were able to enjoy beautiful autumnal views across the farmland around the Llangorse lake below us on one side and extensive moorland views across the vale onto Mynydd Troed, 609 metres, and beyond, sharing them with just a few Welsh mountain ponies and a couple of dog walkers.

A swift walk back as the light began to fade ensured we were not late for the much-anticipated evening meal in the pub with everyone else. The warm atmosphere and friendly hospitality in the New Inn soon had us all relaxing and making plans for the next day.



*Wet start to the walk*

Martha and Paul drove up from Bristol in time for us all to set off in two cars at 9am Saturday to drive to the Storey Arms car park on the A470. The car park closest to the centre was already full so we used the next one which had a footpath gate and stile out onto the hillside where we ascended in the pouring rain to join the Beacons Way as it negotiates the various waterfalls that cut through the rim of Fan Fawr here.

Negotiating these water courses now in full flow following a night of heavy rain proved to be a challenge in itself. By the time we reached the trig point at Fan Frynych, 629 metres, it was apparent to everyone that we were not going to complete the planned 13 miler before it got dark.



*Things are getting brighter!*



We continued into the Graig Cerrig Gleisaid NNR, a lovely hidden little gem tucked under the cliffs and high moor edge of Criag Cwm-du, as the rain abated, and the sun showed itself again, in time for us to stop and have lunch close to the footbridge at Pont Blaen-cwm-du. Here we joined the Roman Road for a short while, which had become a water course with occasional stepping stones.



Improving weather in the afternoon

Once we had all negotiated the flooded gate we turned left and struck off up the steep grassy knoll to its top at 570 metres where we crossed over the Beacons Way and negotiated the boggy and tussocky moor marked as Rhos Dringarth before rejoining with the Beacons Way near Craig y Fro, returning the way we had come.

It was interesting to see how much the flow and depth of water in the various streams had eased off in the intervening five hours. This allowed everyone to complete the walk in good time without getting much wetter.

Everyone returned to the New Inn where we were joined by Jonny and Mary who came bearing gifts in the form of decorative pumpkins wrapped in a brand-new club beanie hat for those that wanted one. Our pre-ordered dinner was enjoyed by all and plans for the morrow were made as the open fire weaved its warming magic, ably assisted by a pint or two in good company.

As the clocks changed at 2am Sunday morning we decided to employ a trick recommended by Don and Judy, that we ignore the change and just get up as we did the day before.

Confusing I know but it worked, and it allowed us a full day out including a café stop. A 45-minute drive following Jonny's camper van lead the six of us to a small car park close to the footpath/driveway leading up to the bunkhouse and café at Clyn-gwyn, and down through the woods to the banks of the Afon Mellte where we saw the first of many waterfalls as we crossed over a confluence footbridge and walked up high on the opposite valley side and down through the woods to a complex series of waterfalls accessed by dead end footpaths.

Here the river cuts through a series of steps and natural rock sluices into another large waterfall which was running full with the rain of the last 48 hours draining off the higher hills where we had walked on Saturday.







Walking back up out of this gorge we made our way round to Sgwd Yr Eira, a waterfall on the Afon Hepste with a rocky path behind a broad curtain of water, reached by a steep woodland trail and exited on the opposite bank in a similar manner.

Lunch was enjoyed on a bench in a clearing above the woods with views across the valley system towards Ystradfellte, before walking down to a coffee house in Pontneddfechan past the limestone quarries and outcrops of Dinas Rock.

From the café we crossed over the road back to the bridge turning left and into the Nedd Fechan river system, here we took another short spur by a bridge up to the waterfalls at Sgwd Gwladus, before returning to the main river and continuing back across the fields to our cars.

This is the second year that Jonny has shared his knowledge of this iconic waterfalls walk with Brecons meet attendees, and to top it all he showed Ed and I how to take tricky photos of fast-moving water using our iPhones.

It is safe to say that the Bannau Brycheiniog just keep on giving.



*Team looking at the river in full spate*

Don and Judy also focussed on walking by water on Sunday by walking along the Brecon and Monmouthshire canal from LLangynidr, past the six locks to the tunnel and back higher up, along the Usk valley way. They also took in a quick visit to Dyrham Park near Gloucester on the way home. It was mainly sunny and beautiful with lovely colours in the trees.

Attendees were Mitch Sneddon, Steve Butterfield, Ed Bramley, Andy Burton, Don Hodge and Judy Renshaw, Anna Kaszuba and Eudald Rossell Vivo, Martha King and Paul Clarke, Mary Eddowes and Jonny Taphouse.

Photos from Mitch, Andy, Judy, Martha and Anna.

## November day walks

### White Peak walk - Marcus Tierney

Our group of five again met at the Yonderman one of our favourite cafes at Wardlow Mires in Derbyshire. Our planned walk was around the Tideswell and Millers Dale areas but with the amount of moisture both in the air and the ground, the route was always open to being changed.



*Happy group at the start*

From Wardlow our route left the main road and headed up towards Litton with views across to the Peter's stone and the Ravensdale crag in the distance. Turning right on Mires Lane we traversed Litton Edge which although modest in stature gives good views in all directions.

Walking through Tideswell ignoring the already open chippy we headed along Slancote Lane. Unusually for such a track Google Earth can be followed on street view. The pictures showed standing water, it didn't show that the lane had been renamed the Tideswell canal!

We did manage to negotiate the 'canal' in various ways but it did give a sense of just how high the water levels would be.

*Tideswell Canal - Andys going in!*

Continuing along the Limestone way towards Miller's Dale we stopped to look at the old Miller's Dale Meal Mill. The River Wye was crossed close to the Anglers Rest. It was very tempting to stop there for refreshment but with the night's drawing in and the fact that our cars were left at the Yonderman which closed at 3pm we decided to push on.

As we continued along the Monsal trail we discussed the possibility that Water Cum Jolly would probably be impassable due to the high water level. At best it would probably be extremely muddy, so we diverted to Tideswell Dale. In the upper reaches of the Dale the sun finally came out







and it threw it down! Taking shelter at the car park toilets we donned full waterproofs.

Our walk continued along Litton Dale to then finish via Tansley Dale and again past the Pete's stone to Wardlow Mires fortunately the rain had eased by this time.

An enjoyable walk with good company and despite a brief soaking we felt like we actually got one over on the weather.

Participants: Andy Burton, Ed Bramley, Ian Mateer, Marcus and Michele Tierney.

*Brook in full spate*

## **Blewbury Round - Mike Goodyer**

Four of us braved the elements on this mild but wet day. The route went past Churn Knob to Blewbury Down passing



*Its raining!*

over the disused railway and crossing the Blewbury gallops. We went on over Compton Down to meet up with the Ridgeway for a couple of miles. After passing the Roman Temple on Lowbury Hill we branched off the Ridgeway to head up to Aston Tirroid, then returning to Blewbury via Blewburton Hill. At least that's what the map said.

With our heads well inside hoods and the grey skies dulling the horizon we mainly saw the path in front of us! The rain eased for the last hour and we finished in weak sunshine.

We thought that we could dry off and warm up a bit by retiring to the local cafe for tea and cake - but the cafe had closed the week before for refurbishment!

Never mind, we had enjoyed each others company and the 10 mile leg stretch.

Attendees: Judy Renshaw, Margaret Moore, Mike O'Dywer and Mike Goodyer.



*Its stopped raining!*

## Presidents Meet, November - Andy Burton

This year's Presidents Meet had to be moved at short notice to the first weekend in November to ensure that the rescheduled Brecons Meet at the New Inn at Bwlch could still go ahead. The regular chef could not make it due to work commitments, and one of the attendees fell off his mountain bike a fortnight before, injuring his shoulder, and causing him to miss both the Brecons meet, and this one, where he was sharing transport with your Editor.

I was beginning to get that 'we're doomed' kind of feeling but three quick phone calls put the meet back on track. Celine agreed to help with the vegetarian meal option by making what is rapidly becoming a firm George Starkey Hut staple enjoyed by one and all, chickpea and spinach curry.

Daniel agreed to make an apple crumble for pudding (also a communal hut meal favourite), whilst Mike drove up to my place on Thursday afternoon, and we set off north in the Skoda, with my largest Tupperware tub full of spag bol and half a dozen bottles of wine, and other necessary supplies.

Concern over finding somewhere open for food and drink later on that evening led us to divert to the Brown Cow at Mansfield for a pint with Mr. Caulton and friends, and a great curry at the Modhu Mitha, scene of many a great post 2-10 shift unwind in my uniform days.



*Ready for the off!*

We arrived at the Hut just before midnight and as there was no fire on, we retreated to our pits. Consequently, Friday morning arrived quite quickly, and Mike and I decided to go on the first ferry to Howtown and explore the area up beyond Arthurs Pike and Lords Seat.

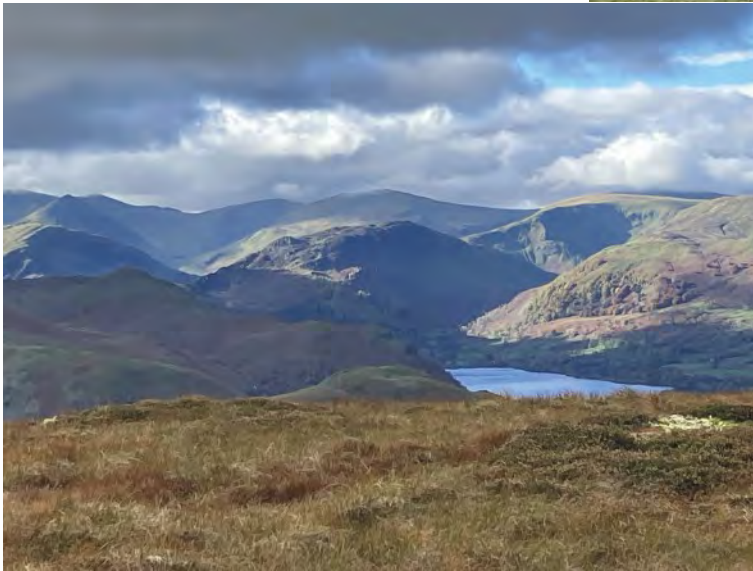
From the Howtown ferry pier we took the Ullswater Way out of the village towards Pooley Bridge. Crossing over Swarthbeck Gill and looking over to Sharrow Bay we reminisced on the fate of the flagship Country House Hotel which fell victim to the pandemic, before passing under Auterstone Crag and walking up towards the Cockpit hanging a sharp right onto Barton Fell and up to Arthur's Pike, eventually joining with the course of the Roman Road, namely High Street.

On reaching the top of Loadpot Hill, 671 metres, and looking along the continuation of the Roman Road towards Wether Hill and eventually High Raise and across Bampton Common we both realised that there was a large area here that we had never walked in. Something to rectify at a later date when more daylight hours are available to us.



We made our way off the top of the fell and down towards Fusedale using vague bits of path and sheep and deer trods with glimpses of parts of Ullswater and the surrounding fells being illuminated in the autumn sun till we were sheltered from the wind.

*Andy sporting the beanie on Loadpot Hill*



Here with views of Hallin Fell and Martindale Common and Howtown nestling below we had some lunch and enjoyed the beautifully varied landscape laid before us. The descent into the back of Howtown, and a quick check to see if any of the Howtown Hotel facilities were open to us followed. They were not.

A short wait back at the pier, and we caught the last ferry of the day back to Glenridding. Initially we sat in the open part of the boat for the views, but the possibility of a hot chocolate and a sit in the warm proved too much for the both of us.

*On the way to Howtown*

A brisk walk back to the hut saw us back inside as the light was fading. I lit the stove, Mike put the kettle on, and in short order we were enjoying the Hut again at its most welcoming best. Marion came and joined us and let us know that the White Lion was closed, as the business had gone bust, so the traditional Friday night fish and chip supper was taken at the Ramblers Bar in the Inn on the Lake. The same room where we hold our AGM before the Annual Dinner at the start of February, served us well on this occasion too.

On walking back to the Hut we met with Gilbert Roberts, a newcomer, and spent the rest of the evening introducing him to the place and things ABMSAC.

On Saturday morning I drove the three of us up to the National Trust car park at Aira Force and from here we completed a favourite round out above Ullswater in Gowbarrow Park, with the lake presenting a very still autumn

surface in which to reflect the surrounding fells, up onto Airy Crag and down on the much more complete stoned path towards both Dockray and the top of the falls.



*Mike and Gilbert on Gowbarrow*

Just after 11am we found ourselves at the open door of the Royal Hotel at Dockray, with a roaring fire going in the stove, and the coffee machine working well enough for the three of us. Half an hour later we are back on the path up to Swineside Knott at 553 metres, and then traversing through Brown Hills towards Scot Crag into Glencoyne Head.

Just level with the disused dam well below us in Glencoyne dale, we sat and ate our lunch, before continuing to traverse our way round this beautifully proportioned 'U'-shaped valley to Nick Head. Here we descended on the opposite valley side to Seldom Seen. Returning back to the car along a short bit of the Ullswater Way, bumping into Celine who was walking back from having visited the falls herself, as we did so.

Returning to the Hut and following a similar MO to the previous day, we were joined by Daniel Albert fresh from skiing lessons, and Ian Mateer from house viewing nearby, and slowly the evening meal preparations began.

Mike and Marian, and Nicky Merrett from Hiking Highs also joined us for the communal meal where there was clearly a little bit of something tasty for everyone to enjoy.



*Andy in Glencoyne dale  
descending to Seldom Seen*

Sunday dawned with another forecast busting clear spell allowing the six of us to set off from the Hut for another firm favourite walk up to Angle Tarn via Boredale Hause, on under Satura Crag and above Prison Crag, taking the path down to Hayeswater just before the Knott.

A little above the footbridge over Hayeswater Gill we all sat and had some lunch and looked at the changes implemented by the removing of the dam and the naturalising of the gill exit from Hayeswater Tarn.

Continuing on down the track towards Hartsop it was interesting to see that the old Filter House on the opposite valley side under Prison Crag had been well renovated into a private dwelling, made easier in great part by the designers in 1926 making a large building look like a small stone cottage from a distance. The relatively new 250kw



micro hydro plant building owned by the National Trust just to the left of the track continues to blend in over time, but not as well as the photogenic old moss-covered barn nearby that always draws the eye.



*On the way to the Knott*

Walking back over the little rocky outcrop above Hartsop across the bottom part of Angletarn Beck back to Patterdale in the autumn afternoon light provided a fine finish to the weekends walking.

Attendees were Mike Goodyer, Gilbert Roberts, Celine Gagnon, Daniel Albert, Ian Mateer, Mike and Marian Parsons, Nicky Merrett and Andy Burton.

### **South Day Walk, December - Judy Renshaw**



*President comes South!*

The last southern day walk of the year went from Stokenchurch to Bledlow Ridge and around, with an early lunch stop at a viewpoint towards Chinnor and a diversion to a trig point hidden in trees.

The weather was better than anticipated, having shown a forecast for rain most of the day, however we had some sunshine either side of a heavy shower for an hour and a half.

Amongst other highlights we saw 2 hares and a buzzard. We all enjoyed the day, including the surprise northern visitor to the group, though the saddest moment was finding the pub had shut by the time we were back at Stokenchurch! At least it gave us the opportunity for a reasonably early return home.

Present: Andy Burton, Mike Goodyer, Paul Stock, Fiona Tomlinson and Judy Renshaw

## Twixmas Meet, New Year - Judy Renshaw

The Twixmas meet this year was quieter than recent years but still good fun. Maybe people had been put off by the weather, which was significantly wet and windy, but had its dry and bright moments. Don and I arrived on the 29th, to find only Pamela and another AC member feeling cold as they had been unable to light the fire. Don sorted that out, then we had the first of 3 sociable evenings with Marian and Mike, first in the hut, next at their house, then in the hut with Pamela and Alan joining us for a very enjoyable shared meal, with contributions from all.



*Glenridding from across Ullswater*

On the Saturday Daniel came over so we went up to Keldas, across the Glenridding YH and up to the col, descending down to Seldom Seen where we saw a red squirrel. On New Year's Day several of us watched the crazy local swimmers at Glenridding pier while Marian was in charge of the cake stall at the village pop-up café. Don gave them some custom at lunch time while I had a quick jaunt up Glenridding Dodd and Sheffield Pike before setting off on the journey home.

Present: Marian Parsons, Mike Parsons, Don Hodge, Judy Renshaw, Daniel Albert, Pamela Holt (AC), plus Alan Hinckes and four AC members.

## Cromford, January 2024 - Andy Burton

Tuesday 9th January's walk was a revisit to Cromford. With the advance party enjoying a cooked breakfast at the Tor Café nestling under the limestone outcrop of Willersley Castle Rocks, a trad climbing crag great for hot weather and summer evening climbing as it is north facing and overlooks the river Derwent and the castle house of the same name. The contrast between the cool climbing area and its tree covered slopes to the river and the busy 'T' junction on the main road to Matlock that appears only as you top out, is quite marked.





*Group wrapped up against the elements*

Free parking was secured on the road alongside the entrance to the Mill for us and Heather and shortly after that Ed too. Martin and Pat parked in the Wharf car park close to the toilet block.

A wise move as the café didn't open till ten and then the glass doors were found to be jammed! This did allow me to spot the various fish shoaling in the canal right by the Wharf café outside seating area. With Marcus coming across to verify my sightings of perch and pike and adding roach to the list, it was an auspicious start to this beautifully clear but cold morning.

As we started walking along the Cromford Canal we were treated to regular sightings of a dabchick (Little Grebe) feeding in the dark canal waters. By the time we reached Aqueduct Cottage I had counted five of these lovely little diving birds.

Aqueduct Cottage, now almost fully renovated and landscaped, is occupied by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, who had volunteers onsite to inform passersby on the progress of this site. Made no doubt a bit easier by the warmth provided by well-lit wood-burning stove.



*Information Centre*

Returning back along the other side of the canal over the aqueduct above the Derwent River back to High Peak Junction with its bright red railway carriage which serves as an information centre on this major piece of local industrial archaeology.

It also marks the start of the ramp that forms the incline of the High Peak Trail that leads from here all the way up to just beyond the Royal Oak pub and campsite at Hurdlow, a place many attendees on my Peak Meet have enjoyed visiting over the years. A great walking and cycling route for all to enjoy.

Everyone enjoyed this stretch in their own way, reaching the old Engine House built to house the winding wheels for raising and lowering the goods wagons on the incline, whilst enjoying the views that open out towards High Tor and Matlock.

Ed and Marcus resisted the temptation to have a go at Railway Slab, and we all made our way up onto the main part of Black Rocks and reminisced about routes climbed on this substantial gritstone outcrop over all the years.



With Heather braving the nithering breeze to stand on top, Ed reenacting his first climb that he made with his Dad, Eric and Marcus showing us that he has still got it in his own inimitable way, we quickly hunkered down in the sun and out of the breeze to eat our butties and share various leftover from Christmas cakes and biscuits.

With a downhill return to Cromford Wharf and its café for an early coffee and cake finish, to allow for Ed to get home in good time for his Zoom lecture on our adventures in the Karwendel in 2012, and for us all to be back home and tuned in to watch said lecture, ensured this was also the shortest day walk to date.

*Black Rocks*

Attendees: Martin Whitaker and Pat Cocks, Ed Bramley, Heather Eddowes, Michele and Marcus Tierney and Andy Burton

### **Ridgeway & West Ilsley, January - Margaret Moore**



Excellent Southern day walk on a clear winters day, organised by Margaret M, along the Ridgeway and countryside around West Ilsley. Stunning views, but a biting cold wind on the tops.

On the Ridgeway we came across an early Iron Age round barrow (Scutchamer Knob). Legend has it that it's the burial site of Saxon King, Cwichelm.

We had short coffee break at the Lord Wantage Monument to Brigadier General Robert Loyd Lindsay. He was a Crimean War hero and he formed the British National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded, which later became known as the Red Cross. His widow had it erected in 1903.

Six of us walked along an enclosed trackway to Farnborough, which is the highest village in Berkshire (!).





*Lord Wantage Monument*



*Woodland walk on the way to West Ilsley*

We found a spot in the sun and out of the wind for a quick lunch before reaching West Ilsley and returning to the car park up the hill.

At the end of the walk we had a warm up and a drink in the recently reopened pub, The Harrow, in West Ilsley. This rounded off a great day. The walk was a little over 12 miles and 650' of ascent.

Attendees: Steve Butterfield, Mike Goodyer, Margaret Moore, Paul Stock, Judy Renshaw and Mitch Sneddon.

## **AGM and Annual Dinner, February - Andy Burton**

The 2024 Annual Dinner Meet started for me in the time-honoured manner with a drive up to Calverley to collect young Edmund. The main difference is now we are retired that the driving takes place in daylight, and on Thursday, avoiding all the delights of driving the motorways of Britain on a Friday evening!

After a lovely lunch with the Bramleys, including meeting the newly walking Isla and catching up with all the building works at Jen and Stews, Ed and I set off for the hills.

With all the various reports of landslides and road works causing delays over Kirkstone we elected to drive straight to the Hut and go for a short walk from there.

Finding Suzanne already in residence, your Editor out on the fells somewhere and Don and Judy arriving as Ed and I were donning our boots for a stroll up to Boredale Hause and back, the meet was well underway.

Beautiful evening light greeted Ed and I as we walked back through Side Farm to the ever-welcoming Hut now with its lights on and a curl of smoke emanating from the chimney.



Ed set to with preparing dinner for four, whilst I drove to Penrith and collected Celine from the railway station. Julie Jones and Pip arrived in their hire car and together with Celine began their communal catering. Suzanne returned later having been invited by Mike Parsons to an Alpine Club evening lecture and together with Marian we all spent the rest of the evening catching up and making plans for the morning.

Celine, Ed, Mike and I elected to take the first ferry from Glenridding to Pooley Bridge and walk back along one side of the Ullswater Way and the four M's were going to join us. With strong winds the main feature of the weather forecasting we should not have been surprised that when we arrived at the ferry office all sailings had been cancelled. A quick revision of our plans and we set off along the Ullswater Way to Aira Force. Here a coffee stop in the National Trust café allowed everyone to catch up before we walked around Gowbarrow to the Ullswater viewpoint.



Here it became abundantly apparent why the ferry had been cancelled and continuing on round to Airy Crag where no one tarried for a photo reinforced the decision, not to go any higher. The work on the path down towards Dockray had gone on apace since the President's meet, making the descent much easier.



*Aira Force*



The Royal was open, and the stove was on and well alight, so we dried off a bit externally and rehydrated in equal measure, before returning via the Aira Force grounds till we joined the way we had come in the morning.

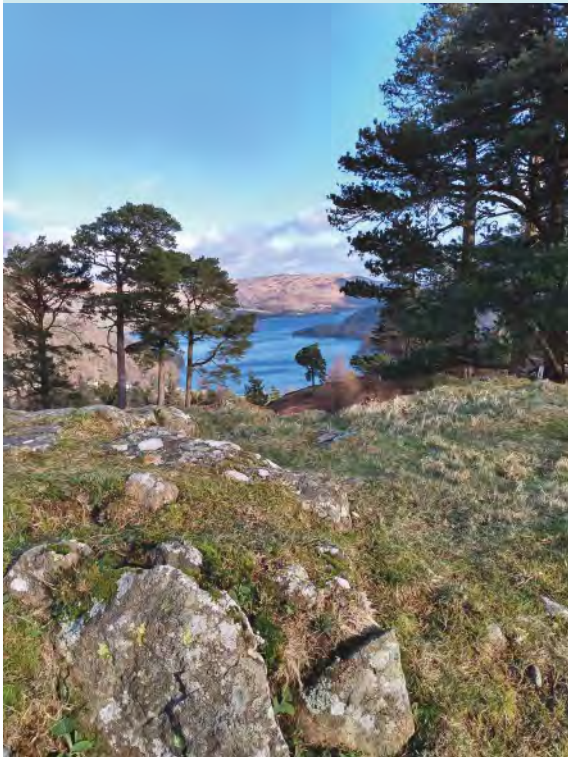
Another communal meal on the Friday night prepared by your Editor was enjoyed by Ed and I as more people steadily arrived to take the number up to fifteen staying at the Hut. Several of us made our way down to the Inn on the Lake to join the twenty or so staying in the hotel for the weekend. As always, the conversation flowed regardless of how long it's been since we last met.

Saturday morning three separate walking groups formed at the Hut and what follows are accounts written by individuals from each group, starting with the first group ably cajoled out the door, by Elsbeth Robson.

With a reasonable forecast (apart from seriously strong winds) a party of six ABMSAC members (Mary, Jonny, Celine, Daniel, Andy and Elsbeth, the author of this piece) set off from the GSH aiming for Birkhouse Moor.

Through the lovely churchyard of Patterdale church clumps of snowdrops lifted our spirits with thoughts that spring might not be too far off. There was lots of chatter as we ascended the road above the beautiful beech woods alongside the rushing and tumbling Grisedale Beck below flowing through the grounds of Patterdale Hall.

We took the route via Lanty's Tarn (very full of cold, dark, clear water) and after looking at the old icehouse, diverted over the stile and up the hill to Keldas to enjoy the delightful view over Ullswater. After a snack or two we retraced our steps onto the open access land and following the wall gradually ascended towards the upper reaches of Mires Beck. Lunch was had in the chilly shelter of a tumbledown sheepfold with lovely views of the fells and the lake.



Fortified, we continued the climb up to the cairn on the summit of Birkhouse Moor. A Wainwright bagged at 718m. The wind was pretty ferocious forcing us to crouch and sit down low to the ground. Given the conditions we decided against the possibility of continuing along the ridge to the Hole in the Wall and descending via Red Tarn. Instead, we retraced steps to our lunch spot and descended on the path along Mires Beck. Just above Glenridding Beck the party split up – most making their way down into Glenridding but the author contoured back to Lanty's Tarn for a little foray into the woods and enjoyed the shafts of evening light piercing through the clouds above Eagle Crag.

During the outing we spied quite a lot of hikers out walking above us up towards Helvellyn including on Striding Edge and questioned their judgement given the extremely strong winds.

Everyone was back at the GSH in time to transform themselves into very smart attire for the evening's AGM and with a hearty appetite worked up for the several courses of dinner at the Inn on the Lake.

Mike, Ed and I left the Hut shortly after Elsbeth and the gang and headed back up Boredale Hause with three of the 4 M's catching me up as I crossed the Goldrill Beck bridge. The fourth M, (Margaret O'Dwyer) having elected to walk to Brotherswater at her own pace.

Very quickly after the Hause, Ed and the two Mike's crossed Freeze Beck and made their way up to Beda Fell Knott and out of sight. Michele, Marcus and I stopped close to the Knott and looking round to Buck Crag at the top end of Bannerdale we saw several deer silhouetted against the skyline. As we watched they made their way out of sight towards that area marked Deer Forest on the map.



*Bracing winds!*

We then enjoyed a windswept but quite sunny walk along Beda Fell, stopping for a sandwich at the cast iron bench on Howstead Brow, enjoying clear views of the obelisk on Hallin Fell, Sandwich Bay, and through the Coombs above Martindale towards Howtown, and out towards the Pennines.



*On the way back to the hut*

We then made our way past the lovely little church among the trees and along the grassy path around Hallin Fell to Waternook and back along the lakeside path among the trees to Sandwick.

As we made our way along the track towards Scalehow Force and the little footbridge two PMRT vehicles passed us and disgorged several of their team members, almost as the track becomes undrivable. They quickly made their way up the path towards Low Moss and by the radio traffic and their overall pace and demeanour they were attending a callout.



We arrived back at the Hut in time to get ready for the AGM and Annual Dinner.



Blowing up to Sheffield Pike by Heather Eddowes.

We knew the Saturday was going to give the best weather for the weekend and so after a filling hotel breakfast Dave and I donned boots and rucksacks and headed out into the gusts and sunshine. We made our way through Glenridding, past the Traveller's Rest, up the Greenside Road, past the cottages and so to the path up through The Rake.

Shall we? Shan't we? Yes let's go up the Dodd first. So we followed the easy, steep path up to Glenridding Dodd (442m) and were rewarded with fabulous views along Ullswater, over to Place Fell and the summits behind us. A few gusts of wind but nothing to worry about.

A couple happily arrived shortly after us and obliged by photographing us with Sheffield Pike behind. This was in exchange for an explanation of the club's logo on Dave's beanie hat . . . . Association of what? Where? When? Who? And of course why? They seemed impressed with my explanation!

The view westwards had a couple of walkers silhouetted on the path up to Sheffield Pike. So that was it. Off we went. As more height was gained so did the strength of the wind. The sudden gusts were particularly well timed to coincide with one or other of us crossing over an exposed step or two with only a branch of heather to steady ourselves. (I'm good for something!) We caught up with the walkers ahead as they left their sheltered lunch spot. So that was the place for our snack stop too. Perfect. Another 5 minutes of ascent had us in the full blast of the wind. The Pike wasn't too far ahead but the wind slowed progress significantly. Overbalancing was to be avoided so all four limbs (in my case) hoicked me to the summit (675m) where Dave was waiting - naturally . . . It was very windy - yes very windy.



The easy inclined path to descend the NW side of Sheffield Pike was hard work due to the 'uphill' wind and the wet boggy nature of the terrain. But the col was finally reached, and we turned right and followed the well-walked stony path descending Bleabank Side, beneath Black Crag into the Glencoyne valley and over the very uneven, stony path through the fallen trees from the storms a few years ago, to the Seldom Seen cottages.

An easy steady track brought us to the right fork up and so over a very small col over to the main road at Mossdale Bay. The lake side footpath brought us back to Glenridding and the hotel in plenty of time to prepare for the evening's AGM and Annual Dinner.

A veritable posse of ABMSAC female members headed for the Annual Dinner at the Inn on the Lake in Glenridding, spurred on by the news that the President had, for the first time, invited a lady as Guest Speaker – the indomitable Kate Ross. What a treat!

Julie Jones and Pip: Not to be deterred by yet another rail strike, we came by trains and boats and ... no, seriously, we came by Avanti West Coast, by car, even hired a car to be there, deftly circumventing the cancellations of Friday by travelling up on the Thursday. The extra day gained dawned wet and very windy so my weekend guest, Pip, was persuaded to try the delights of Keswick rather than Kirkstone (closed) and a circuitous route back to George Starkey via Borrowdale. Afternoon tea was thwarted by scaffolding at the Lodore Hotel but that left plenty of room for supper at the Brotherswater Inn.

Pip was not only a former Joint Alpine Meet participant at Randa, including a memorable overnight with unnamed ABM members at the Trift Berggasthaus, but she also came along as a prospective new member. Having lived in Bhutan for two years and worked extensively in Africa, her wry observations provided welcome feedback and fresh eyes.



A selection of ABM treasures

And so it was to bed and the crushing disappointment of finding that the refurb of the ladies shower room had been postponed yet again by the need, this time, for roof repairs. We may enjoy the sobriquet 'geezer gals' but surely it is the turn of the female members in the year when we celebrated, nay embraced, the role of women in the hills. Even the BMC have a new initiative, OutdoorHer, to address such things although 'Toileting in the Wild' is, perhaps, a little too much information – sheep have been doing it for centuries.

Saturday was a joy from start to finish. Heading up to the Hole in the Wall mid-morning, well behind the trail-blazing men, we met hardened lady walkers coming back down having been blown over on the upper traverse by gusts of 40mph. A brief detour to idyllic Lantys Tarn brought us down at nightfall, just in time to change for the evening's proceedings. The well-chosen menu, with vegetarian options, courtesy of Julie Freemantle's unstinting efforts, lively conversation and general reminiscing made for another excellent Annual Dinner.

A wonderful, illustrated talk by Kate Ross, more a relaxed chat amongst friends than formal lecture, rounded off the evening, ably hosted by retiring President, Andy Burton.

Pip said she would be back when the loos are upgraded – the bubble wrap around the cisterns is not bio-degradable. These things matter nowadays.



On completion of the AGM, which included introducing Daniel Albert, the next Club President to the assembled throng, I met up with Guest Speaker Kate Ross and her partner Keith Lambley.



What followed was an interesting evening with good food and drink and diverting conversation all in the company of ABMSAC memorabilia on display followed by a riveting talk from Kate with great accompanying photos of her life in the mountains that was enjoyed by us all, if the positive feedback I have had is anything to go by.

With thanks to all those who worked in the background to make the evening a success, especially Julie Freemantle, and all who made the trip to join us at the Inn on the Lake.

I hope to see you all next year when I am back sat at the naughty table and Daniel is in charge of proceedings.

## Members Reports

### Hogmanay Reflections *by Julie Jones*

As tradition dictates, for some 30 years at least, the family headed to the Cairngorms for Hogmanay and outdoor excursions which can range from a benign stroll to An Lochan Uaine, the Green Loch, from Glenmore Lodge, to ferocious winds higher up, on Cairngorm, on Ben MacDui, and beyond.



Weather patterns in the Highlands can be erratic, the close of 2022 particularly so. Temperatures were warm, dropping to minus 2 max overnight. New Year's Eve was positively balmy, out on the streets watching fireworks in light fleeces until, at about 2am, it snowed 3 or 4 inches in 2 hours, what the Inuit call little flakes, big snow. By morning it had stopped but, instead of the usual freeze of lying powder into hardened crust, it disappeared as quickly as it had come, every patch gone in a matter of hours.

These changing systems can wrong foot those who go to the hills at this time of year in anticipation of freezing temperatures, perhaps a flurry of snow, and end up soaked to the skin. Outdoor

garments don't always meet both requirements. Same with footwear. You start the day on sheet ice and return at nightfall through a peat bog.

Could this be nature regaining control of the human footprint it has long endured in the mountains, now increasingly over-populated by enthusiasts who seek their thrills in the great (and 'free') outdoors, without regard to the damage which can be caused, nor the safety of rescuers who go to help if things go wrong.

And, what of skiing? Will this exhilarating sport and pastime be remembered as a short-lived, turn-of-the-century recreational pursuit? Fast lifts have offered easy access to high peaks, enabling long downhill runs, sometimes at frightening speed. Were we that privileged generation?

The University of Grenoble says that unless global action is taken to curb carbon emissions, France's two greatest glaciers are doomed: Argentiere will be gone by 2080 and Mer de Glace by the end of the century. 'Almost nothing' can be done locally to stop their decline.

Higher night time temperatures have warmed the faces, making many dangerous to climb, even in darkness. Warming is leading to more rockfall and thawing permafrost, causing havoc with infrastructure. There is no normal any more.



Well-intentioned but futile attempts to change human behaviour make a mockery of 'Save The Planet'. The planet will survive, whatever we do. It is we who will perish.

On 1 January, 2023, Scotland recorded the mildest New Year's Day on record thanks to a flow of warm subtropical air from the Azores. The Met. Office confirmed temperatures reached 15.9 at Achnagart in Glenshiel.

Alfred Wainwright memorably remarked 'there is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing'. Perhaps we should take a hard look in the cupboard and restock some essentials for this changing world. Weather and wardrobe are inextricably linked. Something to ponder for those who frequent high places.

### **Weisshorn Hotel Reflections *by Mike Goodyer***

Back in the summer of 2018 Andy and I walked from Zermatt to Zinal (account in 2019 Journal) and after crossing the Meidpass stayed at the famous Weisshorn Hotel for 2 nights. The Hotel is above St Luc in Val d'Annivers at a height of 2337m.



*Weisshorn Hotel from the Meidpass (insert)*

The Hotel was opened around 1884. Initially the ground floor was made of stone and the first floor of wood. The Alpine Garden, which still exists, was opened in 1885 and used as a test station for the Jardin Alpin in Geneva.



*Hoarding for the Hotel and 'Jardin Alpin'*

In September 1889 the Hotel was destroyed by fire and it was rebuilt in stone. The building was enhanced with a basement, four floors and public rooms, all of which survive today.



The Hotel continued to trade and attract visitors until 1966, when the owner shut it down.

In 1969 the Hotel, under new owners, was reopened and has remained open since. Owners come and go, but the style of the Hotel has changed little over time.

Although the Hotel now boasts its own hydroelectric power station and water supply.

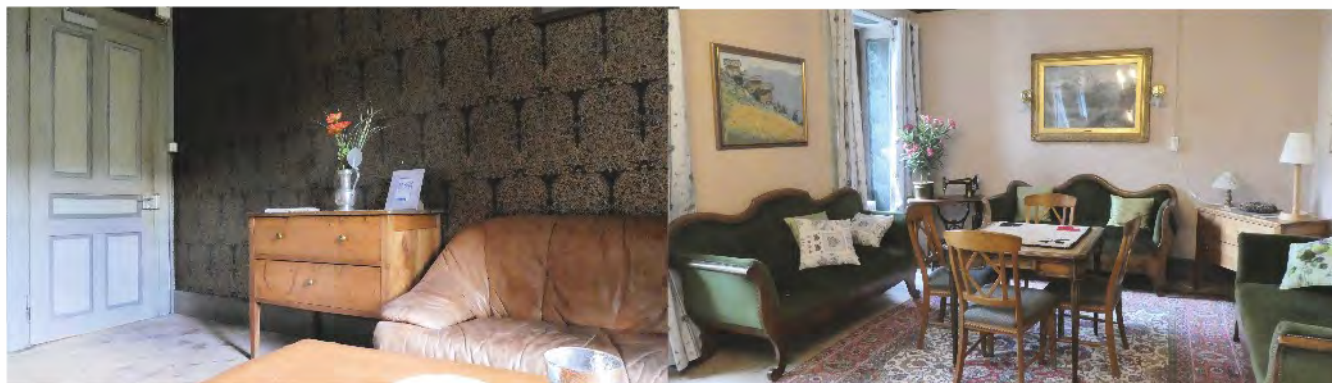
The Hotel is run very much like an Alpine Hut. Boots are taken off in the hallway and 'hut shoes' are offered! The bedrooms are very comfortable, lined with Valais fir and spruce pine panelling. All have twin beds but no en-suites are available instead here are communal bathrooms on each floor.



However in many ways it is run as a Hotel with a full bar and terrace serving food and drink all day to residents and passers by alike. The outdoor terrace has wonderful views across the valley.



The bedrooms are all lined with Valais fir and spruce wood and each floor has a bathroom with showers and toilets. The lounge and 'smoking room' are on the ground floor and still in use by guests.



We were blessed with good weather during our stay and were able to enjoy the comforts of the Hotel to the full. The Hotel was busy with a ladies walking group stopping over and several other couples and families. The only access is by foot or mountain bike. However there is vehicle access for luggage to be transported for the walking groups!

The panoramic dining room overlooks the valley. The set dinner is served in true Alpine Hut style and 'seconds' were offered to guests!

The buffet breakfast, although early, wasn't at Alpine Hut time.



After an early evening thunderstorm at dinner we were treated to a wonderful sunset



The day we spent in the valley we walked up the Bella Tola (3025m) and walked along the ridge, returning on the Planet Trail for welcome refreshment on the terrace.







*Old posters in the Hotel.*

*Note that it is only 8 hours to the Weisshorn from the Hotel*

## HOTEL WEISSHORN

2300 M. ü. M.

**Geöffnet vom 15. Juni bis 15. September**  
**5 Stunden vom Bahnhof Siders (Sierre)**

Dieses komfortable Hotel bietet Familien und Touristen angenehmen Aufenthalt.

Verlässt der Reisende den Bahnhof Siders in südlicher Richtung, so betritt er das reizende Eifischthal (Val d'Anniviers) und gelangt in drei Stunden (im Automobil ¾ Std.) nach Vissoye.

Hierauf geht, reitet oder fährt er 2 Stunden lang durch prächtige Wälder und erreicht das Hotel Weisshorn, das wundervoll auf einer Anhöhe "Tête de Mouton" genannt gelegen ist, in nächster Nähe der Alpenweiden von Zinal.

Vom Hotel aus geniesst der Gast eines der imposantesten Panoramas der Schweizeralpen.

### Erstklassiges Alpenhotel

**Milchkuren und vom 20. August an Traubenkuren**  
**Elektrische Beleuchtung - - Mässige Preise**

#### Spaziergänge

Stunden	Stunden
Au glacier de Tourtemagne 3	Au lac de Combavert ½
" des Diablons 3	Aux chalets hergeries ½
" Pas de la Foreletta 2	Sur le rocher près de l'hôtel ½
Belle vue des glaciers 2	Vue du Mont Blanc ½
A la Croix de Nava 1	A l'Iligraben 4
Vue du Mont Cervin 1	Vissoye hôtel 2
Bec de Nava 2	St-Luc hôtel 1 ½
Au lac de l'Il 3	Zinal hôtel 3

#### Bergbesteigungen

Stunden	Stunden
Bella Tulla 2 ½	Weisshorn 8
Burterhorn 3 ½	Bruneckhorn 6
Tounot 2	Fletschhorn 6
Blumalt 2 ½	Rothhorn 13
Roc de Boudry 2	Gabelhorn 12
Nava 1	Roc noir 5
Diablons 5	Lilhorn 5

#### Passübergänge

Pas du Bozuf	Glacier de l'Arberg et par le Biesjock
A Graben hôtel par le Pas de Meiden	A Stalden par Augstbondli
A St-Nicolas 9 hr. par le Meiden et Augaberd	A Lauische-Straute par le Schwarzgrabe
A Randa 10 hr. par le glacier de Bies	A Evulsa par le col Durand
A Zermatt 12 hr. par le Glacier de l'Arberg	



*The 'Jardin Alpin'*

We enjoyed our short stay and on our last day of the trek walked up the valley to Zinal, going along the Planet Trail. The Weisshorn looming above us as we arrived in Zinal.



Perhaps during your visit to the area on the 2024 Alpine Meet to Grimentz you may be tempted to visit.

### **Walking in the Albanian Alps by Judy Renshaw**

Albania lies between Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Greece, and has a coastline along the Adriatic Sea. The Greek island of Corfu is closer to Albania than to much of Greece; and Italy is a ferry trip away. I had wanted to visit this area of Europe for some time, so in mid-June 2023 I joined a group (with the company KE) to walk in the Albanian Alps, which were previously known as the 'Accursed Mountains'.

Albania became independent from the Ottoman Empire in 15<sup>th</sup> Century and remained so until 1949, when it joined the Soviet block of Eastern European countries. It opened up in 1990 and is now developing rapidly and aspires to join the EU within the next few years.



The walks, mainly in the Valbona and Thethi valleys, were in lovely limestone scenery, close to the border with Montenegro. The days were sunny and warm, except for one day near the end of the trip.

After being met at Tirana airport, we had a couple of days of travel and sightseeing on the way to the Valbona valley. Although this felt like quite a long time before starting the walks, I realised later that it had been necessary in order to get there and to experience some interesting places that we would otherwise have missed.

First we visited Shkodra, the main town in the north, with its prominent castle, Rozafa Castle, on the hill behind. Parts of the existing buildings have been there since the 13th century but there were previous ones many centuries earlier. The name comes from a legend about a woman named Rozafa:

*Three brothers set out to build a castle but were frustrated in their efforts, as each day they built the foundation walls but they fell down again every night. Eventually they consulted a wise man who seemed to know the solution of the problem. He said, 'If you really want to finish the castle, you must make a sacrifice. You must swear never to tell your wives this. The wife who brings you your food tomorrow you must bury alive in the wall of the castle. Only then will the foundations stay put and last forever'. The three brothers swore on the 'besa' (Albanian code of honour) to not tell their wives but the two eldest brothers broke their promise and told their wives, while the youngest brother kept his besa and said nothing.*

*The next day when their mother asked her daughters-in-law to bring lunch to the workers, two of them refused. However Rozafa, the wife of the youngest brother, came, leaving her baby son at home. The youngest brother explained to her that she was to be sacrificed and buried in the wall of the castle so that they could finish building it. She did not protest but, worried about her infant son, she made a request. 'When you wall me in, leave a hole for my right eye, for my right hand, for my right foot and for my right breast. I will cheer my son up with my right eye, comfort him with my right hand, put him to sleep with my right foot and feed him with my right breast. Let my breast turn to stone and the castle flourish. May my son become a great hero, ruler of the world.' The castle was built successfully and stands in a strategic position to this day.*



When we visited the town of Shkodra in the evening we saw a prominent statue of Rozafa in the park, carrying a tray of food and a jug of wine. The town had a pleasant atmosphere, with modern boulevards, restaurants, parks and sculptures. There were some sculptures depicting the suffering of people held in prison camps during the Soviet era. Three religions are practised in Albania, Christian Orthodox, Islam and Roman Catholic, though none of them are an official state religion. There are also many statues of Mother Theresa as she originated from Albania.

*Rozafa statue in Shkodra*



*Ferry coming in to the mountain area*

In the morning we made an early start to drive along a very broken road to a ferry port at the end of Lake Koman. The port was chaotic, with vans and lorries unable to turn or manoeuvre but eventually the ferry was packed with vehicles and standing passengers. The lake is a flooded valley, dammed near the port, and the journey took us up through hills into higher mountains. We passed through spectacular scenery, with a few isolated farm buildings and ever steeper limestone cliffs. Eventually the ferry set us down at the far end, at a village and a reasonable road which took us to our hostel or 'guest house' at Valbona. The hostel was almost the only available accommodation for visitors, so it was full with several other groups from European countries. Our room was small for 6 of us, with a 'wet room' shower so it was quite a challenge to keep everything dry.

The type of food did not vary much but the quality and quantity differed in the 3 hostels in which we stayed. There was always plenty of tomato and cucumber salad, with occasional extras, potatoes, bread, cheese, sausage, with soup and cheese pastries at dinner and some roasted meat. In one of the hostels we were also treated to delicious grilled aubergine and peppers. For breakfast there were always fried dough cakes they called 'pancakes' and sometimes eggs as well.

To reach the start of our first walk we took a short bus ride to the nearby village of Çerem. From there we ascended through beech forest to beautiful meadows with masses of wild flowers, including orchids and different types of





*Judy at the border with Montenegro*

gentians. We also saw many butterflies, a golden eagle and a moderately large viper. We continued up to a ridge which was the border with Montenegro, marked by a concrete post (similar to a Trig point), with great views of mountains all around.

Further along the ridge on the Albanian side we came to another border post for Montenegro, where we stopped for lunch. On the descent we passed a number of shepherds' houses, not yet occupied as they normally set up home around this time to enable the sheep to graze the summer mountain pastures. Later we met some of the shepherds, with ponies loaded with sacks of food to last over the summer months.

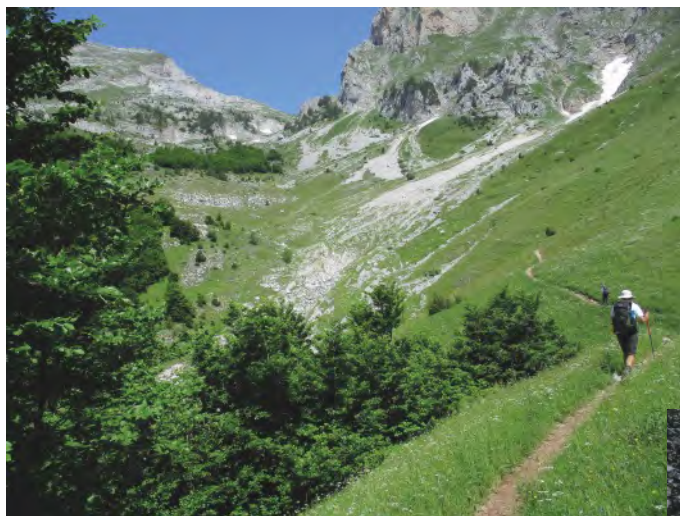


*Shepherds on the way to their summer pastures*



*Summer meadows*

At the bottom we stopped at a small café for drinks. There are many such cafes set up by local people in order to make a little extra money from the visitors. We were strongly encouraged to buy something every time, which we willingly did. My favourite drink was mountain tea, made by the café owners from herbs and plants gathered locally. It varied from place to place and was always nice.



The next day we did a lovely walk up to a pass at 2000m under Mont Rosi, which was possibly my favourite of the week. We set off directly from the hostel along a track then up through forest (where one person opted to stay behind) and later onto a mountain path with views down to the valley and up to the peaks above. The meadows through which we passed had colourful flowers, some lizards were basking in the sun and we heard many birds, including cuckoos. We stopped briefly at a sort of bivouac hut, with an upper floor suitable for sleeping. The shepherds' hut next door was uninhabited but it was due to be in use quite soon, maybe also selling drinks to walkers.

At the top there were a couple of small snow fields to cross but these were not overly steep and did not present any problem.



The views at the top were spectacular, with mountains all around and scenery reminiscent of the Dolomites. At the bottom of the descent there was another café in sunshine with wifi, so some time had to be spent there before returning to the hostel.

*Judy at pass under Mont Rosi,  
looking into Montenegro*





The following day we had to cross over the Valbona Pass to another valley and the village of Thethi, with our luggage carried by mules. The person who had opted out the previous day had to get over the pass in order to reach our next accommodation, so our guide gave her assistance by each taking one end of a walking pole and pulling her along. Although it looked quite awkward she said it helped considerably. The path wound up through forest as usual, with a shady café stop on the way, with a spring and other drinks. The water in the mountains was very good to drink as it was filtered through limestone before emerging as springs. In contrast, the tap water in the cities was not drinkable as the pipework had deteriorated, having many leaks and impurities. Several other groups and individuals were also crossing the pass, as well as a number of mule trains so we did

not stop long at the top but descended to yet another nice café.

Our hostel in the village of Thethi was very comfortable, with plenty of space and good facilities. In contrast with the previous valley, it was much warmer in the evenings and the mornings, so we were able to eat our meals out of doors. We were now on the south side of the ridge rather than the north side, which made all the difference.



A walk from here the next day took us up to the Pass of Peja where there was a junction of paths and a number of groups passing through. It seemed even hotter than before, so we were glad to shelter in a large cave with a high roof on the ascent. The slight breeze on top was very welcome. Our lunch stop overlooked some small

lakes, which were disappointingly green and unattractive but we were promised some swimming opportunities for the following day.



In the morning we had a shorter distance to go to the next hostel so did some sightseeing in Thethi village. This included the church, graveyard and traditional haymaking.



*Entrance to the Tower of Refuge*

The most striking feature was a Tower of Refuge which had been used over many centuries for people sheltering from 'blood feuds'. This tradition originated in an ancient law or code called the *kanun*. This set out numerous complex rules, including a requirement for family members to avenge any death at the hands of another person by killing the perpetrator. In turn, the other family had to take a revenge themselves, and so the feud continued. The towers also provided for negotiation over truces or reconciliation between families.

A novel by the Albanian author, Ismail Kadare, *Broken April*, illustrates the impact of the *Kanun's* rules on one family. There is some evidence that the practice may still continue in some villages in the north of the country (though not in Thethi).



*Traditional Albanian house in Thethi village*

Our walk went down the valley and around into the next one, to the village of Nderlysa. It was very hot, so it was good to spend a little time on the way at a picturesque waterfall under a cooling spray. We crossed a few rivers and arrived at our last hostel, which had a rather cramped dormitory but did have a small swimming pool in the garden. The pool was extremely cold as it was fed by river water from the hills running through it, but was most welcome. Later some of us had a dip in the river which was even colder, so mine was limited to just a few minutes. However, the evening was warm and balmy and the dinner outside was excellent, the best ever.

Our last day's walk should have taken us up the valley to the Thore Pass, from where a bus would take us to a final stopover. However, the walk was shorter than intended. We started up the valley for a couple of hours before a major thunderstorm and torrential rain turned the ground to mud and the path to a stream. We continued to a pool



and spring called the Blue Eye, which was pretty but rapidly becoming inaccessible due to the swollen river. Much debate took place in the group, with a German group nearby having a similar discussion. In the end we all turned back, took a taxi to the Pass above and walked along to meet our bus. The bus journey allowed us a final look at the mountains before reaching Kruja, an attractive town on a hill with a comfortable hotel, a castle to visit and a small craft market. An added bonus was a, rather too warm, pool on the roof.



*View of Kruja and its castle*

I had been worrying about my holdall bag which had begun to fall apart in the last days and looked unrepairable. However, to my relief, we stopped at a garage on the way to Kruja to buy some strong Albanian tape, similar to Duck Tape, which kept it going just for the final journey home.

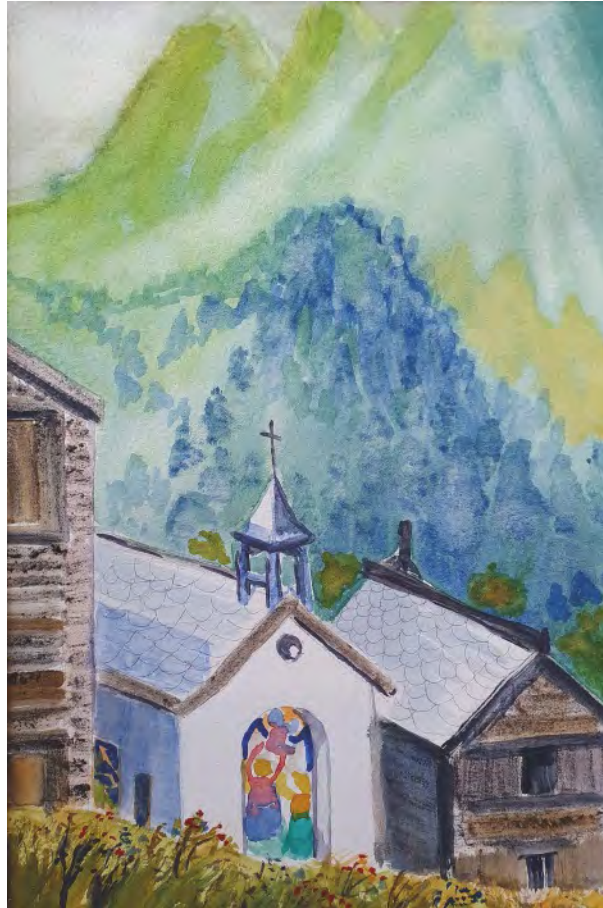
A bus took us to the airport in the morning, from where most people went home. Instead, I stayed an extra night there as I wanted to see a little of Tirana, the capital city, and had the remainder of the day to explore. The centre was small enough to find my way around easily and find the main square, parks, markets and the statue of Skënderberg, the national hero who had led the country to freedom from the Ottoman Empire.

When I asked local people what a visitor should see in a limited time, the consensus was a museum called Bunkart, which seemed to be popular with both Albanian families and foreigners. They indicated that it was important for the younger generation to learn about their recent history. The museum was housed in a huge network of underground tunnels in the city centre and presented a history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from WW1 up to 1990. Most of the exhibits focused on the period 1949-1990 when Albania was totally closed to outsiders from the western world. It had models of towers and guard dogs, massive barbed wire fencing, and surveillance bugs in houses and offices and pictures of prison camps with horrendous conditions. Though very interesting it was good to come back into the warm summer evening and watch families at play in open squares while having a meal at an outdoor restaurant.

This was an enjoyable and interesting trip. I could not have done it on my own in the time available, but it might be possible for a group to organise a visit themselves if they had sufficient time and a local contact, as the country develops its facilities for visitors in the next few years.

## Sketches from Saastal - Marian Parsons

*Editor: On the trip to Saas Almagell last summer Marian sketched several scenes around the Saastal. A selection are presented here with thoughts from Marian.*



### Village chapel

This is a little old village above the town, on a very steep slope. I perched on the edge of the track to sketch, with my feet stuffed into the long meadow grass, which was full of chirping grasshoppers and crickets.

A huge white spotted Apollo butterfly sat next to me briefly, supping on a purple clover.

The detail on the stained glass window of the little chapel was difficult to make out, but I did my best.





## Furggtal

Mike and I used the short lift from Saas Almagell, and traversing across south on the shady woodland paths, we enjoyed a lovely exploration of the Furggtal, without going right to the col. It was sunny and rather hot, so we basked beneath a tree, and I painted this little vignette looking down the narrow valley to the high snowy peaks across the Saastal.

## The Mischabel

Rambling along the flowery traverse path from the Kreuzboden lift, we sat down, gazed around and revelled in memories of so many wonderful high days out, looking across at everything from the Strahlhorn to the Dom, and the Mischabel.

I only use small sketchbooks, so I couldn't fit many mountains on the page, and my amateurish depiction turned out to be far from accurate but the thought was there, and I enjoyed it!





## Mattmark

A very windy day on my 75th Birthday, and Mike wanted to have a bash on his bike, so I got the bus up to the Mattmark dam, and arranged to meet him at some point. I had quite an adventurous walk and scramble from the west side path along the reservoir, up towards the Schwarzberggletscher, managing to shelter from the wind.

There were several chamois above me, kicking stones down! On the way back, I did this quick sketch of the lake and the tunnel which carries the footpath. There were some interesting orchids, as well as beautiful crimson Alpenrose along the way.

## Weissmeiss

We caught a bus north, to Saas Grund then took the cablecar up to Hohnsaas, where I was shocked to see the state of the Triftgletscher route up to Weissmeiss which I had climbed at least 3 times.

Watching parties climbing awkward narrow passages below huge seracs, from a viewpoint just below Hohnsaas,

I painted this picture, trying to show the difficulties of the rocky and icy barriers.





## Wold Gold – Yorkshire’s hidden treasure – Ed & Janet Bramley

You’ve probably heard or even been walking in the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors, but how many of you are aware of the hidden treasure that is the Yorkshire Wolds? The Wolds scenery is big rolling chalkland, steeply incised dry valleys, an escarpment along its western edge looking towards the Vale of York, and the sea on its eastern edge. It’s the northernmost chalkland in the UK, and also the northern most chalk stream, the Gypsy Race, which rises near Boynton and incongruously reaches the sea through Bridlington harbour. Take a look at the map, and it’s like Tolkeins Middle Earth. Whether it’s place names such as Kirby Grindalythe, Wetwang and Fridaythorpe, Dales including Great Givendale, Woodale and Horsedale, or the many ancient settlements shown on the map, all hint at a time gone by.

Why do we like this landscape so much? With the dry valleys, even in winter, most places are dry for the most part under foot. It’s also a chance to get away from the more well known places, so it’s not uncommon to meet only a handful of people during a day. And there’s also something about this wild open and often ancient landscape that has an appeal of its own. Maybe that’s why David Hockney has made several artworks of this area, such as his “Big trees near Warter”, one of the many small villages in the Wolds.

So let me give you a little amuse bouche of this area with a few of our favourite places and walks, to perhaps tempt you into visiting the area yourself. Whilst there are well known long distance walks crossing the area, including the Yorkshire Wolds Way, the Chalkland Way and the Minster Way, some of the tracks are local hidden gems.

We’ll start our journey at the Seaways café in Fridaythorpe, not long out of York, where the scenic road heads across the Wolds to the sea. Fridaythorpe sits at the apex of several dales, so its possible to do a round linking up several of the dales to the west and south of the village, and conveniently arriving in Huggate, the highest settlement on the

Wolds, for a lunch time snack at the aptly named Wolds Inn. Our way back takes us to Horse Dale, but before reaching it, it is worth looking back and taking in the open vistas, including the stands of trees on the skyline. And on a cold winters’ day, when the light is going low that moodiness only increases. Reaching Horse Dale, there is the poets’ bench, designed by Angus Ross and with words by John Wedgewood Clarke, it offers a great place to pause and take in the dry valley.

*Fridaythorpe - Horse Dale*



Only a few miles to the north of Fridaythorpe is the medieval deserted village of Wharram Percy. The village was occupied for around six centuries, before it was abandoned in the 1500s. The remains of the church are still there



and there are the outlines of several houses that can also be traced. Rather than taking the direct route to the village from the car park, we've gone on a clockwise detour to Deep Dale, which gives us a great vista of the church and fish ponds. A stone's throw away from the village is an abandoned railway, part of the Driffield to Malton line which finally closed in 1958, and mainly transported chalk from the nearby quarries. The old station house is now a private dwelling.

*Church and fishpond at Wharram Percy*

A couple miles to the south west of Wharram Percy is one of our favourite villages and walk starts – Thixendale. Sadly, the village shop and café is no more, but sometimes the village hall does have a coffee morning.



*Water Dale*

Leaving the village, we pick up the Yorkshire Wolds Way for a short distance, before heading along the edge of Water Dale, one of the classic views of the Wolds, before joining the Dale at Dimple Hole. A short walk along the road then sees us heading up Brownmoor Dale, which has several earthworks in it, before ascending out of the dale, and crossing over the Roman road that runs along the west edge of this part of the Wolds. A little further on, the vista really opens up, with views back to the Vale of York and York itself. We then join up with the Chalklands Way and drop down into Thixen Dale itself. There you might spot one of the bird perches put up in the trees by Robert Fuller, a local wildlife artist, whose work has been adopted by both the RSPB and National Trust.



Moving to the sea, where the chalk outcrops at Flamborough Head and Bempton cliffs, there is a great circular walk from Danes Dyke (an ancient ditch and bank earthwork which runs for about 2 miles across the headland), right the way around the headland and lighthouse, to North Landing (as seen in the most recent Dad's Army film, as is Bridlington Old Town). Here the boulder clay covers the chalk, so it can be stickier going underfoot in the wrong conditions.



*View towards Danes Dyke*

However, the sight of tens of seals and pups by the stacks at Flamborough are more than enough to compensate for a little muddy going. Unsurprisingly, the unique sea and cliff environment is protected as a SSSI and its seabird colonies mark it as a Special Protection Area. Offshore, the environment has been identified as a Sensitive Marine Area and a Special Area of conservation. Unsurprisingly, in 1979, it was designated as a Heritage Coast.



To finish our amuse bouche, we head south to Pocklington, on the York to Hull road. Dominant in the town is the old second world war airfield, one of several in Yorkshire that was home to the Royal Canadian Air Force, who flew Wellingtons and then Halifaxes out of this airfield, but now is home to the Wolds gliding club. Pocklington, which has ample refreshments, is the start for several of our walks, including along abandoned Pocklington canal, which heads out of the Wolds to the river Derwent from Canal Head.



*Pocklington Airfield*



*Canal Head*

Today though, we're starting in Millington, which has a great homely café, just to the north of Pocklington. Millington makes a great start for both walks and cycle rides. The name of the local pub, the Gate Inn, ties back to land held by local farmers at the time of the Enclosure Act. There is also a wheel set into the pavement of the village street that was used as a hooping iron by the local smithy in making the rims of cart wheels. The tiny church has a squint window, so that lepers in the parish could stand outside and observe the proceedings, without coming into contact with the congregation. Millington Dale itself with its pasture and vegetation, essentially looks like the whole of the Wolds before Enclosure. In those times, it was possible to go in all directions from the village without fields or fences.



*Biking over to Thixendale from Millington*

Well, that's the end of the amuse bouche and we hope that it's whetted your appetite for this area. As to Wold Gold – it's a great blonde beer by the Wold Top brewery (based in Wold Newton) – one for either a curry, or just basking in the sun!



## Obituaries

### Mary Boulter 1925 – 2023



Mary was born on 4 December 1925 in Lowton, Lancashire, to Eunice and Gordon Barlow. Her older brother, Peter, was her fellow accomplice in a care-free childhood and there were many tales of mischief and fun. Her younger brother, Michael, was born when Mary was 10.

Mary's schooling was at Howells School Denbigh where, in addition to her academic subjects, she learnt craft skills and became a very proficient spinner, weaver and dressmaker. Skills that became useful later in life when Paddy had a leg in plaster. Mary made him a waterproof Goretex cover for his plaster, which enabled him to climb 27 summits in the plaster!

Mary and Paddy met on Pancake Tuesday while they were studying in London and, in due course, married and had two daughters. Early in their marriage Mary was introduced to the mountains and went on various climbing trips to Scotland and the Lake District while the girls were in the care of their grandparents. There is a wonderful photo of Mary sitting on the top of Lochnagar, legs stretched out showing the nailed climbing boots!

Holidays in Wales, the Lake District and Scotland over the next few years honed Mary's climbing skills and Paddy was always the first to head uphill at every opportunity. In time they were able to extend their mountaineering to the Alps, the Himalayas, the Rockies – in fact to anywhere in the world where there is a mountain!

In 1968 they became members of the ABMSAC and SAC and derived enormous pleasure from the friendships they made there and from the many meets in the Alps that they joined. One of Mary's highlights was being present at Saas Fee for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the inauguration of the Britannia Hut and climbing in a long skirt and hat in the style of 1909.

Paddy in due course became President and Mary, always a wonderful cook and homemaker, very much enjoyed providing buffet suppers for the meetings in London. Well known for their generous hospitality, she and Paddy loved the companionship of their climbing friends wherever they found themselves.

Mary died age 97 on Easter Sunday, 2023 in her own home in Cumbria.

Jenny Bond (Marys daughter) November 2023

## John Percival 1936 – 2023



*John on Ben Lomond, his last Munro*

John Percival was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1936 in West Ham, East London. Having survived the Blitz he went to school at Plaistow Grammar and then took a degree in economic history and political philosophy at University College London. This was followed by National Service, mainly at RAF Boscombe Down.

John then went to work for the London County Council, which was subsequently replaced by the Greater London Council. Within the GLC the Inner London Education Authority was established to assume the LCC's former role as education authority for the inner London Boroughs. John joined ILEA and rose to become Deputy Establishment Officer. The GLC was abolished in 1986 and John took redundancy. After a short family interlude painting windows, training puppies, and shaving his beard off, he went to work for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames as a senior administrator in the

Parks department, retiring in 2001.

One of his great interests was football, and he was a lifelong supporter of West Ham United. He played for the Old Plaistovians and subsequently for the GLC football club where he became captain. John was a strong believer in providing educational and sporting opportunities for all and he later took voluntary roles in organising trials for New Malden Little League and as secretary of Auriol Boys FC.

John met Graham Daniels at an evening class in geology, run by the City Literary Institute. John already had an interest in mountains, having climbed on Mt Kenya a few years previously, but his meeting with Graham introduced him to the pleasures of British, and particularly Scottish, hills. Graham organised a weekend for the three of us which involved catching the night sleeper train to Rannoch station. We then set out across the moor. We went up our first hill, Beinn Pharlagainn and dropped to a bothy known as Mrs Cook's Cottage. The only furnishings were metal beds without mattresses which kept us off the concrete floor and away from the resident rats. Next morning we climbed Ben Bheoil and left our rucksacs while we climbed a snowy Ben Alder in thick cloud. Returning to our packs we then walked 10 miles along the side of Loch Erich to reach Dalwhinnie station and our sleeper back to London for work on Monday morning. John had passed his introduction to Scottish Munros!

By now he had caught the bug and he joined the ABMSAC. He eventually climbed all the Munros, many in the company of friends from the Club. He claimed that his annual May week in Scotland was written into his marriage contract! His last Munro, on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2005, was a memorable event when many of us gathered on the top of Ben Lomond to celebrate his achievement.

Graham recalls another memorable event "On another trip we were camping in Glen Brittle in Skye and decided to walk in to the BMC Hut by Loch Coruisk from near Elgol the next day. The day dawned rainy so we stopped in the bar at Sligachan for a drink before going further. Sometime later we left and parked under Blaven for the six mile



walk in. Reaching the Camasunary Bad Step we decided to be careful and using our climbing rope we slung our packs across – unfortunately mine fell into the sea never to be recovered!

It was getting dark so we pressed on and then found the river was in spate and we had no chance of crossing in the dark to reach the hut. So we sat down and bivouaced, John with gear from his pack to keep dry, and me with my cagoule which proved by dawn to be very leaky. In high dudgeon we walked, breakfastless, to my car.”

John and Rosemary celebrated their golden wedding in 2022. They had four sons: James, who is an ordained priest and now a Royal Navy Chaplain, David, who died very young, Mark, a rugby player, coach, and developer of community sport in London and Johannesburg, and Neil who previously worked for the Discovery Channel and is now director of UK Padel (tennis). Latterly John delighted in their four grandchildren.

John was known in the Club as John P, to distinguish him from the other Johns. He was a regular attendee at ABM meets and other Club events. We shall all miss his friendly approach, his ready smile and his quiet sense of humour. And most of all we shall miss his company on the hills.

John Dempster & Graham Daniels January 2024

## Karen Yorke



Karen Yorke of Ceinws, Machynlleth, passed away after a short illness on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023. She is survived by her husband Dick, son Alex and grandson Morgan.

Karen was a lifetime teacher, lecturer and educator. She also devoted 64 years of her life to the British Red Cross in a variety of roles including Refugee Services, First Aid, Crisis Management and Trainer Training. She was an avid cross-stitcher and was always working on commissions for her many friends.

On retirement she moved from Oxford to be closer to her beloved mountains of North Wales and was never happier than being in the hills, organising group ski trips to the Alps and looking for cetaceans along the West Wales coastline.

Alex Yorke November 2023

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We have been told that Sally Russell, an ABM and SAC member, passed away last March.

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

**Minutes of meeting held at the Inn on the Lake, Glenridding at 1745 hours  
Saturday 3 February 2024**

President Andy Burton was in the chair, 26 members were in attendance.

**1. Apologies for absence:** John Dempster, Pamela Harris, Ian Mateer, Dick Murton, Dinah Nichols, Alan Norton, Paul Stock, Lin Warris.

**2. Minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2023:** No amendments were suggested.

Proposed by Ed Bramley, seconded by Belinda Baldwin.

**3. Matters arising:** No matters arising.

**4. Election of Officers and Committee**

A. The President and Vice Presidents' terms of office expire in 2024.

B. The Treasurer's term of office expires in 2027.

C. Céline Gagnon has taken over the role of Secretary and the role as one of the Directors of the GSH previously held by Dick Murton.

D. The Meets Secretary's term of office expires in 2025. Paul wishes to stand down early. At the time of writing, no successor has been formally proposed.

E. Mike Goodyer has undertaken the role of Editor since 2009, having been extended under the rules of association. Mike is willing to continue in this role, with the full support of the committee.

F. Daniel Albert took over from Heather Eddowes as Vice President, with a view to becoming President in 2024.

G. Roger James' term of office expires this year. Roger is willing to continue.

H. Andy Hayes' term of office as elected member expires in 2024.

I. Judy Renshaw continues as a co-opted member of the committee. No term of office is specified in the rules of association.

J. Ian Mateer continues to support the GSH website and booking system.

As there were no new nominations and no objections to any of the above nominations and changes proposed at the meeting the above list stands.



## 5. Hon Treasurer's report

This report was circulated in the December 2023 newsletter.

As a club our financial position remains healthy, and whilst the club made an overall deficit of over £2,000 on club activities, our overall income rose by nearly £5,300 at the end of the past year. This is particularly due to the performance of our investments and the residual from encashment of one of those investments, as will be described shortly.

We have had a full call on club funds this year, including:

- Training grants and days (including payment for some training realised in 2021/22)
- Booking and initial payment of meet venues.
- Initial payments for the London lecture series.
- The club Journal.
- Club beanie hats.
- Provision of wine at the annual dinner, and at the Saas Almagell gala dinner.

Looking at the clubs' expenditure, several areas have been affected by increased postal costs, including distribution of the Journal. General administration costs have increased due to the amount of software and associated licences the club uses.

Our income continues to come primarily from our investments, which have continued to perform well. They represent nearly around 80% of the normal income that we receive each year. In addition, this year, we have been fortunate to receive a legacy from the late David Harland.

Returning to our investments, we have now encashed our Jersey based investment, which means that all of our holdings are now UK based and that our tax returns going forward will be simplified. The monies realised have been mostly re-invested into further shares in our existing portfolio.

We continue to monitor how our investments are performing, both in an absolute sense, and against the relevant market benchmarks, and will take action to change our investments should we feel the need arising. This includes seeking professional advice as required.

We have also enabled payments for membership and meets via credit card and smart phone, and this has proved very popular with members. Last year, over two thirds of membership payments, both by number and amount, were made by this method. In contrast, less than 5% of payments were by cheque. The cost of providing this facility was nearly £200 and has been taken out of the membership and meets costs, to allow a more accurate year on year comparison.

At the end of the financial year, the total market value of our investments was nearly £163,000. In addition, our cash reserves (in both deposit and in savings accounts) were over £48,000 giving a net asset value of the club at the financial year end of over £212,000.

Looking at how we use our funds wisely, to the benefit of our members and the local and outdoor community, remains our current largest challenge going forward and, as ever, constructive ideas on this are welcomed.

Eslbeth Robson asked where the investments were made, and whether they are environmentally sustainable and ethical; Ed responded that he did not have such information to hand, but would provide an answer in due course,

whilst reminding members that all the club's investments are named in the accounts.

Proposed by James Baldwin, seconded by Marian Parson.

## **6. 2024 President's Report**

Welcome to your 2024 Club AGM.

Early 2023 continued to build on the various elements that members have become well used to again each month since the pandemic. Firstly, with the provision of a Winter Lecture on the first Tuesday, thanks to Don and Judy and Janet Britnell from the Austrian Alpine Club for keeping this interesting programme going for us, both on Zoom and within the room at the CSC in Great Scotland Yard.

Plus, a North/South Day walk on the second Tuesday. Thanks to all the walk organisers who have made such a varied set of day walks available to our members.

There have been occasional changes to this routine due to unforeseen circumstances, which have been ably covered on the Club website and if necessary, in group emails by Mike (your Editor).

These changes and others within the Meets programme do emphasise the need for everyone to regularly engage with the website and the Facebook page, both to inform and to share exploits with one another. It's good to talk even if its electronically, as someone once said?!

There were fifteen meets on offer in the 2023 programme, carefully devised by Paul Stock and enjoyed by all those attending. Paul unfortunately cannot be here tonight, but as the architect of the training grant scheme and promoter of the Skills Meet training as well as organising a variety of new meets in the UK and abroad, Paul has shared his extensive mountain knowledge and experience with us all. Our thanks go to Paul as he steps down from this important role, and to all the meet organisers who hold this extensive programme together from start to finish each year.

In early July the hotel-based Alpine meet returned to the Saastal. With Pam being able to book us in once again at the Monte Moro in Saas Almagell, the scene was set for thirty-six of us to join in re-affirming our Clubs unique relationship with this beautiful Swiss valley and the Britannia Hut that nestles at 3030 metres in the mountains above.

Several attendees were able to make their way up to the Britannia Hut together with Marc Renaud and Jacques Bondallaz, our special guests from the Geneva Section of the SAC at the Gala Dinner the night before, to see and enjoy the new stove working.

The club donated funds to purchase the new stove to celebrate the 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the building of the Hut in 2022. We were also able to see and enjoy all the other extensive and innovative improvements that the Geneva Section have made to the Hut since we last visited. It was great to see the Britannia Hut being so well used and maintained.

Long may our association with both the Britannia Hut and the SAC continue.

Another long-term project that has been completed this year is the re-roofing, replacing of the roof windows and dormitory ceilings with insulating plasterboard at the George Starkey Hut. Our thanks go to Brian Horn and his team, Heather and her HMC team and our Alpine Club partners for staying with this project through all the ups and downs to completion of this important task.



Heather will be able to elaborate on just how much work is being done to preserve the lovely old building that we jointly with the Alpine Club are custodians of, as much for the wider hill walking community as for ourselves.

The improvements to the Drying Room will be supported by a generous legacy of £2000 from the estate of the late David Harland, a former club member, who clearly enjoyed his time with us.

Our support for the local community within the Ullswater valley continues with annual donations to the Patterdale village community fund, and the Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team.

2023 has seen nearly 20 new members join the Club. This has been a great team effort between Julie Freemantle, our membership secretary, and the various meet organisers to ensure potential new members enjoy their first meets and commit to joining us as a result.

There will be an increase in fees implemented by the BMC for 2024, but the club will absorb that increase for the coming year.

The Journal and the website and Facebook pages continue to inform and hopefully entertain members about what we are all doing and what the ABMSAC is about.

Please keep sending your adventurous and individual stories to your Editor, with accompanying photos in the fullest fattest version you can, so he can use them both online and in the Journal.

Special thanks go to Dick Murton who has successfully handed over the Club Secretary role to Celine, having held the post since 2010, and assisted Ed and I in his time as Director for the Hut Company.

My genuine thanks also go to the whole committee for their continual support and enthusiasm over my three years as President, in helping to run this fine Club of ours.

I am confident that they will continue to assist Daniel Albert as he takes over the role from me after this weekend. I wish Daniel every success in his new role and look forward to working with him.

## **7. Update on George Starkey Hut Ltd (GSH)**

*Overview.* The intended focus of work on the hut in 2023 was expected to be completing roof repairs, and finalising plans for the ladies' washroom. As events have unfolded however, the focus for this year has had to be changed, as described more fully below.

### *Key points*

- Maintenance in 2023 has focussed on the roof, as problems were found to have been more severe than anticipated. As a consequence, the decision was taken to reroof the entire building, along with renewal of Velux windows and up-rating of the loft insulation. This has now been completed.
- Examination of the damp in the ladies' washroom has shown that the damp from groundwater outside of the building needs to be prevented before any improvement work can commence. Associated remedial work is now in hand.
- The key operating cost for the building continues to be energy, followed by rent costs to the PCC.
- The main operating revenue continues to be hut bed nights sold, mainly for weekends. Work is underway to establish how to increase mid-week revenue.
- All relevant health & safety testing has been completed, and there were no reported health & safety incidents at the hut.

- The roof hut has been completed with a few snagging jobs to finish. As there was time Brian the roofer offered to paint the ceilings white which has been done. This shows up the wall which will need to be painted too!

The planning application by Brumby of the School House next door was withdrawn 18 Dec 2023. There had been a good response by members in registering their objections.

*Hut Maintenance (planned & unplanned).* During the year it became apparent that piecemeal repairs to the main roof had become inappropriate and that the whole of the main roof needed to be addressed. It now has been. In addition, deep flow guttering has been affixed, particularly in view of the heavier rainfall that is becoming the norm. Also on the roof, fitments for solar panels have been incorporated so that panels can be fitted at a future date without damaging the roof. The roof is now looking smart with its new slating, ridge work and guttering. Most of it will not be apparent to the visitor or indeed the local community which is testament to the workmanship of the contractors maintaining a Lakeland period property.

To improve insulation, triple glazed Velux-style windows have been fitted in the dormitories, the roof lined and insulation laid to the horizontal part of the dormitory ceilings. This will be completed in January with the fitting of insulation plaster boarding to sloping ceilings in the dormitories. It is expected that these measures will reduce future heating bills for the hut.

Inside, a new and enlarged loft hatch and accompanying ladder has been fitted in the ladies' dorm, allowing the central area in the loft to be boarded, and a solar battery platform to be made, and the through ventilation upstairs modernised. The new hatch and ladder also provided the workmen safe and easier access to remove all the old parging and other detritus that had collected in the roof space over all the years.

Other significant maintenance during the year includes fitting of a new bespoke front door, retaining the green of the hut's external woodwork. Kitchen windows have been repaired and now function easily. The emergency exit in the men's has been improved enabling Warden access to the building should there be a problem with the front door.

*Hut improvements.* In addition to the above work on the hut roof, tests have established that the Ladies' washroom has rising damp in the walls. Further investigations have been carried out and show this to be coming from a number of groundwater sources between the hut and the neighbouring building. A plan has now been developed to address this. Once the damp problem has been resolved the washroom improvements can take place.

*Hut operating costs.* The cost of power has become extremely expensive for everyone. For the hut this came coupled with a change of supplier as the previous contract ran out just at the height of the winter price increases. It is hoped that the effect of all the work on lining the roof and insulating the loft will result in reducing the electricity bills over the coming winter and into the future.

Electricity Costs	To 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2022 = £4,188	To 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2023 = £7,762
Lease Rent	To 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2022 = £ 9,298	To 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2023 = £11,319

Due to the concerns felt by the Board that the recent rapidly rising costs of running the hut were becoming unsustainable long-term, an approach was made to the Patterdale Church Council about the possibility of a rent break. Two members of the PCC accepted our invitation to visit the hut during the maintenance meet and see all the work that was being done on their property. Whilst no rent break has been agreed discussions are ongoing to see if the PCC will help towards the cost of improving the insulation in the hut.



*Hut Usage.* The GSH Financial Year runs 1<sup>st</sup> July to the following 30<sup>th</sup> June

- July 2021 to June 2022 - 1,033 bed nights
- July 2022 to June 2023 - 2,040 bed nights (still to be confirmed)

19 outside clubs have used the GSH as a base. Thus, the hut not only serves as a good central base for the AC & ABM but also the wider mountaineering community with the highest usage being Autumn through to Spring.

The suggestion at the AC's AGM in Nov 2021 that 'free bed nights' could be available to its AC members was introduced in April 2022. A .45p charge is made to the bookers debit card and the remainder of the bed night fee is paid by the AC. It continues for the time being.

*Health & Safety.* The Fire Safety Certificate and PAT testing has been completed. There have been no Health & Safety incidents to report. The location of the water meter next to the road edge remains both an inconvenience and a potential health & safety risk. It remains an ongoing issue with the water company to move the water meter from near the road edge to the outside of the property which is being pursued by the Director Andy Burton.

*Maintenance meet.* The Maintenance Meet was held in August with ten ABMSAC & AC members volunteering their time to fulfil its annual task of deep-cleaning, painting, sorting and scouring. The hut sparkled ready for the next booking. The volunteers were rewarded with beautiful sunny afternoons & evenings in which to get out on the hills. Free accommodation and a communal evening meal together rounded off a productive 3 days. Users of the hut are particularly invited to attend the meet.

*Background to the George Starkey hut and hut management.* The George Starkey Hut, which has been a mountaineering club hut since 1974, is located in Patterdale, Cumbria. It now caters for both the AC and ABMSAC clubs with an 8-bed dormitory for Members and 2 further dormitories of 8 and 12 beds which are let out to other mountaineering clubs. The Members' Room is always available to AC & ABM members unless the hut is booked exclusively for an AC Meet or an ABM meet. Very occasionally the whole Hut is booked out to an outside club.

George Starkey Hut Limited has 6 Directors - 3 from each club who are also senior officers in their own clubs. There is a Hut Management Committee (HMC) whose volunteers are:

- AC volunteers
  - Paul Hudson - Booking Secretary
  - Tom Curtis - Health & Safety
  - John Evans - Secretary
- AC/ABM volunteers
  - Marian Parsons - Hut Warden
  - Don Hodge - font of knowledge about the hut
- ABMSAC volunteers
  - Ian Mateer - GSH website
  - Mike Griffiths - Assistant Booking Secretary
  - Derek Buckley - Accounting
  - Heather Eddowes - Chair of HMC

The current lease runs until 2044. The leasehold is £11,391 per annum. The next review is 2026.

*Making a hut booking.* In order for members to make use of the hut set in the heart of the Lake District go to the GSH website and book on-line: [george-starkey-hut.com](http://george-starkey-hut.com) – for bookings, history and general information;

[george.starkey.hut@gmail.com](mailto:george.starkey.hut@gmail.com) – if you need advice or have questions about a booking.

Judy Renshaw raised concerns about the possibility of opening bookings for individuals, as suggested by the Directors, as a number of aspects of the hut booking system need to be either improved or extended. This was noted and is being actively progressed.

#### **8. Any other business.**

Mike Goodyer asked any members interested to send a write-up about any activities by end of February.

Heather proposed a vote of thanks to Andy for doing an excellent job as a Director and as President.

#### **9. Date of next meeting – Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025**

Celine Gagnon, February 2024

## Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club

### INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th September 2023

		Notes	2023	2022
<b>Income</b>				
	Net income from subscriptions	1	1,107.19	1,258.26
	Bank interest	2	934.56	520.34
	Dividends and Accumulations	3	4,171.87	3,631.74
	Brooks MacDonald income reinvested	3	-	433.28
	Legacy donation to club	4	2,000.00	-
<b>Total Income</b>			<b>8,213.62</b>	<b>5,843.62</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
	Journal & Newsletters			
	Journal (Production & Postage)	-	1,908.16	1,559.34
	Newsletter Postage	-	12.60	19.62
	Meets			
	London Lectures	5	718.57	510.08
	Net support to meets	9	1,149.88	738.76
	Annual Dinner	6	823.57	997.10
	Training			
	Training Grants	7	1,742.50	1,100.00
	Patterdale Mountain Rescue	8	150.00	150.00
	Donations			
	PCC of Patterdale	8	250.00	750.00
	Friends of the Lake District	-	-	100.00
	Britannia hut stove	-	-	7,954.37
	Mary Stevens Hospice	-	-	200.00
	GSHL - Specialist advice	10	529.20	-
	Administration			
	Tax on interest and dividends	-	181.07	191.14
	Smart payment costs - Stripe	11	196.65	-
	Administration	12	525.23	280.78
	Other			
	Beanie hats	13	2,120.13	-
<b>Total expenditure</b>			<b>- 10,307.56</b>	<b>- 14,551.19</b>
<b>Surplus / (Deficit) on Club activities</b>			<b>- 2,093.94</b>	<b>- 8,707.57</b>
<b>Profit on disposal of investments</b>			<b>3 649.26</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Increase / (Decrease) in market value of investments</b>			<b>6,742.61</b>	<b>- 16,434.21</b>
<b>Overall change in club income</b>			<b>5,297.93</b>	<b>- 25,141.78</b>

### BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30th September 2023

<b>Fixed Asset Investments</b>				
	Investments at market value	3	162,732.50	157,230.39
<b>Total Fixed Asset Investments</b>			<b>162,732.50</b>	<b>157,230.39</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>				
	Club deposits to venues for future meets	9	1,376.00	2,007.31
	Cash on deposit	-	48,252.54	47,825.41
<b>Total Current Assets</b>			<b>49,628.54</b>	<b>49,832.72</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>				
	Club members deposits paid to club for future meets	9	-	-
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>			<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>			<b>212,361.04</b>	<b>207,063.11</b>
<b>General Fund</b>				
	Balance brought forward from previous accounting year	-	207,063.11	232,204.89
	Balance transferred from Income & Expenditure account	-	5,297.93	25,141.78
<b>Carried forward at 30th September 2023</b>			<b>212,361.04</b>	<b>207,063.11</b>



# NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

For the year to: 30th. September 2023

Association of British Members  
of the  
Swiss Alpine Club



## 1. MEMBERSHIP

	2022/23		2021/22	
	No.	Amount	No.	Amount
New Members: Oct-Dec previous calendar year (iv)	2	59.30	2	59.00
Memberships renewed	169	6,640.07	176	6,517.16
Members with zero payment	5	-	4	-
New/renewing Members subsequent quarters (iii)	8	238.00	7	169.00
<b>TOTAL Membership Income</b>		<b>6,937.37</b>		<b>6,745.16</b>
SAC Membership bulk payment (i), (ii)	22	-2,166.16	24	-2,046.63
SAC - Chf transfer fee		-15.00		-15.00
<b>TOTAL SAC related payments</b>		<b>-2,181.16</b>		<b>-2,061.63</b>
BMC affiliation payment – New Members Oct-Dec previous calendar year	0	-	2	-40.52
BMC Affiliation payment	153	-3,404.25	162	-3,280.50
BMC Affiliation payment subsequent quarters (iii)	11	-244.77	7	-104.25
<b>TOTAL BMC Affiliation fees</b>		<b>-3,649.02</b>		<b>-3,425.27</b>
<b>Gross Income to ABMSAC</b>		<b>1,107.19</b>		<b>1,258.26</b>
Smart payment costs (Stripe)		-92.17		-
<b>NET Income to ABMSAC</b>		<b>1,015.02</b>		<b>1,258.26</b>

- (i) On behalf of SAC Members paying via ABMSAC.
- (ii) SAC credit for 2022 is Chf 155, due to membership changes after bulk payment made.
- (iii) Only the payments into and out of the club are shown. Where payments are pending, these will appear in the Accounts next year.
- (iv) Includes 30p Stripe test transfer.

## 2. BANK INTEREST

To facilitate more ready access to its savings, particularly to allow payment for meets at critical times of the year, the club has made two changes to its savings accounts. The first has been to close the 95 day notice account with Cambridge & Counties bank and transfer the funds to its existing 31 day notice account with the same bank. The second has been to set up an on-line savings part of the current account, which provides instant access to those savings whilst still generating modest interest.

## 3. INVESTMENTS

The club has now sold its holding in Brooks MacDonald, which was a Jersey based holding. In so doing, this simplifies the tax affairs of the club. The majority of the income from this sale has been invested in additional shares of existing holdings. The net profit on investment is derived from the value of the Brooks MacDonald shares at the end of the previous financial year, and the amount they were sold for.

Investment	Comments	No. Units at year start	No. Units at year end	Type of payment
Aberdeen Standard		7,782	7,782	Accumulation
Brooks MacDonald Sterling Bond	Sold – March 2023	11,636	0	Accumulation (Jersey)
Brunner Investment Trust 25p		4,320	4,687	Dividend
Invesco Select Trust 1p		10,374	12,778	Dividend
LionTrust		6,541	6,541	Accumulation
Murray International 5p	Changed from 25p to 5p	1,665	9,795	Dividend
Witan Investment Trust 5p		12,825	12,825	Dividend

	30 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 2023	30 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 2022
<b>Aggregate market value</b>	<b>162,732.50</b>	<b>157,230.39</b>
Total dividends and interest, including interest on fixed rate bond (2022 only) and change in unit value of accumulations	5,106.43	4,585.36

## 4. LEGACY DONATION

The club received a legacy donation from the late David Harland. After due consideration the committee agreed that this legacy will be used to improve the drying room at the hut, and will be specifically named after him.

**5. LONDON LECTURES** The amount shown is the total cost of the London lectures in 2022/23 as ABMSAC covers the initial cost of the lectures, and then claims a contribution back from the AAC, currently at 75%.

**6. ANNUAL DINNER** The cost of the annual dinner reflects a number of payments, including the guest speaker and menu cards, as well as an amount of wine for each table.

#### **7. TRAINING GRANTS**

Included under this heading is the Nordic poles introduction at the Presidents' meet in October 2022 and the group skills training session run at the George Starkey hut in April 2023. Two training grants from last year have been refunded to the trainees, and one further grant made this financial year.

**8. DONATIONS** As with last year, the club has made a small number of donations that reflect our connections with both the local community and the wider mountaineering community.

**9. NET SUPPORT TO MEETS** Expenditure on meets this year include:  
Deposits already paid to venues by the club last financial year, including refunds where the venue has cancelled.  
Deposits paid by the club for meets next financial year.  
Support provided to meets where fixed numbers of spaces had to be booked, but the uptake was less than the total.  
Provision of wine at the Saas Almagell gala dinner, in recognition of the 110th anniversary of the Britannia hut, and reciprocating the hospitality shown by the SAC.

**10. GSHL RELATED MATTERS** Professional clarification was sought about how the hut AGM should be conducted.

**11. SMART PAYMENT COSTS (STRIPE)** This year, the club has enabled smart payment for both membership and meets by either credit card, or smart phone. Around two thirds of monies received from members now comes in via this route, as compared to under 5% for cheques.

**12. ADMINISTRATION COSTS** The change in administration costs this year is primarily down to both renewal of software licences and the cost of postage.

**13. BEANIE HATS** After discussion with the committee, the club procured beanies with the club logo on for all club members, at no cost to them. Any surplus stock will form part of the welcome package for new members.

Ed Bramley, Honorary Treasurer. Date: 8 February 2024

#### **Examiners' statement:**

In my view the financial statements are in accordance with the Associations accounting records as of 30th September 2023 and disclose a surplus for the twelve month period then ended.

No work of an audit nature has been carried out.

Ian Featherstone, Honorary Examiner. Date: 8 February 2024

# Historic List of Officers

## List of Officers since the formation of the Association

### **PRESIDENTS**

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

### **VICE PRESIDENTS**

1948 Gerald Steel CV & Colonel E R Culverwell MC  
 1949 Colonel E R Culverwell MC & Brigadier E Gueterbock  
 1950 Colonel E R Culverwell MC, Rev G H Lancaster (died April 1950)  
 & Dr C F Fothergill  
 1951-1952 Dr C F Fothergill & Lieut-Colonel A E Tydeman  
 1953 Lieut-Colonel A E Tydeman & J R Amphlett  
 1954-1955 J R Amphlett & Robert Creg  
 1956 Robert Creg & Dr J W Healy  
 1957-1958 Dr J W Healy & B L Richards GM  
 1959 B L Richards GM & Dr A W Barton  
 1960-1961 Dr A W Barton & D G Lambley FRCS  
 1962 D G Lambley, FRCS & V O Cohen MC  
 1963-1964 V O Cohen MC & F Solari  
 1965 F Solari & J G Broadbent  
 1966-1967 J G Broadbent & J S Byam-Grounds  
 1968 J S Byam-Grounds & W Kirstein  
 1969-1970 W Kirstein & Dr D R Riddell  
 1971 Dr D R Riddell & M Bennett  
 1972-1973 M Bennett & Rev F L Jenkins  
 1974 Rev F L Jenkins & P S Boulter FRCS  
 1975 P S Boulter FRCS & J S Whyte  
 1976-1977 J S Whyte & F E Smith  
 1978 F E Smith & J P Ledeboer  
 1979 J P Ledeboer & F P French

### **HONORARY SECRETARIES**

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

1972-1974 D G Lambley FRCS  
 1975-1977 M Bennett  
 1978-1980 P S Boulter FRCS  
 1981-1984 J P Ledeboer  
 1985-1987 Wing Commander H D Archer DFC  
 1988-1990 J S Whyte CBE  
 1991-1993 A Ross Cameron ARC FEng  
 1994-1997 Mrs H M Eddowes  
 1997-2000 W B Midgley  
 2000-2003 M J Goodyer  
 2003-2006 A I Andrews  
 2006-2009 J W S Dempster CB  
 2009-2012 M Pinney  
 2012-2015 E A Bramley  
 2015-2018 M C Parsons  
 2018-2021 J Baldwin  
 2021-2024 A Burton  
 2024- D Albert

1980-1982 F P French & S M Freeman  
 1983-1984 S M Freeman & F A W Schweitzer FRCS  
 1984 FA W Schweitzer FRCS & Wing Commander H D Archer DFC  
 1985 F A W Schweitzer FRCS & A I Andrews  
 1986-1987 A I Andrews & W B Midgley  
 1988 W B Midgley & C G Armstrong  
 1989-1990 C G Armstrong & R W Jones  
 1991 R W Jones & G G Watkins  
 1992 G S Watkins & F B Suter  
 1993-1994 F B Suter & Commander J W Chapman OBE  
 1994-1995 Commander J W Chapman OBE & D R Hodge  
 1996-1997 D R Hodge & R N James  
 1997-1999 R N James & M Pinney  
 2000-2001 M Pinney & Dr D W Watts  
 2001-2003 Prof D C Watts & D F Penlington  
 2003-2004 D F Penlington  
 2004-2007 W L Peebles  
 2007-2010 T J Shaw  
 2010-2013 Mrs B Baldwin  
 2013-2018 J H Strachan  
 2018-2023 Mrs H M Eddowes  
 2023- 2024 D Albert

1971-1972 J P Ledeboer  
 1972-1976 FA W Schweitzer FRCS  
 1976-1978 R A Coatsworth  
 1978-1983 S N Beare  
 1984-1986 A G Partridge  
 1987-1988 S M Freeman  
 1989-2000 H F Romer  
 2000-2001 A I Andrews  
 2001-2006 J W S Dempster  
 2006-2010 Mrs A M Jago  
 2010-2023 D Murton  
 2023- C Gagnon



### **HONORARY MEETS SECRETARIES**

1971-1974 S N Beare  
1975-1979 A Strawther  
1979-1983 A I Andrews  
1984-1988 J C Berry

1989-1994 F B Suter  
1994-2001 M J Goodyer  
2001-2003 E A Bramley  
2004-2009 J C Foster

2009-2010 J F Harris  
2010-2013 M Parsons  
2013- 2019 A Burton  
2019 - P Stock

### **HONORARY MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES**

#### **(Formerly Honorary Registrar)**

1965-1968 George Starkey  
1969-1971 F A W Schweitzer FRCS  
1972-1974 J E Jesson  
1975-1977 D J Abbott

1978-1980 A N Sperry  
1980-1984 J W Eccles  
1985-1991 T G B Howe MC  
1991-1993 H M Eddowes

1994-2003 Dr M J Eddowes  
2004-2012 E A Bramley  
2012-2014 M Pinney  
2014-2021 E A Bramley  
2021 - J Freemantle

### **HONORARY EDITORS**

(The following officers carried out duties of Hon.  
Editor until post was created in 1949: 1909-11 J A B  
Bruce, 1912-28 J A B Bruce & A N Andrews, 1929-48  
M N Clarke)  
1949-1962 M N Clarke  
1963-1964 W R H Jeudwine  
1965-1968 G A Hutcheson

1968-1974 Graham A Daniels  
1975-1986 S M Freeman  
1987-1992 M R Loewy  
1992-2002 M I C Baldwin  
2002-2009 R B Winter  
2009- M J Goodyer

### **HONORARY EDITOR NEWSLETTER**

1992-1995 F B Suter

### **HONORARY TREASURERS**

1909-1911 C E King - Church  
1912-1925 J A B Bruce  
1926-1954 C T Lehmann  
1954-1957 J A Amphlett

1957-1969 F R Crepin  
1970-1978 R Wendell Jones  
1978-1980 R A Coatsworth  
1980-1997 M Pinney

1997-1999 K Dillon  
1999-2005 A I Andrews  
2005- 2018 J Baldwin  
2018- 2021 A Burton  
2021 - E A Bramley

### **HONORARY AUDITORS**

1909-1914 A B Challis  
1915-1922 Reginald Graham  
1923-1930 W L Adams  
1931-1940 F Oughton  
1941-1952 J A Marsden-Neye  
1953-1956 S E Orchard

1957-1967 R A Tyssen-Gee  
1968-1974 A Hart  
1975-1977 J Llwllyn - Jones  
1978-1979 G A Daniels  
1979-1980 C J Sandy  
1981-1984 N Moore

1985-1999 D Bennett  
1999-2005 K N Ballantine  
2005-2009 P McCulloch  
2009-2011 N Harding  
2012 -2018 M Reynolds  
2019 - 2020 S Crisp  
2021 - I Featherstone

### **Posts no longer in use**

### **HON. CHAIRMAN - HUT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

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

### **HONORARY LIBRARIANS**

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

### **HONORARY SOCIAL SECRETARIES**

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

### **HONORARY SOLICITORS**

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

### **CURRENT HONORARY MEMBERS**

Wendell Jones, Don Hodge

## Useful Contacts

### **George Starkey Hut ([www.george-starkey-hut.com](http://www.george-starkey-hut.com))**

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

See the Hut website for details regarding the hut booking system.

Warden Marian Parsons. Contact on [george.starkey.hut@gmail.com](mailto:george.starkey.hut@gmail.com)



### **Oread Mountaineering Club ([www.oread.co.uk](http://www.oread.co.uk))**

We have reciprocal rights at both huts.

Tan Yr Wyddfa, Rhyd Ddu, LL54 6TN, North Wales

Heathy Lea, Baslow (Grid Ref: SK 273722)

To book see the hut booking link on the website



### **Swiss Alpine Club ([www.sac-cas.ch/en](http://www.sac-cas.ch/en))**

SAC members can log onto the site using their membership number and puk number (see membership card).

Get up to date information about routes, huts and suggested tours in summer and winter.



### **BMC ([www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk))**

All UK members are automatically members of the BMC.

The website has up to date information on access and conservation to mountain areas.

Contact- phone 01614456111      email - [office@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:office@thebmc.co.uk)



## Notes



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# ABMSAC Office Holders 2024

## Committee

OFFICE	HOLDER	ELECTED
President	Daniel Albert	2024
Vice President	Tbc	
Hon. Treasurer	Ed Bramley	2021
Hon. Secretary	Céline Gagnon	2023
Hon. Membership Secretary	Julie Freemantle	2021
Hon. Meets Secretary	Andy Burton	2024
Hon. Editor	Mike Goodyer	2009
Hon. Hut Warden	Marian Parsons	2014
Training coordinator	Heather Eddowes	2018
Co opted Committee Member	Andy Hayes	2019
Co opted Committee Member	Roger James	2020
Co opted Committee Member	Judy Renshaw	2021

## George Starkey Hut Ltd

### ABMSAC DIRECTORS

Daniel Albert (appointed March 2024), Andy Burton (hand over),  
Ed Bramley, Celine Gagnon

### HUT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (ABMSAC)

Heather Eddowes (Chair), Derek Buckley,  
Don Hodge, Ian Mateer, Marian Parsons.