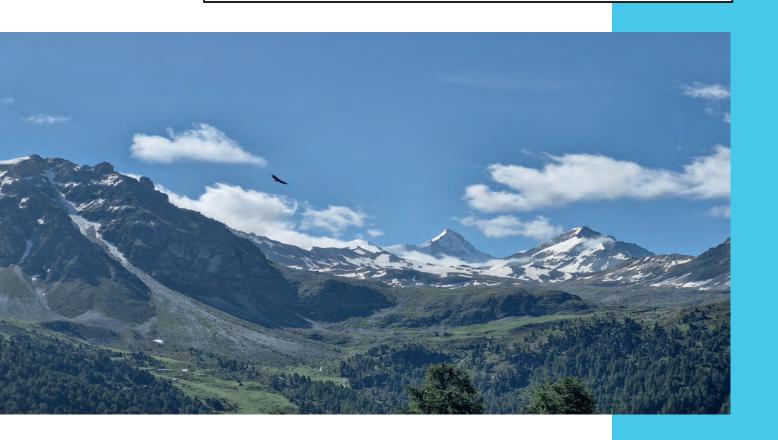




ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH MEMBERS OF THE SWISS ALPINE CLUB



MEETS PROGRAMME 2025

Date	Meet and Venue	Meet Leader
January 14	North/South Day Meet	N/S teams
Jan 31 - Feb 2	Annual Dinner and AGM, Glenridding	Julie Freemantle
February 11	North/South Day Meet	N/S teams
March 11	North/South Day Meet	N/S teams
March 27 - 31	Scottish Winter Meet, Carn Dearg Hut, Glen Doll	Daniel Albert
April 8	North/South day Meet	N/S teams
April 11 - 13	Refresh/Improve Your Skills Meet, George Starkey Hut, Patterdale	Andy Burton
May 2 - 5	Peak District Meet Ilam Hall YH	Andy Burton
May 21 - 27	Scottish Spring Meet, Aviemore YH	Judy Renshaw
June 6 - 8	Rhyd Ddu. Oread Hut, N Wales	Ed Bramley
June 21 - July 5	Joint Alpine Camping Meet, Vicosoprano, Bregaglia	P McWhinney
04 July 2011	Alpine Hotel Meet, Sporthotel Wildstrubel, Lenk, Switzerland	Andy Burton
August 1 - 4	Dartmoor Meet, Plume of Feathers Bunkhouse	Mike Goodyer
August 27 - 29	George Starkey Hut Maintenance Meet	Marian Parsons
August 29 - 31	Joint ABMSAC/AC Late Summer Meet, GSH, Patterdale	Judy Renshaw
September 12 - 21	Via Ferrata Trek, Cortina D'Ampezzo, Italian Dolomites	Andy Burton
October 3 - 5	Roving Meet, The Sill, Hadrian's Wall YHA	David Clear
October 14	North/South Day Meet	N/S teams
October 24 -26	Star Inn, Bwlch, Brecon Beacons	Paul Stock
Oct 31 - Nov 2	Presidents Meet, GSH, Patterdale	Daniel Albert
November 11	North/South Day Meet	N/S teams
December 9	North/South Day Meet	N/S teams
Dec 29 - Jan 2	ABM Twixmas/New Year Meet, George Starkey Hut, Patterdale	Judy Renshaw



JOURNAL CONTENTS

Editorial	1	Member's Articles	
Euitoriai	'	Member 5 Articles	
President's Thoughts	2	From the Haute Savoie to Everest - Pam Harris	59
		Dolomites Via Ferrata - Marcus Tierney	62
Meet Reports		History of Alpine Summer Meets - Pam Harris	67
N/S walk, February - M Tierney, M Goodyer	3	Georgian Caucasus trekking - Judy Renshaw	72
N/S day walk, March - E Bramley, M O'Dwyer	4	Mountaineering Skills for Walkers - C Gagnon	79
N/S day walk, April - A Burton, M Tierney	6	10 th TGOC - Marian Parsons	82
Skills weekend, GSH, April - Mary Eddowes	9		
Peaks Meet, May Day weekend - Andy Burton	12	Obituaries	
Crianlarich Meet, May - Judy Renshaw	16		
N Wales Meet, June - Ed Bramley	24	Dario Andenmatten - Pamela Harris	88
Grimentz Meet, July - Pam Harris	27	Peter Farrington - John Dempster	89
Tatras Trek, Slovakia, September - E Bramley	36		
Dartmoor Meet, September - Paul Stock	40	AMBSAC 2024 AGM Minutes	91
Brecons Meet, September - Steve Caulton	42		
Presidents Meet, GSH, November -Daniel Albert	47	Historic List of Officers, Hon. Members	100
Twixmas Meet, GSH, December - Simon Palmer	50		
N day walk,January - Marcus Tierney	52	Useful Contacts	102
Annual Dinner & AGM, February - Daniel Albert	54		

2025 Meets Programme - inside front cover **Current Office Holders** - back cover

Cover photo: Golden eagle soaring above the peaks, Grimentz by Max Peacock, July 2024

EDITORIAL

Welcome to this years Journal. Celebrating our 115th year with a full programme of mountain activities and visits to Switzerland and other European mountains. Many thanks to all the Meet Organisers who wrote up the Reports for the Journal and to the many members who have contributed with photos and/or personal views of the meets.

At the AGM, in February, Daniel highlighted the meets success last year, despite a drop in the number of members attending some meets. Looking forward to this year we have a programme of meets across the UK and Europe. I hope that you well be tempted to come along and attend a meet, particularly if the location is new to you.

Training opportunities continued for members on the Skills Meet in April, improving navigation techniques and basic VF skills. In addition, Celine took up our training/development offer and learnt skills for mountain walking (see her article under 'members reports'). This training offer is available to all members with at least two years membership.

As usual members have produced some interesting articles. We go trekking in Georgia with Judy, celebrate Marian's 10th crossing of Scotland, learn a bit of Alpine history from Pamela and prepare ourselves for the autumn trek to the Dolomites with a Via Ferrata romp from Marcus. In addition, Pamela has reviewed the Alpine Summer Meets from 1947.

With the last article in mind, it is fitting that the Committee offered Honorary Membership to Pamela for all the work she has done on our behalf organising many meets, particularly in the Alps. Many thanks Pamela!

The London Lecture series continues to be a success. The lectures cover a wide range of mountain activities and the organisers from both our club and the Austrian AC do a great job. We are looking for presenters for the coming years lectures, so if you are off to an interesting place this year why not let members know about it. In addition, we like to to see members attending either in London or on Zoom

The Meet Secretary post is still vacant and many thanks to Andy Burton who has taken the role on temporarily. If any member is interested in taking on this role please let a Committee member know on your next meet.

Finally, 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, Hon. Editor,

12 March 2025

PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

As I write this, typing with two fingers again, my right hand is in a splint because I broke one of my fingers. The well-meaning Health & Safety officer at the swimming pool had ordered the removal of the non-slip

mats as he considered them a trip hazard. So, I didn't trip; I slipped. Twice: on the way into the pool and on the way out. The second time caused the injury. It reminded me of putting on crampons to avoid a slip and then sticking them into trousers or gaiters and falling off the mountain.

It's all about thinking things through using your own, and others', experience to guide you. Which is why most of our near misses (and fortunately rarer real tragedies) tend to occur in our younger years. But my little accident shows that it can also happen to us that should, by now, know better.

Last autumn, Céline and I were supported by the club to go on a five-day mountaineering course in the Lake District with the instructor Graham Uney. We learned how to assess the likelihood and consequences of falling off scrambles

and how to mitigate these risks using the rope in different ways to balance speed and safety according to the terrain. Compared with pitched rock climbing, this alpine approach to mixed ground requires considerable thought and continual re-evaluation. Scrambling is fun because it is easier than rock climbing and it takes you from place to place in the mountains, but it has its risks.

Here in Kendal, there is an initiative to help older people to fall more safely and gracefully, when the inevitable happens. We meet every Tuesday afternoon at the Judo Dojo and receive instruction from an amazing coach with 40 years' experience... and then drink tea. My learning from these classes sadly left my memory as I fell. Need more practice, I guess.

All fine, but yesterday I read that a very experienced young woman and member of a national scrambling club (who knew these exist) fell to her death off Tryfan. I made a small contribution to the crowdfund to return her remains to her family abroad, even though I never knew her.

Take care everyone.

Daniel Albert February 2025

MEET REPORTS

North day walk, Peak District, February - Marcus Tierney

Today's walk began at the Outside shop at Hathersage. After breakfast and and drinks the group left Hathersage via the A6187 for a few yards before ascending through High Lees. The walk continued topping out on Owler Over Tor. At this point there were great views over the Burbage valley and across to the Longshaw Estate.

The walk continued across to the Hathersage Moor sheepfold and with bad weather expected we stopped and took stock. Keeping an eye on the weather the walk continued past the huge leaning block of Higgar Tor. At this point Marcus explained how ambition and ability weren't evenly matched when he attempted the infamous climb called the Rasp in 1987. However he looked stunning in his purple and blue tie dyed outfit so it mattered not whether he climbed it or not, looking good was more important at the time.



The group continued to Stanage Edge with a fine drizzle beginning to obscure the views as the route passed the Cowper Stone. This is an area where Ring Ouzels regularly nest each year. It is virtually guaranteed to see them here and along the North end of the nearby Burbage Edge at the right time of year.

With the weather still worsening the group descended on to the Balcony by Robin Hoods cave. Unfortunately the main cave was full of water but shelter was found in order to have some lunch, Andy and Ed looking like a pair of troglodytes.

A decent was made to Dennis Knoll where a decision to descend at this point was made. The route descended through the North Lees estate under North Lees Hall. This was a building regularly visited by the Brontes and the building itself was

the inspiration for Thornfield Hall in the novel Jane Eyre.

The walk ended at Hathersage and coffee and cake was most welcome as the drizzle was heavy with little visibility left on the tops so the timing was good.

Andy, Steve, Marcus and Michele later stopped for a drink on the way home in Mansfield to celebrate a significant birthday for Steve. Congratulations Steve. A very good day thanks to all who came.

Participants: Andy, Steve, Ed, Heather, Ian, Marcus and Michele.

South day walk, Selborne Common, February - Mike Goodyer

The South walk started in Selborne, with the rain coming in early. Waterproof trousers were donned at the start, which is never a good sign!



An enjoyable 10 mile walk, despite the persistent rain. A lunch time respite in the Rose and Crown in U Farringdon was welcome.

I'm assured by Paul that there are fine views to be had on this walk - we must do it again in good weather and see!

The Selborne Common track was very muddy but the Zig Zag path at the end led us quickly to afternoon tea at the cafe at Gilbert White's House and Garden.

Participants: Margaret M, Margaret O'Dwyer, Judy, Paul, Mitch, Steve and Mike

North day walk, Castleton and Mam Tor - 12 March - Ed Bramley

"One lump or two" said Andy to Marcus, as we sat in Tilly's café, watching the rain come down. I wasn't sure whether he was talking about the rain, or sugar cubes. But I needn't have worried – by the time we had left the café, the rain



had stopped, and the weather was slowly brightening up.

Our route started inauspiciously down a small ginnel in one of the back streets in Castleton, but soon became a proper limestone gill, with water running down what should have been a dry path. As we went higher up Cave Dale, it was clear why this limestone valley was so named. Both hillsides were dotted with cave entrances, and from one (with a grille on), there was a low whistling noise. "That one connects to Peak Cavern" remarked Marcus, sharing some of his caving knowledge of the area.

Higher up the dale, we took a path right, which offered up great views of Cave Dale and Peveril castle, and as we went further, Winnats Pass and

Mam Tor. Before long, our route swung to join the line of an old mining rake, which could be traced from the far side of Cave Dale, to where we were heading for. At the top of the rake, near Rowter farm, we came across several old shafts and spoil heaps – the remains of Slitherstone lead mine. "Titan is only just above us" remarked Marcus, referring to the cave shaft that was rediscovered in 1999, and is the deepest in Britain at 464ft.



It's a straightforward track out to the road beside Mam Tor, and we take the opportunity to detour to Windy Knoll cave, (a fissure cave) where a large number of late Pleistocene bones were found in the late 1800s, including bison, reindeer, bear and wolves. From the road, it's a short pull up onto the top of Mam Tor and the ditch remains of the middle and late bronze age hill fort. A cracking view, including the next part of our route. which has been dubbed 'The great ridge walk'. It's certainly a favourite of mine. We move easily along the path, which now has flagstones to protect it along part of the way. A short pause for lunch at Hollins Cross before ascending Back Tor (looks like a mini Eiger from this aspect when it's got snow on) and along to the top of Lose Hill.

On the ridge

From there, we descend to Crimea farm, and then follow several good tracks back into Castleton. And we still had time for a finishing cuppa at the same café we started at.

Participants: Marcus, Michelle, Andy and Ed

South day walk, Churches around Oakley - 12 March - Mike O'Dwyer

It was yet another wet winter's walk, this time starting and finishing in Oakley Hampshire.

The route started in the village centre avoiding main roads we were quickly on footpaths, heading towards Bulls Bushes Copse the first of many deciduous woodlands that we walked through on this 11 mile circuit. On leaving there Copse, we picked up the Wayfarers Way long distance path, for only a short distance before we diverted to Steventon and St Nicholas Church where Rector Austen, (1731-1805) the father of Jane Austen was in residence in the mid 1700s.

On leaving St Nicholas Church we walked through the grounds of Ashe Park (42 acres) and caught a glimpse only of Ashe House, before crossing the B3400 to the official source of the River Test, famous for its trout fishing and allegedly the birth place of fly fishing.





St Nicholas church

By passing the flooded church at Deane

Stopping in the porch of the Holy Trinity Church for lunch, continuing on through Ashe Park with a significant diversion as the underground tributaries to the River Test were above ground and ankle plus deep. We by passed All Saints Church at Deane as it was cut off by flood water.

Picking up again the Wayfarer's Way back into Oakley via Keith Able's newly plant vineyard - he of Able & Cole Organic food supplier fame. Finally we welcomed hot drinks and homemade cakes at Jolly Ollie's Cafe

All the churches are Commonwealth War Grave Commission sites.

Participants: Margaret, Judy, Mike G, Paul, Mitch and Mike O'Dwyer

South day walk, New Forest gambol - 9 April - Andy Burton

We all met at the New Forest car park at Fritham, five regulars and a Northern visitor - Andy. It was trying to rain (not again!) and we all donned our waterproof coats and some even went all the way to include overtrousers. This seemed to work as the light rain soon stopped, but is was quite windy.

Setting off trough the woods we quickly reached heathland and walked on the Hampton Ridge. This gave us extensive views of the North part of the New Forest. This area has a bit of WWII history, as Steve recounted. The Ashley Walk Bombing Range was operational from 1940 until 1946, and was used for target practice by aircraft from RAF Boscombe Down, Salisbury, as well as explosive and bomb testing. There were airstrips, control and observation

towers, as well as different target types within its boundary, which enclosed a total of 5000 acres. There is very little evidence today.



Walking on Hampton Ridge
Group at the end of the ridge



Well fed in Hyde



We arrived at the Potting Shed cafe in Hyde, which providing us with brunch. We returned via Hasley and Sloden Enclosures. A good 10 miler with great views.

All well planned and booked by Steve Creasey, who also found us the Green Dragon at Brook to finish. Cheers one and all.

Participants: Mitch, Paul, Mike O'D, Steve, Mike and Andy

North day walk, A fishing expedition..? - 9 April - Marcus Tierney

As there was only Ed, Michele and Marcus it was decided that the group would go off piste and visit an area quite well known to Marcus through his fishing exploits. Meeting at Dixie's cafe near Sprotborough just outside Doncaster (or Donny as those from Scunny would call it) meant fuel could be taken on board in the traditional breakfast way. A short drive up the road was made to a car park in Sprotborough where the walk was to start.



Lock at the weir

The walk headed down hill on the road for a short distance before a footpath led along the River Don towards Doncaster. Michele and Ed revelled in Marcus's exciting tales of huge gudgeon and Roach caught some thirty five years previously.

The path continued along the river and passed under the A1. How many times have we driven that section of road and not realised what a brilliant piece of engineering the flyover is? On this section there is also a line of crags known locally as Mo's Buttress where chalk marks indicated that it was used by climbers.

Eventually crossing over a small footbridge the route continued along the Trans Pennine Trail before unfortunately coming to a path closed sign. This meant a diversion back to the road near to Dixie's cafe and through a housing estate, meaning the walk became very urban.

After the diversion we crossed the trail and entered the grounds of Cusworth Hall. The Hall was built in the 1700's for William Wrightson a local land owner. If it can be said, there were good views across towards Doncaster.

There is nice cafe called the Butlers tea room where the group took shelter from the rain and partook of scones, tea and coffee.

The final section of the walk crossed fields and continued through a tunnel under the A1. Walking through the underpass felt like a scene from Harry Potter but fortunately without the Dementors.



The walk ended up back in Sprotborough after a modest eight miles or so. An unusual walk compared to our usual Peak District haunts, but very enjoyable nonetheless the less.

Participants: Marcus, Michelle and Ed

Skills Meet - George Starkey Hut, April - Mary Eddowes

This, the third, ABMSAC 'Skills' meet took place at our club home in Patterdale over the weekend of the 5th-7th April 2024. As well as a fantastic opportunity to learn new skills and become immersed in the mountains, it was also a celebration of 50 years of the much loved birthday boy Jonny Dixon, who had chosen the weekend as one of his 'fifty things to do at fifty!'

Thursday

Nine of us trundled from all across the country to the hut, in anticipation of 'pizza night' and some pre weekend birthday celebrations for Jonny. It was an evening of convivial company, catching up with old friends old and meeting new ones.

Friday

We awoke to windy wild weather with storm Kathleen approaching from the west and made the decision to walk to Brotherswater, with a suggestion from Andy to find the Priests' hole which he'd seen on a postcard and had wanted to see for years. In the valley, a pair of mink were spotted, a male Goosander and numerous toads.



ABM rainbow: Mary, Andy, Simon P, Heather, Jonny T, Louise, Celine, Simon C, Jonny D, next to Brotherswater

After a snack above the lake looking over Dovedale, the hunt was on for the Priest's hole. We did eventually find it but it was looming 50m above us and the wind was so strong we decided not to pursue it further. However we did ascend Hart Crag and encounter gale force winds along the ridge which at times blew us over and was a lesson to us all in communication and decision making.

It was a relief to descend Hartsop Over How via Hoggil brow, Gale Crag and Blueberry Knot, with myself at 6 months pregnant finding I had walked farther than planned, and with the exertion against the wind, was suffering new injuries.

For the evening meal, Jonny T and I cooked up a vegan Bolognese for all to enjoy. With Heather's special apple crumble for dessert. The group were joined by Mike and Marian. And later Nan, Anna, Will, Martha, Paul and Charlie arrived after a long day spent on the M6.

Saturday

For the main training day of the meet we headed to Honister Pass where Andy shared some navigation challenges from mountain leader Nicky Merrett. Two teams set off to find features within this new area and rugged landscape, testing compass, GPS and micro navigation techniques learnt in previous years.

After lunch up above the pass, the brilliant Gnash and Jonny led our Via Ferrata training session at Honister slate mine. Before heading to the wire we learned about confidence roping (with pulley, karabiner and rope), climbing skills and other safety techniques, practiced knots and got kitted up into VF gear.





The wind was so strong that the waterfalls had become water-ups and the spray was blowing up and covering the outdoor via ferrata routes. And so the group were taken inside the old mine for a rather different experience than expected. There were three tiers within the old mine, with traversing tunnels, climbing ladders, suspended wire bridges, zip lines and stapled climbs. It got a little Lord of the Rings at times, although no dragon spotted this time...

There were demonstrations of how to rescue a person who had fallen off the staples (Jonny T rescued Simon and instructor Jonny rescued Charlie in single pulley rescues). The whole group enjoyed climbing inside the mountain and appreciated the shelter too! Looking ahead to a potential Dolomites trip now to practice what's been learnt.

To celebrate a successful day of VF training, we ate a delicious dinner at the Langstrath Pub, a great find, just down the road from Honister in Stonethwaite. Upon our return to the hut, Nan held a late night birthday quiz in which was very much enjoyed by everyone (especially Jonny)!

Celines thoughts on the training day at Honister: After a morning spent practicing our navigation skills (more or less successfully – I overheard a conversation about an elusive sheepfold) with a series of suggested exercises, whilst trying to keep our paper maps from flying away in the wind, we all regrouped to get ready for an afternoon of via ferrata practice at Honister Slate Mine, one of the oldest mines in the UK.

Gnash and Johnny, our guides, welcomed us in the gear shed to talk through the afternoon's activity and how to stay safe. We learned and practiced the Figure of 8 Knot, put our helmets, harnesses and via ferrata kits on and set off for the mountain. By the time we reached the path though, the wind was so strong that Gnash decided to take us inside the mountain to climb for our safety as well as our enjoyment.

Inside, we followed the route of the original underground mine workings, clipping and unclipping as we completed the route with vertical climbs, rope-bridge crossings, steel ladder ascents, a run-away zip line and a Tarzan swing.

We are grateful to both of them for sharing some gear advice, Via Ferrata climbing skills and safety techniques to use on the wire. I don't know how many of us will remember how to make a Figure of 8 Knot, but we should get there faster next time.

I think everyone enjoyed climbing inside a mountain under expert and calm guidance. We also appreciated the shelter it offered from the gales raging outside! We will see in the coming months how many of us now feel confident enough to go on via ferrata trips in the UK or the Alps.

Sunday

We had a relaxed start to the day before heading to the Patterdale Mountain Rescue base for a tour with two of the team, Dan and Ken. They showed us the RIB rescue boat, their three land rovers and talked us through some rescues and response procedures. It was so brilliant to be welcomed into the base and see the operations of a mountain rescue team!

Celine presented them with a cheque for £150 from the ABMSAC as a token of our appreciation and to support their voluntary efforts. Andy has since sent a letter of thanks and a couple of ABMSAC beanies to keep them warm out on the fells.



It has been a pleasure to run the 'new members' meet since 2015 and the 'skills meet' since 2022. Thank you to everyone over the last 9 years who has attended, become ABM members, trained us across many disciplines and generally supported us in the hills and on this spring time meet. And thank you to the ABMSAC committee for subsidising the training this year. It was such a fantastic opportunity for those new to Via Ferrata and has already inspired a couple of members to tackle some VF routes on the costa Brava in Spain. May there be many more adventures to come!

Heather contemplating applying for the team?!

I shall be handing over the reins for next year's meet, as Jonny T and I take on a new challenge of raising a human! Yes, it is an extreme way to secure new ABM members, but we're doing our bit! Wish us luck! And hope to see you in the not too distant future, Mary x

Attendees: Nanette Archer, Anna Kaszuba, Simon Palmer, Mary Eddowes, Jonny Taphouse, Martha King, Paul Clarke, Heather Eddowes, Andy Burton, Jonny Dixon, Will Priestly, Charlie Rawson, Louise Mundy, Simon Coleman.

Peak District Meet - May day weekend - Andy Burton

This years Peak Meet following on from last years stay at Hartington Hall YHA which allowed access to the northern end of Dovedale, was based at Ilam Hall YHA at the southern end of Dovedale about five miles north of Ashbourne. With the Tissington Trail only a couple of miles away, Dovedale with its iconic flat-topped hill, Thorpe Cloud, at its entrance, overlooking the Stepping Stones, just 20 minutes' walk from the front door of the hostel, and both the Manifold valley with its own cycle trail, and the Hamps valley all within easy walking distance of this beautifully maintained Hall and its associated village and Church, this fully catered hostel nestling just inside Staffordshire certainly did not disappoint.



Eight of us arrived at various times during Friday from both North and South and places in between. We all quickly made ourselves at home. Parking after offloading was in the Trust car park, free to members and available to visitors using the hostel at a discounted daily rate.

Ed and I walked across the fields behind the Isaac Walton Hotel down to the main Dovedale car park and round the back of and up Thorpe Cloud. We were greeted with a gentle mizzle of rain on top and made our way carefully off this quite lumpen limestone tabletop and back to the hostel in time for meeting some of the others and joining them for evening meal.

Don and Judy arrived just in time to avoid being locked out, and this years group was complete, and off to their respective bunk beds for some well-earned rest as the journey for most had been a tedious rainy one. Saturday morning brought dry weather albeit a little overcast. Five elected to cycle and three were going to set off on foot in the general direction of the Manifold valley.

Margaret shot off to the Tissington Trail Bike hire centre near Mapleton to rent a velocipede and Myles and I started up the hill towards Thorpe village on our own bikes. At the four ways corner by the Old Dog pub a figure in black lycra whizzed by as Myles and I were checking the map. It was Ed, and he quickly disappeared out of sight on his road bike having elected not to use it on the trails. Myles and I made our way onto the trail and just before the cycle hire who should come cycling towards us, none other than Margaret Moore on an electric bike.



We turned round and started along the No. 68 trail heading north. We were passed by Don going the other way, and after ascertaining that he was happy doing his own thing, we carried on up the trail heading north.

At the bridge over the road to Biggin we took the off ramp, and crossed over the busy A515 onto route 54, which was an unmade road that was clearly popular with the green laners especially after a day of heavy rain. Letting a group of trail motorbikes go ahead Myles and I ended up walking some of the lumpier bits until we crossed over the lane between Pikehall and Parwich where the track took us smoothly round and up onto the High Peak Trail at Longcliffe. Here we were able to use the new bridge installed to replace the one made unsafe by a lorry striking one of the stone abutments in April 2019, and enjoy extensive views across most of Derbyshire to the south. This stretch had a profusion of primulas (cowslips) on either bank and both verges,

as well as various bits of industrial archaeology dotted along the trail to both inform and entertain.

Passing under Harboro Rocks, which had a fair smattering of people climbing on the little limestone outcrops, we took the offramp down and crossed over the road into Wirksworth and took the lovely long downhill curve all the way into Hopton with its well-kept estate managed landscape, past the Miners Arms and across the B5035 onto the trail that goes alongside Carsington Water, where suddenly it was much much busier.

Here at the Severn Trent visitors centre we secured our bikes and took advantage of the very reasonable facilities for lunch. Our route then took us away from the Water, across the B5035 and through Bradbourne, one of only 14 Doubly Thankful villages in the country.

Crossing back over the busy B5056 just where the road going back into the Tissington Hall estate goes through a ford. With the water being well over a foot deep and flowing strong, we all used the little wooden footbridge and started off up the quite steep hill. Margaret's electric bike paid even more dividends than it already had, as she sped off up the hill saying she would save us a seat at the café built into the Hall wall in Tissington village itself. As a result, we were able to enjoy a mug of tea and watch the staff close up the cafe.

Margaret then returned back along the trail to the Bike Hire centre, and Myles and I cycled across the A515 through Thorpe village back to the hostel, where Ed having done 10 miles more than us was already waiting for us.

Taking the long way round - Eds solo ride As the tyres on my road bike were not suitable for the various trails Andy had planned, I'd organised myself an alternative excursion around this part of the Peak District. Any notion that anyone else wanted to do likewise were soon dispelled, so off I set, after switching on my journey beacon.

It was a glorious morning as I rode along the bottom of the Dove valley, but all of that was about to be rudely interrupted with the climb out of the valley towards Thorpe. It was then I remembered why biking straight after a full breakfast was not a good idea. As the gradient steepened my pace slowed, finally coming to a stop for a quick breath before it was a push onto the top, and the steepest climb of the day completed.

From there, it was on to Tissington and then to the ford near the B5056 – no chances taken – I used the bridge, before turning off to Parwich, with its trees in and around the village green looking resplendent in their May blossom. I then head out of the village, following a lovely wooded dale that climbs slowly to meet the main Buxton road. It's still a bit cool in this shaded Dale, but you can hear the bird chattering in the trees – a great time of day to be out. As it's not yet warmed up and it rained in the night, there are still the occasional patches of grit or grease or grit, which require some care, especially when cornering.

After crossing the road, I drop down Back Lane, which is one of those roads with grass in the middle of it, before skirting Biggin and crossing Biggin Dale to connect up with Long Dale. This is another lovely biking Dale that rises slowly but surely, and with great limestone scenery all around. Two or three peletons of riders pass me, the only warning being their rhythmical swish of pedals as they come past like pistons on a steam train. Reminds me of the pace that good cyclists are moving at!

All too soon, I'm up on the tops looking down on Aldery Cliff and across to Parkhouse and Chrome Hills, before I



arrive at my turning point in Earl Sterndale. Alas, it appears that The Quiet Woman pub is no more; one of those time warps of quirkiness we occasionally used to enjoy. From there, I drop down to Crowdicote and up the other side to Longnor, where I pull in at the café for an early lunch refuelling stop. As I'm awaiting my order, another cyclist comes in and orders double espressos for himself and his two friends. On enquiring, he tells me they've already come from Rotherham this morning, and still have about a hundred more miles to complete in the afternoon!

Ilam Church with Thorpe Cloud behind

Heading out from Longnor, my general direction is west and, more importantly, up, climbing all the way to the top of the moor near Ramshaw Rocks and the main Buxton to Leek road. It's decidedly chillier out of the valley, and the wind direction provides no assistance on the climb, so it's low gears all the way to the top at Morridge. Then it's payback time, with a four mile descent into Warslow and Hulme End – Up through the gears, keep off the brakes

and enjoy the wind whistling past as the miles drop off. A further recharge of liquid and comestibles at the café at the end of the Manifold trail sees me fortified for the final miles.

The remainder of my route back seems remarkably free of long or steep climbs, wending its way between valleys and limestones hills, to arrive at Wetton. From there, I connect up with Stanshope Lane and I'm looking down on the pub we've chosen for tomorrow's lunch stop. Straightforward from there, or so I thought, until I manage to derail my chain on one of the minor inclines in my haste to select lowest gear and fall slowly onto the verge. After picking myself up and refitting the chain it was a quick reminder to self to go through a full gear check when home, to prevent a recurrence. All that remained to finish the ride was a steepening descent back to Ilam Hall, which was grit and grease free, so could arrive back with a flourish. A great run out – far enough this time at 40 miles to test both myself and the bike.

Saturday's evening meal was enjoyed by all eight of us in the Isaac Walton Hotel, a fifteen-minute walk across the fields from Ilam Hall.

Sunday dawned and along with the sunshine we were joined by Steve Caulton, who single handedly and valiantly held the fort for the day visitors this year.

After breakfast we said cheerio to Myles who was hotfooting it back home to get ready to fly to visit family in the USA on the Tuesday. We all set off past the church in the hall grounds and back across the fields to Dovedale itself, where we all successfully negotiated the stepping stones, despite them being officially closed for repair, and just relaxed into walking along this beautiful and very popular dale in the sunshine.



Ed. David and Steve at Dove Holes

In Milldale we stopped briefly to use the facilities and enjoy a homemade ice cream before disappearing up the footpath onto Sunny Bank and across the fields to Alstonefield. Here we found a footpath that quickly took us out of the village and across the fields and down into Hopedale, where after about quarter of a mile on the road we arrived at the Watts Russell Arms, our lunchtime watering hole. As there was no food available at the pub, we were able to enjoy a pint with our own sandwiches, sat in the sun without having to suffer the ire of the staff.

Retracing our steps back along Hopedale and up out of the dale and into the collection of houses known as Stanshope, we found ourselves walking down a beautifully spring green grassy sward path into Hall Dale where the orchids gave us a very fine display.

Turning right at the bottom where this dale meets the river Dove, we quickly found ourselves, albeit on the opposite bank, back at the footbridge close to Ilam Rock. Here the two Dave's bid their farewells as they were driving back home to Sunderland that evening.

We swung round under llam Rock now festooned on its vertical faces with at least half a dozen rock climbers and climbed up the steep path behind the tor out of the dale and up onto a footpath that skirted along the edge of the woodland.

Passing through Ilam Tops and down around and under Bunster Hill we found ourselves back in Ilam village close to the memorial, where Margaret yet again led the charge to get in the National Trust café in the hall before they closed. Again, as a direct result, the staff were very generous with their timekeeping, everyone who wanted a cream tea got one. Judy and Don managed to meet up with their friend Joan at the Royal Oak for dinner. Ed and Margaret and I enjoyed another righteous meal in the hostel.

Margaret decided to drive home in the quiet Sunday evening period that a Bank Holiday weekend often affords. That left Ed and I a free hand to do another twelve miler on the Monday in the Manifold and Hamps river valleys, and Don and Judy to climb up Thorpe Cloud.

With this area being new to us from Ilam Hall we were afforded a day virtually free of people with steady rising paths onto belvedereing tracks along ridge tops and edges with old mine sites, vibrant gorse scrub and woodland, with visits to the villages of Wetton and Grindon, nestling on opposite hilltops with a walk past a very busy Thor's Cave between them.

With a strong coffee and just one more homemade ice cream each we both left llam Hall with a desire to return again to explore this quiet corner of Staffordshire sat right next to one of the most visited Dales in this part of the country, anytime soon.

The attendees were: Myles O'Reilly, Margaret Moore, David Clear, David Blackett, Judy Renshaw, Don Hodge, Ed Bramley, Andy Burton and Steve Caulton.

Scottish Meet - Crianlarich, 18-24 May - Judy Renshaw

Eight club members participated in the Scotland meet this year, a good turnout. We were lucky with the weather, as Scotland has often seen drier conditions and more sunshine than England this year, so some good routes were achieved. We stayed at the SYHA hostel in Crianlarich, which proved to be a useful base for a range of Munros and Corbetts (those over 2500ft), as well as other interesting tops. It is within easy walking distance of the train station and the West Highland Way. With its excellent road links from Glasgow and being situated at the junction of the A82 and the A85, many possible walking destinations were available to the eight of us during the week.

The hostel was efficient and friendly, providing all we needed, as well as having a shop and pubs nearby. I had brought a new guidebook for the local area, but regretted having left behind the Cicerone Munro guidebook (to reduce weight) as we ended up doing a couple of routes that were further away. Later, after the routes had been done, I discovered there was a copy in the hostel lounge after all!

Three groups set out on the first day (Sunday) to do some local Munros, Corbetts and other tops. Max and I set off from a bridge about 5 miles East of Crianlarich to do a round of tops leading to the Munros Stob Binnein and Ben More. After some uncertainty and changes of plan, reached a track through forest then headed up to a ridge just below Munro height in long tussocky grass and bilberries. The ridge had no path, so we continued through long grass and heather over several steep ups and downs to the highest point. Then we were finally above the valley we needed to cross in order to reach Stob Binnein and were able to see where we were heading.



The day was dry but with persistent cloud on the higher tops, so some navigation had been needed to keep on track. Once we were on the Munros it became easier and we also had some views as the cloud had shifted around in the afternoon. Thankfully a real path led to the top. then down and up again to Ben More, the highest summit in the area at 1174m. Up there we met a few other people, the first we had seen all day. A descent down the NE ridge was much easier than expected, with short grass and good views, before we traversed back along a fence to find our original track. It had been quite a hard 8 hour day but very satisfying.

Andy: With the weather on our side Paul, Celine and Mike and I started the week by walking from the hostel on a route recommended by one of our wardens.



Making our way onto the nearest stretch of the West Highland Way following the Old Military Road to the farm at Keilator where we crossed the road, railway line and river to walk alongside the River Falloch and up onto Grey

Height at 686 metres, we continued along the mostly unseen ridge to Meall Dhamh at 814 metres where we had lunch.

Celine and Paul elected to carry on up Cruach Ardrain at 1046 metres. Mike and I turned round and made our way back to the tall stile over the deer fence into the forestry that sits above Crianlarich.

Here we negotiated our way through the rows of conifers and the various patches of boggy ground that James the warden had warned us about, to pop out lower down on one of the logging roads and find our way back to the path that brings you out in the corner of the hostel car park. Cold beers all-round and a good start to the week.

Philip and Roger: We drove to Invergaunan in Glen Orchy, where we parked to climb two Corbetts, Beinn Udlaidh and Beinn Bhreac-liath from the North. The weather was perfect, sunny, mild and hardly a breath of wind. At the start we followed the Allt Ghamhnain, the lower reaches of the path being extensively afforested but after about a mile this gave way to open hillside. We followed a remarkable line of quartz rock, which lead us to the first summit, Beinn Udlaidh where we had lunch. We then continued down to the col at 600m between the two hills where Roger decided to return down the glen to our starting point. I continued on to Beinn Bhreac-liath, climbing steeply at first to reach the flat top and continue the circuit, and descended by the long North ridge.

We all went out to eat at the hotel in the evening, which everyone enjoyed, although the manager had needed persuading to take a booking for 8 of us and had put us onto 2 separate tables. We did notice a number of other people from the hostel who were there too.

Max and I wanted a slightly shorter day next so decided to visit Ben Arthur, otherwise known as The Cobbler. This meant a half hour drive to Loch Long and along well-trodden paths though forest the along the valley towards the 3 craggy tops. Near the crags we met a group hoping to climb but wanted to wait for the cloud to lift, as had been forecast. Fortunately we did not wait as it failed to lift all day. The first, north, top was straightforward, rocky but easy, though lacking any view that day. Then we followed the ridge to the central top, which features a famous window,



though which you have to scramble onto a ledge then carefully ascend on exposed holds to the top. It was slightly intimidating in the cloud but we both made it before stopping for a welcome lunch on a flatter area.

We had to backtrack a little as we went slightly in the wrong direction at first, corrected it, then somehow managed to miss the main south top in the mist. We looked around for a while then descended via a circuit over a minor top and grassy ridge running South East. Quite a long way from the top we were surprised to see Andy and Celine heading uphill around 3pm. Since there was plenty of daylight they were happy to take their time and have a late finish. The rest of us went to the local pub for a meal later on, which was very good, although the portions were too large for some of the group.

Mike and Paul went to the Pass of Leny and climbed up through the forest to the ridge path to the summit of a misty Ben Ledi (879m). They chose the steep NE ridge down and back via the tranquil Queen Elizabeth Forest Park.

On the way back they stopped off a Balquhidder church to see the grave of the local 'hero' Rob Roy. An interesting and respectful place.

Andy: Celine and I elected to drive to Arrochar and walk-up Ben Arthur (The Cobbler), a hill I had in my sights since my Dad pointed it out to me on our first family trip to Scotland, having climbed it when he was stationed up there in his Royal Navy days.

We parked at the little Ardgarten Forest car park off the A83 crossed the road and walked along part of the Three Lochs Way/Cowal Way onto a very substantially reinforced forestry road. With Celine picking up the faint path that goes up into the trees at the side of Allt a'Bhalachain we were treated to the often-elusive scent from the numerous stands of bluebells in the various clearings as we scrambled our way through the boulders and woodland that surround this beck.



We popped out of the scented forest close to the weir and dam and made our way across the open moorland dotted with occasional groups of white orchids to An

t-Sron at 614 metres.

Between here and Arthur's Seat we met Judy and Max descending from the tops which were still part wrapped in clouds, whilst the views to the south along Loch Long towards the old refuelling station were starting to show signs of the sun breaking through.

Passing under the south tower (858 metres) the path climbs steeply up its southwestern flank. Here the clouds began to swirl away to reveal glimpses of the

rocky summit, before closing back in again. As we reached the platform area just below the summit of Centre Peak the highpoint on Ben Arthur at 884 metres the clouds lifted to reveal the eye of the needle allowing Celine and I to explore through the eye and up to the summit with ever improving 360-degree views appearing as we did so.

The eye of the needle

Returning to the platform we enjoyed a late lunch and looked over towards North Peak where several groups of climbers were steadily working their way up its eastern face. We then made our way up to the top of the North Peak and I spoke to a couple of climbers who had just topped out. They had just completed Punsters Crack, a severe in

the summer. We were able to see that the main path back to the pay and display car park at Succoth took a longer route around the back of this tower so we descended back to the narrow col between centre and north and descended steeply under the north tower giving us some great views of the remaining climbing teams clearly enjoying their day out on the rock.

Eventually we crossed the Coire a' Bhalachain not far from the Narnain Boulders and continued all the way down the tourist path till it joined the main forest highway and joined our route up back to the car at Ardgartan.

By the time we arrived back at the car a drying wind had swept all the remaining cloud away and we were treated to a blue-sky evening journey back to Crianlarich, with a stop at the An t-Archar (Arrochar) fish and chip shop for tea, followed by an evening leisure drive back along the shores of Loch Lomond from Tarbet. We stopped at the viewing point and jetty near the HEP station at Inveruglas, to take some photos across the still lake towards Ben Lomond, plus a further stop at the Falls of Falloch to have a look at this beautiful place with its sizeable plunge pool at the foot of the main fall drop that must be a mecca for the lovers of wild water swimming and every day tripper who likes to cool off on a hot summers day, to top the day off, I really felt that the old man was definitely on my shoulder today.

Philip and Roger visited the Cruachan hydro-electric scheme and continued to Oban for lunch.

The next day started clear and sunny and had the best forecast of the week, so we all wanted to make the most of it. Max and I decided on the round of Ben Cruachan, a spectacular round with 2 Munros which he had not done



before and it had been at least 16 years since I had been there. We drove round to Loch Awe, which was about the same distance as the previous day, and parked near the electricity pump storage visitor centre. It took a while to find the start, under a railway footbridge through a gate that was extremely difficult to open (having the correct guidebook would have helped us here!) and up through forest on a steep and intriguing winding path with plenty of tree handholds.

After the forest we continued past the dam for the pump storage scheme and onto the ridge to the East. On this route there was a path almost all the way, which made it reasonably easy, although quite long. The sun stayed out all day and there were wonderful views all the way, across to the coast and islands, as well as to the highest tops



including Ben Nevis. We reached the first major top, Stob Garbh, before midday and took in the views. We also noted orchids and other flowers on the hillsides and a raven flying around. The ridge continued to the first Munro, Stob Daimh, where we stopped for lunch. Though sunny, the wind was quite cold, so I put on a few layers and a windproof, but kept to my shorts. The ridge sections were rockier than I remembered so some reasonable scrambling was required, on good quality granite, with nice friction. We were on the final top of Ben Cruachan (1126m) around 2.30, where we met a few people, having seen almost no one up to then.

The decent was easier and less rocky than expected, with a few people now coming up. Most people appeared to have gone down from a first col to the reservoir and along a track to the dam, but we decided to take a ridge route over a final smaller top, Meall Cuanail. This then led down a grassy hillside and across country below the dam to pick up the forest path again. We were down just 5 minutes before the visitor car parked was due to be locked, so were glad we had not parked there! Everyone cooked meals in the hostel that evening in different groups, but all sat together, catching up and checking the forecast for the following days.

Andy: Tuesday's bluebird option was planned out by Paul and transport for Celine, Paul and I provided by Mike, closely followed on by Phil and Roger.

Taking the A85 along Glen Dochart and crossing the river at Killin we made our way along the northern shore of Loch Tay taking the left turn at Edramucky up the hillside to the Scottish National Trust car park at 420 metres.

Reciprocal parking rights and 400 metres height gain, what's not to like. Here we took the path that meandered alongside the Burn of Edramucky among young silver birches and many rowan trees into open ground through the new Trust controlled double fencing gates and up to the cairn marked col at 850 metres.



Here we passed into another complete valley system and walked along the contouring path under Beinn Ghlas up to the col at 1100 metres, Creag Loisgte, where the final 300 foot pull led to the summit of Ben Lawers at 1214 metres. Great views from the summit tria all around, including Ben Nevis, with some residual snow to be seen on the top of Aonach Mhor, as well as long stretches of Loch Tay as it revealed itself below us, and a large part of the Grampian Mountains and Schiehallion showing themselves off too.

A quick lunch on the summit was enjoyed by all, and after the obligatory group photo we made our way back down to the col. Here Roger and Phil descended using our ascent route, and we four followed

the ridge path onto Beinn Ghlas and made our way through Coire a' Chonnaidh down the steep path to the Old Shielings, that Roger and Phil had ascended, before we all came together again at the deer/cattle fence gate, and in glorious afternoon sunshine followed the Burn back to the cars.

Philip 'Tuesday was another fine weather day. Roger and I climbed Ben Lawers from the car park located near the site of the old NTS Visitor Centre. Our route took us over Beinn Ghlas and onto Ben Lawers, where we met Andy, Celine. Mike and Paul. We descended via Coire Odhar to make a bit of a round out of the walk.

By the Wednesday we had all had several good days out and were feeling a little tired. In addition the forecast had been threatening rain for some time, mainly after midday, so most people expected to have a less energetic day. Max opted to go up to a local viewpoint above the village and I decided to investigate part of the West Highland Way, which was almost on the doorstep. Andy and Mike took a car drive to places along the coast, but Paul and Celine decided at the last minute to take a rapid jaunt up Ben More from the front by the shortest and steepest route. Philip and Roger visited Inverary.

The West Highland Way, a long distance path from just north of Glasgow to Fort William, is popular with people from all over the world, some of whom were staying at our hostel in Crianlarich. From the hostel it took me around 15 minutes to reach the well-signed path, on which I went south, the opposite direction to most of the walkers. It was

fairly quiet at first but later I met more people. The route went gradually up and down, past farmland and looking up at the high hills. It was interesting to join a section of the route, which felt almost like a pilgrimage trail, with everyone heading to a given destination, comparing notes with each other and making friends as they went.



I noticed that there were many women on the route, travelling alone, from many different countries. I went just beyond the Falls of Falloch, which are better viewed from the other side nearer the road, but still interesting, then turned around, aiming to get back to the hostel for late lunchtime.

I met a Belgian couple and chatted with them for a while before turning off on the way back to Crianlarich. They went ahead to get as near as possible to their destination before the rain came. (They were surprised to find that I was doing 18Km of their route on my 'rest' day).

I made it back just in time for some lunch outside before the rain started in earnest. It was good to have some time to relax and chat, before later going to the local pub for dinner.

Falls of Falloch

The forecast for Thursday was for very strong winds again and some rain. Several of the group wanted to do Ben Lui by a short route from the West. As I had done this top some years ago, I decided instead to take the northern section of the West highland Way and Max decided to attempt the local Munro, Cruach Ardrain. He said it was a bit of a battle through the forest at the bottom and a lot of wind at the top, though not in between, if a bit cold! My route was enjoyable and gave the opportunity to see some different places, as well as being a full day out, with more distance and more ascent than the previous day. The wind was surprisingly cold, so I was glad not to be up high. The path went up and own through forest before crossing the valley and leading into Tyndrum, the largest centre in the area. I passed a campsite where I had stayed some 17 years ago, which had become more upmarket and offered many 'glamping pods'. Although I was back by early afternoon, most others were there before me, some having had to retreat from the col below Ben Lui in the strong wind, and another having almost lost himself in a forest.

Andy: Thursday's walk for Celine, Paul and I was to be Ben Lui / Beinn Laoigh at 1130 metres. Parking in a recently revamped pay and display car park just off the A85 in Glen Lochy we crossed over the river via some wobbly stones and crouch/crawled under the railway line and followed one of the many streams draining through the forest down to the river.

Crossing the stream at a little rock step and the forestry service road to continue up through the trees avoiding the worst of the boggy ground we came out of the trees and skirted alongside them till an obvious path became visible up Fionn Choireih all the way to the col. As we stepped over the col we met the full force of the wind coming through the gap and after enjoying the busy cloudscape view towards Ben Oss and beyond we agreed to continue up along the ridge towards Beinn a' Chleibh to see if there was any easing of the wind. There was not. Easing was found

about 50 metres back down over the col from whence we came. Returning to the car park to enjoy our scran on some picnic tables installed on a little noddle was also short-lived as the midges zeroed in on us very quickly.

A retreat to the Green Welly shop at Tyndrum, where I resisted the temptation to buy in the whisky shop as I wasn't offered a free tasting, was backed up with a cake and a cuppa stop at the café next door.

Philip: Thursday's weather forecast was for heavy rain and gales but we ventured out in hope but not expecting to complete a walk. In the event, the weather was much better than forecast. No rain or gales, just cloudy but even the cloud base was above the summit of our hill. We climbed Beinn Chuirn, located to the west of Tyndrum from Dalrigh. Walking up the Cononish Glen, we passed the entrance to the gold mine then Cononish farm where we struck up the hillside to gain its southern ridge of Beinn Chuirn. We returned by our route of ascent.

Andy: Back to the hostel for a wash and brush up before we returned in two cars to the Tyndrum Inn for our final evening meal of the week together. We all agreed that Judy had organised another great May week in the mountains of Scotland for us, and next years possible destinations were liberally discussed over good food and a pint.

This was our last evening of the meet; we had a lovely meal the pub in Tyndrum and back for a chat in the hostel lounge, sharing thoughts about possible options for next year. We had all had a really good time and everyone was keen to come to Scotland again. During the week we had seen a variety of wildlife, including birds such as buzzards, green finches, swallows and sand martins and heard cuckoos on most days.

Present: Andy Burton, Celine Gagnon, Judy Renshaw, Max Peacock, Mike Goodyer, Paul Stock, Philip Hands, Roger James.

North Wales Meet - Rhyd Ddu, 7/8 June - Ed Bramley

Always a classic favourite with people, this years' North Wales meet did not disappoint. Several of us arrived early on the Thursday evening, to get an extra day of walking in the next day.



On the Friday, three of us chose to revisit a walk that I had done last year – a round of the Carneddau. We were up early to avoid parking difficulties and were at the parking at Gwen Gol Isaf just after 9am. From there, it's just a short walk along the Snowdonia Slate Trail before crossing over to the north side of the A5. A diagonal track ascends to some buildings and then almost directly to the bridge over the catchwater, which is the start of the broad gentle ridge heading up to Pen yr Helgi Du.

Bwlch Eryl Farchog from Carnedd Llewellyn

Once again, we enjoyed clear and sunny weather, but with a distinctly cool breeze higher up. From the top of Pen yr Helgi Du comes the one of the 'interesting' parts of the route, descending to the saddle of Bwlch Eryl Farchog. Not difficult, but still requires full attention. From the col, we can see the remains of the old slate quarry to our right. There is a slightly less steep pull up onto the summit of Carnedd Llewellyn, and part way up we are treated to the sight of a small group of ponies enjoying the upper fells.



We make use of rocks on the north side of the summit to provide shelter for our lunch stop, and we are out of the wind as well.

The afternoon is ridge walking at its best, taking in Carnedd Dafydd and Carnedd Fach, before reaching our final summit of Pen yr Ole Wen. We've definitely got the best of the weather, as Snowdon (yr Wyddfa) summit is cloud covered. There are stunning views north into the valley of the Black Ladders (Ysgolion Duon) and south, as we look down on Tryfan, and we're all caught up in enjoying this great day out.

At Pen yr Ole Wen, it's back to work time again as we descend the steep western shoulder into the valley of Afon Lloer. It's evident that there has been work on the path over the past twelve months, as the final section down to the A5 is distinctly less tiring than it was a year ago, and from there, we pick up the Slate Trail again back to the car.

Putting the cherry on the cake, the Red Arrows fly down the valley, banking over Llyn Ogwen as they head down Nant Ffancon, and we then remember that the day before was the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

Celines view: On Friday morning, Judy and I set off hut with Ed who drove us to the Ogwen Valley. The plan was to take on the Southern Carneddau for a beautiful – and energising – 10.6 miles in the wind. We parked the car at the Gwern Gof Isaf farm and campsite on the A5.

Suited, booted and having paid our fiver for the parking, we started our walk across the campsite and along a small brook... on the wrong side. We quickly found the path, crossed a footbridge and then the A5 northwards to start our

circular walk anticlockwise. Most guides and websites seem to suggest doing the route the other way round, but I think this gave us the best panoramas.

From the Helyg hut we took the track to the reservoir then followed the slopes up to the top of Pen yr Helgi Du (820m), along the broad grassy ridge of Y Braich and passing Cwm Bychan on our right. The wind was stronger and colder that it should be in June, but the sun and the fabulous landscape opening in front of us made up for unseasonable temperature.

We then clambered the steep, rocky path down to a col along the Bwlch Eryl Farchog ridge, with great views on the Ffynnon Llugwy reservoir on our left and a disused quarry on our right. Being on a mountain range, we had of course to climb all this back up (and more) on another steep path towards Carnedd Llywelyn (1,064m).

The sky was clear enough to afford us great views of the Menai straight on route. We had a close encounter with a small herd of wild horses, who took some delight in posing for a few photographs. I have read somewhere that the Carneddau range is home to the UK's only population of wild horses – what a treat! We found a sheltered spot for lunch on the extensive and rocky summit plateau, enjoying all the beauty surrounding us.

After lunch, we made our way on a large track along the ridge to Carnedd Dafydd (1,044m) and its imposing cairn. The descent started gently to Carnedd Fach and Pen y Ole Wren (978m), then got much steeper as we scrambled down on the right of Ffynnon Lloer lake towards Afon Llafar. We followed the gentler paved path along the stream down to Tal y Llyn Farm and back on the A5. We joined a track along the road that took us back to the car park, watching a group of climbers on the mighty Tryfan to our right

A great day in lovely company.

Saturday sees many of us embark on another favourite, an ascent of Cnicht, 'the Welsh Matterhorn', from Croesor, to take in a round of the Croesor slate quarries. The first half mile of the route is about getting onto the open fell, but



once there, it's a great ridge to ascend and much more straightforward than its nickname would suggest. Part way up I meet a fell runner from Delft in the Netherlands who has specifically come over for the weekend to enjoy the Welsh mountains – Now that's commitment.

Marcus crossing disused dam at Croesor quarry

From the summit of Cnicht, the ridge gently melds with the rest of the landscape, until we are in an undulating area at the head of several valleys. Again, knowledge from previous years comes in handy and we find the best route across the mixed ground to the quarries.

This time, we opt to follow the Snowdonia Slate Trail from the first set of quarries to the main Croesor quarry, so that we can make use of the large track heading steadily down. At the quarry, there's an area that's been previously put behind barbed wire and there is also an adit you can follow for some distance into the hillside. Some background reading afterwards informs me that ICI used to use the quarry tunnels as an explosives store for many years but was quickly emptied when it was realised that a fault ran straight through the site and joined up with the pumped storage reservoir at Ffestiniog!

For the communal Saturday night meal this year, the starter was a tricolour of mozzarella, tomatoes and avocado with a honey and chilli dressing, accompanied by olive bread. This was followed by mains of vegan mushroom vegetable ragu and pappardelle pasta, whilst dessert was a mix of the usual pies and puddings, with either vanilla custard or cream topping. With suitable amounts of wine as accompaniment.

On Sunday, the weather just about held for walking, with some of us opting to walk down to Beddgelert for some comestibles including the obligatory ice cream, whilst others were more adventurous and pulled in Moel Hebog as part of their excursions.

As ever, the meet offered a number of alternatives for people to do something that suited them best during the day, as well as being able to meet up and exchange stories over another well received meal.

Attendees: Ed Bramley, Andy Burton, Steve Caulton, Heather Eddowes, Celine Gagnon, Don Hodge, David Matthews, Margaret O'Dwyer, Mike O'Dwyer, Judy Renshaw, Marcus Tierney, Michele Tierney.

Swiss Alpine Meet - Grimentz, Val d'Anniviers, 4 – 11 July - Pam Harris

After the Covid pandemic in 2020 resulted in the cancellation of the Alpine Meet in the Val d'Anniviers, it was good to finally have a Meet in this beautiful valley surrounded by high peaks. From Sierre the road climbs southwards alongside a deep gorge to reach Vissoie, where it divides into three branches: south-west leading to Grimentz and Moiry; due south to Zinal; and south-east up to St Luc and the highest village of Chandolin. Linked by an efficient post bus service, they provide a wealth of walking and climbing possibilities.

We were based in the picturesque village of Grimentz, its narrow main street lined with traditional wooden houses and old barns on stone stilts, all decorated with window-boxes of colourful geraniums. In the centre a water-wheel activates a sawmill and a flour mill, both still in use. During our visit there was a weekly market and then a folk music festival, with small groups of musicians performing outside the hotels, the highlight for us being the group of five men playing alpenhorns up and down the main street.

We stayed in the Hotel de Moiry, in a quiet location at the edge of the village yet not far from the lifts and the bus stop for access to the other resorts in the valley. It is a small hotel run by Andrea and Aurel Salamin, and we filled most of their rooms.

Dinner Time at the Hotel





We all appreciated the outside terrace for breakfasts as well as drinks after our daily hikes, and we had our own private dining-room. The dinners were always delicious as well as artistically presented, with edible plants and flowers from the garden decorating the plates, and a mouth-watering cheese fondue one evening.

All the rooms contained wildlife photos taken by Aurel, and one evening he showed us the film he had made of a pair of golden eagles which had nested in the valley, and the fledging of their one surviving chick.

The weekend before we arrived there had been torrential storms in this part of the Valais, with flooding, landslides and rockfalls closing roads and trails. The direct road from Vissoie to Grimentz was impassable while we were there, necessitating a longer diversion to St Luc and Chandolin, though the road to Zinal was still open.

Hotel de Moiry

At least 10% of the walking trails in the valley had been damaged, and we were lucky that so little of this affected our hikes.

The worst destruction we saw was on the eastern side of the Lac de Moiry, where rock falls had resulted in the closure of the road to the glacier, and above Zinal, where trails had been flooded and some of the bridges washed away.

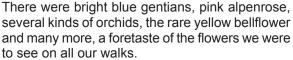
Fortunately, the storms were over by the time we arrived, and the first morning of the Meet dawned bright and sunny for our group walk from the Lac de Moiry at the head of the valley. Five of the group headed off on walks around the lake, either on the high level or the low-level circuit, where they all found clumps of edelweiss growing beside the track.

Meanwhile, the rest of us took the uphill path towards the Lac des Autannes and the Col de Torrent, past slopes of alpine flowers.

Storm damage in the valley









Spring gentians
Trumpet gentians



We soon reached the pastures and farm building of the Alpage de Torrent, and then the small Lac des Autannes. It was a lovely spot, with the snow-covered peaks of the Dent Blanche and Grand Cornier rising above the Moiry glacier at the end of the valley.



Top photo: Lac des Autannes Lower photo: Group below the Col de Torrent

Some of the group continued through the snow up to the Col de Torrent, at 2916m one of the highest points reached on the Meet, from where a path leads down to Evolène in the neighbouring Val d'Hérens. The peak of the Sassenaire is a short distance above the col, but the amount of snow unfortunately made it too dangerous to continue. Later in the week a few returned to Moiry to explore the southern end of the lake and icefall, but Don Hardy, the oldest

member of our group, was the only one to climb up the steep rocky zigzags to the Cabane de Moiry at 2825m, overlooking the jumbled icefall.

The easiest way to gain height from Grimentz itself was to walk through the woods or take the gondola lift to Bendolla, from where a plethora of walking paths radiated in all directions.

One of the shorter walks wound up past banks of different species of orchids to the Marais Restaurant and Panoramic Bench, which has carved wooden marmots at one end and a large wooden eagle on the other, and glorious views

across to Chandolin, St Luc and the Hotel Weisshorn on the other side of the valley.

Mike and Marian headed off on a little used traversing trail to Moiry, while others walked up to the waterfalls below the Becs de Bosson, although Don was the only one to reach the Cabane des Becs de Bosson, at 2982m the highest point of the Meet.

Another easy way to gain height was to take the cable-car up to the Espace Weisshorn, constructed only ten years ago and not on all maps. From here a short rocky path leads up to the Corne de Sorebois, 2895m, but although the view of the surrounding peaks is magnificent, it is a bleak and stony site.

The small café at Sorebois, reached by the gondola lift heading to Zinal, is in a much more attractive setting, next to a bronze ibex sculpture, and from here we watched marmots playing in the grass.

Many of us continued in the gondola down to Zinal, the Zinalrothorn, Besso and the Matterhorn coming into view as we neared the valley.

A few of the group took the forested path from Grimentz to Zinal, but the direct bus was the quickest option. From the end of the village the Cabane du Petit Mountet was an obvious



objective, starting with a flat walk up the valley towards the twin peaks of Besso, with the Weisshorn coming into view above the Cirque d'Arpitettaz.





Dent Blanche and Zinal Glacier above the hut

The path then climbs steeply upwards past slopes of alpenrose, at times protected by chains, crossing waterfalls and small streams where one of the bridges had been destroyed in the recent storms.

The hut is perched at the top of the moraine above the rubble-strewn glacier, and the views of the Dent Blanche above the end of the glacier were

magnificent.



Later in the week a group returned to Zinal to attempt Cicerone author Kev Reynold's favourite walk in the Valais, the Roc de la Vache, a circular walk beneath the Pointe d'Arpitettaz. It is a steep and rocky climb of nearly 1000m, but it was worth the effort for the views at the top extended from the Wildstrubel range across the Rhone valley to the nearer Weisshorn, Zinalrothorn and Dent Blanche. The path on the way down proved more difficult as one of the bridges had been washed away, and the group had to walk back up to find a safe crossing point over the stream.

Our next group walk was from the funicular at Tignousa, 500m above St Luc, on the second half of the annual Sierre to Zinal Mountain Race. Ours was a 16km hike with a steep descent of over 900m at the end, while the whole race from Sierre is much more challenging - a gruelling 31 km, with 2200m height gain and 1100m descent. Not all of us



This was a welcome rest stop, where we enjoyed the hotel's specialty of tarte aux myrtilles. Seven of us stopped here – my excuse being that I had completed the section to Zinal twice in the past - but the rest continued on an undulating trail past the model of the final planet, Pluto.



were planning to walk the 16km to Zinal, but everyone was keen to reach at least the Victorian Hotel Weisshorn. As we set off along the Planets Trail, past scale models of the planets in the solar system, a pair of golden eagles soared over our heads, easily identifiable after Aurel's film the previous evening.

After passing the group of planets closest to the Sun, and then the models of Saturn and Uranus, the track became steeper, and we finally crested the rocks to see the large hotel building above, with its attractive terrace.

Leaving Tignousa

Hotel Weisshorn



The trail, well signed with yellow Z markings, wound round a bowl in the hillside, crossing scree and boulders and occasional streams, with the majestic 4000m peaks of the Weisshorn, Ober Gabelhorn, Dent Blanche, Zinalrothorn and finally the Matterhorn dominating the view.

More golden eagles were spotted, as well as marmots and a group of deer.

Walking towards Saturn



Alan on the trail

The trail ended with a steep descent through larch trees into Zinal, where the 'A' team arrived in record time to catch the 4 o'clock lift up to Sorebois and back to Grimentz.

Perhaps the most delighted to arrive was Alan, for he had completed the whole run 15 times in the past and was now doing the walk with his daughter Rebecca in memory of those achievements.

Another lovely walk from Tignousa is the Sentier des Lacs, the Lakes Trail, which Alan and I had discovered while staying at St Luc on our "Meet for Two" in 2020. This is one of my favourite walks in the valley, and I was pleased to introduce it to others. The trail starts along the Planets Trail but turns off before the Hotel Weisshorn to reach the first lake at Plan Torgon and then the Lac d'Armina from where the high peaks of the Val d'Hérens can be seen in the distance. The final lake is the Lac de Bella Tola below the summit of the 3000m peak, and then it was a rocky scramble down to the Cabane de Bella Tola and back to the funicular station.

Above St Luc is Chandolin, the highest village in the valley and the last to be visited by our group. A chairlift wafted us quickly up to Tsapé, and from there we started on a circuit around several small lakes on another of my favourite walks for its variety of alpine plants. The first lake we reached was the Lac Noir, which had flooded so badly in the recent storms that gentians were flowering under the water.

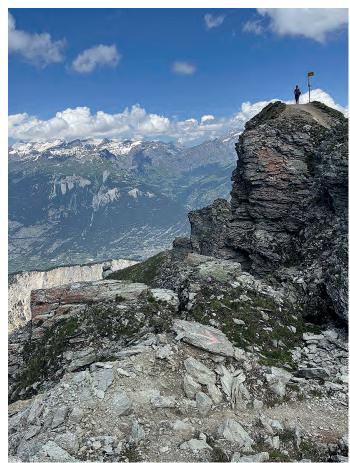
From here there was a steep and rocky scramble down to the Illsee, where on our previous visit we had been overtaken by a group of French botanists. The rocks at the start were covered with pink alpenrose, creeping azalea and moss campion, with gentians and yellow pulsatilla anemones in the grass nearer the lake.



Primula hirsuta



Pulsatilla anemones



Illhorn summit

The path then climbed steeply up towards the Pas d'Illsee, where we found tiny pink primulas and white rock jasmines clinging to the rocks, and late flowering crocuses and delicate soldanellas just below the snow at the col.

The Illhorn, 2716m, was only 30 minutes above the pass, and ten of the group climbed it, one of the few summits to be reached on the Meet. The summiteers returned to Chandolin on the lift while the rest of us walked down a botanic trail to the welcoming Cabane Illhorn for a well-deserved drink before returning to Chandolin.

The last day came all too soon, but those of us not rushing off for a plane back to the UK were able to make the most of the sunshine with a final mountain expedition. As we left, we realised how many other hikes there are in this beautiful valley, with more high huts to be visited and peaks to be climbed. I am sure that many of us will return before long to what is one of the loveliest valleys in the Swiss Alps.

But for me this is an ending, for after organising 22 Alpine Hotel Meets since 2000, the first 12 with Alasdair and the last 10 with Alan, it is now time to pass on the organisation to someone younger and fitter. Fortunately, Andy as Meets Secretary has agreed to take this on, so the club can look forward to many more years hiking in the Alps.

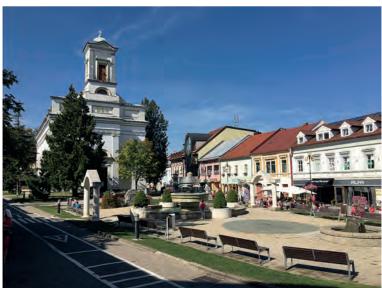
My final words are of thanks: to Alan for all his help on recent Meets, to the committee for their support during these years, and to the "Bhutan Group" who have accompanied me on most or all of my Meets since our trip in 2011 - though this year we sadly missed Rick and Carol Saynor, and John Dempster and Dinah Nichols, present on all previous Meets since that time.

Participants: Pamela Harris & Alan Norton, Daniel Albert, Andy Burton, Geoff & Pauline Causey, Heather Eddowes, Celine Gagnan, Philip Hands, Don Hardy, Richard & Katherine Heery, Roger James, Margaret Moore, Rebecca Norton, Mike & Marian Parsons, Max and Vivien Peacock, Mervyn Powell, Jay Turner, Bill & Rosie Westermeyer, and our local expert Caroline Thonger who joined us on most days.

Photo contributions from Daniel Albert, Andy Burton, Heather Eddowes, Céline Gagnan, Pamela Harris, Alan Norton, Rebecca Norton, Max Peacock, Bill Westermeyer, Rosie Westermeyer

Back to the Tatras - this time from the Slovakian side - Ed Bramley

After a pleasant journey around the Tatras from Krakow, we reach our base for the week, Poprad, in Slovakia. We're



based in a B&B on the edge of the old town, with a good view out across more modern parts of the city. It doesn't take us long to drop our bags off, and then take the short walk up into the old town, a pleasant location, and we're soon chilled out with food and a beer – just what's required after the travel.

Poprad is set a little distance from the Tatras, so most mornings involve an early rise walk or taxi into town to get the modern narrow-gauge railway up to one of a series of resort villages at the base of the mountains. It's about an hour for the journey, so on big days we're getting the 6:30am train up to the mountains. Lovely scenery though as the train rises out the valley and then contours along, stopping at many former eastern bloc holiday resorts.

Our first day is our longest, with an ascent of Rysy planned from Štrbské Pleso (lake), so it's up early to get the 6:30 train. We arrive at Štrbské Pleso at 7:45 and the path out of the resort is straightforward, winding its way through open pine forest to near the lake of Popradské Pleso.



The path is now through dwarf pines with lots of cobbled stones jutting out. In places, flatter stones have been laid to smooth the path. Eventually the dwarf pine dives way to bare boulder fields and in one place there's a laddered section, complete with chains, wires and an up and down system. All the way along, there are lots of people out on the route – perhaps not surprising, as this is the weekend. Reaching the Rysy hut (Chata pod Rysmy) at 2,250m is a welcome milestone on our upward journey.

It's not far over the boulder fields to the summit, but I'm finding moving increasingly difficult. The route skirts over a final shoulder, with great views of Voll chrbát ridge and all that's left now is a small protected technical section to the summit.



Voll chrbát

On the way down to the hut, there's a short five-minute rain shower, which is going to be the pattern for several of the days, and then it's into the hut for refreshing soup and sherpa tea, accompanied by an opera singer at the piano, and later on the fixed wires.



Not a bad introduction to the week.

Given the efforts of the first day, the second day is more laid back, with a minibus picking us up to take us to Bielej Vody. Our path is less broken than yesterday and is a straightforward walk up to the Green lake and associated mountain but.

Sherpa tea is again a good call, accompanied by pancakes filled with soft cheese, bilberries and cream. We're back at the main road by 3pm and the minibus is waiting to take us back to Poprad.



Our third day, Tuesday, is another early up and train ride to Štrbské Pleso.

The fine weather is holding as we walk up the main street, past wood carvings and a curious metal structure to the chair lift, which is running!

Having contemplated the route the night before, changing the route to a clockwise direction means we can use the uplift, rather than potentially missing it at the end of the day. At the top of the uplift, we head left and descend through dwarf pines and the by now familiar associated lumpy underfoot terrain, into Furkotská dolina (valley).

This part of the route has two distinct boulder steps that we need to ascend, and behind each is a lake. Much of the path is boulder, but effort has been made to create a flatter route through. The rim of the second lake is made up of rocks of many colours and is very striking. Off to the right, high up, we spot the col we need to cross through – Bystrá lávka. It's a steep pull up and people are coming from both directions through this narrow rock doorway.



Top lake and Bystrá lávka.

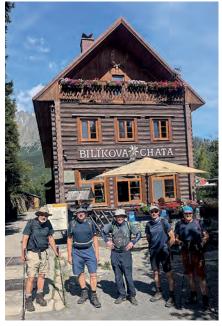
Eventually it's our turn and there's about 25ft of chains on the far side to descend. After that, we can step to one side onto the path. Almost immediately we have a short hail shower, lasting no more than 10 minutes. From that point, it's a steady descent of the Mlynická dolina, with the scenery and going very much a mirror of the first valley.

Part way down the valley is a large rock step with a waterfall, Vodopad skok. Handily, there are a set of chains down the easiest ground. We're then left with another 5km back to the station through the dwarf pines and pines.

The beer at the station is a welcome round off to the day, before we get the train back to Poprad.

Wednesday sees us depart the train at Stary Smokovec, another resort village with obligatory coffee and cake stop. To further aid our travel, we have a funicular that takes us up to Hrebienok, from where the waterfall trail starts. The initial part of the trail passes an old hotel and descends to the first waterfall, which is gently cascading over a big

set of rocks, before repeating the process further down the valley. Travelling upstream, the next substantial waterfall goes over even more distinct rock steps and forms several pools.





Nearby is an old mountain hut (Rainerova chata), complete with a collection of climbing gear even older than I can remember. Further on, we pass the highest waterfall, Obrovsky vodopad, before reaching the mountain hut Zamskovskéno chata for a lentil soup and sherpa tea lunch – just what the body needed. Beyond the hut, we head out onto the belvedere and viewpoint at Lomnická kzatelnica, before retracing our steps back to the funicular, which is a proper rush hour experience.



Thursday is our last walking day and by now we've sussed the quickest way to walk to the station. We alight the train at Popradské Pleso and head up the made road to the hotel of the same name. It's a very popular destination for tourists and after a coffee and cake interlude, Steve and I head up to the viewpoint at Ostrva Sedlo.

Steve at Ostrva viewpoint

The path is well made with plenty of zigzags right the way up. At the top a cold wind picks up, but we find a sheltered spot for lunch and enjoy the stunning viewpoint. After lunch we follow part of the Tatranská Magistrata along an undulating belvedere. At first, the path is well laid with slabs but further on becomes more of the mixed boulder terrain. Near the lake of Batizovské Pleso we turn off the Magistrata to head south, through dwarf pine and boulder underfoot, which requires some concentration.

After about a mile of this, we emerge into pine forest, which is then our terrain for the final couple of miles to Vysné Hágy station, complete with a small bar selling Radlers. Our timing is perfect as no sooner have we finished our drinks then the train arrives to take us back to Poprad. That night we have a local meal of pumpkin soup, followed by chicken with cranberries, pork, vegetables and potatoes.

A great destination for a week in the hills, with plenty left to explore.

Participants: Ed Bramley, Andy Burton, David Clear, Steve Creasey, Philip Hands, Roger James.

Dartmoor Meet - Princetown, September - Paul Stock

The Plume of Feathers public house and bunk rooms was home for the weekend for Andy, Mike, Judy and Paul.

The Baldwins stayed in a nearby guest house.

Andy and Mike arrived at Merrivale early afternoon for a late lunch. After lunch they visited the stone age hut circles, the standing stone, a kyst tomb and the double rows of stones. A very interesting place with great views - an exceptional place to live!

We gathered on the Friday evening for a meal and refreshments with planty of discussion about the walking routes to be taken the following

plenty of discussion about the walking routes to be taken the following day.

After breakfast on the Saturday we gathered to set off on our first walk of the weekend. We were joined by Paul's brother-in-law lan Wren. It was tremendous early morning weather with clear skies and very decent visibility.

From the Plume of Feathers we made our way through Princetown to the start of the path to North Hessary Tor (509m). At the top we were treated to views right across the moor to Plymouth Sound. The tall TV mast on the top of North Hessary Tor makes a great navigational aid in good weather.



Mike at Merrivale

Passing herds of Dartmoor ponies we walked to the rocky top of Great Mis Tor (538m) which is the highest point in the Southern area of Dartmoor. This Tor is used for Royal Marines training with bolts for belay/abseiling protection,



the Tor is right on the edge of the Military training area.

With the only OS marked path from the top retracing our steps back to the road we had crossed on route we decided to go "off piste" and make our way across a boulder field to a stream crossing and a visible path to the top of our third top of the day Great Staple Tor (455m). Brilliant views from this Tor convinced us to stop for some early lunch refreshments.

We followed the path along a weak ridge line to Roos Tor (454m) and then onwards to the stone circle atop Langstone Moor (445m) which is part of the Petertavy Great Common. A second lunch was taken at the stone circle. Up to this point the paths had been reasonably dry given the recent bad weather in the West Country. However, after lunch this did not continue as we crossed three or four extremely boggy stream beds on route to the final top of the day, Black Dunghill (492m). The route continued to follow tracks back





across the moor to a road section just on the outskirts of Princetown. This last section of the walk is dominated by views across to Dartmoor Prison.

On return to Princetown we stopped for tea and scones at the Fox cafe. Very nice! Saturday evenings meal was taken at the Dartmoor Inn in Merrivale where we immersed ourselves in the sensory journey of direct live-fire cooking over the bespoke Ox Grill.

View across to the now closed prison



On Sunday morning we awoke to howling winds with forecasted heavy rain due in at around 11am so after breakfast we decided that walks along the Lydford Gorge would be best given the conditions. But on arrival at the Gorge the National Trust had shut the site due to the weather.

So quickly laid plans enabled us to snatch a very swift walk to the church on the top of Brent Tor (334m). As we returned to the cars the heavens opened and the weekend was complete.

Participants: Andy Burton, Mike Goodyer, Judy Renshaw, Paul Stock, James and Belinda Baldwin.

Brecons Meet - Bwlch, September - Steve Coulton

Andy, Ed and I experienced the usual assault on the senses that is the M5 and arrived in peaceful Crickhowell early Friday afternoon to meet up with Steve Creasey. I hadn't seen Steve in over ten years so it was nice to be in his company again. A family emergency meant no evening meal was on offer at The New Inn in Bwlch so without the prospect of a welcoming fire and the familiar superb fare to which we have become accustomed, we forsook the usual pleasant amble around nearby Langorse Lake and plumbed instead for a perambulation along the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. Having secured a table in the highly recommended Dragon Inn on High Street for a later gastronomic indulgence, we set off under a grey sky and across the lovely narrow bridge that spans the River Usk.

It is the pride of Crickhowell and a Schedule 1 Listed structure. Its present form is Victorian, altered to cope with the requirements of modern vehicular traffic. Multi arched and picturesque it is well worth an admiring look back.

We soon fell onto the towpath and turned East, striking out with no particular intent other than enjoying a leg stretch and whatever we came across. Remnants of the canal's industrial past and its present boating utilisation made for an interesting afternoon but mindful of our six o'clock date with culinary delights and liquid accompaniment we turned around at the river Clydach and retraced our steps back to the welcoming arms of the Dragon Inn.

Suitably replete we made the short trip to Bwlch and our first visit to The Star Bunkhouse which stands opposite The New Inn. We were welcomed by the lovely Emma (never met Pete) and found the place to be excellent in every respect. Clean, modern and well thought out, there are plenty of rooms, the showers are spacious cubicles and the kitchen is fully fitted with all mod cons and plenty of them. We noticed how warm and cosy the whole building was all the time. Lashings of hot water anytime and constant heating appears to be down to solar panels. A far cry from some of the gloomy, chilly and uninviting hostel experiences we've all had. Far better facilities it has to be said and first choice for the future I would suggest.

Saturday morning saw us enjoying a cooked breakfast in civilised surroundings with other guests when decisions were made as to who was going where. The weather was lovely, the sun was up and it was going to be grand day.

Ed and Steve C had plans for an adventurous day in the mountains so we said cheerio and Andy and I made for nearby Llangynidr village.

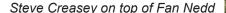
Eds account: It's a glorious Saturday morning and Steve Creasey and I are winding our way up to the Storey Arms car park in his MX-5 with the top down – that's one itch scratched for the day. We avoid the top car park and the masses heading up towards Pen y Fan, instead heading out along the other side of the valley to the trig point at Fan Frynch. The track round crosses a few streams, but they have not been too swollen by overnight rain, unlike our foray in this area last year. It's also noticeable that there's hardly anyone on this side of the valley, something that continues for most of the day. We meet a solitary local on the top who has this as part of his normal constitutional – no wonder he is shifting like a gazelle.



After the top of Fan Frynch we head westwards down the main rib of the mountain and pick a good line that drops us straight out onto the line of the old Roman road (Sarn Helen). This area is part of Cwm Du nature reserve and there are buzzards and ravens about, and we take time to enjoy their aerial antics and calling. Beyond Cwm Du, we climb up the line of the Roman road and find a suitable lunch halt, before heading up Fan Need, which has been beckoning to us from the top of Fan Frynch.

Early start above Storey Arms

We cross some indeterminate ground, avoiding the bogs to left and right, to reach the minor road heading to Ystradfellte. Coming up the track is an elderly gentleman on his e-bike, who has the specific intention of taking several photos from the pass to add to his collection from the same location. It turns out he's a bit of a local historian and tells up about the origins of the walls on Fan Bwlch Chwyth to our left and, as importantly, gives us some ideas for walks in that area.





It's not a long pull up to the top of Fan Need and its tabletop peak with both a large cairn and a trig point. And the elderly gentleman was right – on a day like this, you can see way into the Swansea valleys. In fact, the views all around are tremendous. We follow the south-eastern rib off the mountain and drop down to the car park at Afon Llia, where we pick up the Brecons way for our return leg.

A bit sketchy at first, the track then heads up and over Fan Llia and Fan Dringarth – two whaleback hills that are bathed in autumn sunshine lighting up the moorland grasses – just superb. Our route back is then a classic orienteering choice – stick on the big path on the ridge and take the long way round, or pick up the distinct path on the ground that contours round to the final saddle that we need to cross. We're feeling good, so we opt for the more direct route, which works very well until the final pull over the col and we find ourselves in some really boggy ground. Luckily the boots remain dry, but it was a close call.

It's then just a short distance to join our outward route and back to the car, where I enjoy one last session with the top down on the way back. What a great day!

At the impressive 18th Century bridge over the Usk we stopped to chat with a bunch of intrepid kayakers contemplating how to tackle the daunting flow of a river in spate. It was a fierce freshet of thunderous, churning,tumbling water between the arches but those already in the river had found quieter eddies around the stonework from where they launched themselves into the torrent, paddling furiously between the rock channels as they were swept at speed towards the hopefully calmer waters of Crickhowell.

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Exhausted by it all we found a pot of tea and a slice of home baked cake a great reviver at The Walnut Tree Cafe.

Thus fortified we were invigorated to explore westwards along the canal further than we had ventured on previous visits. The weather was holding nicely, blue sky and warm sunshine enhanced an autumnal landscape of amber foliage with fallen leaves carpeting our pathway and afloat on barely moving water. A pleasant excursion spent chatting to ladies of formidable expertise in the arts of lock gate etiquette and their menfolk equally proficient in the skills necessary to manoeuvre fifty foot of boat at the heady speed of two miles per hour with the sailing capability of a crisp packet.

Steve looking at the hamlet Llandetty

A sign to Llandetty Church aroused enough curiosity for a deviation from the canal and we found ourselves passing through a farm and squeezing between a thorny hedgerow and abandoned lorry permanently blocking the gateway



to keep out the unwanted. Undaunted and somewhat scratched,we found a lovely little local parish church serving, unsurprisingly, the tiny hamlet of Llandetty. This is a little gem built in the twelve hundreds, simple and austere with little adornment. There are the traditional ancient Yew trees and very many centuries old gravestones. The most moving is a single monument to 310 ex-servicemen all once residents of nearby Buckland House when it was a British Legion home. These gentlemen were veterans of both world wars who died of their injuries .They are still in the care of The British Legion which makes this site a rather unique war grave - 'Lest we forget'.

On a lighter note, there is a bullet hole in the priest's door put there in 1660, when the puritan priest objected to Charles 11 returning as monarch. He left and never came back.

Back on the towpath we said hello again to all the boaters we had been talking too earlier as try as we might we couldn't help overtaking them. Lunch beckoned and we sat on a bench with faces to the sun atop the 343 metre long Ashford Tunnel built to hide the canal as the landowner way back then objected to having to see it. A little further on found us at Talybont on Usk and as it was still warm and sunny we felt it in order to visit The Star Inn who's beer garden sits conveniently adjacent to the towpath as a marvellous example of forethought and consideration. You may be surprised to read we opted for no more than a refreshing pot of tea.

We had to leave our canal walk here and make across country for Bwlch. A walk alongside the A40 for a while was the only downside of the day but we were soon back on softer ground taking paths in the direction intended.

A reference to 'castle remains of' on the map was too good a challenge to ignore and after some detective reasoning as to the name 'Castle Wood', we found the small woodland in which lie partial ruins of Castle BlaenlIgnfi, one of the many which was battered constantly by anyone who was anybody in the medieval world.

It was only a short walk back the The Star Inn and tea and cake before a freshen up and a convivial evening with excellent food and fine beer in The New Inn, courtesy of mine host Neil and his wife Sarah. Always a pleasure and never likely to disappoint.

Sunday greeted us with the tail end of Storm Ashley. Steve decided on a short day in order to get home at a reasonable time so we said goodbye till next time.

Though wet and drizzling, colder and far from inviting,nevertheless Andy, Ed and I made for the 4 Waterfalls Walk at the head of The Vale of Neath.



We settled for a starting point at Cwm Porth Car Park with all the necessary facilities.

Advertised as a five and a half miles round trip the main path is well maintained and flat making for easy going, especially on a wet day. None of the waterfalls are visible from the trail.



The track to each waterfall has its own, very detailed information board showing a map and degrees of difficulty. All require a descent down rocky pathways and a climb back up. The wet weather made going down an interesting experience and care has to be taken.

Apparently once down there is an old trail linking each waterfall which precludes a climb up but it follows the riverbank, is dangerous and not on the information boards. Avoid at all costs.

I seem to have seen more than just four waterfalls throughout the day such was the impressive sight of the enormity of so much water.

Andy and Ed had been there previously but had not seen it as we did that day. Whatever had fallen on the Brecons overnight had found its way down to the rivers Mellte and Hepste in a magnificent display of raw power we should be lucky to see again.

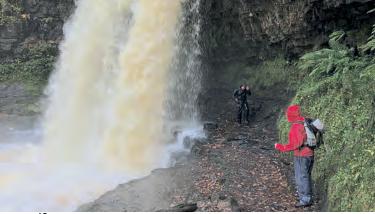
It is hard to describe a sight such as these. It needs to be seen to be believed. Photos are all we can rely on.

Each one has its own identity and interest. Where the waters abated some hardy souls had gathered in swimwear to plunge into water barely above freezing. One or two were a funny shade of blue and it was a relief

to see them move. I had a conversation with a group of young things dressed in wetsuits and wearing crash helmets of some sort. They said they were going to jump into water from on high. I thought they were bonkers till one recognised my accent and said he was from Mansfield- - explained it all.

considered it an experience to don waterproofs and walk behind the noisy cascading waters of Sgwd yr Eira.

The whole walk is a unique encounter with diverse landscapes, taking you along riverbank, through woodland and various pathways. All very verdant and unspoilt and for us at this time of year,very beautiful in its autumn hues. Ed spotted the remains of various buildings, now almost lost to nature but revealing of a time when the area must have been a hive of industry. We must have lingered somewhat over tea and chocolate cake



as we were in danger of finishing in the dark but we made it back to Cwm Porth well in time for a drive to Abergavenny and steak and chips.

A stunning round trip and one I'd like to enjoy again.

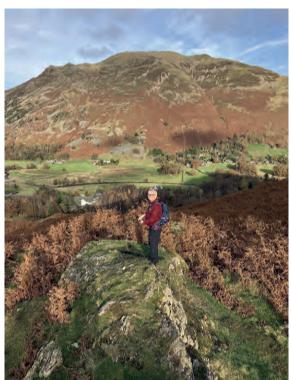
All in all a thoroughly enjoyable weekend with old friends. One of varied weather, scenery and experiences and no reason not to do it all again next year.

Participants: Andy Burton, Ed Bramley, Steve Coulton and Steve Creasey.

Presidents Meet - Patterdale, November - Daniel Albert

Twelve members signed up for my first President's Meet to be held at the George Starkey Hut on 1 - 3 November. This included two who eschewed the comfort of the hut, because they lived next door.

By the time that I arrived on the Friday evening, a few hardy folk had been out enjoying the best of Lakeland weather. Fortunately, the next two days were drier.



Andy B writes: The Friday saw me driving up to Patterdale in fine weather to meet up with our two Mackems, David Clear and David Blackett, for an afternoon walk from the Hut, prior to the start of Daniel's first Meet as President/Organiser.

I arrived in time to have a look for Tony Howard at what was behind the plywood covered boxing high up in the kitchen at the drying room end. The sight of me up the ladder hammering away was not what the two Dave's were expecting on their arrival. But in short order with their assistance the job was done, photos taken and shared with Tony, and all the mess cleared away in time for us to have a quick bit of lunch and get out there.

One of the benefits of coming up to the Hut during my time as Company Secretary to liaise with various workmen, members of the PCC and others is that I have done a fair few shorter walks from the Hut with the remaining daytime available, many of which mirror the walks that Marian favours from her front door, and it was one of those which I chose to do this afternoon.

Finding the footpath hidden at the back of the Patterdale Hotel we set off up to Oxford Crag with views into Glenamara Park and beyond at this first viewing point. The second at 433 metres is Arnison Crag where the views become even more extensive.

Negotiating your way through the Trough Head area and up onto Birks soon had us fully warmed up just in time to join the main path up onto St. Sunday and begin our descent. This path through Thornhow End in my opinion affords some of the best views of the Hut and the surrounding part of Patterdale regardless of season.

A number of us dined at the newly reopened White Lion on Friday night. The food was excellent, staff friendly and general atmosphere very pleasant. In our usual club fashion, we discussed everything apart from what we might do the following morning.

When we returned, the fire was glowing nicely and we settled down onto the, now, fire-retardant sofas. Andy B. entertained us with tales of his excavation of the drying room extractor-fan "ducting". The bucket of rubble, extracted from the extractor, evidence of why it has never worked.

Saturday dawned fine and Judy set off briskly towards Place Fell via the scenic, but rougher, route over Hare Shaw.

Sheffield Pike

On Saturday the rest of us followed Heathers desire to climb up onto Sheffield Pike, 675 metres, where despite the gloom we managed a group photo on top, with the add on as we reached the col at Nick Head of traversing under Glencoyne Head all the way round to the wall above the Dam(disused) for lunch. Following on we took the footpath

marked through the wall above Bell Knott and down through some beautiful woodland rich in the colours of autumn all the way down and across to the Park Brow car park. It was cold at the top but the weather was very fine.

Here we were able to access a path that took you virtually straight to the steps down to the viewing platform below the main waterfall at Aira Force and out onto the main road. Two of the Daves forged ahead and were already sat at the National Trust café enjoying an afternoon tea. They then walked back to the Hut.



Group at Aira Force

The rest of us pitched up within three minutes of the 508 bus arriving, and as we had kitchen duties to perform and senior bus passes, elected for our own café at the Hut. Win win all-round I say.



Dinner, thanks once again to Andy Hayes and his team of kitchen slaves, was magnificent with mixed bruschetta, boeuf (or boeufless) bourguignon followed by delicious filled brandy snaps.

The meal started early and finished with washing up (thanks everyone) around 9pm. I then showed some slides from my trip with the Swiss mountain guide Martin Epp to Swedish Lappland in 1981. Mike Parsons also had memories of Martin and was able to chip in with additional anecdotes.

Sunday morning saw Judy heading off into the sunrise again. This time, in the direction of St Sunday Crag.

Dinnertime!

Andy B writes: Sunday morning after clearing up the two Daves and I set off to have a look at the felling of the storm damaged trees around Lanty's Tarn which Marian had informed us was well underway.

In order to get a different view of this we decided to walk into Glenridding and walk along the west side of the Beck



crossing back over and up onto the Greenside Road beyond Rake Cottages. Crossing over the oddly fastened gated bridge above the new HEP station and weir we made our way up past the Old Pipe Line, which as I understand it provided HEP to the mine and to the school at Glenridding, making it one of the first schools to have electricity in the country.

We then followed the path up alongside Red Tarn Beck to the tarn itself and had our lunch under the cloud shrouded flanks of Helvellyn and its surrounding edges. Our descent path took us past the hole in the wall and followed the ridge with its wall to our right all the way down to Brownend Plantation where the extensive tree-felling work was clear for all to see.

Passing through another footpath marked hole in the wall we made our way towards Lantys Tarn



negotiating the heavy machinery tracks that the forest clearing necessitated. The sight of a set of heavy-duty chains for a caterpillar tracked vehicle all locked together in the bracken made us realise what had carved up the fell side so much.

The return back through the woods alongside the Grisedale Beck gave us another look at this impressive landscape of large established trees and powerful water carving its way down through the rock steps to Ullswater.

The rest of us worked off the previous evening's meal more gently with a few attempting my local treasure hunt. On this subject, it seems that we have some good puzzle solvers in the group as well as some excellent navigators. But those who can do both have yet to take up the challenge.

All told, I had a great weekend with food and friends.

Dave and Andy

Present: Daniel Albert, David Clear, David Blackett, Andy Burton, Andy Hayes, Heather Eddowes, Don Hodge, Judy Renshaw, David Matthews, Ian Mateer, Mike Parsons, Marian Parsons.

Twixmas Meet - Patterdale, December - Simon Palmer



This year's meet was a bittersweet one: many members and friends hoping to make it had to sadly decline due to illnesses, family commitments, and the demands of parenting while moving house for Mary and Jonny T! Their presences were all very much felt in spirit, and nonetheless, faces old and new appeared to join in the fun.

After long journeys up on the 30th for most attendees in glorious afternoon sunshine, the heavens opened once darkness fell, calling for a cosy welcome meeting in the White Lion pub over dinner by the fire... although the smoke pouring from the hearth was slightly less soothing..! Back to the GSH to unpack, settle, and warm the building with a much more enjoyable fire from the stove.

New Year's Eve morning saw the group set off around 9:30am, ready to brave the increasingly ferocious wind and rain, assaulting us from the moment we crossed a fast-swelling Goldrill Beck towards Side Farm. The ascent to Boredale Hause was a challenge for all, the head-on rain stinging cheeks and causing some members to loop back towards home in favour of drier socks. The brave (...foolish?) few to continue on to Hartsop then made a stop at the Brotherswater Inn around midday before abandoning hope and calling for a lift back to the hut!

The afternoon was spent by the fire: reading, snoozing, playing board games - including the now semi-traditional 'Werewolves' led by Eudald - and much laughter and pizza.

Come midnight, Auld Lang Syne was sung (no handbells this time!) prosecco was poured, followed by a quick nip out into the night to toast the hills and the now-visible stars!



Following much debate, it was eventually agreed that most of us were willing to partake in the annual New Year's Day Ullswater swim at Glenridding, the reality of which for most of us entailed less of a swim and more of a blink-and-you'll-miss-it submersion in the shallows and then promptly running back to the car! Points for effort, eh?

Making a swift exit while the locals saunter in...

Despite strong winds still preventing a climb, the rest of the day brought kinder weather, giving some spectacular views of rainbows and sunshine-infused mist during a low-altitude jaunt along the east side of Ullswater, the mist giving way to glorious blue skies in the afternoon upon the approach to sleepy Howtown.

Eating packed lunches on the pontoon dock passed the time while waiting to catch the last ferry of the day back to Glenridding, before another relaxing evening of food and board games by the fire.

The indisputable highlight of the meet was the following pre-dawn scamper up Place Fell on the 2nd of Jan, to catch the sunrise slowly light up the clear skies and a glistening frosty landscape. The colours were indescribable, and needle ice was spotted everywhere! What



better way to be reminded of how rewarding and invigorating the Lake District is, to those who put in the effort to witness its beauty.



Place Fell: let the sun shine!

Attendees: Andy Burton, Anna Kaszuba, Eudald Rossell Vivo, Simon Palmer, John Aouad, Maren Fidje Bjørneseth, Markie Allard, Mike Parsons, Marian Parsons

Wentworth Woodhouse - Figure of eight or curates' egg?, January - Marcus Tierney

Arrangements are made, arrangements are changed, and arrangements are misunderstood. It's simple really. You see there are two stately homes near Barnsley. Both have the word Wentworth in them, both are run by the National Trust, and both are near Wentworth. Note to self don't assume the Stately home at Wentworth is the one you think it is. Now we have that adequately explained to the walk which as the title suggests is more northern than usual and was a bit of a Curates egg.

Ed, Marcus, and Michele met at the cafe at the Wentworth Garden Centre instead of meeting in the national trust car park which was closed but in fact wasn't because the other one was closed but the one Ed meant was open.

The breakfast was good the participants were fortified the walk commenced. Setting off from the car park the walk went along a pleasant path and passed the church in Wentworth and continued over fields past the Kings Wood to Elsecar.

In Elsecar there is a Heritage Centre which we have made a note of to revisit when more time allows. There are arts and craft shops and demonstrations by craftsmen and women. We resisted the temptation to buy a very nice mug we saw in a shop window with the word Numpty in large letters on it, so we continued.



The route continued to have areas of patchy melting snow which was very slippery underfoot and made some areas very muddy and unpleasant. As we walked in and out of built-up areas the amounts of dog mess meant we played hopscotch along the paths. To add insult to this, a Jack Russell terrier tried to bite Ed as they passed one another, but his cat like reactions avoided him being nipped by the beast of Wentworth.

Continuing into the Grounds of Wentworth Woodhouse (which is a stately home near Wentworth)

we were able to enjoy watching a large herd/mob/ bunch or wrangler of deer. The views across the grounds of Wentworth Woodhouse are nice and the house itself is very grand.

The grounds and house have a very interesting history, with several family's trying and failing to make a go of the place. I will now continue with the walk.

The walk continued down past the nice Dog Kennel and Morley ponds. I mentioned the walk might have been a bit of the curate's egg. Well, this was the part of it that was not fun. Half a mile across a ploughed field which had just had 6 inches of snow melt on it. By the time the other end was reached we all had around a





bucket of clay on each boot which was like walking around in deep sea divers' boots.

A more pleasant path led to the impressive Keppel's Column built to commemorate the acquittal of Admiral Keppel at a court martial in 1779. Interestingly the whole area has follies built and we were rarely out of the sight of one.

The walk finished via Thorpe Hesley, where a new mine water purification scheme is being constructed. Despite some parts of the walk being quite challenging, the good views, rich local history and interesting architecture made for a good day. The walk was ten miles give or take. The garden centre cafe was well stocked with vittles' including tea and cake. In typical Yorkshire humour, one of the serving ladies recognised Ed from the morning and asked if he had been in the cafe all day.



Attendees: Ed Bramley, Michele and Marcus Tierney

Annual Dinner Glenridding, February 2025 - Daniel Albert

As my first AGM and dinner as president, and with a number of more experienced committee members unable to attend, I approached this weekend with some trepidation. Thanks to everyone who contributed, it ran like clockwork.



As many chose the softer option, the hut crew was quite small.

Having arrived early, I was invited to join Marian and Margaret for a lovely local walk over Arnison Crag and Hag Beck.

Margaret and Daniel on the Friday afternoon.

Ed Bramley: Good to be out again

As I crested the summit of Kirkstone Pass, there was the view I'd been waiting for. A clear, sunny day and the pass below stretched away to Brothers Water, with no other cars in sight. Now, time to enjoy caressing those curves as I descended the pass, arriving at the hut on the Friday just after midday. After a short lunch, it was time to make the most of the good weather.

I headed out on the familiar track to Boardale Hause, but I'd only just got past Side Farm when a flash of furry red brought me to a halt. It was a red squirrel running along the ground and wall – slow enough to enjoy, but too fast to photograph. A great start to the afternoon. On I went up the path, keeping my steady tap-tap rhythm going to the Hause, where I could take a short stop and look around and enjoy the landscape still in some vestiges of winter raiment.



On I went, up to Bedafell Knott and the wide ridge that runs along to Beda Head.

Easy going, with some tantalising glimpses out to the Pennines, and a great position with the two valleys on either side. It was almost deserted as well, meeting less than a handful of people on the ridge. Coming off the ridge at Garth Head, it was then only a short connecting piece of roadway before I was on the Ullswater Way, heading back on or near the lake to the hut. As I passed Long Crag, the lake steamer came past, sending ripples to the shoreline. All too soon, I was back at the hut, but felt refreshed.

Just ready for a short Friday evening sojourn to the White Lion with others who had begun to arrive......

Friday evening dinner at the White Lion hotel was excellent. The new management provide a limited choice of great food (much appreciated over doing it the other way around).

Saturday morning inspired us with fine weather: wet snow high up and wet rain in the valley, all served with high winds. Ed and Céline combined ambition with common sense, heading for Helvellyn via Nethermost Pike and turning back when it became silly. They still got to use their crampons, have a long day out and return looking weather-beaten. Margaret and I took the easier path to Angle Tarn and back, invoking various excuses that I don't remember.

Ed......Saturday saw low cloud roiling around the Helvellyn tops, but undeterred, Celine and I headed out for Nethermost Cove and Nethermost Pike. Our plan was to get onto the tops and then along and down the Red Screes zig zags into Glenridding. The reality turned out to be a little different.

We reached the old sled track by the side of the old mine on Eagle Crag and made our way slowly up into Nethermost Cove. Some way to our right was the clear outline of Striding Edge, quickly cloaked by the clouds that were circulating round the tops. As we pulled onto initially the wide ridge that leads up to Nethermost Pike, it was evident that the winds were now much stronger, and we would soon be in cloud.

After a quick snack, we started on the upper part of the ridge, which soon changed into a proper winter ridge with large areas of snow, so it was time for ice axe and crampons. Whilst the route through the broken ground was evident in places, in other areas there was no sign of the track, which meant breaking trail through a substantial and crusty layer of snow. We were also mindful of straying too far off the route into the crags on either side of the ridge. This was getting hard work and despite the cloud and wind, I was sweating away. From where we were, it was less than 500ft of ascent to the summit plateau, but as it was already early afternoon, it was decision time – press on, or turn back. It only took a short discussion to reach the safe decision – descend.



We retraced our track down the ridge and then branched right into Ruthwaite Cove, avoiding the small outcrops of crags. Before long, we were back at Ruthwaite Lodge and the route back to the hut for a well deserved cuppa and cake.......

The AGM ran uneventfully with questions from the floor concerning finances of the George Starkey Hut. Which was hardly surprising, given that there remains much to be resolved in this regard.



The dining room looked magnificent bedecked with club memorabilia and the cantonal flags of Switzerland. And the place settings were decorated with menus showing various club photos and name cards including chosen food options for those of us that forget these things. Many thanks to Heather for sending along the club treasures, Julie for organising and Margaret for helping set up, with unquestioning help from Emma of the hotel. Don, as always, had the IT and audio- visual systems totally under control.

With three tables of ten, we were a smaller gathering than of late. As we toasted Absent Friends, the reality struck. We all age, as we must, and the time comes when the journey to Glenridding becomes too difficult or no longer possible. But our lack of newer members is not inevitable, and yet seemingly intractable. And yet, four long-standing members attended the dinner for their very first time – two coming all the way from Switzerland – specifically to hear Pamela Harris give her talk.

After the meal, which really was very tasty, Pamela talked of her travels through the Alps, many with club members past and present. As Pamela talked, with her clear teachers' voice, of people and places that were dear to so many, I could see members' memories being reignited. And for relative newbies, like me, it was another opportunity to see what we have missed.

At the meal, we were honoured to have Charlie Burbridge, honorary secretary of the Alpine Club, as our guest. Whilst most of us did little more than take a short walk and pack up on Sunday morning, Charlie was spotted tucking into a large Cumbrian hotel breakfast, before setting off to run the whole Helvellyn ridge (under drifted snow).

EdThe weather on Sunday was looking like it would be a repeat of Saturday, so Celine and I headed out for the low level favourite around Gowbarrow Fell. On the rising traverse to the viewpoint overlooking Ullswater, we met a group of Northumbrian fire ladies in full gear, who were doing a charity walk along the Ullswater Way. Big Respect.



The lake and the view across to Howtown and Hallin Fell was feeling moody with the lighting of Beda Fell and the corrugated look of the lake. The remainder of the circuit up to the top of Gowbarrow Fell was straightforward; the wind on the top confirming we'd made a sensible decision not to go higher.

There's been a lot of path improvement on the descent side, so it was not long before we had reached Aira Beck. Heading down, we met a couple of teenagers who were keen to convey their adventure of being

out in the Lake District – very heartening to hear. Before long we had reached Aira Force and were rewarded with sunshine and a rainbow at the bottom of the Force.

To cap off the morning, we headed to Glenridding Village Hall, where Marian and others had a coffee morning on the go – even provided some very good cake for the journey home!

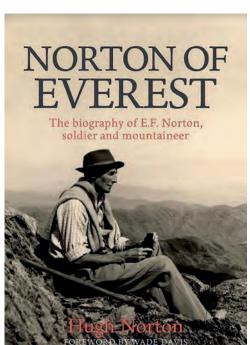
Margaret Moore also went to Aira Force and Gowbarrow, where it was very windy on the top.

My thanks to everyone who made the weekend a great success. I, for one, had a really enjoyable time catching up with so many good friends.

Members Reports

FROM THE HAUTE SAVOIE TO EVEREST: THE CENTENARY by Pamela Harris

One hundred years ago, in the spring of 1924, a British expedition under the auspices of the Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club set out from Darjeeling for an attempt on Everest. At that time the southern route through Nepal was closed to foreigners, and the alternative route through Tibet necessitated a long approach march of five weeks across a windswept plateau.



This was the second climbing expedition since the reconnaissance in 1921, and their hopes were high that they would be the first to set foot on the summit of the mountain. They had a strong team which included George Mallory, who had been present on the previous expeditions. However, the weather was much worse than on their 1922 attempt, with violent winds and heavy snowfalls, and in early June the expedition was abandoned when Mallory and his young climbing partner Andrew Irvine disappeared high on the mountain. Mallory's body was found in 1999, next to a broken rope, and it will probably never be known whether they did reach the summit, 29 years before John Hunt's successful expedition in 1953.

Mallory and Irvine were not the only ones to climb high that year for the team included other strong climbers, one of whom was Edward Norton, the leader of the expedition. Norton was a professional soldier with a distinguished military career both in India and in the First World War, with what was described by his

contemporaries as an "extraordinary gift of leadership". Like others of his generation, he was a well-rounded man of many talents, in particular a gifted artist who took sketchbooks with him on all his journeys. His grandson Christopher Norton has published his private diaries of the 1922 and 1924 expeditions in *Everest Revealed*, illustrated

by his own watercolours and sketches of the landscapes, wildlife, flowers and people he encountered en route, and his son Hugh Norton has written a moving account of his life entitled *Norton of Everest*.

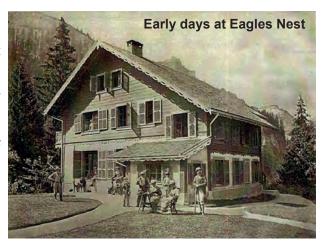
Norton was chosen for this and the earlier 1922 expedition because of his mountaineering skills, and on a summit attempt from Camp VI he reached 28,126 ft (8572m), a record for climbing without supplementary oxygen, bettered only in 1978 with Messner and Habeler's ascent of Everest. He came from a climbing family and was taken on mountain trips from an early age by his maternal grandfather, Sir Alfred Wills, who owned a chalet in the Cirque des Fonds near Sixt in the Haute Savoie of France.

Alfred Wills (1828-1912), an eminent barrister and High Court judge, was a pioneer of climbing in the Alps and one of the founder members of the Alpine Club. He had first discovered the Cirque des Fonds in 1857 after climbing Mont Buet with his guide and was immediately captivated by it. He later wrote: "The scenery struck us as unique in beauty, and it passed through my mind what a glorious site it would be for a chalet." When he took his young wife Lucy with him on a visit the following summer she fell in love with it too.



It was Lucy, a talented artist, who designed the three-storey chalet which was centred round a magnificent carved wooden staircase. Downstairs there was a drawing room with piano and billiards table, a dining room, and a large kitchen, while upstairs there were two floors of bedrooms and even an indoor bathroom with hot and cold running water, rare in those days. Wills named it the Eagle's Nest, le Nid d'Aigle. Sadly, Lucy did not live to see its completion as she died in 1860, leaving Wills with two young children. After re-marrying he went on to have five more, and spent nearly every summer with his growing family at his beloved chalet. His book, The Eagle's Nest in the Valley of Sixt, remains an evocative account of summers at the Eagle's Nest and of the excitement that Wills felt on first discovering this valley

Sixt was relatively unknown to the English before Wills built the Eagle's Nest, and he often invited his mountaineering friends to spend summers at the chalet with him. From then on he rarely climbed in any other area, and together with family and friends, he pioneered many routes in the surrounding mountains. It was through his influence that the locals founded their own company of guides in 1864, the *Compagnie des Guides de Sixt*. The present *Bureau des Guides* is now in possession of a collection of papers and articles on Wills and the Eagle's Nest, with photographs showing the chalet and its many visitors, two of which are reproduced here .





Wills introduced his children, and later grandchildren, to mountaineering on their summer holidays at the chalet, instilling in them his love of the mountains. His last visit was in 1902, after which he gifted the chalet to his eldest daughter Edith who in turn took her growing family on summer holidays there each year. Edward Norton, known as Teddy by the family, was one of her sons, born in 1884, and this is where his own love of the mountains and mountaineering began. As he grew older, he accompanied his uncles and brothers on rock climbs in the Cirque des Fonds, and they frequently walked over the passes to Chamonix where they hired guides for more difficult ascents. During the summers of 1919 and 1921 the brothers climbed several major peaks around Chamonix, practicing the skills of snow and ice climbing so necessary for the Everest expeditions.

On his return from Everest in September 1924, Edward was made an honorary member of the French Alpine Club in recognition of his outstanding achievement on Everest and his connection with Sixt. That year he made a short visit to the chalet, with a longer visit the following year when he proposed to the young Joyce Pasteur. She and her family had been regular visitors to the chalet since 1911, and she was a keen walker who loved the area. However, after their marriage they were unable to enjoy visits to the chalet for long as Teddy was posted to

India and then to Hong Kong as Acting Governor. In 1936 his mother Edith died, after spending a total of 55 summers at her beloved chalet, bequeathing it to her surviving children. Three years later, when war broke out, none of the family were able to travel to France, and the chalet was requisitioned by the French Resistance movement.

It was 1946 before Teddy, together with his elder brother Jack, was finally able to visit again, only to find it badly in need of repair. The next summers were spent cleaning up and working on repairs to make the chalet fit for a family visit, planned for 1949. Teddy was looking forward to introducing his own sons to the valley and the mountains he loved so much, but by this time he was in poor health and his doctor forbade him to travel. So Joyce had to take the boys on her own, making a second visit with them in 1953. The chalet was then put on the market and in 1958 was sold to Charles Lucas, thus ending the family's long association with the area.



Edward Norton died in 1954, in time to see John Hunt's British team make the first ascent of Everest after Nepal had opened to foreigners a few years earlier. But, perhaps fortunately, he did not live long enough to see how the mountain has lost its mystique and has become almost a theme park. Since 1990 anyone with the money to pay can join a commercial expedition, through either Nepal or Tibet, and as of today nearly 12,000 people have set foot on its summit - and nearly 300 have died in the attempt. Above all, Norton would have been horrified to read about the amount of litter on the mountain, the endless queues on the summit ridge, and how some climbers are so focused on their own success that they walk past those dying without a second glance.



In contrast, the Cirque des Fonds remains unspoilt, and hikers are content to enjoy simply being in the mountains. The Eagle's Nest still stands, a walk of less than two hours from the dramatic waterfall of the Cascade du Rouget south of Sixt. I had walked up to it for the first time in 1984, intrigued after reading Wills' book, and over the years I made more visits. Each time it looked deserted, with the shutters closed and the large garden becoming increasingly overgrown, but finally on my last visit in August 2024 I found the shutters open. Hoping that someone was in residence. I enquired at the nearby Refuge des Fonds whether it was still owned by the Lucas family. It was then that I discovered that Laelie Lucas, the great-granddaughter of Charles Lucas, was living in the chalet and spending the summer working at the Refuge. On being introduced to her, she told me how proud her family is to own the chalet, and that they have kept the interior just as it was in Sir Alfred's day.

Sir Alfred is remembered not only at the chalet but also at the Refuge Alfred Wills, 400 metres higher, which is named in his honour. In a prominent position inside the main room, you can find the well-known photograph of him in mountaineering gear standing outside the Eagle's Nest. Although the refuge consists of only two small wooden buildings, it is always busy in the summer months for it is a favourite overnight stop for walkers on the GR5 long distance footpath heading for Chamonix and on to Nice and the Mediterranean.

It is clear that the people of Sixt have not forgotten Sir Alfred and are justifiably proud of him and of his grandson Edward Norton, the leader of one of the first Everest expeditions one hundred years ago, who learned his love of the mountains and his mountaineering skills in their lovely valley.

Editors note: Pam wrote this article for the monthly magazine of the local International Women's Club

Dolomites Via Ferrata August/September 2024 by Marcus Tierney

It's August 12th, my 65th birthday. "So what we intend to do is make a small incision in your wrist and put a tube up the artery in your arm and follow this into your heart where we will inflate a balloon". This procedure may sound familiar to many people of a certain age. As it turns out a great birthday balloon! After a week of local walking Michele and I decided I was well enough to head to our favourite area in Northern Italy for our annual Via Ferrata trip. As we were booking everything last minute and were uncertain of what I could do we headed for areas we know well.

Eight days after my procedure we set off in the car to Folkestone, staying there overnight before our Chunnel journey the next day. We enjoy taking a leisurely drive to the Alps. We are aware that it can be done in a day, but by doing so we would speed past so many lovely places we could visit on route, we are retired and time rich...kind of.

On our journey down we stopped at Valkenburg in Holland and Illertissen in Germany. We walked into the nice surrounding countryside near Valkenburg. It was particularly pleasant later sitting outside a bar in the town watching the world go by with a trio of beers in glasses equivalent to one third of a pint each. The barman told us all about the local beers we sampled and even the order in which to drink them. Beer was part of my recovery program as hops are one of my five a day.

Our first destination in the Dolomites was the Refugio Pomedes hut at 2303m looking over Cortina. The back road to the Refugio Dibona has deteriorated recently and judging by the smell, we used a years worth of clutch getting up there. Leaving the car at the car park near to the Refugio Dibona we made the thirty five minute walk up the hill carrying our kit for the next four days. It was pretty warm that day and I was, not to put too fine a point on it lathered. Michele being a lady perspired just a little. We were aware that there were two new Via Ferrates located near to the Refugio which we were keen to climb.

On our first day the weather looked good but only for the morning so we walked down to one of the new Via Ferrates, Ra Pegna located only fifteen minutes away. This VF although relatively easy was a good route to get the muscles working and get back into the routine of using our VF kit. A short steep ladder at the end of the VF leads back to the ski run. The run is called the Olimpia Tofana which was used for the final event of the 1956 Winter Olympics, the men's downhill. The slope is steep enough to walk down never mind ski down it!



Descending again we reached the start of the VF Ra Bujela on the opposite side of the ski run. The VF is graded a modest 3A but beware, the initial walls are steep and exposed. The VF climbs the walls via ladders and bridges and although short when combined with VF Ra Pegna they make a very good half day. As we descended from the summit the rain began to fall and fortunately its only a short uphill walk back to the Refugio Pomedes. Our choice of routes for the day was justified as within minutes a full blown storm arrived. We saw a family group that day caught out by the sudden storm and they had to retreat off the Punta Anna. They were obviously ill equipped and also unrealistic with their timing, setting off so late in the day. They were very grateful for the warm fire at the Refugio.

The next day we headed off from the Refugio, after descending a short distance we then traversed the VF Sentierio Astaldi with its red layered rock formations. Using this VF eliminated the need to descend to the Refugio Dibona. We continued under the face of the Tofana Di Rozes and passed the start of the very tempting and excellent VF Giavanni Lipella. Resisting the temptation to change our route, our route continued to the Forc Col Dei Bos and past the II Castelletto. Descending northwards we came to the start of the VF Scala Del Minighel . This VF is very unusual as it climbs a line of metal stemples drilled onto the rock. The VF climbs in two sections into the El Majarie valley. In gentle



rain we continued to the Refugio Giussani for lunch. The return journey was downhill and again across the VF Astaldi to return to the Pomedes. This day was an unusual combination of a nice walk and some VF climbing. This route could be done in relatively poor weather.

As the weather was holding well our next day saw us ascend the short distance from the Pomedes to the start of the VF Punta Anna. Actually this route is known by a number of names and will if taken in its entirety lead to the summit of the Tofanna di Mezzo and beyond. The combination of VF's is collectively called the Punta Anna. Our route ascended the ridge which was often very steep, strenuous and exposed. We ignored the escape route to Refugio Giussani and continued up slabs and a large corner before traversing across the huge face. Our descent was via the grade one VF Sentiero Giuseppi Olivieri which returns to the Refugio Pomedes. The whole route is graded 5 if completed, our section was certainly a good grade 4 and a very good round route.

Later as we sat having a well deserved beer we witnessed an unfortunate accident. An elderly gentleman descending from the chair lift tripped and fell. Upon assisting it looked like the man had sustained a serious facial injury but it transpired it was just a cut from his glasses. We later learned he was shaken but OK. We witnessed at close quarters the incredible skill of the helicopter pilots and also some very good 4x4 driving by the Refugio staff to get the casualty to the helicopter.

The Refugio Pomedes is typical of the high mountain huts in this area of the Alps, but we particularly like the location which is especially good for the Via Ferratas and walking. The breakfast view over Cortina is stunning, the staff are all family and friendly. The evening meals are local food, cooked well and good value. Be aware that the rooms can be made up as doubles or twins. I found out that the double is in fact two single beds as when I rolled over to give Michele a bit of a cuddle I ended up on the floor between the beds as they parted. My bed had casters on, I think it was a trap set by Michele.

We intended to travel next to Cortina to look at a new VF near Vito di Cadore and also the VF Terza Cengia which we haven't climbed. Upon researching accommodation we found the prices to have risen hugely. We are led to believe that a lot of hotels are being refitted for the upcoming Olympics and the remaining hotels have upped their prices. Also we had passed through Cortina earlier in the week and it was incredibly busy as there was a big event of some kind being held. As a result we found accommodation at Pescosta which was much more reasonable and headed there.

On arrival at the hotel Ciasa Roch in Pescosta, it seemed to be more like a cat hotel which incidentally also had rooms for humans. There were cats everywhere and more cat flaps than doors, but actually it was fine. The owner and family were all mountaineers and very friendly. The owner was also very knowledgeable about the area and

provided some useful advice about our proposed routes. The family are also very active with charity work in the Himalayas.

Our first day in the area started with a good frost, we walked down the valley to La Villa. Taking a short cable car journey we then walked across to the start of the VF Les Cordes a relatively new VF. This VF is known as a good one for beginners however, it is deceptively steep and strenuous on a couple of short sections. A short walk from the top leads to the Refugio Gherdenacia. After lunching well here we continued on path 5 to the Forc di Sassongher at 2435m. It is only a half hour walk to the summit of the Sassongher from this point, but upon wetting my finger and holding it up in the air I decided it was going to rain so we descended quickly to the valley. Upon stepping through the front door of the hotel I was proved right with my forecast, the mother of all storms hit outside. It was so bad we didn't even venture into the town for an evening meal and made do with snacks.

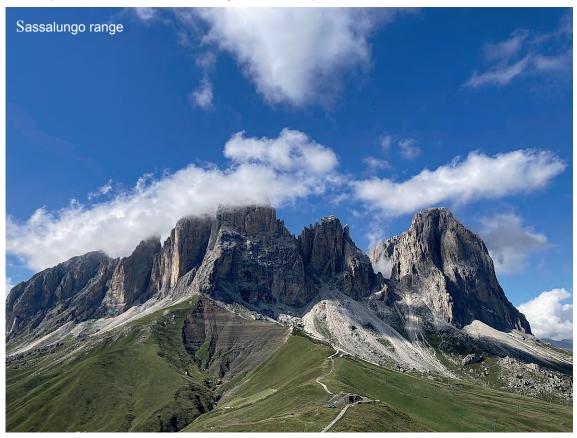
The following two days after the storm the mountains were pretty damp and with the threat of further bad weather we spent our first 'rest day' wondering around the high alpine meadows to the east above Corvara. Taking the Col Alt ski lift (Italys first, built in 1946) the panoramic views from here are excellent. The Marmolada, the Tofannas and the Fanes range are all clearly in view.



The following day we used the free bus service to go up to Passo Gardenna and returned on foot via path 8, 4B and 4A below the Sas Campiac. We had good views of the car park used for the VF Briggatta Tridentina on the other side of the valley. For those visiting the area the car park is still closed due to rockfall and the best access to that VF is by using the free public transport which drops off at that point.

With the forecast improving the next day we took the Boe Gondala and Vallon chairlift to repeat the VF Piz Da Lech which is graded 3B. This excellent VF includes some really good climbing on good rock and includes two huge exposed ladders with an awkward exit at the top of the second. The summit at 2911m has great views in all directions. Our descent included a lunch at the restaurant at the top of the Boe Gondala. The ease of access, quality of the climb and fine summit means this VF is highly recommended as long as you are willing to use the lift as the walk from the valley would be unrealistic.

After a travel day which included a walk, we checked in at the hotel Azola in Canazei we had managed to secure a very attractive half board rate at short notice. Canazei is rather popular but after visiting for the first time last year we had left a couple of new VFs to do and really wanted to repeat the VF Dei Finanzieri on Colac.



With a reasonable forecast we decided to head straight for Colac .The VF is situated on the northern side of Colac so can be quite cold. There is very little rock climbing on Colac as most of it is as they say, is a 'tottering pile of

66

choss', however the VF winds its way up some really good rock including some nice slabs. There are two highlights on the route, the first being the ladder section which starts with a thirty foot overhanging section followed by a long section of vertical ladders. The second highlight is the final wall which has just the right number of stemples and handholds. This final wall requires good balance as the holds are offset. This is quite a long route and needs to be dry to be able to enjoy it properly which fortunately for us it was.

The long descent from the summit is via an easier VF therefore virtually the full decent is protected by cables. The descent continues to the Forcia Neigra. At this point we intended to extend the day by continuing onto the Sasso Bianca ridge but as we removed our VF kit the rain began to fall and we had to don our waterproofs for the descent to the Ciampac cable car. We will return to complete this full circuit one day as it promises to be a great round route.

The following two days we were restricted by the weather. Using our lift passes we explored the area between the Col Rodela and the Col Di Rosc and also tested an approach route to the VF Furcela de Saslonch. To do this we walked from the Col Rodela to the Passo Sella and took the coffin lift to the Rif T Demetz. Later we traversed the area via lifts and walking before descending the Pecol lift. Rain meant that we couldn't complete the VF on the Col Rodela that day.

The next day we used our tested route to approach the VF Furcela de Saslonch which is on the edge of the Sassolungo range. This via Ferrata is relatively new and is very popular. The guide books describes parking at the Passo Sella but on that day we were aware that thousands of cyclists would be competing in the Sella Ronda and the roads would be closed. Our clever little traverse from the Col Rodela meant that we could leave the car at the hotel and beat the crowds.

Having ascended in the coffin lift to the Forc Sasalungo we descended to the start of the route. Unfortunately there were two families in front on the ridge and whilst the parents were well equipped the children were attached to the parents in loose fitting harnesses and shared VF kit with their parents. We could not bear to watch as it looked so dangerous, so we hung back. This meant that the VF took twice as long as it might have done, in retrospect we should have climbed past them. It is however a very nice route.

This was our last route of the trip and we had been mostly very lucky with the weather and climbed most of our objectives. We almost always leave something to go back for and that was certainly so this time round. We will be returning next year and word has it that there might be an ABMSAC Via Ferrata trip to the Dolomites in the near future.

We enjoyed our journey home and managed to stock up on a little beer, wine and limoncello on route. Please do contact Michele and me if you want to know any more about this interesting form of mountaineering or the areas we have visited.

A HISTORY OF ABMSAC ALPINE SUMMER MEETS: 1947 – 2024 by Pamela Harris

After the foundation of the ABMSAC in 1909, members continued to make frequent climbing trips to the Alps, especially to Switzerland. However, it was not until 1947, two years after the end of the Second World War, that the club's first official Alpine Meet was held, in the Hotel Mont Collon at Arolla in the Val d'Hérens. As was the custom in those days, guides were hired to accompany members, and ascents were made of Mont Collon, Mont Blanc de Cheilon and the Dent Blanche. The following year there was a Meet at the Hotel Diablons in Zinal in the Val

67

d'Anniviers, with ascents of Besso, Zinal Rothorn and Pointe de Zinal. Even more members turned up for the Meet in 1949 at Maloja in the Engadine, when twenty peaks in the Bernina and Bregaglia groups were climbed. These early members felt that they had learned a lot from climbing with guides, and special mention should be made of Otto Stoller, who led ropes on many of the Meets.

For the next three years, 1950, 1951 and 1952, Meets were held in Austria, in the Otztal, Silvretta and Stubaital, but after that few Meets were held outside Switzerland until the turn of the century. Saas-Fee was a favourite venue so as to visit the Britannia Hut, the club's gift to the Swiss Alpine Club in 1912 and one of the major reasons for its foundation. In 1959, the 50th anniversary of the club, an ascent was made of the Allalinhorn, and this became a regular event on future anniversary Meets.

From 1963 Meets fell into a regular yearly pattern, held most frequently in the Valais, the Engadine and the Bernese Oberland. They proved so popular that in 1971 the first Meets Secretary was appointed to facilitate their organisation. Members gradually realised that camping was a cheaper option, and the first camping Meet took place in 1973 at Saas-Grund so that members could climb with those staying on the hotel Meet in Saas-Almagell. From then on these became an annual fixture, sometimes in France or Italy as well as Switzerland, often in the same valley as the hotel Meet. The organisation of these was taken on in 1981 by Mike Pinney, who used the campsites as a base for climbing all the 4000 metre peaks in the Alps. Mike continued to organise the camping Meets until his untimely death in 2015.

By 1975 hotels were becoming prohibitively expensive, so Harry Archer organised the first of his chalet-based Meets, at Saas-Fee. Harry's wife and later a team of chalet girls did the catering, one of these in 1985 being Rosemary Westermeyer, who is still a regular attendee on the hotel Meets. Harry organised 20 chalet Meets in total, often at Fieschspiel in the Lötschental, but also at Morgenrot above Zermatt, another popular venue. For several years Paul French led "walk-ins" across various Alpine passes to the Meet venue.

The 75th anniversary of the ABMSAC was celebrated in 1984 with a Meet in Saas-Fee that August, and the Britannia Hut once again provided the focal point for the festivities. A large group of members assembled there for a candle-lit dinner, with the same menu as that of the inaugural banquet at the hut in 1912. All wore the climbing outfits of those times, the ladies in long woollen skirts. An ascent of the Allalinhorn was made the following morning, but the weather was so bad that only eight members reached the summit. The only ABMSAC member to be present both on this occasion and at the hut's inauguration in 1912 was 93-year-old Noel Odell of Everest fame.

In the next few years Meets were mostly held in Switzerland, at Klosters, Zermatt, Champex and Saas-Fee, with a few camping Meets in France or Italy. By this time climbs were generally made without guides as members became more proficient: for example, at the 1986 Meet in Arolla, 80 members made 130 guideless ascents. The meet at Saas-Fee in 1988 was another great success, with ascents of the Dom, Weissmies, Nadelhorn, Lagginhorn and Alphubel by a group which included Hugh Romer and Bill Westermeyer. Meanwhile, at the camping meet at Täsch, Mike Pinney and Marian Elmes (Parsons) climbed ten 4000 metre peaks, including the Monte Rosa-Breithorn traverse, Castor and Pollux. Camping Meets were now joined by Alpine Club and Climbing Club members, and it was these groups which made the more serious ascents, though a few members of hotel Meets continued to climb high.

1995 marked the first annual trek, which gradually began to resemble Paul French's earlier "walk-ins" to the venue of the hotel Meet. In 1999 the Tour of Monte Rosa, organised by Alasdair Andrews, ended at Saas-Grund for the

90th anniversary celebrations of the club, and from then on Alasdair took over the organisation of all future hotel Meets, generally preceded by a trek.

After a trek in the Val Bregaglia and a Meet at the Hotel Engadinerhof in Pontresina in 2000, mountain areas in other countries were explored. The first of these was in 2001 to Madonna di Campiglio in the Brenta Dolomites where several *via ferrata* routes were explored. This was preceded by a trek round the Rosengarten Dolomites and a longer camping Meet in nearby Pinzolo.

In 2002 the first two-centre hotel Meet was held in the Vanoise, the first week at Lanslebourg and the second at Pralognan. The highest peak climbed was the Grand Bec, by John Edwards and David Watts. The following year another two-centre Meet was held in Austria, at Mayrhofen in the Zillertal and Obergurgl in the Otztal when several groups climbed the Wildspitze and Similaun. The third and last two-centre Meet was in 2008, at Neustift in the Stubaital and Mandarfen in the Pitztal. Other new venues for the club were the 2005 hotel Meet at Cauterets in the French Pyrenees and the 2006 Meet to Santa Caterina in the Italian Ortler.

Back in Switzerland, Zermatt in 2004 proved a popular centre from where a large group climbed the Breithorn, and Mark Davison and Tony Arkley climbed Castor. Fiesch in the Upper Valais was the base for the 2007 Meet, and for the club's centenary in 2009 the Saastal was chosen again, this time Saas-Almagell, with the camping Meet at Saas-Grund. This was preceded by the Haute Route, a high-level trek from Argentière to the Britannia Hut, led by Ed Bramley. The highlight for all was the Anniversary lunch at the hut, attended by 62 members together with representatives of the Geneva Section of the SAC. Ascents were made of several high peaks, including the Allalinhorn, Weissmies and Alphubel.

Treks in other countries also proved popular, with two treks in the Himalayas organised by Pamela Harris, first to the Everest and Gokyo region of Nepal in 2007, and then to Bhutan in 2011. In addition, Ed Bramley organised three treks in Morocco.

Alasdair's last hotel Meet was at Fiesch in 2011, after which the organisation passed to Pamela Harris. The Meets were gradually reduced from two weeks to one, the attendees now mainly hikers rather than climbers. During the following years four Meets were held in Italy - at Gressoney in the Val d'Aosta in 2012, at Madonna di Campiglio in the Brenta Dolomites in 2015, at Cogne in the Val d'Aosta in 2016, and Selva Gardena in the Dolomites in 2017 - and one in Austria, at Mayrhofen in 2018.

The last big hotel Meet was in 2019 at Klosters in the Engadine, with more than 40 attendees. One of those present was Heather Eddowes, who had also been present on the previous Meet to Klosters in 1989. Many high-level walks were made, and the highest peak climbed was the Flüela Schwarzhorn. A celebratory dinner was held in the hotel, with guests from the Geneva Section of the SAC.

Three hotel Meets have been held since then, at Kandersteg, Saas-Almagell and most recently, at Grimentz in the Val d'Anniviers. The group of members who have been regular attendees at these meets since 2000 are now getting noticeably older, so this is perhaps the end of an era.

Compiled by Pamela Harris, who has organised many Trek and Hotel meets since 2007 and organised her last Meet this summer in Grimentz.

ABMSAC ALPINE SUMMER MEETS: 1947-2024

YEAR	HOTEL	CAMPING	TREK
1947	Arolla		
1948	Zinal		
1949	Maloja, Engadine		
1950	Vent, Otztal		
1951	Gaschurn, Vorarlberg		r'
1952	Neustift		
1953	(no meet)		
1954	Saas-Fee		
1955-1958	(no meets)		
1959	Saas-Fee 50th		
960 + 1962	(no meets)		ili.
1961	Kandersteg		114
1963	Zinal		
1964	Sils Maria, Engadine		
1965	Grindelwald		
1966	Arolla		
1967	Fafleralp, Lötschental		Lötschental
1968	Obergurgl		
1969	Kandersteg		
1970	Trient		
1971	Täsch		
1972	Pontresina, Engadine		
1973	Saas-Almagell	Saas- Grund	
1974	Meiringen	Arolla	
1975	Saas-Fee		Gressoney - Saas-Fee
1976	Fieschbiel, Lötschental		Kandersteg – Lötschenta
1977	Kandersteg	Kandersteg	Grindelwald - Kandersteg
1978	Zermatt	Täsch	Saas-Fee - Zermatt
1979	Courmayeur (It)	Courmayeur	111
1980	Bivio	Grindelwald	
1981	Atolla	Täsch	
1982	Kandersteg	Argentière	
1983	Bivio	Silvaplana, Engadine	Val Bregaglia
1984	Saas-Fee 75th	Täsch	Zermatt - Saas-Fee
1985	Fieschbiel, Lötschental	Grindelwald	
1986	Arolla	La Bérarde, Ecrins	
1987	Champex	Argentière, Courmayeur	
1988	Saas-Fee	Täsch	
1989	Klosters	Courmayeur (It)	
1990	Zermatt	Täsch	
1991	Arolla	Arolla	
1992	Zermatt	Argentière	
1993	Fieschbiel, Lötschental	Grindelwald	Crete
1994	Saas-Fee	Ailefroide	
1995	Kranjska Gora	Vicos oprano, Bregaglia	Pyrenees
1996	Vorarlberg, Tirol	Argentière	Vorarlberg

YEAR	HOTEL	CAMPING	TREK
1997	Derby, Val d'Aosta	Randa	Glockner
1998	(no meet)	Lauterbrunnen	Tirol
1999	Saas-Grund 90th	La Bérarde, Ecrins	Tour of Monte Rosa
2000	Pontresina	Canazei, Dolomite	Val Bregaglia
2001	Madonna di Campiglio	Pinzolo, Dol	Rosengartner Dolomites
2002	Vanoise	Servoz, Chamonix	Muverans Tour
2003	Mayrhofen, Obergurgi	Val Ferret	Tour de Trient
2004	Zermatt	Innertkirchen	Maritime Alps
2005	Cauterets	Vicosoprano, Bregaglia	Oberland Pass Route
2006	Santa Caterina, Ortler	Täsch + Cortina,	Gardena Dolomites
2007	Fiesch	Val Ferret Cortina, Dolomite	Valais + Stubaital Nepal : Everest and Gokyo
2008	Stubaital, Pitztal	Corvara, Dolomite	Julian Alps - Slov
2009	Saas-Almagell 100th	Saas-Grund	Haute Route
2010	Pitztal, Stubaital	Vicosoprano, Bregaglia	Morocco: High Atlas
2011	Fiesch	Ailefroide	Pyrenees, Bhutan
2012	Gressoney	Innertkirchen	Karwendel
2013	Saas-Almagell	Randa + Solden	
2014	Pontresina	Cogne + Cortina	Morocco: Edge of Sahara
2015	Madonna di Campiglio	Argentière	Mattertal
2016	Cogne	Ailefroide	Tatras - Poland
2017	Selva Gardena, Dol	Vicosoprano, Bregaglia	Pirin Mtns
2018	Mayrhofen	Randa	Catalonia
2019	Klosters 110th	Pyrenees	Morocco: Land of Berbers
2020-2021	meets cancelled	Covid lockdown	
2022	Kandersteg	Argentiére	Picos d'Europa
2023	Saas-Almagell	Val Veni + Val Ferret	Tour de Mont Blanc
2024	Grimentz	Ailefroide	Tatras - Slovakia



Editor's note: A complete list of Alpine Meets from 1947 to 2024 is attached. Treks outside Europe are in red. Accounts of the meets can be found in the Journal archive on the website

Trekking in the Georgian Caucasus by Judy Renshaw

The Caucasus Mountains stretch from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea, creating a natural border between Georgia and Russia. I had not been to this area and had heard that the mountains were spectacular, so I decided to take the opportunity to do a trekking holiday in the Georgian Caucasus in July 2024. I went with the company KE, which linked with a local agency called Visit Georgia.



Georgia is about two thirds the size of the UK but has a population of only 3.7 million. It is located between Russia, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan and has become a trade route between Russia and these countries. Its language has similarities to those of other Slavic countries and its main religion is Georgian Orthodox Christian.

Getting there was not the easiest, as I had to change planes at Istanbul airport (which is gigantic), with a very short time to transfer onto the flight to Tbilisi. I ran all the way to the departure gate and made it just I time but my bag did not. Luckily it went on a flight soon afterwards so I was able to wait and pick it up at Tbilisi. The driver and one fellow trekker had to wait for me as well, and we all finally made it to our hotel around 5.30am Georgia time. We had a few brief hours to rest and wash before getting ready for a day of travel and sightseeing. Another member of our group, coming from Dublin, missed his connection and arrived mid-morning, so there was no rest at all for him!

Eventually our group of six set off with our guide, Zura, towards the mountains in the North. We took the main highway, which was busy with many lorries passing through Georgia on a very basic two-lane road, so progress was pretty slow. We took in some sights on the way, including a viewpoint over a large lake, formed by a dam that

provides water for Tbilisi. This was crowded with stalls selling strings of glutinous sweetmeats and headdresses of shaggy sheepskin. There were also pleasure boats for hire on the lake. Later we stopped at a 17th century church that had influences from Asian and various Christian denominations in its design. It was nice to see many swifts flying around the building. A late lunch was provided by a lovely family in the northern Regional capital of Kazbegi, with a grand spread of local delicacies such as aubergines with walnut paste, ratatouille, chicken stew and cheese bread.

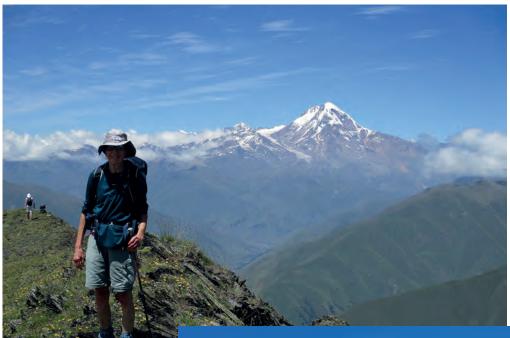
At the end of the day we had a short walk of an hour and a half up a valley to our camp. Everything was slightly



damp after recent rain but it was good to arrive and get some rest. No one was very hungry for dinner although it was good, with excellent homemade soup and a variety of dishes. I was glad to turn in and catch up on some sleep before the real trekking began.

It always takes a while to get sorted out in the first morning and this was no exception. I managed to find a bowl and bring some water to the tent for a wash then joined the others for a camp breakfast of cereals, bread and local honey. We each made up a packed lunch which included plenty of nuts for me and sausage and cheese for others. We were lucky that the rather dubious weather forecast was wrong and the sun was out for most of the day, after a cloudy start, and I was in shorts most of the time.

Our goal for the day was Tetu peak (3210m) which involved following a damp path up the valley crossing three tributaries of the river then ascending a very pleasant hillside. As I dislike river crossings, I was glad of some help from Zura and our local guide, George. Soon we were into a zone of wild flower meadows, some Alpine flowers and others unique to Georgia at this specific altitude, such as a species of small rhododendrons. The mountains around were spectacular, especially Mount Kazbegi, the highest in Georgia at just over 5000m, so I took many photos. The guide told me stories of his trips to ascend Kazbegi, his favourite mountain, which involved a stay in a high altitude hut and an Alpine start, with full mountaineering gear. We saw a brown eagle soaring above us and not far away. After a leisurely lunch stop on the top of Tetu peak, we made a rapid descent to a picturesque lake in the upper valley and took a different path back to camp. Then we had to cross the river lower down, so everyone took off their boots and waded. At least this meant that my feet had a good wash! Tea in the sunshine was followed by a bowl wash at the tent and putting on warm clothes after the sun went down, when the temperature dropped sharply. A good dinner and a warm sleeping bag made for a suitable end to the day.



Judy on Tetu Peak with Mt Kazbegi behind



Lunchtime on Tetu Peak

The next day we went to the next valley over the Abudelauri Pass, though our camp crew were able to take a road around and set up camp before we arrived. The walk was longer than the previous day and just slightly higher, at 3330m, and very satisfying. After a cold start it was sunny for most of the day, with some cloud moving around the higher tops. We set off at 7.30, wearing many layers of clothing at first. Initially we walked up the same valley as the day before then took a different route, after crossing the river by a series of large rocks. We gradually ascended the upper valley, with a couple of rest stops for water and snacks, taking in the views of Kazbegi and the high mountains in the Russian territory beyond.



Two of us were allowed to go ahead with the local guide, up a zigzag path to reach the ridge around 11.30. There were some snow patches still lying, but not enough to impede walking, and a cold wind blowing, so the warm clothing was needed again. When the others had caught up and were taking a rest, the three of us descended through flower meadows and some scree to the Abudelauri lakes.

These three lakes are famed for their colours when viewed from above, blue, green and white. The first one certainly was a beautiful deep blue and the water clear. It was too cold to be tempted to swim, but several of us enjoyed a paddle. The final descent down the valley led to a few houses and to our camp on top of a flower covered hilltop.

One of the Abudelauri Lakes

The stars that night were spectacular, it was wonderful to see so many galaxies I had never seen, nor heard of, before and the Milky Way as a clear streak across the sky.

We had a shorter walk the next day, down the valley to a camp at lower altitude, mainly through tall vegetation. We had been warned in advance that there were large areas with giant hogweed, which can be corrosive to the skin, so we should wear long trousers and sleeves. Since it was quite hot, I wore shorts with over-trousers which provided

good protection but could easily be removed once clear of the hogweed. This worked well and I was comfortable enough. Although we had started quite late, around 9.00, we reached camp by lunchtime, across a road bridge over a large river and up a winding track.

After a luxurious lunch in camp with tinned fish and salads, most people preferred to sleep but I was restless and wanted to make the most of the warmth before the sun went behind the hill. We had been told about a place down below at the river, where there



was access to bathe and wash. I was given vague directions and set off down the track to the road with my swimsuit and washing kit, initially going the wrong way along the road. All I could see was a deep ravine and a rushing torrent, with no obvious access. Luckily a van driver came along who guessed what I wanted and pointed to the right direction.

I did eventually find a gentle grassy slope leading to the river, with a small horizontal area and two people already washing. It was cold but wonderful! I was able to get right into the river, wash my hair and some clothes and started to dry before the others turned up, having taken a lift down in the minibus. I moved out of the way, as space by the river was limited, but later took advantage of a lift back up the hill. Back at camp we had tea and some warm cheese bread made by a woman who lived nearby. After dark the crew made a fire which we all sat around for a nice sociable evening. Our tents were spread out along the track sides, with the only drawback being thick hogweed stems which threatened to poke through the



groundsheet. Luckily the sleeping mats were hard enough to resist them, but it was a pretty lumpy night.



The following day we were lucky to avoid some rain showers until the very end of the walk. Unusually we had a lift in the 4x4 minibuses from our camp for half an hour to the start. We ascended another valley, which was greener and less rocky than on previous days, to a ridge around midday. At one point we had to bunch together while the guides negotiated with some shepherds who were looking after a large herd of sheep and goats in order to let us past safely. The dogs employed by the shepherds were trained to fight off wolves and anything else they might encounter, so we could have been attacked if not careful. The guide gave the shepherds some cigarettes as a present for their cooperation.

After a lunch stop at the Barbalo Pass (3000m) at the snow line, the same three of us descended quickly, by-passing some of the zigzags, with thunder rolling around and the sky looking threatening. Our timing was just about right, as heavy raindrops began just as we reached the minibuses at the bottom. The rest of the group joined us gradually, with the last of them getting quite wet. The rain continued for a few hours but had stopped by dinner time, so we had a comfortable night in our latest riverside camp.

The rain began again next morning, which was not encouraging. However, this day started with a longer minibus drive to visit some ancient villages so, by chance, the itinerary fitted the morning weather conditions. The drive took an hour or so away from the higher mountains and gradually the road became drier. By the time we reached the medieval village of Shatili it had almost stopped.



This village was built as a fortress to protect the population against siege and is now a special heritage site. The old buildings had different levels for animals, crop storage and living spaces, all built into a steep hillside with steps and paths between them. From the outside the village looked like a jumble of abandoned ancient houses, some falling into ruin at the edges but, once you went up to it, several buildings had been tastefully adapted to create cafes and guest houses with modern fittings and conveniences. Several visitor tours of Georgia arrange overnight stays in the village. We were allowed to wander around and admire its clever reconstruction and careful renovation and were also allowed to use the cafes and facilities, a great luxury!

The minibuses took us from here to Mutso, another 16th century village, this one uninhabited and on a higher hill. We ascended to the very top, which had great views of the valley in both directions, so it was obviously a good lookout position. After descending, it was a couple of hours' walk up the valley to the camp. The crew were particularly happy as we were to stay here for 2 nights. Some of them fished in the river and managed to catch several good sized fish (though we did not actually get the benefit of them). We did, however have a good meal of borscht with cabbage, buckwheat, beef stew and watermelon for dessert. There was another campfire that night so we were able to warm ourselves and enjoy each other's company for a while before bed time.

Our guide, Zura, was suffering from a knee problem so we persuaded him to stay behind for the last day of walking as we still had George who was a reliable local guide. The day was warm and humid with thick cloud. We had been told that there were around 4 river crossings in order to get to the Khidotani Pass (2463m), all requiring wading in sandals. But fortunately this turned out not to be necessary. We followed the track and a path up the valley to a confluence of rivers, then up another higher valley, having crossed two small bridges without any need for wading. As it steepened the path became muddy and overgrown with giant hogweed. I had to put on over-trousers, which made for a hot and sweaty ascent. We were surprised to come across a house where one person was living and keeping animals all year round. The outer walls of the house were plastered with cow dung for insulation, and hay was drying in a nearby field. We were told that some of the villagers from the valley brought food to help him out at times.

It was good to reach the higher altitude zone which was cooler. I was able to change back into shorts and we saw the unique Georgian rhododendrons again. We had been warned that we would come to the border with Chechnya, which is part of Russia, and on no account should we take any photos or else our cameras would be confiscated. But, to our surprise, the German group, who had camped further up the valley, were sitting by the border guards' hut eating lunch. They had also been allowed to use the guards' Wi-Fi! I was annoyed that I had left my phone behind at camp so was unable to take advantage of it. Others picked up some international news, including that of a global outage in communication systems, which was a bit worrying for getting home. We stayed a good distance from the hut for our lunch and some of us took discreet photos from a distance.



Later, three of us went up to the top of the pass, even though the border hut was the recognised high point of the walk. At the top were Alpine meadows strewn with flowers and great views of the surrounding mountains. Our descent was fairly quick as two of us were allowed to go ahead and find our way to the main valley, across the bridges, so we were back in camp before some heavy rain started. In the evening, it cleared up and we enjoyed another campfire and shared our unused cash to give as tips for the guides and crew.

Our last day consisted of sightseeing in the ancient capital of Georgia before returning to Tbilisi. The weather had changed significantly from the past week, making it the coolest and wettest day of the holiday. We had been so lucky to have had good conditions on the trek. It rained in the early morning, so our bags had to be packed and

stored before breakfast. We said goodbye to all of the crew except our guide Zura and took minibuses down the valley, glad to be under cover. We took a different road south from the way there, which had fewer lorries and delays, although it was not far away and we could recognise some of the sights from the other side of the valley.

In the afternoon we visited Mtskheca, the ancient capital, with its imposing 11th Century cathedral. Several wedding ceremonies were taking place inside and many people were watching them. Later, we visited a monastery on a hill overlooking the town, with views of the river winding around it. There were more wedding parties there, as it is a popular place for taking wedding photos.

After a quick turnaround at our hotel we had a short tour of Tbilisi, including taking its cable car to a hill overlooking the city. We had dinner in a traditional Georgian restaurant and said our goodbyes as people were leaving at different times in the morning.

This had been a great trip, with beautiful mountains and friendly people. Georgia was a very interesting country to visit.

Mountaineering Skills for Walkers, Lake District, September 2024 - Celine Gagnon

In a bid to expand my mountaineering knowledge, I decided to sign up to a scrambling course, organised by *Graham Uney Mountaineering*. Every time I had a go, I really enjoyed scrambling – first, somewhere on the Red Cuillins a long time ago, then Tryfan's North Ridge, Devil's Kitchen, and Striding, Swirral and Sharp Edges. Daniel, who had trained with Graham before, suggested this course and that he'd like to join in. What a great plan this turned out to be!

This five-day course was tailored to our individual experiences and personal objectives. I wanted to learn basic rope skills, practice scrambling route finding and get more comfortable with exposure. I got plenty of that and a bit more: I learned when to scramble unroped or when to rope up, how and when to move together, how to pitch sections, how to descend.

Monday. On a cold and misty morning, we started our week at Basecamp North Lakes Farm Shop and Café to make a plan. After coffee, we made our way to Keswick Climbing Wall & Outdoor Centre for our first session. Graham talked us through scrambling grades and when scrambling becomes climbing – not so cut and dry. We then looked at a full climbing rack and what each piece of equipment is used for. To warm up (I think it was colder in the hangar than outside...) we took turns to go up a few routes on the wall to learn/ practice roping onto a harness, belaying and abseiling. After lunch, we drove to Borrowdale and Shepherd's Crag for our first scramble. We continued to practice roping up in situ, checking each other's knots and equipment, working as a pair, using climbing techniques to scramble up a grade 2/3 route. It was a fine first day.



Tuesday. We met at Stickle Ghyll car park in Langdale, on what turned out to be an unexpectedly beautiful morning. Graham talked us through selecting a scrambling rack considering activity, route, terrain, exposure, and weight. We looked up Tarn Crag in the Scrambles in the Lake District South Cicerone guidebook to read about the scrambles and identify our route's starting point from the path. And up we went. After about an hour on the path, we found the holly tree that marked the starting point of our scramble on Tarn Crag. Out of three possible routes we chose The Groove, a grade 3 scramble with a steep first pitch. Once roped up – figure of 8 knot, rope through belay loops on harness, rethread through figure of 8, stopper knot – we looked at anchors and protections as well as moving together when roped, before being led up The Groove.

Remembering the sequence of actions you've got to take once you've reached the pitch is a challenge in itself – securing yourself to the anchor with a clove hitch, giving back to the lead all the gear you've collected on the way up, flicking the rope, getting the lead climber on belay the right way around, belaying them, waiting for the "safe" call, getting and shouting "off belay", waiting to hear "on belay, climb when you're ready", getting off the anchor, gathering all the gear left and securing it on the harness, finally shouting "climbing" as your start your way to the next pitch. Phew! A young shepherd and his two dogs appeared out of nowhere. They were helping with the gathering;

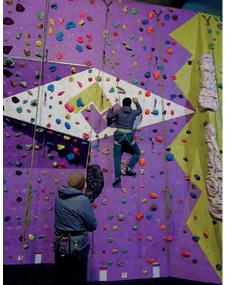
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one of the dogs had to be helped down (quite forcefully) the steep crag. It was hard not to get distracted by the stunning view over Langdale and by the hundreds of sheep guided down the mountain whilst focusing on the climbing task at hand.

After lunch, we opted for a second scramble up the East Rib (grade 2) on Tarn Crag instead of going up Jake's Rake nearby. The route looked like it had not been frequented for some time, so we had to scramble through vegetation and try different ways to set up anchors on a slope with few cracks. The rain started as we were partway, turning the rock quickly from very grippy to quite slippery; it was useful to experience, in a safe environment, how fast the terrain can change with weather conditions. My main learning of the day though was to make sure I clipped any equipment straight to my harness. I can still see the orange belay plate tumble all the way down into the overgrowth... Sorry Graham!

Wednesday. Because of the rain forecast – and it was colder than it should be in late September – we changed our plans. We went to Hutton Roof Crags in Lancashire, where there was some shelter should the rain get heavier. The idea was to do some easy rock climbing to build on what we did the day before and practice making anchors, placing protections using different nuts, cams and hexes and rating their safety to achieve a score of 10+. We tried abseiling, observed how to install and use a safety rope and used a prusik knot to abseil. After lunch, we put our climbing shoes on and consulted the climbing guide to choose a couple of routes on the Ronson Kirby section. I am very proud to have successfully climbed Wings (VD) and The Rib (HS). The rain finally came, so it was time to pack our bags and go home.





Thursday. The weather was so uninviting that we went back to the Keswick Climbing Wall for the day. We crammed in a huge amount of revision and of new stuff, such as using a range of different belay devices, warming up, climbing games, precision footwork, climbs up to 6a, how to call out Mountain Rescue, taking coils and moving together, and tying off a belay plate. Traversing the wall blindfolded was a firm favourite.

Friday. The sun appeared just in time for our last day. We put all our remembered and new-found skills into practice to alternate lead up Cam Crag Ridge in a beautifully autumnal Langstrath. Again, we crammed a lot in: soloing easy scrambling ground, moving together roped as appropriate, and pitching steeper steps where needed. On the walk back, I was able to remember the IDEALS acronym for anchors we used as our mantra through the day — independent + directional + equal + angle + load + safety. A fantastic day to close a superb week.

Thank you very much to the ABMSAC for awarding me a grant to undertake this course. Thank you to Daniel for the best suggestion and for his company. And a heartfelt thank you to Graham Uney for his impeccable guidance and generous expertise.





Pinnacle Ridge – here I come!

Céline, October 2024



Marian's 10th TGOC! - May 2024

My 9th Challenge, in 2023, had been a succession of trials: beautiful weather, a long, hot, arduous first day, through The 'TGOC' (The Great Outdoors Challenge, always fabulous mountain scenery - but then a desperate wild camp supported by TGO magazine) is an annual painful blinight, luckily hidden from view in the heather, sick unsupported non-competitive backpacking event, and aching, with a horrid tummy bug! Then all too soon taking place across the Scottish Highlands, for a sufferingsters beneath my heels, due to insufficient training fortnight in May. with a heavy load. Although I enjoyed my chosen line, which The event has been going since 1980. Participants began through the glorious Glen Affric, towards the end I was really struggling with my feet and I'd had to simplify the over several days then finish within 15 days, on the last few days and stumble along the Deeside Way which is North Sea coast, between Fraserburgh and Arbroath, mostly flat, to stand any chance of finishing at all.

rucksack around our local patch, and although I'd had no must be experienced at navigation in remote country, trial camps at home or even full days out, I felt I was strong and be happy camping wild with 'leave no trace' enough to go for it. My line was chosen to avoid big ethics. mountain days (at 76, although I'm pretty fit, carrying a Your route (which you must submit for examination by heavy pack is hard) and explore country where I'd never an experienced team of 'vetters') can climb lots of been on previous Challenges.

I'd booked a few hostels and a couple of hotels along the choose. route. Challengers must be self-sufficient, so despite Mike Wild camping is legal in Scotland, as is 'freedom to deciding to follow me round in the van, and meet up here roam', given that no nuisance or damage is done. and there for a cuppa. I had to carry all my own gear: tent. sleeping bag, mat, spare clothes, waterproofs, maps, stove, food and fuel.

can sign out from 12 West Coast villages, any time taking any line they choose.

Large groups and dogs are banned, since this is 2024 was a lot different! I'd done plenty of work hefting the intended to be 'low impact' on the environment. You

> Munros, explore remote and hidden glens, or maybe visit certain interesting places - whatever slant you



My planned route, which had been checked and approved by the TGOC 'vetters', was to take me from the Atlantic Ocean to the North Sea, beginning in Oban and finishing in Montrose.

After signing out at the Youth Hostel in the West Highland port of Oban on a warm showery morning, off I went along quiet country lanes to Taynuilt, by the beautiful Loch Etive: a sociable walk, as I fell into step with a variety of Challengers from about 5 different countries. It felt like a long first day and by the time I had crossed the River Awe, and slogged through to the turn-off to Port na Mine (creeping furtively past the buildings though the sign at the turn-off did indicate that access was ok) and down the little grassy path to the shore, I was well ready to pitch up in a lovely wooded dell by Loch Etive, that needed some gardening but offered a handy stream and a fabulous view to make up for the biting midges.

Oban on a wet morning - can't wait to set off!

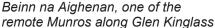


Cuckoos woke me on Day 2, then I scrambled back up steeply to the forestry track, and followed it, close to Loch Etive until the turn-off through beautiful Glen Kinglass, a broad valley cutting north-east through the mountains for 30 km to reach the A82 at Bridge of Orchy. I met a slowworm, and enjoyed birdsong and bleating lambs, before setting up camp close to the River Kinglass. There were oystercatchers nesting nearby, and I loved their 'kleep-a-kleep' calls.

Beautiful morning at the south end of Loch Etive.

I'm using a Dyneema tarptent, very light but tiny.

I'd teamed up by chance with two guys I vaguely knew, from a few years ago, so it was a nice sociable evening and we set off together the next day, though they soon outdistanced me on the rough wet uphill path. The guys snapped a photo of me staggering across a long, wobbly bridge. It was warm and sunny, ideal weather, heading on through the beautiful glen and I believed that it wouldn't be hard to find a camp spot at Victoria Bridge, several miles short of Bridge of Orchy, close to the main A82 between Tyndrum and Glencoe.







Victoria Bridge area turned out to be crowded with coach-party tourists however, so I marched another 6km down the road to Bridge of Orchy, where I could have easily pitched the tent, but husband Mike was there with his van, so we enjoyed a catch-up night together! He'd run the van off the road into a ditch and had no end of trouble getting rescued, as there's no mobile phone signal in many parts of the Highlands.

Bridge of Orchy, where it's easy to camp before crossing the A82 on the West Highland Way

I had to do quite a stretch of the WHW, here looking back at Ben Dorain.

An easy, but very scenic section followed, down the much-trodden West Highland Way to Tyndrum where I'd booked a chalet on a campsite. This valley walk, running parallel to the main N-S road, between high heathery hills, was beautifully lined with golden flowering gorse bushes, and pretty riverside banks for rest and a snack.

The mainline railway also ran close by, and there was an occasional bridge to cross over or under it. Reaching Tyndrum, I met up with Mike again at the Green Wellie Stop, which is quite impossible to walk past. There's a café there, and toilets: what a treat! What more could a hiking gal possibly want! Then a mighty thunderstorm hit, but we reached our campsite cabin just in time as the rain came pelting down.

Sitting munching our evening rations in the chalet, we were bound to reminisce about



the Challenges we'd done together. I was going to say 'enjoyed', but there's always going to be a balance between joy and misery on a long-distance hike in Scotland! Various near-epics sprung to mind........

There was the time we were caught in a fierce snow-storm (yes, in the middle of May!), while hiking the long, high, exposed path round the east side of Bynack Mor, south-east of Aviemore. This amounted to nearly 9 km of sheer misery, climbing up to 770m with no shelter whatsoever, and we reached the stage where you daren't take off a layer to put another underneath! With frozen hands, we finally made the little shelter at Fords of A'an, and thankfully got out of the wind to warm up before tackling the ford, which had a bad reputation for being unfordable, but permitted a shaky passage on underwater stepping stones!

Then there was that unforgettable night camping (accidentally) in a wind tunnel, down in Glen Lethnot east of Glen Clova. We'd thought we were sheltered as the gale developed, but the wind changed to a deafening crescendo, and soon it was trying to rip out the pegs and flatten the tent. We had a worrying night, staying fully dressed and packed for a quick departure at first light, whilst hanging onto the tent poles. A good learning experience!

It always feels like a real adventure crossing through the wild Scottish Highlands when no amount of pre-planning can make sure of finding a tent pitch for the night. Days can get very long! Another memory sprung to mind:

It was a fine, cold May morning, in 2012, Day 2 of a coast-to-coast hike across Scotland. We struck camp, leaving our nice flat grassy riverbank. We'd started the day before, from a comfortable hotel at Strathcarron, on the north-west coast of the Scottish Highlands. We'd enjoyed a scenic wander along old pony tracks into the heart of some of Scotland's highest mountains. There was snow on the tops, and now we had to cross the mountain range, picking a pathless line through the rough boggy heather.

Now Mike and I cowered in a gale against a boulder in the snow, on the summit of An Riabhachan, 1086m up. With packs weighing 14kg, it had been a tough struggle to climb from our camp for two hours through deep and snow-covered heather, which hid both rocks and water-filled holes, then a steep and slippery gully, where the fresh snow sloughed off the wet grass at every step, threatening to carry us down with it. Now the wind was rising to a whistling scream, and we could barely stand. The forecast, heard before leaving 'civilisation' three days previously, had been for heavy snow - and gales up to 100mph. Mike: 'Let's get out of here!'

We slithered and scrambled down nearly 1000m to lonely Loch Mullardoch, where we stumbled along the shore, seeking a sheltered spot for our little tent, but the rough tussocks and rocks gave no flat spot or cover for 6 kilometres - then mercifully a tiny copse of ancient and battered Scots Pines appeared, clinging to the steep mountainside. The wind was still rising, and it's never wise to camp beneath trees in a gale – but climbing steeply to the top of the wood, Eureka! There it was - a perfectly sheltered flat grassy clearing, safeguarded by fallen trees which offered protection without risk! All we had to do was clear the ground of spiky twigs and cones, and set up camp for the night, while the howling wind passed harmlessly over our heads. The next day, in contrast, was warm and sunny, a joyful romp through pretty woodland lanes, serenaded by birdsong to a campsite near Loch Ness.

By contrast, some of the best moments have been at the end, in the gentle farmlands close to the North Sea, where we've enjoyed an unrushed wander along peaceful lanes and wooded paths, with birds singing and primroses at our feet, then finally reaching the sea and paddling along the shore with the waves splashing at our feet, knowing we've smashed it. Then bursting into the Park Hotel in Montrose, feeling triumphant and satiated, to a lovely welcome: applause, tea and biscuits and a T-shirt!

Anyway – back in Tyndrum in 2024, I arose to a showery morning and left Mike and the cabin behind to continue on the West Highland Way and then cut off north over the hills to Killin before reaching Crianlarich. This was just a two-day stint, but the cloud came down across the high boggy moorlands and I had to watch my direction as there was no path for miles. I finally got to a track-head, at a ruined sheiling (farmstead), where they were putting in deer fencing right over the hills in order to plant new forests. It was a re-wilding project apparently but my track was a terrible muddy mess, with bulldozers going up and down, so I was lucky to find a good clean spot to camp by the River Lochay, where the ground was undisturbed.



Killin the next day was an opportunity to re-provision, then I set forth on the Rob Roy Way to Pitlochry. Much of the walk was along the south-east side of Loch Tay, on a very peaceful road, and although I normally avoid road walking, the views were lovely, and there were lots of birds and flowers. I did meet a very smartly dressed foreign chap who was looking for a particular historic cave. We were near to Fiddlers Bay at the time, and I saw on my map that the cave was 18 km away, above Acharn, but he didn't believe me. He was convinced it was close by, and he climbed over a gate and headed uphill out of sight into the woods so I left him to it! Is he still in there...?

Climbing over the steep gorsey ridge, from Strathtay to Pitlochry. Half way across Scotland now

Reaching the east end of Loch Tay, I found the way-marked route turned off steeply above the Kenmore Crannog Centre to meet a minor road, and a little hidden car park which offered good grass for a tent, and a stream nearby. Hiking on through pleasant woodland, full of the heady scent of bluebells, on a disused railway line to Aberfeldy then climbing steeply up and over the ridge to Pitlochry, things were going really well. I had no worries about dodgy knees, blisters or anything much really. Things

I'd planned a two-night rest in the SYHA hostel with Mike, and we did have a really nice break, lots of good company and comfortable beds in a private dorm. The fear of going down with Covid again had made me shell out on the private room, but that didn't save me from other hostellers germs, unfortunately.

were, however, shortly to turn for the worse!

Pitlochry Youth Hostel, where I caught a nasty chest bug, despite having booked a private room.



After leaving the hostel, I embarked on an interesting cross-country excursion through lanes, forests and enormous bogs, where I had to clamber over 7ft deer fences. It was very warm and the flies were biting like mad. I reached

the pre-booked pub accommodation in the next hamlet, Kirkmichael, and began to feel a bit off that night. Going downhill rapidly after, my chest became really congested, my throat itched and swelled, I sweated and shivered in my sleeping bag, my legs were weak and wobbly and I had an awful cough. (Poor Mike was suffering too.)

Streaming eyes made it hard to read the maps. The only sensible course was to move my route south off the hills and down to quiet roads where I could just get my head down and keep going. Moving ever eastward, I plodded through Kirkton of Glenisla, Glen Quharity, Cortachy and eventually Brechin, which was then only a day from the North Sea.



Eventually I did make it to the beach at Montrose, with a huge grin and a sigh of relief, but the outcome was uncertain right to the end. Still, there were interesting encounters, like a girl I met on a farm track in a cold shower of rain. I stopped to put more layers on, and she stopped alongside for a chat and proceeded to strip off down to T-shirt and shorts, while complaining she was overheating!

The North Sea, Montrose Bay - feeling very proud, and relieved!

Checking into the Park Hotel in Montrose is usually a lovely friendly warm experience, where you are congratulated and given refreshments and a certificate, but it was a brief affair this time, as I was sent packing along with Mike who was also suffering a bit, to get tested for Covid, and firmly instructed not to attend the usual celebratory dinner that night if we tested positive. Though the test was negative, I learned afterwards from a medical professional that the disease had mutated into a cross between pneumonia and 'flu (which rang true for my symptoms), but they hadn't come up with a new test.

PROSECCO

The 'Ten Crossings' plaque means I am now officially a Legend (pronounced Leg-End).

All done and dusted then! Will I ever do an 11th crossing? Well, just maybe....

Obituaries

DARIO ANDENMATTEN, 1972 - 2024 Warden of the Britannia Hut 2014 - 2024



Dario Andenmatten, the warden of the Britannia Hut, died suddenly on 10th October 2024 of a cancerous brain tumour. His memorial service in the church of Saas-Fee on 23rd October was attended by a large crowd of family and friends, both from the Saastal and from the Geneva Section of the SAC, with Paul Everett representing the ABMSAC

Dario was the elder son of Andros and Thérèse Andenmatten who were made wardens of the Britannia Hut in 1978 when Dario was six years old. He and his younger brother Gino spent many happy days at the Hut, and when his father died in 1988, also of cancer, his mother continued as sole warden. When she remarried Marc Renaud, another brother, Yannick, arrived.

By 2012 Dario had taken on more duties at the Hut and was MC at its centenary celebrations, dressed in the mountaineering gear of 1912. A small number of us were privileged to be present on this occasion, which was an unforgettable experience. The following year his mother Thérèse retired after 35 years as warden and handed over the position to Dario.



Once appointed warden, Dario's energy and enthusiasm, as well as his formidable mountaineering skills, became quickly apparent. He created a *via ferrata* nearby, enjoyed by Andy Burton's group on their visit during the 2023 summer meet, and opened up new routes to the hut, one from the Egginerjoch which bypassed the crumbling Chessjen Glacier, and another from Mattmark via Schwarzbergchopf.

Dario always greeted our members with warmth and friendliness, and was keen to promote the link with our club. During the hotel meet at Saas-Almagell in the summer of 2013, a large group of us made a lunchtime visit to the Hut where he warmly welcomed us. The following year when I accompanied Mike Pinney's sister Margaret and her family in order to donate Mike's ice axe to the hut, Dario greeted us with equal warmth, and his words to Margaret were that now "a little bit of Mike" would always be at the hut.

After so many years, we can be sure that even more of Dario will always be there.

He was an exceptional person and will not be forgotten by all who knew him, including members of our club. Visits to the Britannia Hut will not be the same without him.

Pamela Harris

PETER FARRINGTON, 1943 - 2025

Sadly Peter Farrington died on Saturday February 1st after a rapid decline in an illness.



Peter Farrington was born in Manchester in 1943. His first job was in the office of the Manchester Ship Canal Company. In 1967 he married Pat, a radiographer. For their honeymoon they went to Islay.

They were so attracted to the island that they regularly returned there for holidays. On one of these holidays they discovered that there was a vacancy for a radiographer at the local hospital. They agreed that Pat should apply for the job, and if she was successful they would move permanently to Islay. This was what happened, and they duly moved to Islay with their first child, Becky. Their two other children, Simon and Kate were born on Islay.

Peter on Creag Meagaidh

Peter took a job as General Manager of the Co-op garage. In this capacity he acted as driver of the school bus, the ambulance and the hearse. He took training as an ambulance driver and became a Leading Ambulance Officer.

As such he became the island's chief ambulance driver, a job which he held until his retirement. In this role he became a well known and popular figure in the local community.

Peter's interest in climbing started as a teenager, climbing in the Lakes. He climbed in the Alps, and visited Peru, Bolivia and Nepal. After moving to Islay he climbed regularly in Scotland. He joined the ABMSAC and despite the awkwardness of the journey from Islay he became a regular participant in the Club's Scottish winter meets which Alasdair Andrews organised in the 1980s and 90s. He and Pat went on a Club meet in Crete where he and others climbed Mount Ida in chilly conditions for which he alone was well prepared.

Like many Scottish climbers he collected Munros. He was a frequent visitor to John and Marj Foster in Fort Augustus, often arriving on the doorstep with the words "Is the cafe open?" His final Munro was An Socach, and I was sorry to miss the celebrations. Not only was he good company but he was also a very experienced winter climber. Once, when we were descending in snow from Ben Nevis to the Steall car park he commented "Be careful. The last time I came down here I tripped on my crampons and went head over heels". He was also very fit and regularly took part in the fell running race over the Paps of Jura.

I visited Islay in 2023. I made contact Peter and we had a few words on the phone, but it was clear he was far from well. The Club is the poorer with the loss of such an interesting and well liked member.

John Dempster

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH MEMBERS OF THE SWISS ALPINE CLUB

Minutes of the meeting held at the Inn on the Lake, Glenridding Saturday, 1st February 2025 at 5.45 pm

President Daniel Albert was in the chair, 19 members in attendance.

1. Apologies for absence:

Andy Burton, Anne Jago, Heather Eddowes, Dave Matthews, Jonny Taphouse, Julie Freemantle, Judy Renshaw, Mary Eddowes, Mike Goodyer, Michele Tierney, Marcus Tierney.

2. Minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 3rd February 2024:

No amendments were suggested; proposed by Margaret Moore, seconded by Don Hodge.

- **3. Matters arising**: No matters arising.
- 4. Election of Officers and Committee
- The President's term of office expires in 2027.
- b. The Treasurer's term of office expires in 2027.
- c. Andy Burton has taken over the role of Meets Secretary as interim; no successor has been formally proposed to date.
- d. No successor to the Vice President has been formally proposed to date.
- e. Andy Hayes' term of office as elected member expired in 2024. He will not stand for re-election.
- f. Any member interested in the Vice President or Meets Secretary posts are invited to speak to Daniel or any of the other officers.
- Gurrent committee members are re-elected for 2025; proposed by James Baldwin, seconded by Tony Howard.

5. Hon Treasurer's report

This report was circulated in the December 2024 newsletter.

Our financial position remains healthy, with our cash reserves (in both deposit and in savings accounts) standing at nearly £47,000. In addition, the total market value of our investments was approaching £210,000, giving a net asset value of the club of nearly £260,000, which is a net increase of over £50,000, yes, £50,000 from last year. As with last year, this emphasises the role that our investments play in keeping the ABM part of subscriptions low, and the need to prudently plan what we should be doing with our funds. A little more on that later.

Against that backdrop, we have had a full and planned call on club funds this year, including:

Offsetting BMC affiliation fee increases

- Training grants and skills weekend.
- Net support to 2024 meets. (Please note that this is different from the information given in the accounts commentary, which was sent out in December).
- Club deposits to venues for 2025 meets.
- Settling our tax liability for divesting ourselves of our Brooks MacDonald (Jersey) holding.
- The club Journal.
- Provision of wine at the annual dinner, and at the Swiss meet gala dinner.
- Donations to PMR and PCC.

The most significant change to our expenditure in 2023/24 was not passing on the £6 per person price increase from the BMC, which applies to UK members. This totalled over £900 support to members and will be applied as a tapered support over the next five years.

In organising our meets, we are looking for bookings to be as flexible as possible, so that the club is not having to cover the cost of places not taken, and we are becoming increasingly adept at doing this. Many thanks to all the meet organisers and Andy Burton as Meets Secretary for their roles in achieving this.

The take up of training grants has dropped since last year, so I would encourage people to speak to our training coordinator (Heather Eddowes), if you would like to make an application.

The cost of producing the journal has been held static since last year, so many thanks to Mike Goodyer, our Editor, for keeping that key cost area under control.

In terms of how we use our available funds wisely, the club already has initiatives running, including:

- Training grants
- Temporary subsidy of BMC costs
- Providing wine at the annual dinner, and overseas hotel meet gala dinner.
- Payment of foreign currency transfer fees for SAC membership and overseas meets.

Beyond this, the club is considering whether it should:

- Subsidise midweek ABM member bookings at the hut.
- Provide a sliding scale of subsidy to members attending overseas meets, dependent on their length of club membership.

For these additional ideas, I need to complete evaluate their financial implications to ensure they are financially sound.

I would also want any further changes to be linked to how we use these changes to be linked to a concerted and continued publicity drive for the club, with the aim of attracting new members.

That concludes my report for the clubs' financial year, ending 30th September 2024.

BMC membership cost increase – John Dempster reminded the assembly that the BMC had experienced financial difficulties causing a substantial increase in membership gosts. As Trevor Campbell Davis conducted a review and

helped stabilise their finances, we might not be confronted with such high increases in the future.

6. President's report including update from the GSH AGM

It gives me great pleasure to be able to stand before you and say that our club has not had a bad year. The rest of the world seems to have fared worse with global heating not just of the seas and atmosphere but of the international political climate. In the Swiss Alps the skiing season continues to become shorter and less reliable, and the glaciers continue to melt.

Against this backdrop, we have kept going. This is entirely thanks to our small and hardworking committee. I would like to give my particular thanks to our past president, Andy Burton, who could unfortunately not be here today. He left the organization of the club in excellent order and volunteered to return to the Honorary Meets Secretary role until a replacement could be found. Also unable to make it today are Mike Goodyer who has kept us all informed for many years in his role of honorary editor and Julie Freemantle, without whose hard work we would have no dinner to enjoy this evening. Together with Ed and Céline here, the other committee members, and other club members who have helped, thank you all.

Our club is all about getting out and doing things. The 2024 meets program was well attended. Here are a few highlights.

April 2024 – Our third skills meet saw the planned Via Ferrata training take place underground to avoid terrible weather. There are plans to put these skills to use this year in the Dolomites.

May 2024 – A small group took over the youth hostel in Crianlarich and proceeded to summit a number of serious Munros and Corbetts.

June 2024 – The annual trip to the Oread hut at Rhyd Ddu delivered a circuit of the Carneddu in fine weather as well as an ascent of Cnicht. And the food was reported as excellent, too.

July 2024 – The "hotel meet", in Grimentz, was Pamela's last one as organiser. A magical week with weather to suit. And a chance to catch up with members who have made Switzerland their home.

September 2024 – The "trekking meet" was centre-based in the Slovakian Tatra mountains. Some very long ascents, amid impressive rock scenery, by all accounts.

The meets list for this year also has much to offer. All the usual suspects are there and a few new offerings as well. The popular day walks will continue monthly through the winter. The skills meet will, once again, focus on Via Ferrata skills in preparation for the September trekking meet in the Dolomites.

I will be leading two new meets. At the end of March to a cosy modern hut in Glen Clova in the eastern Cairngorms. And, in June, a gentle wilderness camping weekend in beautiful Eskdale in the western Lake District.

In the summer, there will be a choice of luxury at our hotel meet in Lenk in Simmental. Or you can practice your Italian whilst camping together with the Alpine Club in the shadow of Piz Bernina.

When we are not travelling, we are often at the George Starkey hut in Patterdale that we share with the Alpine Club. As ABMSAC president, I am automatically a director of the company running the hut. Considered solely as a business, the hut makes an annual financial loss of around £15,000 when there is only routine maintenance to be done. Thus, for our club only, the cost of having the hut is around £7,500 pa. For the next few years, at least, this is a manageable cost for having this amenity. Improvements to the hut would likely increase revenue, but only up to a certain level. We have not concluded discussions around what is the optimum level of upgrade to go for. More hut detail to follow

in the Hut Management committee report. All members are of course very welcome to help spring-clean the hut in the autumn at our maintenance meet.

Finally, membership remains stable at between 160 and 170. This is however not as encouraging as it sounds. Just looking around the room, if this is representative, our ages are mostly compressed into 2-3 decades. If we want to keep the club alive, we need to plan for a bit of a mass exodus of members over the next 20 years and have some replacements ready. Ideas for recruitment of new members are always welcome.

Thank you.

7. Update on George Starkey Hut Ltd (GSH)

This report was circulated in the December 2024 newsletter.

Leading on from the replacement of the slate roof the internal wall and ceiling insulation work has been the main focus of work at the hut. Yet again the Ladies washroom and its damp issues has had to take second place.

Hut Maintenance - replacement / repair

After completion of the new slate roof the replacement of the plaster ceiling was tasked. This was done in January 2024. Unfortunately, it was necessary to close the hut for 4 weeks but as work was completed ahead of schedule the new ceilings received a sealing coat of paint.

This, of course, showed up the rest of the paintwork in the dormitories. The task of painting the dormitories was initially allocated to the Maintenance Meet but it was decided to employ a painter. He has been busy in the hut during the vacant mid-week periods of September. This has proved very acceptable. The gloss on the woodwork in the dorms and down both stairwells to be completed during the New Year.

Preparatory work on the damp in the Ladies Washroom could begin but a 'lead project manager' is needed to take this forward. A verbal damp report & written quote from our roofing contractor has been received with his recommendation to 'tank' the room, re-floor and re-paint. Then new washroom fixtures and fittings would have to be fitted after this wall & floor work, by a separate contractor.

A new internal modern water meter has replaced the old one set adjacent to the main road and readings of the meter can be taken from outside the building by the water company.

Further to damage to the roof corner above the entrance door - the 4th in 3 years, steps are being taken to protect it. Possible options are a bollard, a large rock placed at the base of the wall's corner or a visual pipe work structure to draw attention to the overhang of the roof. Hut Warden Marian and a local contractor are researching these.

Maintenance Meet - August 2024

At the Maintenance Meet in August the flooring was replaced between the 2 men's showers. This should last a year or two before the men's washroom is addressed.

Other work completed at the Maintenance Meet was:-

- Deep cleaning kitchen, washrooms, foyer, drying room, with walls washed throughout the building and all downstairs windows cleaned in & outside.
- Painting of the front door
- Painting of the drying room ceiling in prep of its upgrade in the near future

- Removal of the 4-seater settee unfortunately it did not have a H&S fire tag so would not pass the H&S inspection. (Anyone with an unwanted 4-seater H&S fire compliant settee contact GSH!)
- · Gardening & tidying outside
- ABMSAC & AC plaques reattached next to front door

A big 'thank you' to the dedicated volunteers for their hard work this year. Without this very valuable contribution from members the costs of the hut would increase as outside personnel would need to be employed to maintain the building. Three nights free accommodation, a communal meal and time out on the hills was the reward.

Hut Operating Costs

The cost of electricity at the hut continues to be high. A change of suppliers meant 3 months outside a contract which really elevated the costs. Efforts were made to avoid this but... Currently the heating is turned off or lowered during mid-weeks of No Occupancy.

Electricity costs: - to 30th June 2023 = £7,762.81 - to 30th June 2024 = £18,157.95

Lease rent: - to 30th June 2023 = £11,319 - to 30th June 2024 = £11,319

The current lease is to 2044. The leasehold is £11,391 per annum. Next review is 2026.

No assistance from the PPC was possible as the hut rent is one of its few sources of income.

Hut Usage

The GSH Financial Year runs 1st July to 30th June.

July 2022 to June 2023: - 2040 bednights

July 2023 to June 2024: - 2561 bednights

28 outside clubs (19 last year) have booked into the GSH this financial year with almost all weekends booked.

Mid-week bookings are low and ways of advertising its mid-week availability are being investigated. Again, this needs a dedicated volunteer to oversee this.

'Free bednights' for AC members continues for the moment. A 50p charge is made via the Stripe booking for individual bookings which enables firstly the small payment that Stripe takes and secondly to be able to check, if necessary, the authenticity of the booking.

There have been 4 Alpine Club meets at the hut including a Family Meet in June and 3 ABMSAC meets between July '23 to June '24. Plus the joint Twixmas and Maintenance Meets.

Health and Safety

The Fire Safety and Pat testing has been completed.

There have been no H&S incidents to report.

School House Planning Application

A planning application was submitted (Oct' 23) by the owner of the property next door to the GSH. One of the many design plans for the property was a 2 storey enlargement which would have essentially blocked the sunlight from the large gothic style window at the southern end of the GSH. This would have affected the dining/seating areas as

well as both the dormitories upstairs. The application was withdrawn. A second submission (June '24) was made with a reduced height but single storey extension which would still block winter sun into the hut. Other issues include parking, building work to be carried out on Saturdays (GSHs busiest day) plus many other organisational details that would affect occupants of the hut. This second application has been withdrawn. Thank you to those members who wrote to the Lake District Planning Authority with their comments.

Background to the George Starkey hut and hut management

The George Starkey Hut, which has been a mountaineering club hut since 1974, is 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.

Questions were raised about the £50k in fixed assets, the rent review, and the hut usage:

- Although the building is not owned by us, it was considered appropriate to amortise improvement costs over the residue of the lease, particularly when work improves the state of the property. This treatment was deemed important by the AC to protect the value of their investment in GSHL, which is included on the AC balance sheet at the 2016 acquisition value. If GSHL was to incur a substantial loss by writing off major building work in one year, the GSHL net asset value would fall to such a low level that it would require a write-down in the books of the AC.
- The next rent review will be 2026; the current lease runs until 2044. The leasehold is £11,391 per annum. The Diocese of Carlisle is the leaseholder. They will not negotiate the rent increase, which is an important income for the parish.
- There is a pressing need to increase hut usage to eliminate the operational deficit by opening the hut to
 more users, on top of the Austrian Alpine Club special arrangement, but the HMC does not have the
 resources nor the facilities to make this happen. Other huts, such as the Oread, are facing similar difficulties.

8. Any other business

Don Hodge reminded members that the next London lecture – *A superficial history of the Alps* by Kevin Thomas – is on Tuesday 4th February at 7.30pm at the Civil Service Club.

9. Date of next meeting – Saturday 7th February 2026 as a provisional date

Celine Gagnon, February 2025

Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th September 2024

		Notes	2024	2023
ncome				Re-state
icome	Net income from membership subscriptions	1	688.36	1,107.1
	Bank Interest	2	1,568.94	934.5
	Dividends and Accumulations	3	4,748.45	4,171.8
	Legacy donation to club	4	n/a	2,000.00
Meets	London Lectures	5	25.67	n/a
otal income	entrant experted		7,031.42	8,213.63
on on diturn				
xpenditure Journal &	Journal (Production & Postage)		1,906.29	- 1,908.1
Newsletters			7.70	- 12.6
Meets	London Lectures	5	n/a	- 718.5
Miccia	Net support to meets	9 -	719.57	- 1,149.8
	Annual Dinner	6-	880.75	- 823.5
Training	Training Grants & Skills meet	7-	755.00	- 1,742.5
1000000	Patternale Mountain Rescue	8 -	300.00	- 150.0
Donations	PCC of Patterdale	8-	250.00	- 250.00
GSHL	GSHL - Specialist advice (drying room)	10	82.43	- 529.20
Gant	Tax on interest & capital gains - previous year	11	04.40	- 181.0
1	Tax on interest- current year	111-	298.10	- 898.8
Administration		12	207.16	- 196.6
Administration	Administration	13	383.06	- 525.2
Other	Beanie hats	14	n/a	- 2,120.1
otal expenditure		-7	5,790.06	- 11,206.4
				200
urplus / (Deficit)	on Club activities		1,241.36	- 2,992.8
	of Investments	1 1	40	649.20
rofit on disposal	or investments	3		045.20
-		3	-,	
ncrease / (Decre	ase) in market value of investments	3	47,152.97	6,742.61
-	ase) in market value of investments		-,	6,742.6
ocrease / (Decrea	ase) in market value of investments		47,152.97	6,742.6
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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

For the year to: 30th. September 2024



1. MEMBERSHIP

	2023/24		2022/23	
	No.	Amount	No.	Amount
New Members: Oct-Dec previous calendar year (iv)	0		2	59.30
Memberships renewed	168	6,336.00	169	6,640.07
Members with zero payment	5		5	The state of
New/renewing Members subsequent quarters	2	61.50	8	238.00
TOTAL Membership income		6397.50		6,937.37
SAC Membership bulk payment (i), (ii)	19	-2,061.34	22	-2,166.16
SAC - Chf transfer fee		-15.00		-15.00
TOTAL SAC related payments		-2076.34		-2,181.16
BMC affiliation payment - New Members Oct-Dec previous calendar year	0	4 4000	0	
BMC Affiliation payment (iii)	151	-3,608.90	153	-3,404.25
BMC Affiliation payment subsequent quarters (iii)	1	-23.90	11	-244.77
TOTAL BMC Affiliation fees		-3,632.80		-3,649.02
Gross income to ABMSAC		688.36		1,107.19
Smart payment costs (Stripe)	1	-101.03	11000	-92.17
Net Income to ABMSAC		587.33		1,015.02

On behalf of SAC Members paying via ABMSAC.

ii) SAC credit for next financial year is Chf 334, due to membership changes after bulk payment made.

(iii) In 2023/24, the club did not pass on the £6 BMC price increase to members, which equates to a total support to members of £912.

(iv) Includes 30p Stripe test transfer in 2022/23.

2. BANK INTEREST

There have been no changes to our banking arrangements over the past year.

	30th Sept. 2024	30th Sept. 2023
Bank interest	1,568.94	934.56

3. INVESTMENTS

There has been no change to the number of investments we hold during the financial year. Our investments continue to perform well. The capital gains tax on our Brooks MacDonald holding, which we sold in the previous financial year, has been paid.

Investment	Comments	No. Units at year start	No. Units at year end	Type of payment
Aberdeen Standard		7,782	7,782	Accumulation
Brunner Investment Trust 25p		4,687	4,587	Dividend
Invesco Select Trust 1p		12,778	12,778	Dividend
LionTrust		6,541	6,541	Accumulation
Murray International 5p	Changed from 25p to 5p	9,795	9,795	Dividend
Witan Investment Trust 5p	THE STREET	12,825	12,825	Dividend

30th Sept. 2024	30th Sept. 2023
210,594.75	162,732.50
4,748.45	4,171.87
	210,594.75

4. LEGACY DONATION

In the previous financial year, the club received a legacy donation from the late David Harland. This legacy is being used to improve the drying room at the hut and will be specifically named after him.

5. LONDON LECTURES

The amount shown is the net cost of the London lectures in 2023/24 as it includes a refund from the AAC for the 2022/23 lecture series, as ABMSAC covered the total initial cost of the lectures.

6. ANNUAL DINNER

The cost of the annual dinner reflects several payments, including the guest speaker and menu cards, as well as an amount of wine for each table.

7. SKILLS WEEKEND AND TRAINING GRANTS

The skills weekend in April 2023 included a visit to Honister quarry to learn basic via ferrata skills and two individual training grants.

8. DONATIONS

As with last year, the dub 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 Swiss meet gala dinner.

10. GSHL RELATED MATTERS

This covers advisory work in relation to the drying room (see also 4.)

11. SMART PAYMENT COSTS (STRIPE)

The use of smart payment options for both membership and meets continues to be the preferred option for most members. To assist in processing Stripe information for the accounts, the Treasurer as developed software that allows ready reconciliation of those costs.

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

In the previous financial year, the club purchased beanie hats for all club members who wanted one. Surplus stock now forms part of the welcome package for new members.

Ed Bramley	
Honorary Treasurer	
Date: 24 October 2024	

Honorary Examiner Date: 24 October 2024

Ian Featherstone

Examiner's statement:

In my view the financial statements are in accordance with the Associations accounting records as of 30th September 2024 and disclose a surplus for the twelve-month period then ended.

No work of an audit nature has been carried out.

These accounts were formally adopted at the club AGM on 1st February 2025.

Historic List of Officers

List of Officers since the formation of the Association

PRESIDEN	TS	1972-1974	D G Lambley FRCS
1909-1912	Clinton Dent	1975-1977	M Bennett
1913-1922	A E W Mason	1978-1980	P S Boulter FRCS
	Dr H L R Dent	1981-1984	J P Ledeboer
	Brig Gen.The Hon C G Bruce C MVO		Wing Commander H D Archer DFC
	W M Roberts OBE	1988-1990	J S Whyte CBE
	A N Andrews		A Ross Cameron ARC FEng
	C T Lehmann		Mrs H M Eddowes
	Dr N S Finzi		W B Midgley
	Gerald Steel CB		M J Goodyer
	Col E R Culverwell MC		A I Andrews
1954-1956			J W S Dempster CB
	George Starkey B L Richards	2009-2012	
	Dr A W Barton		E A Bramley M C Parsons
	Frank Solari	2018-2018	
	Vincent O Cohen MC	2021-2024	
1300-1300	VIIICETTE O COTTETT MIC	2024-	D Albert
VICE PRES	IDENTS	2024	D / NDC/T
1948	Gerald Steel CV & Colonel E R Culverwell MC	1000 1000	EDE h A OME
1949	Colonel E R Culverwell MC & Brigadier E Gueterbock		F P French & S M Freeman
1950	Colonel E R Culverwell MC, Rev G H Lancaster (died April1950)		S M Freeman & F A W Schweitzer FRCS
	& Dr C F Fothergill	1984	FA W Schweitzer FRCS & Wing Commander H D Archer DFC
1951-1952	Dr C F Fothergill & Lieut-Colonel A E Tydeman	1985	F A W Schweitzer FRCS & A I Andrews
1953	Lieut-Colonel A E Tydeman & J R Amphlett		A I Andrews & W B Midgley
1954-1955	J R Amphlett & Robert Creg	1988	W B Midgley & C G Armstrong
1956	Robert Creg & Dr J W Healy		C G Armstrong & R W Jones
1957-1958	Dr J W Healy & B L Richards GM	1991	R W Jones & G G Watkins
1959	B L Richards GM & Dr A W Barton	1992	G S Watkins & F B Suter
1960-1961	Dr A W Barton & D G Lambley FRCS	1993-1994	F B Suter & Commander J W Chapman OBE
1962	D G Lambley, FRCS & V O Cohen MC	1994-1995	Commander J W Chapman OBE & D R Hodge
1963-1964	V 0 Cohen MC & F Solari	1996-1997	D R Hodge & R N James
1965	F Solari & J G Broadbent	1997-1999	R N James & M Pinney
	J G Broadbent & J S Byam-Grounds	2000-2001	M Pinney & Dr D W Watts
1968	J S Byam-Grounds & W Kirstein	2001-2003	Prof D C Watts & D F Penlington
	W Kirstein & Dr D R Riddell	2003-2004	D F Penlington
1971	Dr D R Riddell & M Bennett	2004-2007	W L Peebles
	M Bennett & Rev F L Jenkins	2007-2010	T J Shaw
1974	Rev F L Jenkins & P S Boulter FRCS	2010-2013	Mrs B Baldwin
1975	P S Boulter FRCS & J S Whyte	2013-2018	J H Strachan
	J S Whyte & F E Smith	2018-2023	Mrs H M Eddowes
	F E Smith & J P Ledeboer	2023- 2024	D Albert
1979	J P Ledeboer & F P French		
HONOBAR	Y SECRETARIES	1971-1972	J P Ledeboer
	J A B Bruce & Gerald Steel		FA W Schweitzer FRCS
	E B Harris & A N Andrews		
	A N Andrews & N E Odell		R A Coatsworth
	A N Andrews & W M Roberts	1978-1983	
	W M Roberts & M N Clarke	1984-1986	A G Partridge
1931-1944	N Clarke & F W Cavey	1987-1988	S M Freeman
	M N Clarke & F P Crepin	1989-2000	H F Romer
1949-1953	F R Crepin & George Starkey	2000-2001	
	George Starkey & R C J Parker	2001-2006	J W S Dempster
1957-1958	R C J Parker & H McArthur		•
1958-1960	R C J Parker & F E Smith	2006-2010	9
1960-1962	F E Smith & M Bennett	2010-2023	D Murton
1963-1970	M Bennett & J P Ledeboer	2023-	C Gagnon
		1111	

100

HONORARY MEETS SECRETARIES

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

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

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 with Roberts/Gavev/Crepin

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

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

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 EDITOR NEWSLETTER

1992-1995 F B Suter

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

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES (Formerly Honorary Registrar)

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

HONORARY EDITORS

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

HONORARY TREASURERS

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

HONORARY AUDITORS

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

Posts no longer in use

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 SOLICITORS
1909-1932 E R Taylor
1933-1973 The Lord Tangley
1974 M Bennett
1991-1995 S N Beare

1996-2003 Mrs D K Lewis (nee Midgley)

CURRENT HONORARY MEMBERS

Wendell Jones, Don Hodge, Pamela Harris

101

2009-2010 J F Harris 2010-2013 M Parsons 2013-2019 A Burton 2019-2023 P Stock 2023- A Burton

1994-2003 Dr M J Eddowes

2004-2012 E A Bramley 2012-2014 M Pinney 2014-2021 E A Bramley 2021 - J Freemantle

1987-1992 M R Loewy 1992-2002 M I C Baldwin 2002-2009 R B Winter 2009- M J Goodyer

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

2018- 2021 A Burton 2021 - E A Bramley

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

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

Useful Contacts

George Starkey Hut (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



Oread Mountaineering Club (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)

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)

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



NOTES

ABMSAC Office Holders 2025

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	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.