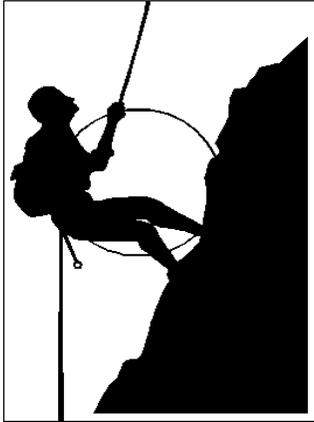

LMC Newsletter

September 2008



Editorial

This is my last Newsletter after eleven years (or so). Thanks to all contributors, and good luck to Claire who takes over as editor after the AGM.

Jim Cunningham

Twelve Members and a Dog

(or: The LMC at play on Pillar Rock)

Bernard Smith

The day dawned hot and sunny on Church Stile campsite. As is usual on the Wasdale meet we were surrounded by industrious, bustling indecision. We had already made our plans and so breakfast extended slowly lunchwards. Gradually but insidiously the team grew in numbers if not in stature. Slowly at first, but with increasing rapidity, it became apparent that without an imminent departure things would get completely out of hand. A motley crew of twelve members and a dog eventually toiled up towards Black Sail Pass in the sweltering heat, our passage marked by the streams of sweat.

Reassembling at Looking Stead, we took the traverse path past Robinson's cairn and across the Shamrock Traverse, where we paused for lunch. Ignoring the torrents of abuse being hurled from above by "The Pensioner", we began the descent of the West Gully. A seemingly determined attempt to stone me to death failed and we all somehow survived to gather at the foot of the Old West Route. It now became apparent that the team was of mixed abilities and experience. We formed a sight, not dissimilar to a file of Tibetan refugees, as we wound our way to the top of Low Man. By now we were match fit and soon dispatched the small pitches on the ridge to the summit of High Man.

The whole team, including Oscar the dog, paused here for a second lunch and a team photo. It was now that we heard the distant thunder. As we started down Slab and

Notch the rain began to fall, gently at first then with more menace. The large polished holds soon became ice-like and a rope was considered sensible. It was now that we discovered a lack of ability to improvise. "What's a bowline?" "How does this harness go on?" echoed off the gully walls. It was slow, but gradually the team slotted through the Notch and crossed the Slab to level ground. One glorious memory is the sight of Oscar clinging to his master's leg with all four paws as he downclimbed to the Notch.

As the rain had now stopped we returned over Pillar mountain to the Wasdale Head Inn for a well deserved pint after a grand mountaineering day.

Cast; Bernard, Josie & Claire Smith, Iain McClellan, Mark & Janette Braithwaite, Richard Ramsden, Jason Whiteley, Joanne Medcalf, Clare, Petra, Amanda & Oscar the dog.

A Nordic Ski Tour March 2008

Bernard Smith

Norway was an itch that needed scratching. Having toured extensively throughout the Alps I felt as though the Scandinavian version was, at worst, a new experience, and at best, a whole new world. We teamed up with the Buchanans who, at least, had done it before. Dave selected the Rondane area, 3.5h. N.E. of Oslo by train, and as befits an IBM man organised the entire trip. We flew Norwegian from Edinburgh to Oslo, which was quite cheap, took a train to Otta, and a taxi to Mysusetter, where there is an excellent budget hotel. All things are relative, of course, and "budget" by Norwegian standards is not necessarily cheap.

We awoke to a magnificent breakfast to celebrate Pat's birthday (don't ask which) followed by our introduction to the mysteries of waxing. Was it to be blue or purple? Apparently it all depends on the temperature, age and nature of the snow. There are many colours and several grades of each colour. It pays to be non-committal but observant! Our objective was the Smuksjoseter Hytta, but the learning curve was steeper than the terrain as I

struggled with the unfamiliar equipment. However a cut track led unerringly through the mist to the staffed DNT hut. Superb quality, but at £50pppn you would expect it.

Day three took us to the Rondvassbu Hut and gave an insight to the possibilities of this genre. We blazed our own trail through virgin snow, and even managed a few parallel turns on the descent to the collection of huts. Apparently there are usually at least two in case one burns down as they are all wooden buildings. We spent two nights here with a day tour up the Rondvassdelen, and were fed splendidly with reindeer meat and salmon steaks.

The fifth day to the Bjornhallia Hytta was again through virgin snow and involved the crossing of a low col, with a challenging descent through birch scrub. By now we were almost in control and we arrived unscathed. Day six was the best of the holiday as we crossed some impressive terrain to the Eldabu Hut. The GPS proved indispensable as we headed due south into a whiteout. In between the scenery was magnificent and the silence only broken by the incessant chatter of DB's shutter. This was our first self catering hut and we really appreciated the DNT system of stocking the huts with food and trusting people to pay for what they use. We also met some real Nordic tourers who were averaging 50km a day.

Another self catering hut, the Grahogdbu, followed, which was crowded but fine all the same. Then came the ski out to Venabu, a resort with uplift, but many miles of Nordic trails. It has a good, but expensive hotel with fantastic food for a mere £90 a night. We did a day tour up Svartfjellet, a small peak of 1154m., which was superb on our mountain touring skis. The downside was being overtaken by fat Norwegians on track skis. It was like going out on a MTB with the North Lancs. Road Club. Dave enjoyed himself so much that he treated us to a beer at about £9 a pint! The best time to visit Norway is in Lent.

An early start at 2.45am saw us in a taxi to the railway station, train to Oslo and the flight home. On balance I would say that it opened up a whole new world but a potentially expensive one.

The Cairngorm Meet 20th - 22nd June

Bernard Smith

A meet at the Shelter Stone seemed to fit in with the current Munro campaign, so Josie & I decided to go. The others would be climbing but, we thought, it would be sociable to bivvi with them in the famous howf.

Having recently become members of the "leisured class" the plan was to drive to Aviemore early, stroll over to Loch Avon on the Friday, and have a brew ready for the late arrivals. However, in the tradition of the LMC, the "meet" went elsewhere.

Undeterred we carried on. Freed from the shackles of a meet leader we passed Loch Avon and carried our tent up to Loch Etchachan. Here we discovered that level, dry sites are a rarity. We pitched the tent however, and wandered up Derry Cairngorm in strong winds and the occasional hail storm, being rewarded with panoramic views from the summit.

Back at base we decided to do Beinn Mheadoin whilst the weather held, so dinner was postponed. It was but a short stride to the top, but as Sod's Law dictates we were drenched by a sudden squall just before regaining the tent. Dinner was a damp affair and whilst enjoying a post-prandial digesif we noticed that the Cairngorm gale was trying to steal our tent. The decision was made. We would retreat to the shelter of Loch Avon, where I knew a sheltered, sandy cove. An hour later we were sitting by the loch brewing up.

Saturday dawned magnificently with clear sky and not a ripple on the loch. Breakfast was stretched out as long as possible so as to savour this special place. Dragging ourselves away in mid morning, we strolled up Coire Raibert and down the Fiacall Ridge to Aviemore. There were Corbetts calling and Dave Buchanan's 60th birthday party at Dundonnel. But that's another story.
