

LMC Newsletter

April 2010



The new LMC t-shirts have landed!

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2010. It has a distinctly cold feel to it due to the number of people who have taken great advantage of the fantastic winter conditions in recent months. Thank you very much to all those who have provided me with articles. I hope to have another newsletter ready by June/July so please keep the articles coming! If you've done something independently you would like to write about that's fine as well, it's not restricted to club activities. If you are a meet leader, please email me your meet report, or delegate someone else to do the job! Photos are always appreciated to accompany articles.

Printing and posting a newsletter three or four times a year is a considerable expense to the club in terms of budget, to the members doing the address labelling and stamp sticking in terms of time, and to the environment in terms of the trees that are chopped down to provide the paper and the fuel used to transport the post! A large number of people have indicated that they are happy to read the newsletter online, or download and print a copy themselves if they prefer to read it on paper. This method of viewing also means you get to see the photos in colour! On the other hand it is also appreciated that not everyone has access to the internet at home and would prefer a paper copy through the post. Rather than ask people to opt out, I am asking people to opt in if they would like to continue to receive a paper copy so that we are not printing or posting any newsletters unnecessarily. This will also make it a lot easier to produce the newsletter more regularly and keep it up to date.

If you would like a paper copy of the newsletter please let me know by email: helen.clare.taylor@gmail.com, or by phone/text: 07793 116 142. Helen Taylor

Some thanks from Clive related to the Annual Dinner:

Thank you to those who came to the Annual Dinner and participated in our fundraising for the local mountain rescue. We raised £63 from the raffle.

I would like to thank the following for generously donating to the raffle:

Cotswolds in Leeds for donating £100 worth of items from the store.

Nevisport in Leeds for donating a £30 voucher.

Mountain Intelligence in Leeds a £20 voucher. (if you visit the store let them know you are a member of LMC for a bit of extra special treatment!)

And the Leeds Wall, a coaching session for two in either bouldering, leading or an introduction to climbing.

A message from Holly, our new social secretary - please get in touch if you are interested in doing a short slide show in an upcoming event. It could be any trip you might have done either connected with the club or otherwise.

Upcoming Club meets:

Hut Weekends:

April 1/2/3/4 2010 (Easter) Inverardran Cottage, Crianlarich, Scotland (18 places)
April 16/17 2010 Stair, North Lakes (16 places)
Apr/May 30/1/2 2010 Raeburn Hut, Dalwhinnie, Scotland (12 places)
29th May-5th June 2010 - Glen Brittle Memorial Hut, Skye (10 places)
11/12th June 2010 - Carlswark Cottage, Stoney Middleton, Peak District (15 places)
18/19th June 2010 - Cae Amos (12 places)
24/25th September, 2010 - Tranearth, Torver, SW Lakes (20 places)
8/9th October, 2010 - PCU, Llanberis, Snowdonia (18 places)
22/23rd October 2010 - Bowderstones, Borrowdale, Lake District (20 places)
5th/6th Nov 2010 - Cae Amos (12 places)
26/27th Nov 2010 - Low Hall Garth, Little Langdale, Lake District (12 places)
10/11th Dec 2010 - K-Shoes, Borrowdale, Lake District (25 places)
14/15th Jan 2011 - George Starkey, Patterdale, Lake District (20 places)
28/29th Jan 2011 - Mill Cottage, Feshiebridge, Cairngorms (14 places)
23/24/25/26 Feb 2011- Lagangarbh, Glencoe (14 places)
11/12th March 2011 - Little Langdale, Lake District (16 places)
25th/26th March 2011- Newlands, Lake District (16 places)
8/9th April 2011 - Pant-y-Fron, Nant Peris, Llanberis, Snowdonia (13 places)
21/22/23/24th April (Easter) 2011 - Strawberry Cottage, Glen Affric, NW Scotland (12 places)

Camping Weekends:

May 17/18th 2010 - Chapel Style Landgale
July 2/3rd 2010 - Syke Farm, Buttermere, Lake District
July 16/17th 2010 - Ty Isaf, Nant Peris, Llanberis, Snowdonia
July 30/31st 2010 - Turner Hall Farm, Duddon Valley, Lake District
13/14th August 2010 - National Trust, Wasdale Head, Lake District (places limited to 15)
August 27/28/29th 2010 - St Petrox, Pembrokeshire
10/11th September, 2010 - Gwern-gof-Uchaf, Ogwen, Snowdonia
April 29/30th & May 1st 2011 - Wooler, Northumberland

Climbing Day Meets (See website for evening climbing meets)

May 22/23rd 2010 - Roaches/Hen Cloud
July 9th 2010 - Shining Clough
July 23rd 2010 - Dovestone Tor
August 7th 2010 - Burbage South
August 21/22nd 2010 - Bamford Edge/Higgar Tor
September 18th 2010 - Brimham Rocks
October 1st 2010 - Crookrise

Walking Day and Evening Meets

Sat 24th April Wharfedale
Wed 5th May Ilkley Navigation Evening (followed by curry)
Sun 23rd May Peak District Walk (combined with climbing meet)
Wed 16th June Hebden Bridge evening walk
Sun 27th June Bilsdale
10th-11th July 2 day long distance bivi walk (venue TBC)
Wed 28th July Bolton Abby evening walk
Sun 8th Aug LMC trip to the seaside (east coast)
Sat 4th Sep LMC 3 peak race/walk/bimble
Sat 16th Oct Forest of Bowland
Sat 30th Oct Halloween night walk (starting after dark, venue TBC)
Sat 4th Dec Ribblesdale
Sat 8th Jan New Year christmas dinner walk off (venue TBC)
Sat 5th Feb Wharfedale

El Chorro New Year 2009

Attendees: Kevin Bowser, Matt Hopkinson, Allie Goodwill, Helen Taylor, Jamie Fuller, Cath Sanders, Dave Clark, Paul Lucas, Rich Moses, Dave Rippin, Holly Adamthwaite, Andy Hainsworth, Mike Nuttall, Alan Christensen, Katherine Christensen.



I arrived in Malaga on December 28th feeling anxious. Helen and Jamie had been in El Chorro for a few days already, reporting on Christmas Eve that it was raining on and off and that the forecast looked appalling. Matt and Allie had arrived on Boxing Day to around 6 inches of rain on the roads, and conditions resembling a very wet Lake District. I was not optimistic.

So, as I left Malaga airport for the station I was somewhat relieved that it was cool and cloudy but most importantly dry. An hour or so later I was picked up at Alora station, and advised that we should get climbing asap whilst it was dry. After dumping all of my bags at the Olive Branch (our accommodation), I quickly repacked for an afternoons climbing - spent at one of the most accessible sectors - Castrojo, repeating a couple of routes that I'd done on my previous visit, followed by a rapid retreat back to the car as it started to rain.

The next couple of days were enjoyable, and largely dry, allowing two full days of climbing on the spectacular Frontales crags. Almost all of the group had now arrived and we were making full use of the sun to re-familiarise ourselves with Spanish Limestone.

Unfortunately the downpour we'd been fearing arrived early on New Year's Eve, only finally abating around lunchtime having effectively ruled out our chances to climb at all that day. Most people elected to walk along the Caminito del Rey (the kings little pathway) during the afternoon. This is a walkway built around 100 metres high up the main gorge for which El Chorro is most famous, it's current state of repair and the stunning situation make it an absolute must do for any climber visiting the area.



It's become a tradition that at some point shortly after the New Year, Matt and I would attempt a classic multi-pitch route. This year it would be Amptrax, which scales the full height of the Frontales cliffs. Dave C/Mike & Dave R/Hol were the other pairs who led the way for a fantastic day, the highlight for me being an amazing fly past by a couple of eagles - they were literally a few feet away from me at the belay point below the last pitch.

Sadly our last day was again marred by rain, but nevertheless we spent an excellent afternoon at Las Encantadas, which overlooks our accommodation and was relatively quick drying.

Despite the rain I had a fantastic trip, climbing on 7 days out of 8 and with the special kind of atmosphere that seems to go hand in hand with LMC New Year trips. I'm already looking forward to the next one...

Kevin Bowser

'Mordor on Ice': A winter adventure on Aonach Mor Ballachulish Meet, Jan 2010

As Mark, Clive, Mike and I jumped onto the Nevis Range gondola cable car at 8am, it was like getting on an Alton Towers ride. Little did we know of what lay ahead...

We were all intent on getting some winter climbs under our belts that weekend. I felt it was about time I led a solid Grade II, and based on a couple of recommendations and a good condition report, had decided on Golden Oldy; a 500 metre long buttress route on the West Face of Aonach Mor, that climbs right to the mountain's 1221 metre high summit. I'd convinced Mark of the merit of this plan, and Mike and Clive had decided it sounded good too. It was to be Mark's first proper winter climb, and a bit of a winter climbing taster day for Mike too.

Martin Moran's 'Scotland's Winter Mountains', describes Grade II as being non-technical, perhaps requiring a short pitch or two; broadly comparable to summer V Diff in overall difficulty. I anticipated a largely straightforward scramble on snow and ice, with the odd short obstacle, but as competent and able climbers, nothing we couldn't take in our stride. I felt very confident in my ability to tackle the route.

At 10.30 we stood at the base of the huge West Face. The route looked rather steep and imposing. The top wasn't even visible. Mike was looking slightly uncertain. 'You know, Dave Payne told me at breakfast it's notorious for benightments. Are you sure this is a good idea? Perhaps we should have picked something a bit shorter.' Clive and I brushed this off as negative thinking. Mark had gone very quiet.

With two other parties just starting out on Golden Oldy, Clive and Mike decided to find another route; eventually picking Solitaire, another Grade II of similar character and dimensions on a neighbouring buttress. Mark and I stuck to our original plan.



All was fine to start with. A steep névé slope, which we soloed, then steeper mixed ground, on which we moved together; quickly overtaking the party in front of us, who were pitching it.

Then we came to the steeper main section of buttress and the difficulties began. Further thaw followed by a fresh dump of snow had replaced the well-consolidated snow described in the condition report with a deep layer of very loose powder snow over bare rock. Climbing this involved either swimming or scrabbling around trying to find decent axe placements and footholds. Mark said he was feeling quite scared, and asked if I could lead it. No problem, I thought.

40 minutes later, some way further up the buttress, having already thrutched and hauled my way up an icy chimney, with frozen turf under the powder providing the only secure axe placements, I hooked one axe over a rock, torqued the other in a crack, locked it off, then entrusted my entire body weight to the axes as my crampons scrabbled ineffectually against a featureless granite slab in an effort to move my feet up. Four metres above my last bit of gear, 1000 metres up the side of a mountain and in minus 7 degrees, this didn't feel like V Diff. It felt Moderately Desperate.

And so it continued, with another hard pitch. It was like a Darwinian crash-course in mixed winter climbing techniques.

We then came to an equally steep broken slabby wall. The leader of the party in front of us was struggling and cursing his way up it: 'Grade II my @rse - more like bloody Grade III !'. I turned to Mark: 'Look, my head's getting a bit frazzled by all this leading, can you do this one?' He looked particularly unhappy at this suggestion, but agreed.

He proceeded up it in good controlled style, making much less a meal of it than the previous party. Only having one piece of protection must have focused his mind.

The route then started relenting in angle, forming a long narrow ridge that snaked up into the mist. It was now 2.45 pm. 'This all feels really hardcore, I don't like it, I just want to get off' said Mark. I tried to reassure him that the worst must now be over.



The ridge presented further obstacles: great jumbles of powder-smothered granite blocks to surmount, interspersed with insanely narrow and worryingly unstable snowy arêtes, with massively steep exposure on either side. These needed very good balance and careful foot placements to follow or create the most stable path. The scale and situation felt more like the Alps than somewhere in the UK. Occasional breaks in the mist gave spectacular views across to Carn Mor Dearg and down into the snowy glen hundreds of metres below. Slightly more within my comfort zone, I started vaguely enjoying it, although my head was almost exploding with the focus required to keep going. Mark however didn't look like he was enjoying any of it.

My concerns as to whether we would complete the route in daylight were mounting. However, the priority was to get up safely. We continued to pitch it, despite the time this added, to provide some extra security and maintain confidence. I figured it was climbable in the dark if necessary. The ridge seemed to go on forever, and on either side monstrous snowy crags loomed up into the mist, with no end in sight. I kept looking down to two parties now way below us on Western Rib, a Grade III route on the adjacent buttress. They still had over 150 m of steep climbing to go, then more, and were facing certain benightment. Whatever predicament we're in, it's not as bad as theirs, I kept thinking.

My gear was becoming caked in rime ice and my drinking tube along with my gloves had frozen solid. With precious minutes of daylight now ticking away, there didn't seem time to stop to eat and drink. In retrospect this was a mistake, and we should have stopped for five minutes to cram in some food and liquid. We got very, very hungry and thirsty. And quite cold, on and off.

It was possibly one of the best things I've ever seen when the rock ended and there was just 50 metres of Grade I angle snow slope, and then no more mountain. With great relief we topped out at 5.10 pm, in rapidly fading half-light. We gave each other a hug. Mark looked happy for the first time in the last six hours.

We followed a bearing through the fog off the top; keeping the west edge in view to avoid straying towards the large cornices over the east face. After half an hour of picking our way across the plateau in darkness and fog, we located the top ski tow.

We now felt safe enough to stop and try to contact Mike and Clive. We weren't sure what route they'd done in the end and I imagined them having romped up some gully and now being back at the car wondering where the hell we were. I turned on my mobile, and immediately got a text saying 'we're at the top - on our way down'. I was then stunned to realise they'd only just sent it: they were 45 minutes behind us!



We followed the tows down to the top gondola station. Needless to say, we'd missed the last gondola down. We waited there for the others; watching out for the lights of their headtorches coming down the mountainside. They eventually emerged from the darkness, and another harrowing tale started to unfold; their route having presented similar challenges to ours. We then all walked together down the mountain bike trail to the bottom of the mountain. At 9 pm, 13 hours after we'd set off, we got back to the car, all feeling very weary. Quite an extended adventure all in all.

We then headed into Fort William, and the chippy. Mike and I tried unsuccessfully to buy a bottle of Champagne to celebrate still being alive. Running the gauntlet of Fort William High Street on a Saturday night looking for an off-licence felt more frightening to me than the climb; I was convinced we'd be set upon and knifed. We ended up with a can of Irn-Bru.

For Mike, the 'taster day' had proved a bit too much. 'I thought it was supposed to be an easy introduction? It was like climbing bloody Mordor!!' He continued to gibber unhappily about the various horrors encountered on their route for the rest of the evening. 'Ach, it's all character building' remarked a gnarled old Glaswegian back at the hut, to which Mike retorted 'But I don't *want* to have a character!'

What on earth had possessed me to pick a 500 metre long route up one of Britain's highest mountains? In the conditions, it had been a much more challenging day out than we'd all bargained for. As well as parts of my body hurting quite a lot, I felt like a psychologically damaged war veteran for several days afterwards; haunted by continuous reel of images of the climb and its dangers. But we'd done it, which felt like a tremendous achievement, and had an amazing adventure. Within a few days selective amnesia had set in and we were all asking ourselves 'When can I do it again...?'

Cath Sanders

Annual Dinner, 14th February 2010

The 2010 Annual Dinner was hosted at the Wastwater Youth Hostel in Eskdale. Despite having a little further to drive on a Friday night than last year, it proved to be a very popular venue with the added bonus of stunning morning views of Great Gable, perfectly reflected in the still water. The cold conditions had held and many parties had arrived equipped with pointy things to take advantage of the snow and ice still present in the hills. These people were banished to the 'early risers' bedroom, so as not to disturb those wishing to have a more leisurely start.



Holly, Dave R, Clive and Anna took advantage of their early start and managed to do both Easy Gully and Deep Ghyll on Scarfell. Scarfell was a popular destination, with Tom, Paul L and Cath S also choosing to do Deep Ghyll, and Neil and Andy attempting to do the same but due to some confusion regarding their exact location they ending up on Red Ghyll instead. John L, Mike and Dave P went up the bottom half of direct route on Scarfell Shamrock and the top half or Easy Gully. Two route for the price of one there, sort of.

James R and Kev avoided the cold stuff and went climbing at Bell Stand. Kev spent a good part of the morning standing outside the youth hostel all kitted up and ready to go whilst enduring an impressive amount of faffing around by Mr Rowe. Apparently they left at the perfect time for the sun to be hitting the rock at the right angle. Kev looked as convinced as me on hearing this declaration.

Many others also hit the hills, but with the intention of staying on their feet rather than requiring three or four points of contact. Three different walking parties formed. Kate, Mark, Gwyneth, Paul S, Ruth, James H and Paul P headed over to Yewbarrow and took in Red Pike, Scoat Fell, Pillar and Black Sail Pass. Genevieve, John P, Lesley, Kathrine, Susan, Paul E, Cath E and Mike made their way over Lingmell, Scarfell Pike, Broad Crag, Ill Crag, Great End and Esk Hause Pass. Dave C and Alan C paired up to walk over Great Gable, Kirkfell, Pillar, ? and Red Pike.

Jack preferred to use two wheels to get himself around and headed off on his bike towards Wasdale Head.

Those not already mentioned formed an alternative group made up of those recovering from injury, illness, or just generally feeling relaxed /lethargic and not keen on anything requiring too much effort. Oh, and Burj, who'd done his usual training run before breakfast and didn't require many more miles on top of that. Corky, Jo, Nick, Pam, Jesus, Claire, Hannah, Burj and I set off in search of tea and cakes. Not something you'd consider



a difficult task in the Lakes. We eventually found said tea and cakes at 5pm. By this side we'd strolled alongside the beach in Ravenglass,



with some of us having more luck with skimming stones than others. We walked a circular route along the trails to Muncaster Castle, walked into the visitors centre and decided that what they were charging to look at the gardens was extortionate. Despite protests from Burj and his stomach, it was declared too early for lunch so from there we headed up to Muncaster Fell, which gives the most glorious panoramic

views of both the coast line and the hills. And Sellafield. Rather than walking back the way we came we carried on down into Eskdale Green and returned to Ravenglass via the miniature steam railway. By this time we were all starving, as we were only heading out for tea and cakes and you don't tend to pack your sandwiches for that. We were sustained during our wait at the station by peanuts and shortbread biscuits, courtesy of Nick and Corky. Back in Ravenglass The Ratty Arms was displaying a large banner 'good food served all day'. We limped over to it. It lied. It was shut. After another three failed attempts we found a lovely café that was indeed serving tea and cakes, and lovely toasties. Just a pity it was only a couple of hours before we were eating again!

The dinner went very well, with Cath S sweeping the awards table and Dave Rippin dominating the photo competition (see the bulletin board for a link to all the competition entries). Clive did a great job stepping in for Will (our chairman was busy at home waiting to become a Dad) and provided Cath with yet more winnings as she correctly guessed the length of his speech. No-one however could have predicted the length of the raffle... After that it was over to the disco or the cups of coffee. Impressively, everyone was present and correct for breakfast the next morning.

A good weekend enjoyed by all. Many thanks to PJ for organising it.

Helen Taylor

LMC half term meet – Roybridge, Scotland

Wednesday – the drive up.

Claire T and Dave drove round to the flat in Barney on Wednesday afternoon, and Jo J did the same in her car. We successfully managed to pack 4 bikes, 2 snowboards and all our gear and food into the back of the van and by half 4 we were off on the long journey north. We eventually arrived at Roybridge at near on 11pm. The hostel seemed Ok, but with several parties there, and about 30 people in all, 2 cookers in the kitchen seemed nowhere near enough. In the end however with regard to space it was fine as the other people were sensible and there were little or no issues with cooking and whatnot. Conditions outside were apparently perfect and they'd had a big dollop of fresh snow across the area on the Tuesday night. Temperatures were way down below freezing and there was no wind to speak of, so it was as good as it gets. The large party who were already at the hostel had enjoyed stunning hill conditions for 3 days and this was apparently forecast to continue for the duration of our stay. Hurrah. Maps were poured over, routes were considered and plans were hatched. "My" group made to make the most of the calm weather and go skiing at Nevis Range at the first opportunity, so that's where we headed on day 1.



Thursday – skiing at Nevis Range.

Claire and Dave had brought their snowboards with them – Dave having boldly splashed out on his the day before - but Jo, Cath and I needed to get there to hire gear, so set off and arrived at the ski centre around 8am. Boy was it cold, and there didn't seem to be that much of a queue for the kit. However, after some indecision caused by a sign near the hire centre door stating they'd run out of various things (including starting to drive off to Glencoe and turning back) we stood for over an hour in a desperately slow moving queue (and almost literally froze as it was around -7 degrees) before finally getting inside and getting hold of some gear. There was not too much left by that time - I ended up with skis which were too long really, and we all had to make do with the dregs of the ski poles with mis-matched pairs. Still, we were off and running, and so straight up in the gondola and out onto the slopes. Dave and Claire had got the lift up while we were queuing so we looked out for them. Jo was worried about her fairly recently operated on knee and deciding that perhaps skiing was not the best thing for it. Still – she



battled on, and did look very comfortable on the initial runs. There were not too many people about, and no queues for any of the lifts which was excellent, and the snow seemed great... in a way that only Scottish snow can be. Parts of most of the runs were piste bashed, giving narrow fast descents surrounded by unnervingly lumpy bumpy swathes of powder. Once you'd got your confidence up it was basically a free for all across the runs and really excellent fun. Cath was soon off doing her own thing so Jo and I headed for the summit while the weather was good

(there looked to be some clouds approaching), and spotted our snowboarding pair from the chair lift. Once up at the top (via the t-bar and then the summit button) the conditions and views from the summit station were incredible. We took off our skis and had a bit of a walk around – up to the very summit of the mountain where the view to the south opened up. In the sun it was warm enough to stand around and eat a sandwich and just gawp at the 360 degree worth of staggering winter wonderland mountain vistas. Amazing. We set off on the runs down but Jo decided on the way that her knee was protesting too much and so retreated to the Snow Goose station for a break. I had managed to get control of my skis somewhat by this time and enjoyed bouncing across and down a couple of red runs before joining her for a lunch break. Claire and Dave had opted for a breather too with Dave having amusingly crushed a couple of bananas in his rucksack (too much falling over!), resulting in a terrific vomit looking mess of gunk coated spare gear. He was seen at one point licking squashed banana from his wallet. After lunch some cloud had started down from the summit and I found a wide, wildly bumpy unbashed red from the top of the t-bar which was an complete mad joy of a thing to lash down at speed, and a presented a proper challenge to staying upright. Claire was worried about her leg so took things easy but had a go (she's a very skilful boarder) and loved it; Cath was seen on the same run somewhat intimidated but she

soon got a grip of it, and Dave stuck to the blues, still trying to get to grips with his brand new snowboard. We stayed there and thereabouts though for the rest of the afternoon until the slowly dropping clag (the only bit of cloud in the area as it happens) made the top of the run from the T-Bar decidedly dodgy with that white out zero visibility thing you get in the snow. Cath was around there too, and she and I were the last of our group off at about 4 pm. After a coffee it was decidedly quicker taking the gear back that it had been to get it in the first place. A brilliant, brilliant day out all in all. Jo's knee though was a real worry as it was incredibly sore for her, and she went going so far as to check out train times to get back to Leeds the next day when we drove in to get some in FW food after the skiing. All others in the LMC party had had a great day out too with some Grey Corries walking and a ridge ascent up onto Carn mor Deargh completed in the sensational conditions.

Friday – Ben a Crunchie and the 'ridge of doom'.

Cath had decided that she was off on one of her buttress climbing epics and collared me to join her. I was thinking of the adventure that she and PJ had experienced on Aonach Mor a couple of weeks previously but this one was only a grade I/II and the conditions were perfect so ... how hard could it be? The east ridge of Beinn a Chaorainn was our aim, which was a road side-ish Munro a few miles up the road from the hostel, so off we went at about 8:30 am. It was cold – very cold - at the car to start off. It must have been -10 or below and our faffing, packing and dressing was done with quickly freezing fingers. Things soon warmed up though once we got walking in the sun and our minds were taken off the cold by the stunning scenery, and a path winding up alongside a river through a pine tree plantation. The route in was as suggested by article Cath had printed off from a climbing site, and as we eventually found out was definitely the long way round. An early river crossing to find a nice easy track to the base of the ridge through the forest proved impossible with everything frozen or snowed over, so we were forced round the outside of another large tree plantation following the stream, and eventually managed

to cross the water further up. We skirted what seemed a long way round the trees and finally linked up with the 'proper' path. But at least at that point we were rewarded with spectacular views of our very impressive looking ridge of the day. Conditions were stunningly clear, and we could rest assured that for the remainder of the route navigation was not going to be an issue! There had been some reassuring previous traffic on the route over the past couple of days and we trudged up the lower slopes following footprints to get to the business end of things. Sure enough, when we got close, we could see what looked like a large guided party stopped at the first buttress, but they moved off nicely just as we got there and we had the ridge to ourselves. The pitch did look pretty serious from the first stance, but we decided that the girl struggling to climb it in the other group had just been making a bit of a meal of things. There was a snow gully option round the corner according to one of the other party leaders but Cath decided that the rock climbing option looked the most fun, so we kitted and belayed and she was soon bashing her way up the rock/ice/powder/ frozen turf mix to the first belay. Two nicely straightforward mixed rock pitches later (bit of a dodgy belay at the top of pitch 2, but we'll let that pass...) we'd done all the serious technicalities and were left moving, roped together up the rest of it. And that rest of it turned out to be an absolute joy – steep but relatively straightforward, extremely exhilarating, exposed and great fun. The 6 inches or so of fresh powder snow up the gulleys had been packed down somewhat by the other climbers so seemed stable on top of the previous hardened frozen stuff, the results of which lent very stable purchase to axe and crampon placements. And then all too soon it was over but our reward was the views from the top when we got there, and they were stupendous. With not a cloud in the sky, no wind and everything to the horizons all round covered in snow which sparkled like a Christmas card in the low winter sun, it was simply outrageous... breathtaking. What a place Scotland is when the weather is good – you absolutely cannot beat it. After some photos and a spot of lunch the walk off was a matter of following footprints and enjoying the views, trudging through the snow and indulging in the occasional bum slide. That was until we got back down to the lower plantation and once again could not get back over the river. Our options were to follow a nice big forestry track right down to the road and have a couple of km to wander back along it to the car; or we could take a left on another track back towards the river which on the map petered out frustratingly close to where the car was on the road. Maybe there was a handy stalkers path through the trees following our side of the water, and anyway who wants to walk all that way along the road? Yeah, so there was no path at the end of the track, and we set off through the trees alongside the deepening river gorge. Not much fun it has to be said but after 20 minutes or so of bashing our way through the



alarmingly thickly packed pine trees, getting sown down our necks, crawling on the floor etc, we eventually popped out onto the road next to the car – just as it was getting dark. The thrash through the trees was a bit of a frustrating way to end the day but overall what a day it had been. One of the best, really.

Jo, Claire and Dave had taken a mountain biking option on the Friday and headed off on the tracks from behind the hostel which led back towards, and eventually into the forestry at Nevis range. Conditions under wheel were mainly snow and some ice which was a bit much for Claire who was nursing her not too long ago broken leg, so was understandably nervous. Jo did make a good day of it though and managed to cycle over to the Nevis Range Witches Trails, and the other two picked her up at the centre later on. Over dinner we swapped our tales of the day. Andy May, Neil and Marcus had been sticking together as a climbing threesome and did a relatively easy day out on the smallish hill behind the Hostel, as they had plans to tackle the Aonach Eagach on Saturday. Mick H and Simon had continued their ascents of large tops in the grey Corries etc. and were obviously relishing the fantastic conditions.

We were doing well for food all in all. Jo J produced two great meals for the pair of us that she had prepared previously and brought along to cook at the hostel. The first night the pair of us polished off an alarmingly large dish of her excellent lasagne, and Friday we managed to do the same with an equally serious amount of shepherd's pie. I think under the pressure to finish it off though we overdid it and I ended up going to bed carrying a stomach ache category food baby.

Saturday – easy day, including a sauna.

Jo and Claire wanted to at least get out walking and get some nice views so I volunteered to take us on a walk on the aforementioned hill behind the hut, and see how the pair of them with their injured parts held out. So we had a very relaxed, not too taxing wander about the local fells in the snow. The terrain was very uneven and it was very hard work with the amount of powder, so it was not really too clever too aim for the top and we instead climbed for a while, contoured round and just enjoyed the views, fabulous as they were. We wandered back along the mountain bike track and across the bridge over the gorge, and decided to all hit the in house sauna which turned out to be a laugh. A fine relaxing day in great company really. Cath, Mick and Simon who'd been out together walking arrived back but there was still no sign of the Aonach Eagach party by 7 pm, and they'd left for their day at 6 am. On checking my phone (no signal in the hostel – you needed to be in the car park for that) there was a message to contact Marcus “as a matter of urgency”. Uh oh. Marcus and Neil were in the Nevis Sport bar and Andy May was in the Fort William hospital A&E. Andy had somehow dislocated his shoulder on one of the pinnacles on the ridge, but fortunately he'd held on and there was no further injury. They'd done well keeping calm, sorted him and themselves out, phoned the mountain rescue and had hunkered down on the ridge for an hour or so (still in daylight) before all being winched off by helicopter. I borrowed Cath's car and drove to Fort William to pick them and their gear up. Andy looked rather sore and sorry for himself in the hospital, but seemed Ok otherwise. They were keeping him in overnight for observation as he'd been given morphine when they put his shoulder back in. I drove the other two round to Glencoe where their car was still at the top of the pass where they'd left it – it's a surprisingly long way round the peninsula, through Ballachulish and up that valley. After I'd dropped them I did a brief stop off at the 3 Sisters view point as they were dramatically lit up by the moon, there was a starlight background etc ... but it was just ridiculously cold out of the car so managed all of 30 seconds gawping at it all before driving back round to the hostel. It did bring home just how mightily uncomfortable getting benighted on one of these climbs or ridges would be.

So, a great weekend all in all. Yes, there was a helicopter off style drama but one in which no one was really badly hurt, so we were lucky in that respect. Goes to show though that even in spankingly good conditions one mistake or misfortune can have very serious consequences. Scotland is not to be messed with.

Andy Golbourne

Tyn Lon, Nant Peris, Llanberis March 5/6 2010



Location, Location, iphone

This is my first report of what really happened. I can honestly say what a great weekend; after a few last minute drop-outs and travel arrangements were all sorted we set off from my house to the great location of Nant Peris. The journey took an interesting turn when we were about 5 miles away from the hut as PJ (Mark Robinson) had put the wrong postcode on the website. Initially I used the sat nav to Nant Peris then tried to find it on the roadmap with no joy. Finally we had to resort to Alan's iphone for the correct postcode for the sat nav. Upon arrival at the pub we asked for directions to the hut and we were informed "it's next door" so we tried the house next door (key didn't fit). A very strange lady who looked more like a builder walked past. We walked a bit further to find the hut, once inside the builder lady appeared and we explained who we were. At this point she enquired what we were doing trying to gain access to the mountain rescue hut?

New Members/Members

We had 3 new members on this meet. It was quite unusual not to be the new person anymore as I've only been here a short while.

Alan, PJ, John and James (members)

Helen, Graham and Steve (new members)

In the pub it was decided that the committee member must make breakfast (this never happened). Alcohol was involved heavily.

The Hut/Company

The hut was a very pleasant experience. I thought personally it was great, only missing a microwave in the kitchen that was large enough for all. There were also hut club members Rich and Nat, just to name a couple, all very pleasant and nice and also the friendly pet dog. After a few beers, pizza, toast and wine we finally managed to get to bed around 1:30pm.

"Is that Anglesey?"

"No James Anglesey is much bigger than that it's only a map."

Oh we did laugh!

Day One – Snowdon via Crib Goch

Star of the day must go to PJ, Who woke everyone up at 6:30am with his alarm, then was the last one to be woken up. After much faffing, Graham was the last one out.

We arrived at the foot of Crib Goch, sorted the parking and we were out of the starting blocks, weather conditions were great a bit cold but to be expected for the time of year, glorious sunshine with cloud moving quite quickly throughout the day.

After a bit of a hike up to Crib Goch everyone was slightly nervous, some more than others James & Helen!

Steve had not got crampons, but Helen had spare walking spikes "that's brave" but Steve seemed to manage ok.

A real team effort across Crib Goch, a group of people who came together performed well and made sure we were all ok as a team. There were not many people on the ridge that day, but we bumped into Nick and his friend Felix. Not sure if that was his name as random names were used all weekend. A member of the group had a memory problem (Graham).

As we got taking to Nick he explained he was making a calendar for his friend this consisted of him showing his underpants on the top of mountains. In true style Nick dropped his pants to bare his underpants for all to see on Crib Goch (**forever to be known as the underpants guy**).

From here we moved on to a cloudy Snowdon summit, with a nice guy chipping ice steps so people could walk to the summit, a dog chasing snowballs and a lot of unprepared walkers.

The descent down the Pyg track was hilarious. The group split as the kids wanted to play in the snow. We all made a huge slide; James made a 2ft snow hole then tried to convince us he could survive in it.

Everyone wanted to have a go even the underpants guy, but the fastest was the girl on her survival bag! If you could not stop there was always the mine shaft! I remember a tiring walk back after playing in the snow.

On arrival back at the hut we were greeted with tea and cake provided by Helen.

The usual shower, food & alcohol Helen made an impressive meal for herself and PJ, then off to the pub all slightly tipsy. Graham provided some coal for a nice fire in the sitting area "followed by an epic coal discussion."

Finally to bed at 1:30pm. James was in bed early with Alan. "They were in separate beds."

Day Two - Slate Mine's Nant Peris

All up apart from PJ **again**, cooked breakfast was made via John, James, Alan, and PJ.

There was a huge gathering of people to clean the hut and the local members were amazed at our cleaning skills. True LMC style cleanup!

From here we decided to walk up to the slate mines, having not been before I did not know what to expect. I thought they were very impressive, there's talk of climbing and I, being quite novice still, was very excited. The rest of the climbing team was equally as enthusiastic, we spent all morning looking for routes and exploring tunnels. When stopping for lunch Graham mentioned that his lunch time the previous day had been too short and he would like it noted that he required a full 30mins. The previous day was 20mins, so after 25mins I told him "that's 30mins" and we were off again.

We descended into a deep tunnel only to escape through a small hole at the end, to be honest you would not see that hole unless you knew where it was.

From here the group split as Helen and James headed off home and the climbing began.

Alan was first up with an impressive lead, PJ also lead the route.

I lead the route known as 3-6-2 – that's how many miners died in the quarry (not sure I like that as my first lead outdoors). Next we moved onto a route known as The Gargoyle. Alan did an impressive lead, I attempted a second but the adrenaline got the better of me as I'm still quite a novice, but I enjoyed it all the same. PJ completed the second. After making out with the Gargoyle (we have photographic evidence), Steve and Graham declined the last route. So we headed off back to the hut, the weather was amazing climbing in the sunshine sheltered from the slight cold breeze in the quarry.

After a 4hr drive home due to traffic and re-fuel, I'm sure we all had a wonderful weekend in excellent company and great conditions, one day in the snow the next in the sun.

John Armitage



Braemar Ski Touring Feb 26th - March 1st

This weekend was organised by the Eagle Ski Club and was based at Mar Lodge, a Victorian hunting lodge now owned by the National Trust.

Due to heavy snowfall I didn't actually arrive till Saturday. This also involved an 80 mile detour as the Glenshee pass was still closed.

On the Sunday myself, Stuart and Sonia skinned up to Carn Bhac(946m). The weather was good and a long approach was rewarded with stunning views over the Southern Cairngorms in a full winter coat. We chose a modest descent avoiding steep slopes due to the significant avalanche risk and saw no other people all day but lots of red deer and arctic hares.

On Monday 1st we drove up to the Glenshee ski centre car park and within an hour we had bagged our first munro of the day the Cairnwell(933m). We bagged 2 more munroes and descended down the piste and were back in the car park for 3pm.

Although cut short by a day this was a fantastic weekend with a great crowd from the Eagle Ski Club.

Beinn Udlaidh - Ice Climbing Fri 6th - Sun 8th March

My friend Masa drove up from Leicester on the Friday night and we left Leeds at about 8pm arriving at Beinn Udlaidh (which is south of Glencoe) at about 2am and tried our best to sleep in the the car. At 6am we geared up for the shortish walk in to the crag. This proved quite arduous as I'd decided to take my tent so we could camp up in the col on the Saturday night.

I led my first ice climb, West Gulley (III), which proved to be pretty scary and exciting. Masa then led Organ Pipe wall (V), which was a truly spectacular frozen waterfall.

After spending a comfortable night in my cosy tent we were then able to make an early start and did White Caterpillar (III) before setting off for the long drive south.



My First Winter Mountaineering Experience

I'd done winter mountaineering courses before, walking with crampons, ice axe arrest, building bucket belays, that sort of thing, but I'd always come away from them thinking: that was OK but this winter stuff is all a bit too cold for me, I think I was built for a hotter climate.

But every winter people would head off North and come back raving about what a good time they'd had, so after resisting for so many years I decided that I should give it a proper go. So I borrowed some boots (thanks John F) and some axes and crampons (thanks Matt), Clive agreed to be my climbing partner and off we headed to the hills.



We chose a grade II at Aonach Mor, I've done the Aonach Eagach Ridge in winter before which is given grade II and that was pretty straight forward walk, so I thought it was going to be pretty easy. After 13 hours out on the hills I was thoroughly dispossessed of that idea!

My first mistake was not having enough warm clothing, on the very first pitch while I was belaying I got so cold that my whole body started shaking; I've never shivered so violently before! The weird thing is it does warm you up, it was like jogging on the spot.

My second mistake was wearing too thin a pair of gloves, as I seconded up the first pitch my hands got really, really cold, it was like I wasn't actually wearing any gloves. When I reached Clive I had to spend about 5 minutes just blowing into my hands to warm them up – hot aches - sooo painful! And I'm afraid to say I didn't suffer stoically.

So I changed to a decent pair of gloves and set off to lead the second pitch - it was hard, very, very hard, rock covered in thin ice covered in powder snow. I realise now that's probably not good conditions. We were constantly having to brush away piles of snow to find rock or ice or turf, and you'd kick your foot in to it just for the snow to collapse away underneath. It was really scary.



The third pitch traversed off to the left and went OK, except that we'd gone off route. At this point we decided to retreat, but we only had one 60 meter rope and all we could see below us was a drop off and we didn't know what was under it. So we reversed the last pitch. At that point we could have abbed down in 3 goes, but that would have meant sacrificing quite a lot of gear, and it wasn't that straightforward so we decided to try traversing to the right to see if we could find easier ground. We did except it went upwards, OK lets continue up then as that seemed like the best option, Clive lead

that pitch. I did the next pitch, which was probably the most terrifying pitch I have ever done in my life! It started off not too bad but with no gear so I went quite a long way before I could get my first piece of gear in which was a spectre ice piton; I'd never seen one until that day and this was the second time I'd used it, so I was really nervous about it holding a fall, and then after



another long run out came the hardest move on the whole route, a horrible, awkward, tenuous, balancy step up with only the tiniest bit of the tip of one axe hooked into a tiny crack in the rock. I don't mind admitting I was a gibbering wreck trying to do it, it was terrifying, it took several goes, a lot of gibbering and resulted in a lot of hyperventilating, but I managed to make the move eventually, thank god! Good grief!

After that, thankfully, the ground did start to get easier and we were able to move together, it was dark by now and I was completely

knackered, in all the excitement I'd forgotten to have anything to drink and I think I was dehydrated without realising it. And at this point I decided that an appropriate description of my borrowed boots was "the buckets of pain". So we did finally get to the top and 13 hours after setting off arrived back at the car dishevelled and knackered but glad to be alive!

Post Script.

Bizarrely this didn't put me off! I figured everything went wrong that could go wrong so it could only get better, and I should give it another go having learned some valuable lessons. Since then I've had some great winter mountaineering experiences that I've actually enjoyed. Including a great day out at the Annual Dinner with Dave P and John L on Scafell (when I counted 12 LMCers out doing winter routes), a brilliant day out with Clive at Great End, and a fantastic 3 days in Scotland with Keith... and more to come before the winter is out I hope.

Mike Nuttall