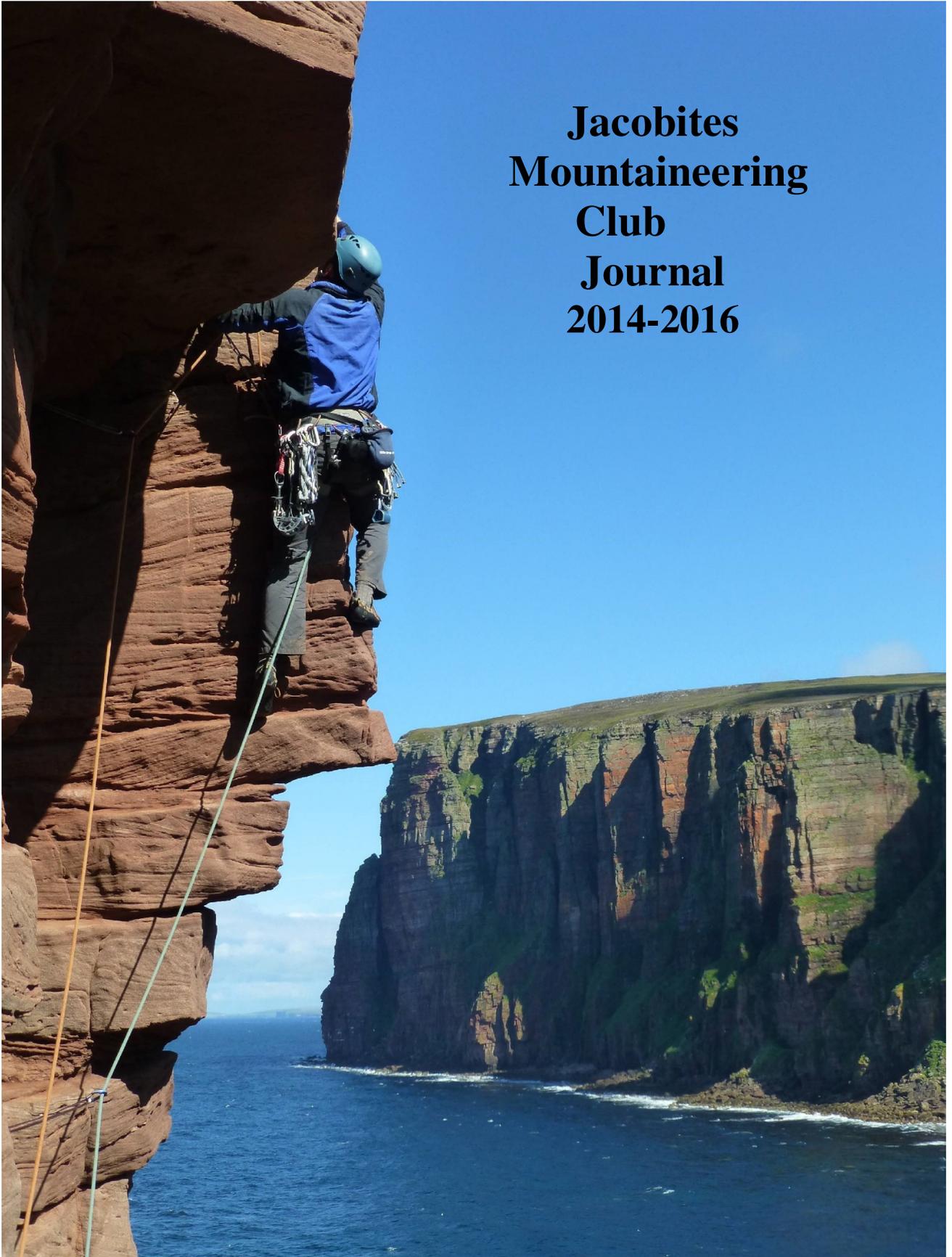


**Jacobites  
Mountaineering  
Club  
Journal  
2014-2016**



# Jacobites Mountaineering Club Journal 2014-2016

Edited by Alec Erskine



## Contents

Editorial  
Committee

The Meets Year  
Evening Talks  
Other Social Events  
New Routes & Compleaters  
The South Face of Mount Cook (Aoraki)  
Hoy  
Mountain Hare Culling on Scottish Moorlands  
Cat's Burns Night Speech 2014  
Coruisk  
Th' Blethin' Bothy  
Chasing Dragons on Marboré  
A Guide to Uphill Skiing  
The Weather Gods Smiled on Skye  
Moments of Magic, Moments of Doubt  
The Dave McHugh Award

Various Authors  
Ros Clancy/Alec Erskine  
Tasmin Gray

Tim Elson  
Lucy Spark  
Alan Walker  
Cat Trebilco  
Graham Pearson  
Petra O'Neill  
Catherine Jones  
Lisa Ferrero  
Lucy Spark  
Karl Zeiner

Cover photograph: Dan Whaley on the Old Man of Hoy (Photo: Lucy Sparks)

## Committee

Post	2014-15	2015-16
President	Andrew Waddie	Ros Clancey
Secretary	Fiona Shepherd	Margaret Hodge
Treasurer	Karl Zeiner	Zoe O'Connor
Meets Sec 1	Ros Clancey	Lucy Spark
Meets Sec 2	Iain Kinnell	Tim Taylor
Membership	Phil Endicott	Fiona Milligan
Gear	Graham Pearson	Graham Pearson
Hut	Adrian Proctor	Adrian Proctor
Newsletter	Tim Kearsey	Tim Kearsey
Webmaster		Chris Banks
Journal	Laetitia Jan	Alec Erskine
Social	Jill Brown	Tamsin Gray



El Presidente in action at Kylee (photo: Alec Erskine)

# Editorial

Welcome to the 2014-2016 edition of the Jacobites Mountaineering Club Journal.

The production of a club journal for a mountaineering club is such a time-honoured task that there is post on most club committees devoted exclusively to the production of journals. For the grand old clubs of the UK, these journals, often produced since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (1863 in the case of the Alpine Club Journal), represent an invaluable treasure trove of history and route-recording combined with genuine literary quality. In Scotland, the SMC Journal is still an important chronicle of contemporary mountaineering and in its hallowed pages the scribblings of the greatest mountaineers the country has produced are documented. Articles by Robin Smith, Tom Patey and Jimmy Marshall are still revered in mountaineering literature.



The editor remembering that he's got a journal to put together (Bits and Pieces, Shepherds Crag, VS). Photo: Richard Furlong

Banks has become more topical and easily added to by all the committee. We would like to see it become a regularly consulted site, with a lively News page but work needs to be done in encouraging contributions.

So is there still a place for a club journal? I think there is. The records we leave on the internet may turn out to be less permanent – can we be sure our children will still be able to access or even find the exploits of today. The journal may have to be redesigned and adjusted to meet the modern taste but fundamentally it represents a permanent compilation

Most Scottish clubs the size of the Jacobites produce a journal but it is by no means always the case. With the advent of the internet, the need to record new routes in a formal printed document is not what it was - websites like UK Mountaineering have a reasonable claim that they are now the repository of new route information. The other main influence of the web on popular culture is that it changed the way we read – it has caused us to prefer take in written information in smaller chunks. We rarely seem to have the patience to read or write article-length items but instead prefer to graze through paragraph length items, with lots of pictures.

Print journalism itself is having to redefine itself. The Independent newspaper published its last print version in March this year. Other papers are having to think carefully about their business models.

The club now finds that its digital presence is more important part of the functioning of the club. The Facebook page has become central to the planning of meets, evening climbing and last-minute lifts. The club site, due primarily to the efforts of Chris

of the outdoor interest and achievement of the group of people we are. It provides us with a document showing our club and its activities that we can point to with pride. It may become more like our website or our Facebook sites, but also forms a separate mechanism for disseminating this information, and the websites should perhaps act as “feeders” for the Journal. I think in these digital times, with the shifting sands of iClouds and commercial social media it is more important than ever to set in stone the line of history of the club and to inspire the next generation.

This edition of the Journal has some tremendous articles covering the varied activities in the mountains of the membership. At the sharp end, Tim Elson’s activities on Mount Cook show that every now and then his climbs do go according to plan. The club’s exploits in other mountain ranges are also documented with Catherine’s explorations in the Pyrenees and Karl’s completion of the Ultra-Trail Race around Mount Blanc. Club stalwart Alan has updated us on the state of hare culling in Scotland and there are a few lighter articles about having a wild time in Scotland.

A new feature in this edition of the journal is a short account of the club meets. Mostly in Scotland, these meets are the soul of the club and provide our *raison d’etre*, getting out into the hills with like-minded souls to share a walk or a climb and some post-match craic.

We’ve also tried to show how the club’s evening talks programme continues to be a success, pulling in big crowds to the Cumberland Bar. Even in a digital age, hearing somebody tell you face-to-face about their adventures will always be an inspiring experience. Our thanks to the many speakers who have toiled over getting their pictures in order to no reward other than a round of applause.

We hope you enjoy it and it inspires some outdoor adventures.

Alec Erskine  
September 2016

# Meets Year 2015 to August 2016

## Various contributors

### **16/18 Oct 2015 – Saddle Mountain Hostel, Invergarry**

Crazy name, crazy hostel with slightly neurotic new owners. Catherine, Paul, Cat, Matt and Emily D saw 14 ptarmigan sunbathing on their way from Gleouraich to Spidean Mialach. Many other munroes and wildlife spotting achieved.

### **30 Oct 2015 – 1st Nov 2015 – Black Rock Cottage, Glencoe**

In which Beinn Sgulaird, both Buachailles, Beinn Flualaidh, Sgor na h-Ulaidh were ascended and Team Corbett Mission forced a crossing of the largest bog in Scotland and braved a raging torrent to tick a Corbett that nobody can remember the name of. On Sunday Lucy & Guy curved up the Buachaille and Chris unveiled his new quiff.

### **27/29 Nov 2015 - Carr Bridge**

A small contingent of Jacobites met the Hut Cat. Catherine, Chris, Tim K and Paul steamed up Carn Steamininn and then procured a steaming cup of hot chocolate.

### **Dec 2015 – Christmas Dinner, Inver**

16 hungry elves descended on Inver where St. John assisted by Jill B and Andy Waugh served up a magnificent festive extravaganza. Smoked salmon (with Pablo's fancy bread), beef and venison stew with all the trimmings. Dan and Lucy decided for reasons known only to themselves to spend day ascending a vertical wall of unfrozen turf. Cat, Cathy and Paul saw a unicorn near summit of Maoille Looney.

### **Dec 2015 Jan 2016 – New Year, Inver**

A select gathering consumed enough whisky to refloat the Titanic and then staggered outside and claim to have seen the Northern Lights. [The rest of this item is censored for legal reasons].

### **15/16 Jan 2016 – Crianlarich**

White-out conditions generally thwarted various attempts on various hills. The whiteout appears to have followed everyone back to the hut, with Andy and Zoe the last to appear. Curry night then proceeded to warm the team's cockles.

### **30 Jan to 1st Feb - Roy Bridge**

The weather was wild and snowy – winds gusting 60+ mph. Most sensible souls kept their activities low level but a couple of craven Corbett baggers drove as far as they could get on the Kinloch Hourn road and staggered their way up Sgurr nan Eugalt. As the snow closed in at the end of the day their escape was barely made.

### **5/7 Feb - Newtonmore**

Spiral Gulley was ascended by Tim & Ollie in fiercely cold conditions but little snow. Adrian, Ros and Pablo were beaten back by foul conditions on Braeriach but various Corbetts were bagged. Full training was provided to all attendees in dog-handling in Antarctica (courtesy of 1958 BAS film provided by Alec's dad). General celebrations as the club acquired its first sheriff (thanks for all the Deputy Dawg jokes – Ed) and commiserations as Scotland lost to the Auld Enemy in the Calcutta Cup.

### **26 to 28 February - Muir of Inverey, Braemar**

What a stunning weekend! Who forgot to pack their sunscreen? Every now and again there is a reward for battling the elements. Two glorious days in the winter wonderland of the Cairngorms. Long ascents and late returns.

### **26/28 February CIC Hut Ben Nevis**

Between the 8 who staggered in to the CIC, ascents were made of:

- 8 x Tower Ridge
- 4 x Ledge Route (up and down)
- 4 x CMD Arete down
- 2 x Point 5 (!)
- 2 x Green Gulley
- 2 x Comb Gulley
- 2 x Curtain
- 2 x Italian right hand
- 2 x Vanishing

Well done to Stuart Mcleod, Ewan Paterson, Lucy Spark, Chris Petrauskas, Tim Taylor + 2 randoms (Tim's friends from south of the border). Photo: Tim Taylor



### **Corran Bunkhouse 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> March**

A weekend of beasting, by all accounts. Adrian finished a few off on the long and wet ascent of Streap. Walter needed to lie down to recover after accompanying ultra-marathon Karl on a run.

### **Glen Affric 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> April**

Mixed weather but the enthusiasm of the Jacobites was undinted. Tim K cast caution, and his boots, to the wind (they were left in Edinburgh), and, declaring “I’ll drink Bucks Fizz. I’ll drink anything” completed a wet ascent of Tom a’Choinnch in his trainers. Ros and Adrian took on two long and remote Corbetts. Catherine, Chris, Paul and Alison sampled a long day over Sgurr na Lapaich, Mam Sodhail, Carn Eighe, Beinn Fhionnalaidh and Carn Eighe again. Andy Waugh and the other Paul got ‘Carolined’. The men declared themselves to be broken creatures.

### **Coruisk Hut 29<sup>th</sup> April – 2 May**

Somewhat wet but see Graham’s article for details.

### **Camping Achiltibuie 13 – 15 May**

Much climbing at Reiff, and Graham did his first sea stack! Lucy and Scott climbed a route on Stac Pollaidh and there was also an ascent of Quinag on the Sunday. The highlight of the weekend was pies in the pub.

### **Creich Hall, Mull 27- 30<sup>th</sup> May**

Some pretty decent weather for this late May bank holiday weekend. That idyllic combination of climbing, sun and even sea bathing at Erraid, some long cycle rides and ascents of Ben More and the Corbett Beinn Talaidh. Evening entertainment included chair jenga (don’t ask!).

### **Inver Croft Work Meet 3 – 5<sup>th</sup> June**

At which the great wall of China (or is that the wall of Mexico?) aka the Inver Walkway, said to be visible from outerspace was rebuilt. It has now been extended in length and height – those with vertigo or poor balance in strong winds take note! The new walkway includes a wheelbarrow passing place, complete with correct Highway Authority approved signage. In the evening, to high drama, the Heimlich Manoeuvre was demonstrated to great effect by a Saint. Thanks to everybody who helped.



### **Camping Durness 24 – 26 June**

A limited turnout of 2 on this one as the hordes drifted off to their summer adventures. Such was the intensity of Adrian and Ros's Corbett-bagging ardour that they went on their separate missions on Friday. They took a long route linking up two disparate peaks on Saturday before a final leg stretch up Ben Stack on Sunday and the long drive home.

## **Evening Talks**

### **Ros Clancy/Alec Erskine**

#### **12<sup>th</sup> February 2015 – Frozen Cheese and other Hardships – Tamsin Gray**

An entertaining account of overwintering in the Antarctic

#### **15<sup>th</sup> October 2015 - Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc 2015 – Karl Zeiner**

Karl talked about his participation in the most prestigious ultra in Europe. The UTMB circumnavigates the Mont Blanc Massif over 105 miles. He explored his reasons his own motivations for doing challenges of this magnitude, and described the agony and joy of entering these events.

#### **29<sup>th</sup> October 2015 - Exploring the Heart of Borneo – Martin Holland**

Stories, photos and film from 5 years of scientific, media, and mapping expeditions into the remote, rainforest-covered interior of the island of Borneo, working with local people and NGOs to try to slow the astonishing rates of deforestation on this incredible island.

#### **12<sup>th</sup> November 2015 – Austrian Alps – Adrian Proctor**

Adrian gave an introduction to mountaineering in the Austrian Alps, with emphasis on hut to hut tours and climbing peaks. The Austrian Alps are ideal for walkers making their first trip to the Alps and provide good areas to learn the skills required to safely negotiate glaciers. There is a fantastic hut infrastructure which are, as Adrian demonstrated, well provisioned with good beer! Some of these pictures were a trip down memory lane for certain individuals.....

#### **26<sup>th</sup> November 2015 – Catherine Jones – Eastern Austria**

Another talk about a trip to the Austrian Alps, well explored by the Jacobites (see article by Catherine).

#### **10<sup>th</sup> December 2015 – Scott Vivi – Working in the Himalayas**

Scott Vivi gave us an alternative perspective on the Himalayas, where he lived for a period whilst undertaking project work with a village community, sharing with us many insights into the lives and culture of the people he spent time with.

#### **14<sup>th</sup> January 2016 – Watery Adventures – Guy Wimble**

Guy Wimble's Watery Adventures were just that – Guy has undertaken a number of sailing and kayaking trips in Scotland, in sometimes exciting conditions, but we particularly enjoyed the sail-and-ski combo. A trip to Norway, sailing in to fjords to enjoy remote and spectacular ski touring before returning back to the boat, no doubt for the customary G&Ts.

#### **29<sup>th</sup> January 2016 – A Hundred Alpine Routes – Tim Elson**

Tim Elson recently completed his 100<sup>th</sup> Alpine ascent and took us through some highlights of his climbing career. A full audience were regaled with a selection of stories often involving

unplanned bivouacs and near-death experiences on serious Alpine routes. The rock fall that sliced the rucksack off the back sticks in my mind. Tim's self-deprecating and amusing style underplayed what an extraordinary achievement this is. The spirit of adventure is truly alive and well in the club.

**25<sup>th</sup> February 2016 – Snow-shoe Adventures in the Alps – Ros Clancy**

If you don't ski you can snowshoe! Ros Clancy doesn't ski but has found that snow-shoe trips in the Alps can give you some\* of the fun of having a winter holiday. Successive trips to the Alps in Austria, Italy and France have included hut to hut walks, over cols and peaks, in her mission to ruin the ski-touring experience by churning up the virgin snow. The après-snowshoe is a bit like après-ski but you don't come down as fast.

**10th March 2016 – The French Pre-Alps – Bruce Kerr**

Bruce Kerr has recently made some trips to beautiful areas in the French pre-Alps on the borders of Italy including the Queyras. Bruce showed some excellent photographs of his walking, scrambling, exploring and wildlife-watching.

**24<sup>th</sup> March 2016 – Austrian Alps the easy way – Fiona Milligan**

It seems the Austrian Alps have been infested with Jacobites this year. Fiona Milligan illustrated again how much they have to offer, giving her advice on sampling the AA "the easy way". Her talk demonstrated the fantastic and satisfying hut to hut walking that the routes and hut infrastructure make possible without having to venture onto glaciated terrain.

Many thanks to all our speakers for their talks.

## **Other Social Events**

### **Tamsin Gray**

**24<sup>th</sup> September 2015 – AGM.** The Committee got generally re-arranged as usual, whilst the club stalwarts oiled themselves up at the Grange Bar in time to lob in a few grenades from the back for Madame President to bat away to deep midwicket. Actually this year it was all relatively well-behaved. Nobody got barred, nobody proposed the club wind itself up and we share out the proceeds and nobody threw anything at the committee. See you next year!

**3<sup>rd</sup> October 2015 – Annual Dinner – Roy Bridge**

After taking their annual bath, the Jacobite motley crew were barely recognizable all kitted out in their Sunday best. The usual combination of overeating followed by uncomfortably vigorous dancing went down so well that even a handful of random locals joined in to help us drink the bar dry. A fabulous effort by 2015/16 social sec Jill Brown, cheers Jill!

**4<sup>th</sup> December 2015 – Christmas Ceilidh**

Hosted by the Merlin in Morningside, this year's Christmas Ceilidh included some less well known dances. One had Adrian and Mike duelling as stags in front of slightly bewildered partners, whilst another had us all careering around like pinballs. It was so energetic that even the band struggled to keep up and some German tourists who happened upon this display of rampant Scottishness certainly got their money's worth. Raffle prizes galore included a shiny new Tiso ice axe for merry new member May.

### **20<sup>th</sup> January 2016 – Burns Supper**

A well-attended gathering at the Grange, where Colin Crabbe once again demonstrated his compere-ing skills. Colin introduced the various other poets, musicians and singers as well as wheeling out a couple of his old favorites. Both of our singers, Jean Waddie and Cat Trebilco were really astonishingly good and well worth the price of entry. All washed down with a few pints from the Grange Bar and a wholesome serving of the Chieftain of the Pudding Race.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016 – Skittles Night**

In classic mountaineering club style, the evening began with a dash up Arthur's Seat, with a whole 2 members actually being bothered to go to the top. The rest of us raced to the bar to quench the extreme thirst built up climbing almost a fifth of a munro. The skittles game itself descended into utter chaos, as over 40 folk, including several new members made an attempt to take out Captain Kinnell who valiantly tried to keep the skittles more upright than he usually is on a Thursday night in the Cumberland. The evening turned to the Jacobites' specialist subject, eating and drinking, followed by general merriment. Maybe the Sheep's Heid will make an annual appearance on the social calendar from now on?

## **New Routes**

### **Creag a' Chaorainn NH168338**

#### **Don't Forget the Joker 200m IV,4, Graham Stein, Mick James, 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2016**

Viewed from the outflow of Loch Tuill Bhearnach, there is a prominent snow bay towards the left of the crag. This route takes the first shallow turfy gully/corner that breaks out from the far right side of the bay.

Climb the corner on mainly moderate ground, passing two short steep steps (130m). Climb easier ground above by the line of least resistance to the top (70m).



**The line of the route (above) and Mick James on the route (left). Photo: Graham Stein.**

## Sheigra

**Rhapsody in Blue E3 5c \*\* 35m, Robert Durran and Jerry Handren, 27 July 2015**

Abseil to the lower tidal ledge below the start of Above The Blue. Hand traverse a small ramp leftwards onto the steep wall. Go up at its end then traverse hard left to gain an obvious blunt spike. Climb steeply up the left side of the wall passing a ledge on the left to finish more easily up Right Hand Buttress.

## Flodigarry, Skye

**Diamonds E2 5b\*\* 35m Robert Durran and Lucy Spark 14 July 2016**

From a belay at the foot of the span, move right as for Sea Slaters Groove, then step right again into the next groove. Climb straight up the wall passing a big spike and turning a bulge rightwards to reach the ledge. Finish up Lucy in the Sky. Good sustained technical climbing, though slightly eliminate.

## **Munro Completers**

Well done to Alan McClelland who finished on Sron Na Ciche, 22 May 2016



Rod Bain and Alan Yardley also completed their Munros together on Slioch in September 2015.



# The South Face of Mount Cook (Aoraki)

## by Timothy Elson

Sitting on the edge of a crevasse below the south face of Mount Cook, my friend Reg and I are slowly being baked alive by the antipodean sun while preparing our bivi for the night. I began to wonder how I've got here...

I ended up on holiday in New Zealand as 7 of my good friends have emigrated there over the past decade. I always intended to go to New Zealand on a really long trip – however work commitments (i.e. having a job and a need to earn money) meant I've never really been able to get the amount of time off I wanted. So in December 2015 I went on a 3 week trip to New Zealand for a holiday that was about visiting my friends and climbing - luckily these overlap.

After a week's climbing which included the traverse of the Remarkables, an AD ridge traverse, and an ascent of Mount Barff during a gap in the rain, Reg and I headed towards Mount Cook village where we stayed at the Wynn Erwin hut. There we got some information that a team of three had set off to try the South Face of Mount Cook, which was exactly our plan! Being someone who climbs a lot in Europe I wasn't that surprised someone else was off to climb it, however the big routes in New Zealand are apparently climbed very seldomly - two teams climbing it in the same year is rare and two teams going for the face at the same time was unheard of.



Mount Cook from a view point about 35km away. Photo Reg Measures

Being the southern hemisphere, a south face in New Zealand is like a north face in the Alps – cold and usually a bit scary. When discussing plans with Reg before getting to New Zealand he had explained how much he wanted to climb the South Face of Mount Cook as he had failed on a previous attempt. Reg outlined that our chances were probably very, very low as the weather windows in New Zealand are short – it seems to have weather a bit like Scotland, but with

mountains that are 2000m higher. In New Zealand there is usually not much information about the current conditions in the mountains however we bumped into Guy McKinnon, a well-known Kiwi climber who works as a ranger in the Mount Cook Park, and he gave us the information he knew.



The Crevasse Bivi – Photo: Tim Elson

We got up at 5am, ate a quick breakfast and then picked up our bags. They seemed too heavy – we had 4 days food (that we could stretch to 5) and bivi kit, as the Gainer hut (an old tin box) had been swept off Mount Cook the previous year in a massive avalanche – so we ditched a rope, meaning we were committing to a big face with one 60m x 8.1mm rope. However, the whole climb is on ice and we'd done similar routes in the Alps in the same style. Our plan was day 1: walk up the Hooker valley to the crevasse bivi, day 2: climb the south face of Mount Cook, traverse the 3 summits of Mount Cook and descend to the Plateau hut, day 3: sit out the horrendous sounding storm that was forecast, day 4: climb Mount Tasmin (the second highest mountain in New Zealand) and then walk out. The plan pretty much worked out like this which is amazing as my plans almost never work out – life would probably be boring if that happened.

Walk in and walk out – normal, right? Actually it turns out this is pretty rare on Mount Cook. Most parties fly in to and

fly out from the Plateau hut. This is because Mount Cook village is at about 700m and Mount Cook is 3724m high – so there is a 3000m height gain and loss – there are also no real paths for a lot of the journey, and the approach and descents go up major glaciated terrain which are climbs in themselves. In fact when we measured our route on a digital map, Reg and I had travelled over 50km and done about 5000m of ascent and descent!

Meanwhile, back at the bivi on the edge of the crevasse, the alarm went at 3am and after about an hour of melting snow and only moving one at a time – so we didn't slide off the mountain – we set off. The first hour or so we climbed an easy looking gully that led to the bottom of the south face. The gully was a funnel for anything falling off the mountain above and on the south face there are several BIG seracs – we hoped they would stay still while we scooted up the gully, and luckily they did.

The route we intended to climb is called White Dream and follows a series of ice gullies on the left-hand side of the south face. We started pitching at first light and the climbing was on perfect neve (the last time Reg had attempted the face it had been powder snow on slabs). This made for fairly rapid progress as there wasn't really much gear on any pitch to slow us down. In all we only climbed 7 rope stretching (i.e. moving together) pitches. The pitch that looked the steepest from below was one of the most enjoyable ice pitches of my climbing career; it would actually be hard to design a pitch of that steepness so easy to climb. The gully was narrow, which allowed bridging the whole way up, and the ice had formed almost like stairs meaning there were natural



Climbing on the lower part of the South Face of Mt Cook, Climber Reg Measures. Photo: Tim

footholds all the way. Pitch 7 was the crux, a steep brittle ice pitch just to the left of one of the massive seracs on the face. Reg led it calmly and he was quite relieved when he could step right around the steep bulge at the top. Following this we climbed up to a bergschrund above the serac and un-roped, then soloed the top half of the face, that kind of calf-burning, never-ending style of snow slope. Here we started finding traces of the team ahead in the form of welcome ledges every 60m. Finally at 11am we reached the west ridge of the Low Peak on Mount Cook, and could sit down and have a rest. Basically so far everything had gone incredibly well – this never happens on Alpine climbs, so I was in the mindset that something would soon go wrong.

After our sandwich it was time to start moving again, and we quickly gained the Low Peak of Mount Cook. The route from here traverses to the Middle and High peaks of Mount Cook and it is almost exactly a mile from the Low to the High peak. This was actually the bit of the route I was most worried about, as the ridge is pretty knife edge, with a 2000m+ drop on one side down the Caroline face and a 1000m drop

on the down the Shelia face. From Low peak we could see three dots moving from Middle peak and we guessed (correctly) this was the team that had climbed the South Face the day before. From Low peak we soloed to Middle peak with one incredible exposed section. On top of Middle peak the rest of the ridge looked very icy so we roped back up and moved together with an ice screw between us, the angle was annoying and the ice hard, meaning you had to swing your axe even on quite low angle sections. The section to the High peak was really quite slow.

I arrived at the summit first and was greeted by a stranger saying “you must be Tim Elson then”. It turned out the team in front were Reg’s friends and they were people who we had been planning to go on an expedition to Peru in the summer with! (I couldn’t go in the end due to a shoulder injury). It turned out the three in front had set off from the same bivi as us the day before, climbed the face and had bivied again in Middle Peak hotel – a crevasse near the summit of Middle peak.

The descent from High peak is the normal route on Mount Cook: the Linda Glacier, which is famous for being very dangerous, with a long section where you are exposed to serac fall from pretty much all angles, which is aptly named the gun barrels. We descended the first section to where there are a series of abseils and here we caught up with the guided parties who were already descending. This section was very busy so Reg and I took the option of getting our stove out and melting some water while waiting for the queue to clear. It didn’t really clear though, so Reg and I started abseiling down a different line to the side of the others.

The plan for the gun barrels was to run. Which is what we did! This is trickier than it sounds as at the top it is quite steep – about 45 degrees – and there are a lot of crevasses to jump and navigate around. At one point a serac collapsed high above us setting off an avalanche, however it didn’t reach us. We arrived at the plateau hut at 5pm. And nothing had gone wrong!



Soloing on the upper part of the South Face of Mount Cook, Climber Tim Elson. Photo Reg Measures

The next morning the weather was terrible. It was raining/snowing hard and the wind was so strong that you couldn't get to the toilets located approximately 15m away from the hut door – we were very glad not to be out on the mountain. We spent most of the day trying to get nicer food (i.e. not dehydrated or lightweight) from people who had flown in. We swapped a snow stake we found on the descent for a bag of oats, and managed to get butter and potatoes. The food we



On the Summit Ridge between Middle peak and High peak with High peak the furthest point, Climber Tim Elson. Photo Reg Measures

bartered we shared with the other team who climbed the south face as they were quite low on food, having not anticipated spending a day sitting out a storm. Anyway the day passed and when it cleared in the evening we got a view of our next objective: going up the Syme ridge and down the Silverhorn ridge on New Zealand's second highest peak Mount Tasmin.

The next morning we started early, getting going by 2am. The forecast for the day was for it to be quite windy and the potential for a storm to come in from the west in the afternoon. The first section of the route was to work our way through a maze of crevasses to get to the base of Mount Tasmin. This involved various jumps, detours and finally some climbing in and out of crevasses;

including climbing out of some that we didn't think we would be able to climb down nor abseil – this all felt very committing. At the bergschrund at the base of the Syme ridge it was really windy, but we decided to push on mainly because neither of us fancied going back the way we had come. There is often a point like this on an alpine climb where you almost decide to give up before you have really given things a go – I have learnt to try and assess logically why do I feel why I want to go down and it is usually a combination of feeling slightly intimidated/scared/hungry/cold/tired/thirsty/it's not yet light/it's about to get dark etc.



On the Syme Ridge of Mount Tasmin, Climber Tim Elson. Photo Reg Measures

The Syme ridge was pure fun to climb. We soloed up brilliant neve for about 1000m with an amazing sunrise half way up. We then roped up again for an icy section near the top before weaving our way round a couple of seracs up to the summit ridge. The view west from the continental divide we had just gained was not very encouraging - we could see a big black cloud heading our way – in other ways however the view was amazing. The sea at this point is only 15km from the Mount Tasmin and you suddenly realise how exposed you are on the ridge.

The final bit of the north ridge to the summit of Mount Tasmin was slow going, being very icy and narrow, at some points you could see through the blue ice that made up the cornice you were climbing on! Eventually we



The view from the summit of Mount Silverhorn back towards Mount Tasmin, Climber Tim Elson. Photo Reg Measures

gained the summit, which we believed had only been reached one other time in the whole of 2015! The descent down to Mount Silverhorn (the top of the Silverhorn ridge) was slow going, again being very icy and quite steep, but the view back from the summit of the Silverhorn did show a perfect ice arête. Once onto the east facing Silverhorn ridge it turned to neve and we descended quickly with two abseils down an unbelievably loose band of rock. The final section of the descent is called the “Mad Mile” due to its exposure to serac fall – we ran down this section arriving back at the hut at midday.

I now thought the day was pretty much over with only the descent back to Mount Cook village to go, this turned out to be a mistaken assumption. The descent down to the Tasmin glacier is 1000m, we crossed three smaller glaciers and crossed two cols – on the second of which we watched an avalanche engulf the whole of the Caroline face of Mount Cook. The face is 2000m+ and is of Himalayan proportions and also looks like a total death trap. The descent from

the second col is the start of a long section of what I can only describe as horrendous travel. Basically as steep choss as you can down-climb without the whole thing collapsing, no sign that anyone has ever travelled anywhere on this before, and on reaching the Tasmin Glacier having to the re-ascend several hundred metres up more choss mounds to the start of a track out. We reached Mount Cook Village at about 8pm having hitched a lift the last bit of the way back. I commented to Reg that I could see why Kiwi climbers do so well in the greater ranges.

The Southern Alps are an amazing place to climb, and offer a different experience to the Alps with much fewer people. Everything seems like much more of an “adventure”, even just finding a mountain.

# Mountain Hare Culling on Scottish Moorlands

## by Alan Walker

The controversy over culling mountain hares on Scotland's grouse moors is growing. It is increasingly distressing to many hill walkers to know of these attractive and engaging animals being shot in large numbers for the sake of providing more red grouse for more shooting. This article describes some of the biological background to this problem.



**The Mountain Hare** (Photo: AC Easton, Wikipedia)

An extensive questionnaire survey, published in 2010 by Annabel Harrison and colleagues from the James Hutton Institute (JHI) showed 25,000 mountain hares were shot over the 2006/7 season. Of these, 50% were reportedly to increase the numbers of grouse, 40% were for sport, whilst the remainder were to protect crops and forests. (The JHI was formerly Macaulay Land Use Institute, Aberdeen and Dundee; they research widely on agriculture and land use).

This killing is legal. The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Scotland) of 2011 allows shooting of

mountain hares in an open season of August to February inclusive. Under European Union directives mountain hares are designated as an Annex 5 species. This designation requires member states to ensure that the exploitation of Annex 5 animals is "compatible with their being maintained at a favourable conservation status". In plain English, this demonstrates that it is accepted that mountain hares will be shot for sport and managerial purposes but hopefully not too many will be shot.

Culling hares to increase grouse numbers is based on a relationship between these animals and a disease causing virus. Louping-ill virus is named after the staggering movement of sheep when their brains become inflamed (encephalitis) by invading virus. The virus is transmitted between sheep during feeding of sheep ticks, also called deer ticks. Farmers protect their flocks with a vaccine, and often by additional treatment of the sheep to kill ticks. The virus poses little threat to humans. Risk from ticks infected with louping-ill virus is not the same as risk from ticks infected with the bacteria causing Lyme disease. To protect those few people at professional risk of louping-ill there is a vaccine against the closely similar virus that causes tick-borne encephalitis in humans in continental Europe.

These ticks feed readily on roe and red deer, and mountain hares. Often on grouse moors most of the ticks lurking on the heather, waiting for a new host, have been supported by previously feeding on hares. The immature stages of this tick also feed readily on grouse. The louping-ill virus passes easily from one tick to another as the ticks feed together on hares. But the hares are not affected by the virus. When some of same infected ticks mature and then feed on grouse, especially on chicks, severe to fatal louping-ill results.



**The Deer Tick.** (Photo: Alan Walker)

This pattern of disease, this epidemiology, is well established and understood, mostly from studies led by Peter Hudson, who worked at the University of Stirling with many collaborators. A crucial study was done there by Lucy Gilbert and colleagues, published in 2001. Using many previously published data they constructed a set of equations to model, or mimic, the disease using computer programs. The team predicted the relationship of louping-ill virus circulating between hares and grouse. They concluded that grouse would be harmed.

Meanwhile, the Stirling group were conducting a field experiment to test the effect of culling hares on the health of grouse. Karen Laurenson and colleagues published in 2003 the results of their experiment, done between 1993 and 2001 on three hunting estates between Inverness and Perth. At the test site in Morayshire, hares were culled out completely over a grouse moor area of 12,500 hectares. The consequences of this cull on the incidence of new cases of virus infection in the grouse were compared with two control sites where no hare culling was done. In their analysis of this complex ecology they concluded that in some situations: ". . . a reduction in hare density may be the only method of improving red grouse harvests." They went on to conclude finally that "these complex consequences must therefore be weighed against the undesirability of a local reduction in mountain hare densities to control disease. Luckily this situation of potential conflict is rare and probably primarily limited to parts of Morayshire. Overall the distribution and population size of mountain hares in the UK should be essentially unchanged whatever management is adopted".

David Cope and colleagues at the JHI argued that the lack of replicate test sites and poor control comparisons of Laurenson's study did not justify the conclusion that hare culling could protect grouse. Harrison and colleagues in their 2010 study stated that the current level of understanding of this relationship did not justify such culling. Adam Watson, after a lifetime of research on ecology of upland animals from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Banchory, stated in an interview with the Sunday Herald in 2013 that such culling of hares was being done very heavily

with the purpose of eradication of hare on grouse moors.



The Red Grouse (Photo: Wikipedia)

It has been clear to most hill walkers and naturalists out on the uplands of Scotland over the last decade that management of grouse moors has greatly intensified. There seem to be plenty of shooting clients with plenty of money to pay for these new hill tracks, shooting butts, stoat and crow traps, drainage channels to expand the moors, and moor burnings. These estates count as agricultural land, entitled to government subsidies. In return the clients demand plenty of grouse to shoot. Control of predators of grouse is ruthless. Alongside that control,

disease of grouse caused by parasitic worms is substantially reduced by medicating the grit that is laid out for the grouse to aid their digestion. It appears that managers of grouse moors see a higher level of shooting hares as part of a generalized disease control that complements the legally regulated control of foxes, stoats and crows. The issue of illegal killing of raptor birds is beyond the scope of this article.

To return to the central questions: does culling of hares protect grouse from louping-ill, and if it does, then is such culling justified as proportional to the economic problem and to the ethical standards of conduct to wild animals now prevailing in Scotland?

Experimental field testing to confirm the early results will probably never be repeated. Conventional funding for science research rarely goes to repeats. Another approach to improve

conservation of hares is to count them, accurately. Then if they are found to be in significant decline, campaigns to restrict further hare shooting will have a better chance of enactment at the parliament in Holyrood.

Currently the situation is unclear. A 2010 study by Vicky Patton and six colleagues from the JHI and the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust concluded that data from 1995/6 compared to 2005/6 showed no clear trend in the geographical distribution of hares in Scotland (the GWCT represents and is supported by hunters). In contrast, estimates of the actual numbers of hares from a combination of game bag data from the GWCT and field counts by British Trust for Ornithology from 1965 to 2009, recorded a slowly declining trend in numbers, about thirty percent down over that period. Scottish Natural Heritage at the JHI are starting a more accurate and standardized system for counting hares - by recording their dung piles. This sounds simplistic but is a well developed method, effectively used for counting deer in woodland for example. This should provide good evidence to inform future action on hare conservation.

In the meantime, those who care about these fine mammals, joyful additions to a day on the hill, can contribute to the campaign for stronger protection of mountain hares being run by ten British conservation organizations including the Scottish Wildlife Trust. What is needed is a change in the law, but that requires a robust and long term political strategy based on solid evidence. One plan is to gain a moratorium on hare culling for three years whilst hares can be counted. Information on the ten organisations, and much else about this problem is easily found by entering on an internet search something like: mountain – hare – protection – Scotland. Or try going direct to the websites of the JHI and the GWCT, and follow the leads they provide.

## **Cat's Burns Night Speech 2014**

By Cat Trebilco

A single young lassie, new to the town  
In search of adventure with a club of renown,  
She arrives at the pub, afraid and alone  
To discover the mountains in which she can roam.

Coming in from the outside, chilled to the core  
A Jacobite welcome was truly in store  
Unaware what would hit her, this poor young wee lass,  
The laddies were prowling and descended en masse.

“Welcome, young lassie” echoed their cries.  
“What a delight, you’re a sight for sore eyes”  
“We’ll buy you a drink, pull up a chair.....”  
And as easy as that, she was in to their lair.

And so bidding started, trying to impress  
With invites for trips and talents to stress  
Bewildered and scared, with many a sideways glance  
Our poor young lassie didn’t stand a chance.

“Well” said Mike Snook, “as President, I am  
Perhaps the best person to show you round town?”  
“May I enquire, do you have a mountain bike?  
We could go to Glen Tress, or the Pentlands tonight?”

“We’ll get covered in mud, on a blue or a red,  
Or if you’ve a death wish, we’ll do the black instead”  
“Then, at the end, I’ll hose you down,  
And you can come for a whisky at my flat back in town.”

“Hang on,” said a young, Austrian fellow,  
“How about you try something a little more mellow?”  
“We could go for a short run, let’s not delay,  
There’s a little route I know, called the West Highland Way.”

“Now wait,” said Dan Whaley, “you could come away with me,  
I’ve got this hut in the Highlands, I could give you a key”  
“Bring your wellies, it’s a walk from the road,  
But since I’m a gent, I’ll wheelbarrow your load.”

“Oh yes” said Graham Pearson, “What a great thing to do,  
“I’ll give you a lift in the Biscuit Tin, it’s older than you!”  
“I do, however, have just one request...  
“Can you wear stockings? Fan belt’s not at its best”

“No no” said Adrian, “I know just what she needs...  
An adventurous journey with the King of Speed”  
“The Biscuit Tin will never survive the A9,  
If she comes with me, we’ll be there in half the time”

Now speed is something passed from father to son,  
And there are times our lassie wished Thomas took after his mum.  
Beware the young Proctor, because he will  
Absolutely beast you up many a hill!

So, our young lassie went away to Inver Croft  
And found herself sleeping up in the loft.  
The laddies’ whisky-fuelled snoring was terribly dire  
So she moved herself out to sleep in the Byre.

Now the Croft known as Inver has a few nasty pests  
But fear not, Iain will rid us of unwanted guests  
You’d better just hope he doesn’t see a dead mouse  
As he’ll scream like a girl and run out of the house!

In the morning, our lassie put on her walking socks  
While Tim jumped around, shouting “Look at the rocks”  
Some sedimentary sandstone is mostly in sight,  
Topped with a splendid display of Cambrian quartzite”

Now, while out walking, our lassie found out more,  
About the more unusual hobbies our laddies explore.  
Mr Waddie offered to dress up in tights  
And show her his sword for a re-enactment fight.

Now, finally, a few others who'll give our lassie a fright,  
Like Colin, who'll ask her to toast on Burns Night  
And Andrew, who invites her for an ice climb  
And Guy who makes jokes she doesn't get most of the time.

But lassies, give it time, you'll get lucky one night  
And you might even meet your own Mr Right.  
So lassies, take a break from your haggis, neeps and tatties,  
And join me in a toast to our Jacobite Laddies.

## Coruisk

### By Graham Pearson

It was wet! It was windy! The toilet didn't work! Nobody brought Bananagrams! Despite which, we had a good weekend.

Phil, Cat, Franklin and I (Graham) walked in to the Coruisk hut from various directions on the Friday, to discover a pile of food left by previous occupants, and a blocked toilet. Fortunately(?) the Cuillin was covered in snow so we had all brought ice axes. Meanwhile various luxury-lovers spent a warm comfortable night in Broadford, and the club slappers camped at the head of Loch Slappin'.



Next morning the others arrived by boat from Elgol. The only slight problem was that, having seen the weather forecast, the boat wasn't willing to come back on Monday, so the choice was to get an early boat out on Sunday or walk out. Between this and the lack of toilet, the meet was getting more bothy-like all the time.

The weather being too grotty for the ridge, two intrepid groups set off: one heading up Sgurr na Stri by the scramble from the Bad Step, the other planning a traverse of Druim nan Ramh. The guide book said the only scramble up it was up at the Loch Scavaig end, but Lucy thought she knew a way from Coir'-uisg. Fortunately she was right! These feats of derring-do were rewarded with Catherine's slap-up chilli and Andy's cake & custard compote en croute. The only problem was a surplus of whisky, which nobody was keen to carry out.

Next morning Cat, Catherine, Chris, Jack and I headed up Loch Coruisk leaving Phil to fester in

the hut and the others to get the boat out. I walked up Coir'-uisg until I got bored then back by the other side of Loch Coruisk, while the others traversed Druim nan Ramh by Lucy's Route. Both routes seemed potentially erroneous when I met a party which was walking all the way around Loch Coruisk to avoid the now-submerged stepping stones; fortunately they were just being shandy-arsed and we all got across, albeit with even wetter feet than we had before. Phil, meanwhile, had been making himself useful by using rope tricks to reduce the shutters' rattling in the wind, fending off marauding boat parties who had seen whisky through the window, and also discovered that the toilet bowl had drained over the previous 48 hours.

Cat, Catherine, Chris, Jack and Phil walked out on Monday morning, Phil to walk to Slig, the others to Elgol, leaving me with the hut to myself for 24 hours. Party on! My cunning plan for a walk up Sgurr Hain lasted precisely five minutes: having walked to the stepping stones, humming "All By Myself", I discovered them to be under even more water than the previous night. I'm glad I didn't have to walk out that day! Apparently the departers had to walk around the head of the loch - Cat is a qualified Mountain Leader, but seemingly that doesn't help with coastal walks. So I spent some time around the hut: I patched up a leak in the water supply, discovered a hole in the intake to the septic tank, and found that no matter how frequently I flushed the toilet I could no longer get it to back up. Who knew that blocked toilets could be self-healing?

Having exhausted all festering possibilities, and the time being barely after twelve, I felt the urge to go for a Pearson Pointless Plod in Pissing Precipitation®. I wasn't keen to give myself a soaking crossing the stepping stones, nor to potentially trap myself on the wrong side of the Mad Burn, and I'd already walked up Loch Coruisk twice, so I went in the only remaining direction: up An Garbh-choire. And I can report that it truly lives up to its name: it is filled with a jumble of blocks of the roughest rock I have ever encountered. Oh yeah and there was the odd hail shower passing through. But, keen to reach the ridge at least once over the weekend, I made it to Bealach a' Garbh-choire and discovered that the wind wasn't quite strong enough to stop me. So, rather cautiously, I continued to the top of Sgurr nan Eag. And despite it being a bank holiday I had the hill to myself, with only the rather ominous sound of a helicopter for company. I even got a bit of a view down the other side.

After an evening spent listening to hailstones the size of marbles (seriously) bouncing off the metal roof of the hut, on Tuesday I walked out to Slig for a well deserved pint of Black Face and bowl of Cuillin Skink, and the bus back home. Maybe next time the meet secs can arrange for better weather!

# The Bletherin' Bothy

By Petra O'Neill



The bletherin' bothy blethered awa'  
Tellin' tales ay fowk fa passed his way  
Guttin' explorers thaur tae rest  
Shelterin' afair th' crest  
He blethered an' blethered his bothy soul  
While walkers burnt their warmin' coal

Wild winds whistling  
White snaw glistnin'  
Aw a bustle wi' each new party  
Oan th' fire a broth most hearty  
A sin' sang as fowk meet  
A bothy ballad fur a treat  
He blethered an' blethered his bothy soul  
While seasons pest an' took their toll

Th' halfway hoose, th' welcome stop  
His creakin' walls did ken a lot  
Lang tales  
Taa tales  
Och th' stories 'at he tauld  
As he blethered an' blethered his bothy soul.

# Chasing Dragons on Marboré

## by Catherine Jones

We had been in the Pyrenees for just over a week and found ourselves at the busy, but fantastically situated Refuge de la Brèche. With good weather set to continue, the obvious hill to do the next day was Pic du Marboré 3248m, as suggested by “Walks and Climbs in the Pyrenees”, published by Cicerone, Route 74: Refuge de la Brèche – Pic du Marboré. 3.5 – 4 hrs to summit from hut.

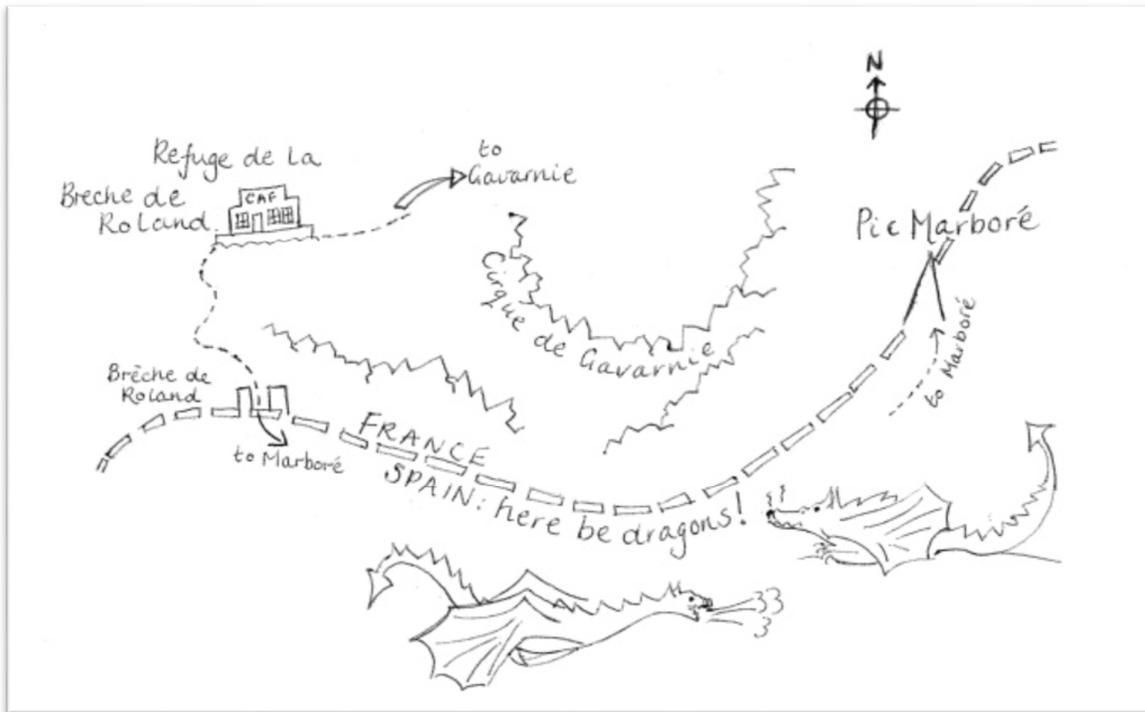
From the guidebook, the route description is straightforward: follow the path to the Brèche de Roland, continue to follow said path round to an obvious col, then round to a cairn below a short chimney, and go up the short chimney. Then follow the cairns to the edge of the Cirque de Gavarnie, then towards Cilindro (a neighbouring hill). At a point halfway between the col and Cilindro leave the path and bear left up a slope broken by boulders and patches of snow, the bald, southern slopes of Marboré, heading a little west of north. The summit is gained without difficulty.

And so at about 7:30 am on a Monday in late July 2015, we set off to go up Marboré. We'd be on the top for lunchtime and would have time for a quick trip up the Tour du Marboré on the way back down. This plan was swiftly binned at about 12 noon, when we realised we were trying to follow cairns, which had rather abruptly ended and were directly above the Góriz Hut. We should have been nowhere near the Góriz Hut (at least we couldn't smell the toilet block). To make it even better it was impossible to tell which hill we were aiming for.

You see, what we did not appreciate until this moment of frustration in the hot Spanish sun, was that Mr Cicerone's route description above is accurate up to the word “obvious”.

To illustrate this, the map shown below describes the route as accurately as this route description does. It combines a French map which is reluctant to admit the existence of Spain, and a Spanish map which does show both sides of the border, but omits any depiction of crags, and the paths are an artist's impression at best. Add to this the fact that, unlike in France, there are no sign posts in Spain, and walking up Marboré becomes a bit of an adventure. It's a walk to the extent of hands-in-pockets-all-the-way-to-the-summit. It should have been a grand day out with ample sunbathing, photos and marvelling at the cloud inversion over France. Instead there was much frustration and quite a lot of swearing. We only went the wrong way 4 times on the ascent....

Firstly, returning to consider the guidebook description, we missed the “cairn below a short chimney on the left”. I should add at this point that the paths were waymarked with cairns. How does one know which is *the* cairn marking a path junction? We unwittingly missed this junction and ended up around the tail of the right hand side dragon. However, all was not lost (or so we thought). As we realised we must have missed the path in the guide book, a cunning plan B formed. This plan centred around following a path which was marked on the Spanish map, which would take us around and up above the Góriz Hut to Marboré. Alas, this is the path that petered out above Góriz - it didn't really exist. Frustrated, we turned around and retraced our steps along the terrace, back towards the Brèche. We had lunch, coincidentally beside a slightly bigger cairn. As the tumbleweed passed by, the penny (or Euro cent?) of frustration/hope dropped and we realised that that was *the* cairn, with further inspection revealing fresh footsteps going up the snow behind. Hardly a “chimney”, but we gave it a go.



Above: map of the route up Marboré.

At this point two of the group decided they'd had enough fun deciphering guidebooks and maps for one day and went to go up the Tour du Marboré instead. This left Chris and I to go on alone, promising we would be back for dinner at the hut at 6 pm. Suddenly we were lured into thinking it would all be easy navigation from now on. I dread to think what would have happened if this had been in the mist - we'd have probably been eaten by the dragons. Soon we had reached the edge of the Cirque de Gavarnie. It was now 5 hours since we left the hut.

After we waxed lyric about how this was now appearing to be quite straightforward, the cairns promptly disappeared. Thankfully they reappeared and we reached a 4-way junction. I am sure that most readers can now guess what happened next, especially considering that there was no 4-way path junction marked on the Spanish map, mentioned in the guidebook, and the simple existence of this part of the world is open to question from the French map. The entire landscape was "broken by boulders and patches of snow" - some helpful advice there from Mr Cicerone. Naturally, we went the wrong way twice, going half way to Monte Perdido on one of the false turns. (Clearly Perdido and Marboré were named the wrong way around). Finally, we took the correct path (we had run out of options by this point), and met two groups of Spaniards coming down who we asked about the route and were reassured we were on the right path. One group said we were still an hour from the summit, which worried us slightly and thankfully it turned out we were about 30 minutes from the top. The route was marked with cairns to the summit, and no off-roading was required, Mr Cicerone should take note.



Chris Banks on the edge of the Cirque de Gavarnie (photo: Catherine Jones)

It took 8 hours from the hut to the summit. Hence a rather speedy, “must make guidebook time” descent (i.e. no more bandwidth for navigational mess ups available) was required to get back for the dinner that we’d promised our friends we’d be back for, which we thankfully did, helped by some (intentional) glissading down the snow patch above the hut.



Chris Banks at the top of Marbore (photo: Catherine Jones)

# A Guide to Uphill Skiing

## by Lisa Ferrero

I've tried to explain this many times to various work colleagues - and they just don't get it..."why don't you just use the lifts?"

Ski touring (as its more officially called) has given me some of the most amazing days out on the hill, and a good swooshy downhill beats everything- except maybe the views.

Admittedly, I have also been reduced to tears, when it's just one of those days, you can't seem to ski, and basically what you really need is a few days rest and nicer snow!

### How?

Once upon a time, to go uphill on skis you tied a seal-skin to your ski so that when you slid forward the fur was smoothed down, and when you slid backwards, the fur was pushed on end,



2 Sarah F forward-moonwalking (skinning) up the Albula Alps

hopefully stopping your slide. Much to the seals' relief, synthetic skins were invented, along with skin glue, which is like post-it note glue on steroids.

This, along with ski-bindings that allow you to lift your heel, allows you to 'forward- moonwalk' your way up the hill- the idea being that you slide, rather than lift your skis at every step. When you get to the top, you rip the skins off the base of your skis, try not to get them stuck on everything else, tighten down your boots, have a general good faff, and then slide off down the hill.

The main touring set-ups used are AT (alpine touring) and Telemark. AT bindings are the easiest to try as a piste skier, as they allow you to lock your heel while going downhill (so it feels like piste skis), and Telemark have a free heel on the way down as well as up.

### Why?

Well, if you're in the Alps in the winter/spring (and sometimes in Scottyland), if you don't have large things tied to your feet, you can't go into the mountains without sinking; and if you can ski, why would you snowshoe? As previously mentioned, the views are great, the skiing is mostly fun (don't mention breakable crust), and the cake at the alpine huts is fabulous!

### Where?



1 The Alps perhaps? Nope- Walter descending glorious spring snow near Carn Turc



3: Dan finding out that the snow is very deep if you step off your skis



Some of the best ski-touring days I've had have been in Scotland. The Cairngorm Plateau, Glenshee area, Drumochter and Ben Lawers areas are some of the most popular, mostly because that is where you're most likely to be able to drive to the snow-line.

In the Alps, there are amazing touring areas, many of which allow you to do a week-long hut to hut tour. Switzerland and Austria, although not cheap, do provide Goldilocks mountains (not too steep but not too boring) for ski touring - the first ever ski-tour I went on was to the Silveretta, near Innsbruck. They also have the advantage of a good hut network which is open for the ski-touring season (usually open with food and guardian from mid March to May). Further afield there are many options- for many of the more obscure ask Guy Wimble!

*4 Tug of war- skins love sticking to themselves!*

**I fancy giving this a go - any tips?**

1. Build up your off-piste skiing. It might sound obvious, but if you're going to enjoy the experience you need to be competent on skis in a broad range of snow conditions, from perfect spring snow (yey!), through ice, breakable crust (boo!) and everything else the mountain will throw at you. That doesn't mean you need to look good (I am an expert in extreme snow-ploughing!) - everybody struggles in some snow conditions - just able to get down the slope, mostly the right way up, and know when it's safe to go for a roll, and when you need to stay on your feet! Glenmore Lodge suggest that for their intro course you should be a competent (but not necessarily pretty) black run skier.
2. Give it a go. Try it for a day or two- either hire kit (Braemar/Perth/ Aviemore), and go with a more experienced friend (there's quite a few tourers in the Jacobites), or sign up for one of the various intro courses available in Scotland. The kit isn't cheap so you want to check it's a worthwhile investment, and find out what kit suits you.
3. Be nice to your body. Touring is physically demanding, especially when your skiing isn't as good as it could be. Choose something appropriate to your fitness (it's never going to be enjoyable if you're knackered). Also, if you're going to buy one bit of kit, buy well-fitting boots - it is unfortunately a blister-prone sport!
4. Keep it light. Skiing with a rucksack doesn't make things easier, especially for multi-day tours. If you commit to doing a tour that has some glaciers and steeper cols, then you are likely



*5 Ski mountaineering- a friend going for a little ski-less adventure up Piz Kesch (See what I mean about the views)*

to be carrying avalanche and glacier rescue kits, rope, crampons, axe, harness etc. Particularly if you are small, economical packing and investment in lightweight kit can make a huge difference. For a week's tour I take a 40 litre rucksack, and always have space left at the top so I don't need to re-pack neatly (disclaimer- bigger people may need more space for clothing and lunch!).



*6 Carrying skis – not something to do too often (photo: Alec Erskine)*

# The Weather Gods Smiled on Skye

## by Lucy Spark

### Day 1

An inauspicious start to the half-term when I sailed off the road on black ice into a ditch in Glen Brittle! Abandoned the car, hitched a lift with Mr Mike Lates and his clients and set off for Sgurr Mhic Coinnich. Lovely snow conditions on the ridge were followed by a brilliant abseil down Kings Chimney. Fortunately the clients turned out to be SAS men so retrieving the car was no problem!



### Day 2

Less than 15mph all the way to Sligachan then headed for Sgurr nan Gillean. We watched the first sunlight creep onto the mountains. The early traversers' tracks made life easy for us and arriving on the ridge between Gillean and Sgurr Beag gave us one of the best moments of the trip. Very hard to describe but so glad to have been there. Nerves about the top of the tourist route proved unnecessary and the descent down the West ridge was great. Had time for a quick look at the Basteir Tooth in winter glory before heading down.

It was that evening that a small seed of stupidity was planted in our heads. A night on the ridge in winter - great plan, and the sleeping bags already in place, even better!

### Day 3 and 4

Laden with essentials like chocolate digestives, fresh milk and whisky, we set off to climb the gully of Eag Dubh. This brought us out at the last rise before Sgurr a Ghreadaidh and we made

our way carefully along to the cave under the Wart and inspected our bivvy gear. Sleeping bags, yes, warm - definitely not. It turned out to be the longest, coldest night of our lives with added danger of sliding down into Coruisk if we wanted to go to the toilet! Much to learn!



Reward came at sunrise with these stunning views. There was temptation to escape to the car but sun and perfect conditions got us moving towards Banachdich. Just after some careful down climbing, 2 sets of cramponed feet landed in the snow beside us. Their owners said a cheerful hello and disappeared at speed. They turned out to be Finlay Wild and Tim Gomersall on a record winter traverse. Apparently their secret is jelly babies!

I feel incredibly privileged to have spent so much time on the ridge in perfect conditions. It is a magical place in winter and words and photos just can't do it justice. If you haven't experienced it, then speak to the weather Gods and get up there.

# Moments of Magic, Moments of Doubt

## By Karl Zeiner

*[longer version previously published on DeZeiner Fitness blog]*



### **No reason**

The moment I knew that I could complete the [Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc \(UTMB\)](#), I didn't want to finish it any more. Knowing I could physically finish meant that I had nothing to prove. I wasn't doing this for anyone in particular. I'd set out with two simple objectives: to finish and to enjoy it. To be successful both objectives needed to be completed.

I had been going for more than a day. It was approaching nightfall on Saturday, August 29th 2015 and I hadn't been enjoying myself for most of the previous 24 hours. My stomach had been giving me issues starting somewhere around midnight on Friday and there was no sign of this abating. It would occasionally improve a bit and occasionally get worse. As a consequence I didn't eat much at the checkpoints.

I was on my way from the La Fouly checkpoint to the Champex Lac checkpoint, a 13km section, something I could on fresh legs do in 90 min, even on the narrow trails and with the 300m ascent to Champex Lac. I hadn't realised during the preceding descent how bad that climb up to Champex Lac would be. It was only 300m but in the dark I seemed to go up two steps and come down one, zigzagging around. From the valley bottom it had looked like 15 minutes. It took nearly 1 hour and with that nearly 3.5 hours from La Fouly – for 13km!

Yes, I had now completed 120 km since departing Chamonix at 6pm the previous evening but I was still moving pretty well. Climbing up to Champex Lac seemed to be the crux of the UTMB for many a runner. Looking back, that checkpoint was the tipping point for me, either where my race would end or, if I left that checkpoint, the finish would be secure.

Around 10pm I did leave the Champex Lac checkpoint to start a hideous climb which on fresh legs and by daylight would probably have been fun. I had, for the first time, wolfed down a bowl of pasta and my stomach was probably feeling notably better than it had for the previous 24 hours or so. Even though I still wasn't enjoying the experience, reaching the finish line now wasn't in doubt. The climb was scrambly in places, had river crossings and was occasionally very narrow, meaning that our little group of runners would regularly have to stop as those ahead of us struggled through pinch points.

### **Full Moon**

The first night of the UTMB was magical. Our first big climb was the Croix du Col du Bonhomme which tops out at just over 2500m and depending on what you regard as its starting point, either rises from under 900m at St Gervais or from around 1100m at Les Contamines. But to be honest it starts properly from La Balme which although already at 1700m was where we'd enter single track climbing for the first time.

Along with the clear night was a full moon which lit up the mountains around us and when we crossed the Col the night views were something to behold. At the same time if you looked back down the valley you could see the long line of head torches snaking its way up the mountain. This also gave me an idea that I was in a decent enough position in the race. Although that probably still meant just inside the top half.



In Chamonix I'd chosen a starting point which felt like it was at the back of the field but was probably inside the top half. Ashok and myself decided to wait in the Cheval Rouge Bar until the last minute before lining up watching the elites take their positions and relaxing with the rest of the Scottish contingent who had come down to watch.

The start of the UTMB is one of the incredible experiences of the race. Accompanied by Vangelis' Conquest of Paradise and univocal countdown we are off through the streets of Chamonix. These streets are lined with supporters at least 5 deep on both sides cheering us on, wishing us good luck and high fiving us. We are heroes before we have even covered the first km. It must be at least 2 km before we cover any ground where we only have some trees for support. The crowds soon return.

Les Houches, our first checkpoint town, is heaving as are the lower slopes going up the climb to the Col de Voza out of Les Houches. I'd dubbed this the Spanish corner as most of the shouts from the crowd were 'Venga, Venga'. I thought we were in France?! This illustrates the international nature of this event. In every checkpoint and town we would go through the support was immense with huge crowds even if we arrived sometime during the night. At the mountain tops we'd have support from the Mountain Rescue guys. I tried to keep myself occupied trying to work out which language to respond in as I came out with a mixture of 'merci', 'thank you', 'grazie' and 'gracias' with the occasional 'danke' thrown in.

### **Heat**

When the crowds had ebbed away on the climb up the Col de Voza just over 1 hour into the race, I started noticing something else. A substantial number of runners appeared to be sick or vomiting. Were they struggling with the heat? Already? After such a short time? Although my initial feeling was that I'd have preferred to start in the morning, the hot temperatures made an evening start and thus a night run for the first 12 hours very welcome.

The hottest part of the race (for me) was departing Courmayeur – roughly the half way point – climbing up to the Refugio Bertone and Bonatti which are at a plateau at around 2000m. From



those we'd drop down to the Arnava checkpoint to start a long ascent up to the Grand Col Ferret at 2537m. I'd left Courmayeur just before midday and it was baking hot and only going to get hotter. In the first 2km out of Courmayeur I stopped at two water fountains. there were no more after that. I was carrying enough water to drink but it would have been good to douse head arms and legs to keep cool. Other runners were taking stops in the shade to cool off.

It was around here that I started to question why I was doing it. I was told that this was to be the most beautiful section of the route with stunning views of the east side of the Mont Blanc massif. It was too hot to enjoy this, my stomach was too achy and my energy levels not right due to the lack of food I was taking on. I had also decided it was a bit hypocritical to call this a run and wasn't prepared to call those around me runners anymore. We were faster walkers with smaller packs than those sensible enough to carry bigger packs and take a few days to do this route.

### **Courmayeur**

If things had gone to plan then I'd have left Courmayeur 2-3 hours earlier. My stomach issue had slowed me down from daybreak onwards. I'd taken the stop on the boulder field, hung around a long time at Lac Combal hoping that some food and coffee would help. And to add insult to injury I'd left my running poles at the last checkpoint before getting to Courmayeur. I'd descended nearly 1km towards Courmayeur before I realised. After a short debate with myself I decided to go back to get them, passing a surprised Graeme Gatherer who I'd had a brief chat with at the checkpoint on the way. The climb back up to the checkpoint was all the proof I needed that the poles would be vital for the remainder of the UTMB. Not using poles would have added a huge chunk of time to my climbs. It was a wasteful 20 min though.

The Courmayeur checkpoint was in a sports hall, the biggest checkpoint of them all. Pretty efficiently set up so that you could pick up your drop bag, meet your support person (should you have one) and sit down for a while or even put your head down on a mattress. I'd been debating with myself on the way in if I should have a short nap. When I got there I got myself a bowl of pasta. It took me a long time to eat the pasta as I was constantly falling asleep. I'd also hoped to see Fiona (my partner) there as we'd said that if I was slow into Courmayeur she could come across from Chamonix on one of the organised buses. If I was fast she wouldn't have made it. I was slow but somehow she still didn't make it. I was a bit confused and put my head down for a while in the hope it would refresh me a bit. It may have helped to stem the sleepiness but not the stomach issues.

I briefly bumped into Craig Hamilton before leaving. He complained about the boulder field on the Col des Pyramides Calcaires as that hadn't been there before. It was his fourth UTMB and the first time he'd thrown up. I don't think he blamed the boulder field for that. The boulder field didn't bother me but then I'd not seen the course before. I also bumped into Bob Allison who seemed in pretty good spirits at the time. We'd meet again on the Grand Col Ferret when he was having a rest on his way to the summit. Both on my way in and out of the checkpoint I got a wave from Katie Hall which was most welcome. She was waiting for Ashok to come in. I did always expect him to catch me at some point. He never did and sadly retired from the race at Courmayeur after falling heavily on his hip.

One thing that did help make me feel better leaving Courmayeur was a change of shoes, socks and t-shirt. I also had a cap back as I'd lost the other in the Chapieux checkpoint during the random kit check there. All of the above contributed to a midday departure instead of probably a 10am departure. Would it have made a difference? Probably not.

So I'd hoped getting through Courmayeur would give me a boost. It didn't. As already mentioned I was genuinely questioning the sanity of this venture while heading from Bertone Refugio to the Bonatti Refugio, my stomach continued to play up and I started making the one mistake you shouldn't do: looking at the big picture. Arriving at the Arnava checkpoint I'd just about done 100km which sounds awesome until you flip that around and have 70km to go. O.M.G. Strangely I couldn't really work out what that meant as I wasn't sure what distance I was covering per hour.

The sector from Arnava to La Fouly was a struggle though as it was the longest unsupported stretch since we had started with 14 km and the Grand Col Ferret in between. I had a couple of stops on the way up including a chat with Bob. Clouds had rolled in and I was looking forward to a good descent on the shadowy side of the mountain. The descent was great fun down as far as La Peule after which it got bitsy and once it hit the valley it was too flat for me.

Remarkably I think it is the flatter parts of the route that I mostly struggled with as I wasn't travelling at a pace I was comfortable with and others would travel faster which was frustrating. The descent from La Fouly to the bottom of the climb to Champex Lac was like this and on paper looked like I should be able to cover this much faster.

As with Courmayeur I'd secretly hoped that Fiona would make it to La Fouly. I'd texted her earlier to find out which checkpoint she would be at to which I didn't get a response apart from a motivational response saying that I could do this. I just wanted someone to chat to at this point and was starting to convince myself that Fiona was not going to be at any checkpoints in order to get me to the finish.

### **Stomach**

I have been going on about stomach issues for a while now and while they plagued me for nearly the entire race I have managed to come up with a possible reason why. Nearly all the races I have done have a morning start, usually somewhere between 6-9am. I have a routine for morning races which includes when to have breakfast, what to have for breakfast and how often I need to go to the toilet to clear out my bowels. The UTMB started at 6pm. I had breakfast that day and then lunch at around 1pm. I wasn't able to go to the toilet to clear my bowels pre race – my body didn't let me – and I wasn't able to do this for the first 24 hours of the race even though I did visit the odd toilet at some checkpoints on route. Finally with nearly 27 hours gone, a field just outside Issert at the foot of the climb to Champex Lac served as the much needed toilet.

This was probably the start of the turning point for me in the race. As I got to Champex Lac, Fiona was there: Hurray! Part 2 of the turning point? I had a moan at Fiona as to how I wasn't enjoying this and had nothing to prove and would be happy to walk away. She kindly said I should continue.



The next two climbs were very foresty and rather technical meaning slow progress and no night time views. Frustratingly the descent after the first climb was one of the few I really didn't enjoy as it was ankle breaking stuff. Fiona was there again in Trient and I was down to two climbs to go. I had some noodle soup and coke (or was it coffee?) and was on my way again reasonably swiftly. The climb over Catogne and down to Vallorcine wasn't that bad. I could enjoy some of that descent and got into Vallorcine just as the second dawn was breaking over this race. I was now one climb and 17km from the finish. Inside the last 10km Fiona was there to help again. I had my last helping of noodle soup and another coffee (or was it coke?).

### **Finish**

I couldn't care less about the sunrise happening in front of me - I just wanted to finish. I was very tired. I tend to use Proplus in long ultras to help keep me awake and alert. I said to Fiona that they don't seem to be helping much anymore. I had been awake for more than 48 hours by now.

On my way out of Vallorcine, after saying 'bye, see you at the finish' to Fiona, I bumped into Sarah Spence - to my surprise - who had been one of my coaching clients. She had just sent her husband Ross off on his last leg of this journey too. She pointed him out to me and I made an effort to catch up with him for a chat. We hiked up to the Col des Montets together where he stopped to sort out a blister. Even though it was a very sleepy chat it was good to talk and take the mind off things. On to the final climb proper which I mastered pretty well in the morning sunshine and nearly enjoyed. I passed quite a few competitors but whatever energy I had used to do this seemed to have disappeared as I got closer to the top. Some of them started passing me again. Once I'd passed the checkpoint at Tete aux Vents a wave of tiredness came over me and I had to sit down to regain my strength. A few jelly babies helped too.

I'd soon be on familiar territory. Getting from Tete aux Vents to La Flegere is surprisingly technical on tired legs and half way there I stopped for another break. I was making hard work of these last few kms. Ross caught up with me again and we covered the section to La Flegere

together. I'd been on this bit earlier in the week but it didn't make it any easier. Into the checkpoint at La Flegere for the final scan of our number and a cup of coke. No more climbing to do now just an 800m descent into Chamonix over about 8km. Let's hope the coke I just had would do the job to so that I could lift my legs on the descent.

Ross said to me as we left the checkpoint that I shouldn't hold back for him on the descent. Not sure what he was expecting of my descending prowess after 160km of running (or moving forward). We'd come through La Flegere at 10am and I thought with an 8km descent I should make the finish before 11am and thus inside 41 hours. With that in mind I did leave Ross behind but the gap didn't really open much and as I stopped for a drink by a river he caught me again. It was 25 min to 11 and I said to Ross I am going to try and get to the finish before 11. His comment: no chance. But I'd finally found the switch to the after burners. I threw caution to the wind and bounded down the last 400m of vertical drop having.

Since we'd topped out at Tete aux Vents support along the trail was growing with people regularly congratulating us. Numbers grew as we got closer to Chamonix and I was enjoying overtaking runner after runner. I was tempted to put my number to the back so that they did think I was some idiot on his Sunday run, instead I was some idiot who was sprinting down a hill having already done 160km.

### **Video Player**

I always hoped though to finish like this in the same way that I had finished the [Zugspitz Ultra Trail](#) a couple of months earlier. One huge advantage of finishing towards midday and not in the early morning hours was the presence of the crowds. As I hit the pavements of Chamonix there were cheers everywhere. Before the race had started I was confused as to why the route followed such a complicated labyrinth through Chamonix before reaching the finish line. Now I understood, and I didn't want it to end. Having spent hours, nearly days, wanting this to end, I'd hit the streets of Chamonix and it could have gone on forever. I felt awesome, the crowd were awesome, I was high fiving folk lining the route to the finish, the pain in my legs had disappeared and my stomach was fine and any tiredness was gone. After my high speed descent I did slow down somewhat going through Chamonix to soak up the atmosphere, saw Donald and Elaine Sandeman, spotted John and Karen Munro, Fiona handed me the Austrian flag and I turned onto the finishing straight, swung over to the left hand side to high five the Scottish support crew who were (still I assume) outside the Cheval Rouge Bar, and strode up to the finish line.

Ross crossed the line a few minutes after I did while I was still milling around at the finish. Bob came in around 1 hour later to rapturous applause from the Scottish crowd. Craig finished at 2:30pm. I was fast asleep by then. Congratulations to the other 2 Scottish finishers, [Caroline McKay](#) and Matt Williamson who stormed the course in 35 and 30 hours respectively.

### **40 epic long hours followed by 63 minutes of awesome fun!**

A few days after the event I picked up an [article by Kilian Jornet about his speed ascent of Denali](#) in which he wrote the following line: 'I had the satisfaction of having completed my objective, but I hadn't felt the pleasure of the journey.'

This sentence perfectly summarised how I felt about my UTMB experience. I had gone and completed the event I had set out to do, the distance, the mountains, crossed that finish line, but when I look back I struggle to be happy about it as I hadn't been able to enjoy the experience. When I got to Champex Lac I said to Fiona that I never want to do something like this again. At the finish some people commented that now that I had finished I wouldn't have to go back again. Had I DNFed then I probably wouldn't go back again. Having finished, knowing the course and likely being aware what caused the problems mean I can see genuine room for improvement.



All my moaning aside, I am pleased to have picked up my UTMB gilet on what proved to be a very tough weekend for many. Nearly 1000 of the approximately 2500 runners that started dropped out of the race. I nearly joined that number but thanks to Fiona and a gradual change of fortunes I didn't. 41 hours is a bloody long time to be on your feet. I have no intention of being on my feet for any longer any time soon, probably ever! Which means that if I do it again I'll have to do it quicker.

### **Thank you**

We had an absolutely awesome week in Chamonix, enjoying the trails, the mountains and the buzz. A place I am surprised not to have visited before but a place I will return to before long again. Alongside the UTMB there were four other races going on during the week and the runners I was out with had mixed fortunes on all of them with heat and the courses taking their toll. Congratulations to all for toeing the start line and thank you to all for being fantastic start and finish line support during the UTMB itself. My final but most important thanks goes to Fiona for once again being my trusted support crew out on the course. I wouldn't have made the finish line without her and I have realised more than ever how much of a help that is.

I'd like to thank you all for reading and also thank everyone who congratulated me or willed me on by text, social media or in person. THANK YOU!

## The Dave McHugh Award

The Dave McHugh award honours the memory of Jacobites member Dave McHugh who was tragically killed in a road traffic accident over 25 years ago. The award is made annually to an individual or group of individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to the club that year either by personal mountaineering achievements or services to the club.

2014

The Dave McHugh award for 2014 was awarded to Pam Van de Brug in acknowledgement of her development in climbing and her outstanding contribution to the life of the club made as social secretary in the previous two years.

2015

In 2015 the award was made to Karl Zeiner to acknowledge his achievements in the world of ultra-marathons, in particular his completion of the Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc. This is described in detail in an article in this journal.



**Lonely Cross-country Skier in Iceland (photo: Margaret Hodge)**



Ian Jones on Roaring Forties, E3 5c, Mucklehouse Wall (photo: Lucy Spark)



Edelweiss in the Dolomites (photo: Alec Erskine)

## Photograph of the Year



Rob Durrán on "The Lewisian" E3 Rubha Beirghe near Shawbost (photo: Lucy Spark)