

## Looking for a Walrus by Margaret Page

EARLY in 2003 I saw a walrus peering out of the Travel Section of the Telegraph. Where on Earth were they suggesting that we could go on holiday to see one? It appeared that if you took a cruise with Voyages of Discovery you might see one and possibly a polar bear too. The particular journey was to take you via several ports in mainland Norway to Svarlbard, to Ny Alesund and Longyearbyen on the island of Spitzburgen. Now there are many members in the club who would see it as sissified to go on a cruise ship, even to Spitzbergen. I knew that if ever I was to go it was the only way possible. My first cruise was planned. The mechanics of the cruise were very well organised with talks about towns to be visited and tours that could be made while visiting them. There were guest speakers, a resident artist, giving classes, Bridge classes and the usual array of musical quizzes, dances, shows, etc, etc. My feeling about cruises is that you spend an awful lot of time making for somewhere only to see it vanishing into the distance very quickly.

To anyone who has not been to Norway I can only say one thing. Go! It is one of the most beautiful places that I have seen and I've seen a few. Having started from Harwich in summer sun on 12 July, our first stop was Bergen. I had visited it years before. It was my jumping off point for a four month trek through the Europe of 1960. Basically it hadn't changed much at all. I had hoped to go to hear a recital at Grieg's home, Troidhaugen, but obviously our fellow passengers were on the lower brow side and it was cancelled for lack of support. My view on this was supported by one of our guest speakers, Sir Bernard Ingham. He was to speak later about his time with Margaret Thatcher and also in support of Nuclear and renewable power sources. In Bergen we wandered through the ancient Hanseatic section of town and the Quayside market, reindeer pelts, prawn butties and live fish all available. We had time enough to take the Floienbahn to look over the city from mount Floien and the sun shone.

A couple of years ago I joined a group from Higham Hall the Adult Education College at Bassenthwaite to paint in and around Molde. This was our second stop. Not only beautiful but a wonderful centre to tour from. From the quayside berth it was possible to see dozens of peaks. The ferries crossing the fjord and ships, including the coastal

steamer moving all day show the importance of shipping to Norwegian communities. Almost entirely destroyed in the second world war the town has been restored. The beautifully coloured wooden houses set in plant filled gardens. The City of Roses is, in July, also the home of an international jazz festival. Quite amazing to see a man dressed in black with his top hat leading a band around the town, followed by a crocodile of locals. Very New Orleans! Sadly we were not to be able to stay to "do" a concert. We only had time to visit the cathedral with it's wonderful modern stained glass and then ride out to the Atlantic Ocean Road. Why is it that we with 55 million people can't build roads while they, with 4.5 million have tunnels, bridges and roads of spectacular vision. The bridge to Skye is like the M25 compared to most of them too. This road joins several islands and cuts out miles of driving and ferries. And the sun shone!

Sailing off in the sun and a 2 foot swell (basically flat) we were now off to the top of the world, as some see it, North Cape. Like all good furthest N S E and W points North Cape is not the most northerly point in Norway, Knivskjelodden is, but as it is not very accessible to tourists or spellers, it has been sidelined. We crossed the Arctic Circle, 66.33N, at 6 am on 16 July and remained above it until 6.30 pm on 22 July. And the sun shone.

As we got near to North Cape we had some mists which made the cliffs we were passing look interesting and worth a painting through



*Me on the right in Kingsbay, Ny Alesund*

the art class window. We were lucky enough to see Bear Island which our captain said he had seen only twice before. We were allowed onto the bridge in parties of about 15 and saw the vigilance of the duty officers and seamen. We only saw one sizable iceberg, which



*Wrapped up against the wind at North Cape*

the captain said was further south than he had expected to see one. During the sailing days we had had wonderful talks. One speaker, Dr Bernard Rowlands, ex John Moores University, gave three lectures about the geography, geology, glaciology of Norway and the Vikings too.

Arriving in Honningsvåg on 17 July we were in the port for North Cape. A pretty place with 23 tourist busses on the quay. When we got into Honningsvåg – you guessed it – the sun came out and we were driven via scenery rather like Skye but with reindeer and a Sami “Camp”, to North Cape. This is very well touristified. Set on 1,000ft cliffs you wonder how the first visitors managed to climb up rock paths from the bay below. The ladies aided by husky sailors, no doubt. (Sorry girls but you try it in long skirts.) The children’s Peace sculptures offer some hope but the huge skeleton globe provided little

shelter from the wind but the sun shone.

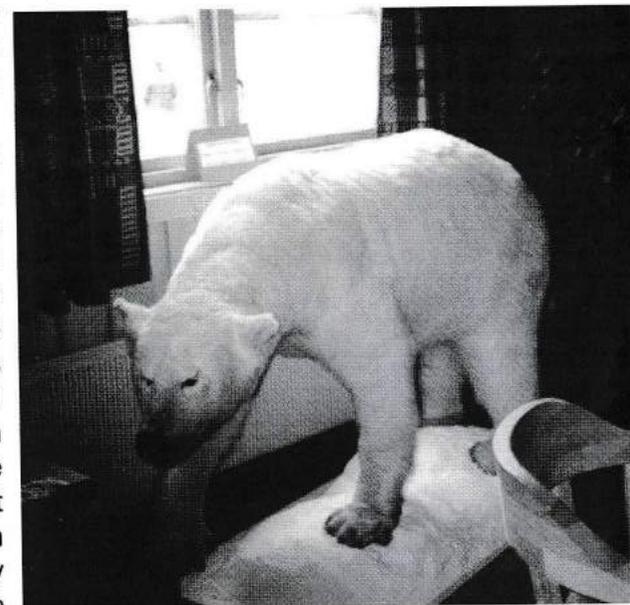
The drive back to the ship made the visit well worthwhile. Numerous times the eye picked out a small house set in a place so beautiful that it made you sad to leave it. The truth about North Cape for me is that, as Dr Johnson said of the Giant’s Causeway, “It is worth seeing but not worth going to see.” Looking north one might be excused for thinking that there was nothing up there. But we knew better!

Though we had seen few animals apart from a seal near Molde and reindeer near North Cape we had seen many, many birds. Some crossed our path some circled us but others, especially Fulmars, followed mile upon mile. We were helped in our bird watching by Dr Robert Lederer. He is an American ornithologist who gave us three

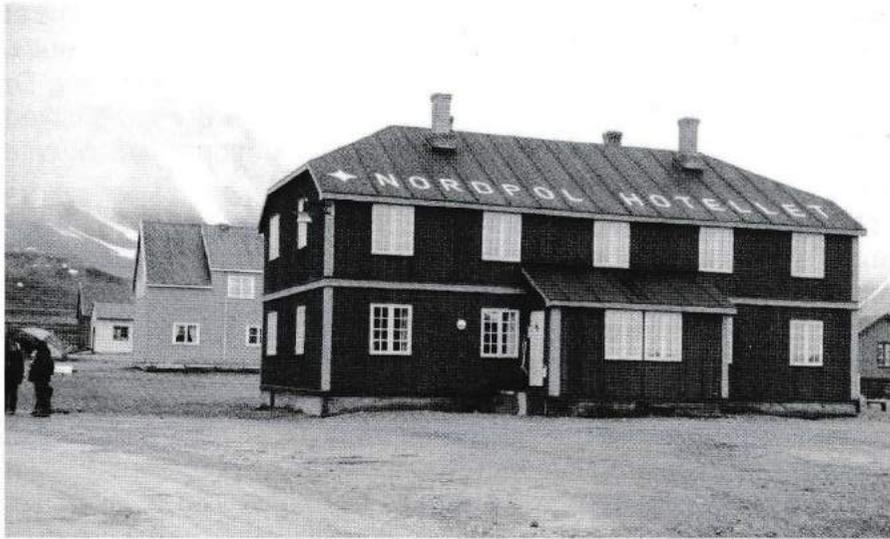
talks on the birds of Norway. Naturally as we spent most of our time at sea the majority of sightings were sea birds, Blackheaded gulls, Skuas, Blackbacks, Terns, Guillemots, Puffins and of course Fulmars. Dr Lederer was accompanied by his partner, Dr Carole Burr, who talked about birds in literature. We were ultimately encouraged to write poems.

The sail to Longyearbyen took two days. It is the capital of Svalbard and its name comes as a bit of a mouthful. It turned out to mean, amazingly, the town-byen named for Mr Longyear. An American, Longyear decided that the coal found there was worth commercial development. Now, low grade coal is mined only by Russians. They had a terrible disaster a few years ago when the plane bringing wives and children for a visit crashed, killing them all. There is evidence of much more mine working with the supports of numerous bucket cableways, stretching across high valley walls. The town is like Conniston with docks. It is divided by a small river which is given a very wide bed. We saw only a small trickle. Presumably it could be a raging torrent. In one half of the town was a building, the church and community centre. Polar bear at last! In the half of the room, which serves as the community hall, there is a stuffed bear. It was shot in the hall in 1999. It really brought home to us that this was an unusual place.

Walking to the commercial centre, across the river, you pass a triangular road sign that warns of skidoos. The shopping area was just normal Norwegian wooden buildings but inside the Supermarket it could have been Tesco’s. The day had been dull as we left the ship by



*Polar Bear at last!*



*The North Pole Hotel, Ny Alesund*

tender. "Just shut your eyes and step into space." It had become really very warm, however, walking into the town and we peeled off layers. I had to remind myself that it was high summer. It was more like an early winter day here. We had a little drizzle as we returned to the ship but it had stopped before we left. It was sunny enough for me to try a quick pen and wash picture. With a covering of snow the town might be pretty. The houses are painted all the yellow, ochre, blue and greens you see everywhere in Norway but I don't think it will catch on!

Not so Ny Alesund! This is a dream place. We sailed into the Kongsfjorden with snow capped, jagged topped mountains all around us.

Tiny icebergs, really little lumps of ice from glaciers reaching down to the sea floated by. Then the village came into view. A scattered collection of buildings. It reminded me of ancient settlements where you placed your house where you fancied it. It is now only a research station pop. 40, 79 degrees north. Summer brings another 100 researchers and, of course the cruise ships. The original industry was coal mining which stopped in 1963. There is still a beautiful little steam engine and a couple of wagons in the village, going nowhere. The hotel is the wonderfully named "Nordpollhotellet, the North Pole Hotel."

It's that or camping. There was an arctic fox and family living under one of the houses. It was not fazed by us wandering about. At one point it trotted off, grabbed a Barnacle goose and popped back. There were lots of gulls, Eider duck and Snow bunting. At first the scene was overcast and threatened to rain but the sun came out and brought the houses to life. Hardly two the same colour but all of them the refined greens, reds, creams, yellows, blues and even a turquoise, as anyone who has been to Norway will remember. There was the statue of Amundsen and the anchor pylon which the polar explorer Umberto Nobile used when he was making successful but ultimately disastrous balloon flights to the North Pole. Ny Alesund was the preferred starting point for early Amundsen, Lincoln and also Admiral Byrd's polar explorations. Walking round we were advised to take care as terns were nesting and dive bombing anyone who got too near. We were also told not to leave the immediate area of the village as it was possible for polar bears to be around. Sadly not that day! Nor were there any walruses anywhere in the area, I asked. I was totally miffed. I had to buy a stuffed toy walrus at the post office, while having my postcards franked Ny Alesund 79 north and stamping on polar bears with the rubber stamps provided. At last a piece of luck! The ship was unable to sail until 3 hours later than expected. We were all on deck sunbathing, even people in the hot tub, and I, almost full to the brim with looking at a scene I will never forget.



*Ny Alesund*

Southwards via Trondheim, Alesund and Flam, Gerangerfjord and Gudvangen. To pop these spectacularly wonderful places on to the end gives some idea of the wonder of Ny Alesund. And the sun had shone. The sea had been calm. Only crossing to Harwich did the Captain provide the toffs on deck nine with a few waves to show what it might have been like.

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### Seabird

*Have you seen me, watching you?  
Have you watched me?  
Hanging in the wind above my head,  
I think that I am nothing in your eyes,  
While you, to me, personify a master  
Of the sea, the sky and wilderness.  
If I could fly, swoop, float and dive like you,  
Would I achieve the freedom you enjoy?  
I never should forget, yours is a tooth and claw domain.  
Mistakes made, reap a fast and hard reward.  
Down on the sea a floating feather  
Over! Gone!*

Margaret Page 23/7/03

### *There was a young fellow from Svarlbard*

*There was a young fellow from Svarlbard  
Who t'be eaten by bears found it not hard.  
When confronted by Brumas  
He cried "Don't consume us."  
That northerly birdman from Svarlbard.*

Margaret Page 23/7/03

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - NOVEMBER 2004 J FOSTER

AT the meeting John Foster delivered his expected plea for increased activity on the fells and continuing interest in the Scottish hut. The contents of his plea were not unexpected and were consistent with many similar appeals over the years.

John completed his delivery by confirming that he felt it would be his last serious plea for a hut in Scotland and that his efforts for pursuing the cause were becoming a little tiresome for him.

In passing he mentioned that we were but custodians of the Club's traditions and facilities and that in years to come the names of individuals currently associated with the Club would probably be forgotten.

It was sad to hear John talk in terms of possible increasing fragility and whilst many of us at the meetings groan when John assumes his usual hobby horse it will never be forgotten that John has been an active and vigorous member of Achille Ratti since 1955 and John and Joyce were the real parents of Twn-Tyr, our hut in Wales, with serious commitment to the Welsh hut for over 18 years and to the Club for nearly 50 years.

His efforts and commitment to Achille Ratti have not and will not be forgotten.

In these times of increasing levels of comfort at the huts it should also not be forgotten that John was the instigator of the single most beneficial improvement of hut facilities in all its history – I refer to the provision of the de-humidifiers in the drying room, a piece of simple equipment which John first introduced at Twn-Tyr and has now been replicated at all our huts for the benefit of members who still get wet on the fells.

Whilst John may feel that his efforts and appeals go unnoticed he should be assured that his pleas never fall on deaf ears. Whilst he has yet to become fully acquainted with the modern belaying techniques as practised by myself on Skye in the early 60's I trust John's reduced level of activity will not be too onerous and I feel sure he will continue to be a welcome thorn in the side of the establishment – long may he continue.

Michael Pooler  
28 November 2004

## National Mountaineering Huts

*QUESTIONS asked about the Glen Brittle Memorial Hut after our AGM indicated that it would be worth reprinting the article "The Mountaineering Hut in Glen Brittle", first published in the June edition of Skye Views in 1996. The Hut is registered with the Imperial War Museum as No 44785 on the United Kingdom National Inventory of War Memorials.*

*As our club is affiliated to the British Mountaineering Council, all our members are entitled to use it. Hut fees are £3 per night. The booking secretary (a club member) is: Mrs Sandra Winter, Gillean, Dall, Rannoch, by Pitlochry, PH17 2QH. Tel 01822 632240.*

*Similarly with the Alex MacIntyre Memorial Hut at North Ballachulish. Hut fees £3.50 per night. The booking secretary is: Arthur Howarth, 44 Aintree Lane, Liverpool, L10 2JK. Tel 01514 740360.*

*Alex MacIntyre was the National Officer of the BMC about 1980, and was killed on Annapurna a couple of years later.*



### The Mountaineering Hut in Glen Brittle

EVERY year it seems there is an anniversary of this or that, and for most older people 1995 was significant in that we commemorated the end of the war in Europe and also the war in the Pacific. There was another anniversary last year which hardly anyone took notice of which was linked to the two big events. The 5th of June was the 30th anniversary of the formal opening of the Glen Brittle Mountaineering Memorial Hut by Dame Flora MacLeod of MacLeod. A memorial to what? Many who have passed the white painted building are aware it is a mountaineering hut, but few will know that it is a war memorial.

It was in 1944 as the war with Germany was beginning its last phase that a noted mountaineer, Sir Geoffrey Winthrop Young (who lost a leg in the first world war) persuaded the main mountaineering clubs to come together to form the British Mountaineering Council to be the governing body of the sport. The BMC has had many achievements, but what is of most concern to this story is that the idea originated in the late forties among members that there should be some memorial to climbing mates that did not survive the war. With food still rationed, power cuts and shortages on all fuels, the restrictions of all those years delayed the formation of a committee to administer the funds for a memorial until 1952, but nearly £900 had already been donated.

Various suggestions as to the form of a memorial were considered, but it was quickly established that the fund should be used to provide huts or bivouac shelters in mountain areas where accommodation was sparse. Initially it was intended to give grants to individual clubs to do this, but in 1955 it was decided it would be better to establish a national mountaineering hut for use by all the constituent clubs, and a proposal by the Scottish Mountaineering Club that it should be in Glen Brittle was accepted.

The MacLeod Estate was approached and reacted favourably as long as the location and extent of the site were agreed with the late Hugh MacRae, the tenant farming the glen. The size and structure of the hut began to be considered, and it became apparent that more money would be needed, so a fresh appeal was decided on, involving also the national press. This was necessary because it was hoped that donations would come not just from individuals and clubs who had lost friends and members, but from the families of climbers, civilian or servicemen, who had died in the war.

An architect, who was a climber, had made the offer of his services without payment of fee or expenses, which was accepted. Also, the area engineer for Inverness CC resident in Portree, another climber, had offered to keep an eye on building operations for the committee.

The design of the building was agreed, and local builders invited to tender. The job was awarded to Duncan MacKenzie of Balmacara, who had taken into partnership Danny MacLeod of Carbost. A fortunate coincidence was that Hydroelectric extended their line into Glen Brittle about the time construction was under way which made possible an all electric hut instead of reliance on bottled gas for cooking and lighting. Good fortune also prevailed over the water supply from the Bannachdich Burn in that another climber who was the water engineer for Ross-shire took this in hand, and a member of the committee persuaded his employer (ICI) to donate all the plastic piping, copper tube and couplings, and gutters and downspouts. Another manufacturer donated a stainless steel double sink unit, and much of the internal woodwork (bunks, worksurfaces, etc.) and all the painting was carried out by voluntary labour.

Early in 1965 the fitting out was sufficiently complete to allow the hut to be brought into use on 1st April, but the formal opening was planned for 5th June, no doubt with the hope of good weather in mind. It was most fitting that Dame Flora was able to open the hut, as it was her decision to donate the land, showing her sympathy with the idea of the

hut being a war memorial, no doubt with her own family's war record in mind.

*The previous evening was wet and miserable, but on the morning the sun had returned and the Cuillin stood out clearly against a blue sky. More and more people arrived until by the appointed time 150 were gathered to witness the event. The proceedings were organised by the President of the Association of Scottish Climbing Clubs, and among the speeches a prayer was offered for the safety of those who use the hut, followed by the unveiling of a plaque by the main door.*

**Glen Brittle Memorial Hut  
1939 - 1945**

**This hut is built in memory of those who found strength  
in the hills to sustain them even unto death**

**B.M.C. A.S.C.C.**

A committee was formed to manage the hut, and a trust deed was drawn up to regulate its relationship with the trustees. From this three names illustrate the significance of the hut being a war memorial. The then Sir John Hunt was President of the BMC, known to most people as the leader of the 1953 expedition which put Sir Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing on the top of Everest. But in 1943 he was Brigadier John Hunt, given the task in Italy of reforming the 11th Brigade of the 4th Indian Division, which had been overrun at the fall of Tobruk in 1942.

Harry Spilsbury without whose energy and drive the hut would never have been built, was the chairman of the Management Committee. In 1918, serving in the Royal Artillery, he was taken prisoner in France. George Roger of Bridge of Allen had been the treasurer of the funding committee in Scotland, but in the war served as a navigator in Coastal Command Liberators.

To these men their efforts in establishing and running the hut were a fitting way of commemorating British climbers killed in the war, but personally I like to think of the hut as a memorial also to all those mountaineers, French and Italian, German and Austrian, who failed to return to the mountains they loved. All were victims of forces beyond their control.

John Foster  
(Chairman of the Hut Management Committee)



## **Langdale Climbing Meet 5 June 2004** **by Helen Hodgkinson**

LANGDALE! One of the best places to climb, anywhere, with stunning routes at all standards and all within walking distance of the hut! The perfect location for the summer climbing meet.

Neil and I had left a rainy Sutherland early the previous day, hoping for better weather in the Lakes. Luckily we weren't to be disappointed. By 9.30 in the morning there was a good gathering of familiar faces at the hut: Dot, Jim and Terry; Barry and Ann Rodgers; Dave Makin; Pete McArthur; Dave Birkett and Mary, together with a couple of Mary's friends from South Africa.

Barry and Ann headed for Scout Crag to climb a route on each of Lower, Middle and Upper Scout. Dot, Jim and Terry decided on White Ghyll and the rest of us plodded up Stickle Ghyll and geared up at the foot of Pavey Ark. The overcast skies threatened rain but the only dampness felt was from the unusual humidity.

The rock was drying nicely but the East Buttress was streaked with run off so routes were chosen carefully. However as soon as we stood still to study the guide book, a cloud of midges descended and I was soon jumping around like a lunatic attempting to escape their ferocious menaces. After a week of experiencing the Scottish variety of midge, Neil and I decided to beat a hasty retreat to White Ghyll. The hardier climbers in our party persisted – Pete and Dave Makin made an ascent of Stoa's Crack and Dave, Mary and friends tackled some E3s and E4s further to the left.

Thankfully, White Ghyll was a midge free zone and we were greeted by Dot, Jim and Terry, who were about to set off up the Slabs, Route 1, on the Upper Crag. We plumped for The Gordian Knot first off, a tremendous three pitch route, which weaves its way up a slabby wall and an imposing hanging corner.

Our next objective was Forget-Me-Not, on the sweep of slabs to the left of White Ghyll Chimney. The climbing was delicate in places but the angle was pleasant. I even had a rare lead!

We then turned our attention to Man of Straw, a three star E1, lower down the Ghyll. It is described in the guide book as a "delightful climb which is quite sustained but never desperate unless confidence in your feet starts to evaporate". Neil made it look a breeze, but confidence in my feet evaporated almost immediately and I teetered my

way up the top section, cursing Neil's excellent nut placements as I struggled to remove them. As I glanced across to my left, I saw another club member, Angela Soper, dancing gracefully up Waste Not Want Not, the next route along.

"I can't get this nut out!" I shouted up to Neil, "You will have to abseil down to retrieve it, it won't budge".

"Calm down and look at how it went in, it's easy", replied Neil despairingly.

I continued to berate Neil for a further ten minutes, and wasted all my flagging energy yanking at the wire while my legs shook. I was definitely not graceful!

I gave up and finished the route faintly embarrassed in the realisation that we had just had one of those "couples who climb" moments, which always raise a chuckle among fellow climbers.

Once Neil had abseiled down for the gear, we sensibly decided to call it a day and spent the evening with the other Ratti climbers recounting our adventures in the New DG over a few beers.

Thanks to Dave M for organising a very successful and well attended meet, but no midges next time please!



Left to right: Dot, Mary's South African friends, Dave Makin, Pete, Mary, Dave Birkett, Jim, Barry, Ann, Neil and Terry.

*The Pennine Way celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2005 – on 24 April 1965 thousands of people gathered on Malham Moor for the official launch. This is Anne's reflections of a trip along the Way ten years later.*

## Reflections on the Pennine Way 1975

by Anne Wallace

THOUGHTS of not having been to Scotland for a number of years were combined with knowing that a continuous walking route had opened in 1965. The result was that I decided to head for Derbyshire and walk north.

The shop in town that sold OS maps had Tom Stephenson's book. A flick through showed that it gave the line but only some of the surrounding countryside.

A number of maps were already in my possession from various wanderings over the years. Thinking about not getting in at a Youth Hostel and there being no campsite nearby led to buying a few more. They may be necessary if directed to a campsite or B & B some way off route. A read of the book and look at the maps gave a rough idea of how much to do on any one day.

Now, there have been alterations over the years. Some sections have been re-routed. The location of a few Youth Hostels may have changed somewhat. This is a story of what happened 30 years ago.

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Right, I was ready for the day to take the trains to Edale.

It turned out to be the start of a heatwave with temperatures over 25°C (shorts and T-shirt were worn for the next couple of weeks). Maybe a good thing as the weight was cut down by taking only the flysheet and one change of top clothing. There were a few changes of stockings. The rest of me might be OK with a bit of muck and grime but I intended to take good care of my feet.

The night at the campsite was marred by lack of sleep. A group of lads arrived late and continued to make a lot of noise. The police were called. The lads had to leave first thing next morning.

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The day to Crowden YH was notable for two things: A bad stomach after drinking a brew made with water that was supposed to be OK (the walkers I stopped to chat with while they made the brew com-

mented on an odd smell); Not being able to have a shower after stomping over the peat groughs, because the spring water was in short supply. (This was the first of a number of times when only a wash was possible).

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More peat bog (well, what else around here) with the only landmarks being roads, Winter Hill station, and the "Aiggin Stone", which is just beyond the trig pillar of Blackstone Edge.

Along service roads by reservoirs, easier going. "Plenty of water for the city and towns but little for those up here", was my thinking.

The stop for the night was to be at Mankinholes YH. The steps of a pack horse trail lead towards it.

On the horizon stood Stoodley Pike, a monument to commemorate the peace after the battle of Waterloo. I could hardly believe my eyes at the path took me closer to it. Oh boy! Is it big!

The Way descends from here towards Hebden Bridge but as I was going the youth hostel, I retraced steps and picked up the route in the valley next day.

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The going to Earby YH was very enjoyable. The Bronte sisters lived only a few miles from "Withins". The ruin was never a mansion by any stretch of the imagination but arguably the inspiration for "Wuthering Heights".

On over Ickornshaw Moor, which takes its name from the Norse for squirrel.

I was wondering what the landscape must have looked like over 1,000 years ago.

Everybody living, or working, where the route went that day passing the time of day for however long the conversation lasted – asking for a fill-up of water from one lady and being given a glass of orange cordial as well – lovely!

The day might have ended with a downside, for, although the Youth Hostel warden would let me stay, he could only offer a couple of common room chairs to sleep on. He later said that a campbed had been made available. Thank goodness for that!

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The next day was only an 11-mile walk to Malham but it was hot going.

I had passed the double bridge which carries the A59 over the Leeds and Liverpool canal. The lower bridge supports the upper bridge, Worth seeing if it has not been demolished for some road scheme.

Somewhere between Gargrave and Kirby Malham, a man came up and said that the temperature was 90°F (33°C). My reply was "I can well believe it". The shirt was on to prevent sunburn and I stopped at a pub for a cooling lager.

The Youth Hostel would not be open for some hours. So, I thought to pass a while looking at the display in the Information Office. That was impossible because of sweat running down my face, into eyes and blurring vision for quite a time. Yes, that was a scorcher.

Well, the Malham area is one of the places where a motley of people with interests in earth and natural sciences have been wandering about before anyone was routinely dangling from walls. The plan was to spend the next day going around the area just looking at what was growing.

I was one of the first in the Youth Hostel queue and was given a cancelled place for two nights.

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The heatwave showed no sign of letting up and thought was given to carrying the flysheet, cooking gear and sleeping bag, in it. If there were no places at Youth Hostels there would be B & Bs nearby. If some distance away, I had maps. So, a hitch off route should get me shelter for the night.

A hitch was obtained to where the parcel could be posted to Middleton-in-Teesdale Post Office. Another hitch back to continue the walk.

Fountains Fell lying long against the sky and there, beautiful Pen-y-ghent with its steep rocky path on the last section. Although the day was a fine one, there were times on that last bit when I had to clutch the rock for the wind was blowing strongly. Descending took me past the pot where some visitors were being winched down on a chair for a fee, which was going to a charity.

The Way goes to Horton-in-Ribblesdale but the nearest hostel was at Stainforth. I waited by its columns but was disappointed to hear that no places were available. The tentage was posted ahead. So, the only thing to do was to walk back and look for B & B. A local policeman returning home from work saw me and gave a lift with directions for

Mrs C's house. He must have seen this kind of thing many times before.

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It was a bit cloudy and breezy for the walk along a green road to Hawes.

Tuesdays were market days, good style. I had arrived at lunch time. Far too early to wait by the Hostel.

It was the first time I had tried Theakstons, while talking with some farmers who had come in for market. I am not sure how the warden was persuaded to let me in but I did learn to treat that beer with due respect.

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Visitors to Hawes are recommended to see Hardraw Force. It is on the way out, behind the Green Dragon. As there was said to be little water coming over at that time, I just went past.

It was up along the long shoulder of Great Shunner Fell before dropping into tranquil scenes as Thwaite and Swaledale came into view.

Keld Youth Hostel is just over a mile to the left along a road but this approach was not taken. Instead it was to go right, then, turn around Kisdon to reach what was aptly described as a simple Hostel.

Could it be? Strains of Wagner emanating from the direction of Kisdon Force, were coming from a walker taking advantage of the only bathing facility available.

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The camping stuff had been sent to Middleton-in-Teesdale Post Office. The intention was to get there before it closed, which I thought might be 1630 hours.

It was along the moor to Tan Hill, where the highest pub in England is. The chipping-covered track leading to Trough Heads may be fine for four-wheel drive vehicles but I found it uncomfortable after softer ground.

The guide suggested an alternative route to Bowes and then over Sledden Brow. However, this would miss God's Bridge. Here, the bed of limestone has been undercut, leaving a natural walkway over the River Greta.

Then it was over the A66, one of the Roman roads, followed by easy walking to Middleton.

The Postmaster responded to my enquiry about a tent, etc, as though

he was involved in a new experience. It seemed he could hardly believe his eyes as packing materials were bought and the bundle divided. The flysheet and cooking stuff could be sent home, for I reckoned that somewhere to sleep would be found. The sleeping bag was going ahead in case the nights became cool.

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The next day was a semi-rest day.

Time to enjoy the scenery while walking along the river. Field and woodland abounded with life. Berries were plucked from bushes and the Tees splashed by. There were people ambling along with whom to have conversations.

Low Force was passed. Then, High Force was reached. The river has cut back through beds of limestone and shale until the harder Whin Sill has been reached. The brown Tees plunges 70ft over the edge of the rocks. Wonderful landscape beneath our feet.

The night was spent at Langdon Beck. A few people there were wondering how much longer the good weather would last. It seemed as though there may be a change. For, far over in the NW sky there was darkening and sheet lightning made silver flashes over there.

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30 years ago the Youth Hostel was not at Dufton but at Knock, some mile away. That was where I was heading next. The scenery along the way was spectacular.

It was a case of twinkle toeing across the boulders below Falcon Clints, while thinking about tickling for trout in the river. Next, was the massive cascade of Cauldron Snout, the outfall of a reservoir. A couple who had been seen around came up about here and we walked on together. They were handing our glucose sweets as the conversation was of one thing, or another. Then we saw the splendour of High Cup Nick.

"I don't believe it," said he to her.

"Truly incredible," said she to him. "What caused it?"

"Glaciation," was the reply.

Leaving some half-an-hour later, we cast many a backward glance into the horseshoe cleft.

There was no room at the hostel. So, it was back to the village to enquire about B & B. I was directed to Mrs A. "Have you room for one woman for one night?"

"Yes, it is two pounds."

"I'll take it. Is there anywhere in the village where I can get an evening meal, or does the pub do bar snacks?"

"I do an evening meal but if you only want bed and breakfast it will be less than two pounds."

Elation! A double bed to roam around after resting active limbs on restrictive bunks. A meal at one the best laid tables I could remember since childhood. Days of my mother's home-baked steak pies, angel cakes and trifle treats, all rolled into one.

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The following day it was up that landmark, seen so often from far off, of Cross Fell.

Some will say that Blue John stone can only be found around Castleton but land movement has led to mineral rocks, including blue fluorspar, being accessible on the way along Alston Moor.

That evening, two men seen on Cross Fell came into the pub. One of them had given up his job to walk from Land's End to John O'Groats. He was five weeks into his journey.

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The walk up the valley from Alston towards Greenhead is very pleasant. Going for much of the time along a path with views over the Tees.

As I was having a bite to eat by the B6292, a man came over. His parents lived nearby but he had moved away. He asked if I had enough water and offered to fill the bottle when I said that I was a bit low.

He had known many people to veer off course on the way up Ulpham and wander about marshy ground. His advice was to pass a roofless barn before heading for a bridge.

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I suppose we all know of Hadrian's Wall. Built on a north facing escarpment of Whin Sill, with walls about 15ft high and a ditch in front, to mark the boundary of the military zone. Milecastles along its length. Gateways just wide enough to control the flow of wheeled traffic. Forts behind.

The first 8 miles were up and down as the crest was followed. The rest of the route to Bellingham, away from the wall, was easy. Well reasonable so, since a blister had started to form on my right heel the day before. It had been patched up and gave no great problem.

Notes made soon after give that: A cow appeared over a brow;

hotly persued by a bull; thankfully he was more interested in chasing her than me. Round there, the farmers had the white cattle which were much less aggressive than the livestock I was used to seeing.

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The walk had taken me over much ground. There were only a couple of days to go before the end would be reached. These were my thoughts as I passed through the lower land towards Byrness.

The vegetation was more diverse than had been seen up to this point. A variety of colours caught the eye as I made my way through meadows. However, the last bit through forestry plantation was a bit boring.

Just as I reached the destination, heavy rain came down. Bicycles, rucksacks and people filled the entry by the Youth Hostel. Some, seeking a less draughty place, bolted for the Information Office.

That night the lights went out. Power was restored only to go again later. The warden went around explaining to those who did not know what was happening that the thunderstorm and heavy rain were affecting supply. It was a night of lanterns.

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The weather had seemed set to turn for a few days. However, what rain there had been had fallen after the day's destination was reached, or during the night. Now, on the last day things were to be different. It did not rain all day but when it did, it was known about.

A thin mist drifted about the forest as I headed up the firebreak and toward the watchtower. A bleary-eyed head peered out from a canvas draped over the half-walled structure. I thought, "no wonder you didn't get much sleep with the forces of nature crashing and banging all around you."

At the remains of a Roman camp at Chew Green, a lad who had been seen at times on and off the walk came up. He asked if we could walk together since he did not like to be out alone on a day with lightning about.

On and on through the boggy land of the Cheviot Hills. Over Lamb Hill and Windy Gyle to Auchope Cairn. Here there is the option of going right to bag The Cheviot but on that soaking day it was given a miss.

The steep descent from Auchope Cairn led to a shelter in the form of an old railway wagon (goods). The Land's End-John O'Groats man

was inside making a brew. His invitation to have a cup, or two, was accepted with thanks.

Then it was off for the final stretch to Kirk Yetholm.

All I wanted was a bed and meal; have a few beers; maybe get into conversation; maybe not, just have a quiet drink.

Well, there was talk going on about having done the Way and how long it took, whether it was continuous, or, at intervals. Sat at the bar, I was a casual observer to whatever was going on.

Then the lad I had walked with that day, until the thunderstorm ceased, came in. He said that both himself and myself had just finished.

Now the next bit, I did hesitate over answering for the questions were, "How many days did it take you? Were you alone?" and people were looking in my direction.

It was not a case of blasting up 250, or so, miles of pathways. Thought had been given to a likely days travel in order to reach a place to spend the night. The purpose had been to wander up a series of hills and end up in Scotland. That having been done and enjoyed was all that mattered.

## Tour de France 2004: Stage 10 Limoges to Saint Flour

By Dominic Sinnett

WHY write about the Tour de France in a climbing journal? Well, stage 10 of the 2004 tour was the first mountain stage of the race, 149 miles across the Massif Central and the volcanoes of the Auvergne after a week or so of relatively flat racing from Belgium to Brittany. And with over 4000 metres of height gain, a lot more climbing than even the longest day's Munroing! This was the stage chosen for the 'Etape du Tour', the annual stage opened up to enthusiastic amateurs, hoping to emulate the feats of the professionals. So it was that I found myself lining up in the chilly July dawn on the start line in Limoges with some 7000 or so other cyclists.

I had flown out to France a couple of days previously with over 30 other cyclists from in and around Ilkley. We were all customers or friends of the owners of the bike shop where I had bought my racer after foot and mouth had temporarily put paid to mountain biking. We were all rather apprehensive because of the strict regulations governing the Etape, one of which was the stipulation that the first 30km had to be covered at an average of 18mph, otherwise there would be compulsory elimination. When, at 6.30 am, the race got going, it took me nearly 15 minutes to cross the start line, and the occasional sound of exploding high-pressure inner tubes was distinctly unnerving. We were riding 7 or 8 abreast on *routes départementales* with shouts of 'attention' or 'à gauche' as faster riders tried to squeeze past on the verges. The roads of course were closed to normal traffic, just as in the Tour itself, with gendarmes standing at every junction, and an amazing number of spectators cheering people on, even in the misty twilight at 7 in the morning. I pressed on, looking out for the magic 30km marker and the end of the *zone d'élimination*.

Before signing up for the Etape, I had never ridden together with lots of other riders, so an important part of my preparation for the event had been the training rides that were organized from the shop on Sunday mornings in the six months before the event. It was while on these rides up to Wensleydale, over to Hebden Bridge and Pendle Hill or out towards Castle Howard, through rain and snow and into biting nor' easterlies, that I picked up the useful skill of riding in a fast-moving bunch. Safely through the 30km point, without hearing the

broom wagon rumbling behind, I came to the first climb of the day, the Mont Gargan. You could see through the mist a ribbon of brightly coloured riders winding its way up through the trees ahead. Living in Pudsey you get used to riding uphill. I found I wasn't doing too badly as other riders slowed dramatically every time the road steepened, and I soon reached the top.

The next target was the first feed station at Egletons, some 70 miles in, and still short of the half way point. In training in the spring we had started off with some 70-80 mile rides before pushing it up to one very long but flat 127 mile ride through the Vale of York to Easingwold. That was the only time in my life that I had done the magic hundred on a bike. On this stage, the serious climbing, up to the 1589m col of the Puy Mary, didn't come until over 100 miles in. So when I got to the first feed station to refill my bidons and eat as much bread and cheese and dried figs as I could swallow, I was under no illusions as to the difficulties ahead as we set off again.

The organisers of the Tour were hoping that this stage would encourage some aggressive racing and challenges to the dominance of Lance Armstrong. It didn't work out like that, as the peloton stayed together with the exception of a single breakaway which was allowed to win the stage. But there was plenty of aggressive riding on the Etape, especially on the downhills where gravel covered hairpins and narrow bridges made descending at 40+mph a hair-raising experience! After dropping steeply into the gorge of the Dordogne it was a succession of long slogs as we climbed relentlessly for 20 miles. Most of us had a bad moment around this time. By the time I got to the last 2km of the big climb, the 1st category Puy Mary, most of the field were off and pushing up the 1 in 5. I managed to ride it, out of the saddle, knees popping, in my lowest gear. I frankly disbelieved the sign promising 'sommet à 1 km' when you could see the road snaking up apparently miles above your head. I also shouldn't have believed the enthusiastic spectators shouting 'bravo' and implying the worst was behind me.

The scenery of the volcanoes was spectacular, quite unlike the Alps or Pyrenees, more reminiscent of the Cheviots or Howgills. There wasn't much time to enjoy it though. The sign indicating the summit of Plomb du Cantal said 9km. I glanced at my trip computer, which was hovering between 5 and 6 mph. Another hour of toil in bottom gear. I had found some good long hills to train on in Northumberland and in the Pennines, but the UK has nothing to match this kind of soul-destroy-

ing climbing. Once beyond the col long lines of cyclists began to form as people drafted to save tired legs for the 20 or so miles to the stage finish. I enjoyed building up a bit of speed again, and as we rounded the last bend in St Flour I found the energy to sprint up the straight avenue to the Arrivée banner.

My official time was 10h13'56" for the 149 miles, although my trip computer read 9 hours 20, so I must have spent a lot of time sitting around at the feed stations! I was pleased to finish 3681st. Three days later the pros raced the same stage. The stage winner, with a Bastille Day tear in his eye, was controversial Frenchman Richard Virenque. His time was a minute over six hours.



## Michael Lomas

1945 - 2004

CLUB Members were saddened by the death in June 2004 of Mike Lomas.

Mike had been an active member of ARCC for nearly forty years and served on the Management Committee as Club Treasurer for over 15 years.

Mike suffered a brain tumour in Autumn 2000 and during the last four years his courage and resolve in coping with his illness were matched only by Jean who cared for him until the end.

On happier thoughts he will be remembered for his considerable energy and commitment whether at working weekends, Bishop's Walks or other club activities but particularly for his support on the many Bob Graham rounds in the mid 80s when Mike's unstinting efforts on behalf of others certainly compromised his own attempt which narrowly failed.

Mike met Jean on one of the Club's meets and it was thought that during his early friendship that Cupid's arrow had been despatched when he was observed at the Refuge in Argentiére returning from the refectory with double portions of soup, main course and dessert. Sadly for the romantics Mike proceeded to sit alone enabling him to fully despatch both meals to his satisfaction. Jean at that time was allowed to fend for herself. Mike redeemed himself when they were married in June 1991.

Those who attended the summer meets in France will never forget the sight of Mike fully dressed in running vest and shorts at a height of 8,000ft on the snow covered Col de la Seigne waxing lyrically on some topic or other to fully equipped but shivering walkers from Holland.

Whilst we can no longer look forward to being trapped by Mike to discuss the merit of double entry bookkeeping or Chancellor's latest budget we shall cherish the memories of Mike in singlet, shorts and neckerchief running over the hills.

The Club is poorer for the loss of a dedicated member and good friend.

Our condolences to Jean.



## Joyce Foster

JOYCE Foster was a popular and active member of our club for more years than most members would care to remember. Her death after a short illness on 3 October last year came as a great shock to her family and her many friends.

Joyce was brought up and went to school in Blackpool. Her first connection with future members of the ARCC came when she was at the Collegiate Blackpool girl's grammar school. The school had a wall dividing it from St Joseph's College which many lads attended who were members of the CBA, the organisation from which ARCC sprung. It was in conversations over the school wall with people like Tom Carroll that she first got to know the people that she was to meet again in the Langdale valley and introduce her to the club.

From her earliest years Joyce had a great quest for adventure which took her to the Langdale valley when she was 16. This soon led to her meeting up with John and becoming, as she so often told us, a child bride. Her two children Mike and Keith came along shortly afterwards and the family were regular users of Bishops scale in the early sixties.

Joyce was a dedicated member of ARCC and the club has much to thank her for. Along with John she put a great deal of work in to the development of Tyn-Twr, our club hut in Snowdonia.

When the family lived in Billinge Joyce was involved in running a play group. She was very fond of children and keen to get them out in the countryside and on the mountains. Dot Wood has asked me to mention that Joyce knew all the best spots to take the kids and that she is still taking children to the places Joyce introduced her to.

When the boys grew up and went their own way Joyce parted from John and moved back to Blackpool to be near her parents. In Blackpool she worked as the practice manager at the surgery in Glastonbury Avenue. From her new base in Blackpool she renewed her friendships with the mountaineers from the Fylde that she had known in the early days.

Joyce now had the opportunity to pursue her quest for adventure. She climbed a good number of the Munros in Scotland, completed walks in the Alps and went trekking in the Himalayas on a number of occasions.

When walking became more difficult for her she continued her travels to interesting places all over the world. The list of places she visited includes the Galapagos Islands, China, Machu Picchu and many other places too numerous to list.

As an ARCC member she helped many younger members and introduced many to the club and to the hills. Joyce was to many members a valued and loyal friend.

For the last 10 or more years she has been warden of our Beckstones Hut. She has overseen the development of this hut and made it a very comfortable place. Not just with comfy chairs but a place where people feel welcome. I hope that we can do justice to her memory by maintaining this ethos at Beckstones.

Joyce was a spiritual person. She was not a Catholic but she had a great respect for the catholic faith.

She knew more about Mgr Achille Ratti (later Pope Pius XI) than most if not all other club members and she had twice cycled to Santiago de Compostela.

Joyce had an interest in and respect for Buddhism. She had a great concern for the plight of the Buddhist monks and nuns imprisoned by the Chinese in Tibet. She went on marches in London to draw attention to the condition of these people.

The funeral service for Joyce was held in Blackpool at the Catholic church of Saint John Vianney. There was a considerable congregation at the service that represented all the facets of her life including friends from her early mountaineering years, work friends from Billinge and Blackpool and members of ARCC.

Joyce will be missed by her friends and particularly by her brother Alan, her two sons Mike and Keith and by her grandchildren.



### **Father Tom Walsh**

ALSO during 2004 we recorded the death of Fr Tom Walsh who was our club chaplain in the late 50s and early 60s. At the time he was an active member, who I am sure older members will remember. Fr Tom goes back to the very origins of the club, having been in the Catholic Boys Association (CBA), founded by Bishop Pearson at St Cuthbert's, Blackpool. The Requiem Mass was held at the Cathedral, Lancaster, and a number of club members were present.