



Edinburgh
October 2009

Dear members,

Newsletter – Autumn 2009

welcome to the autumn newsletter. On the following pages are reports on the year's meets, details of forthcoming meets, and articles by members on their recent mountaineering exploits.

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Cherry-picking sea stacks

Routes

Old Man of Stoer, Original Route VS 5a ****, 65m, 21 June 2008

Old Man of Hoy, Original Route E1 5b ***, 135m, 17 August 2009

Old Man of Stoer

Last year Ruth persuaded me that we really ought to do the Old Man of Stoer. This did seem like a good idea - in Scottish Rock Climbs the Original Route has 4 stars, and is described as 'a superb VS'. So, last June we headed off up north to the Naismith Hut in Elphin, and then off to the lighthouse at Stoer Point. From there, an easy walk across moorland brought us to the stack - a spectacular sight from the cliff-top - then a steep, slightly scrambly walk led us down to a large rock platform directly across from the stack.

We were now faced with the main difficulty - the Tyrolean traverse. Neither of us had set up one of these before, but on the basis of



First view of the Old Man of Stoer on the walk -in.



View from the cliff top.

successfully constructing what I felt was a remarkably realistic, 2 metre, Tyrolean between some chairs in Ruth's living room in about 5 minutes flat, after half a bottle of wine, I was convinced that we had mastered the technique. Also, we were carrying enough ropes (static, dynamic and tatty), pulleys, rope-men and other accoutrements to open a small climbing shop, so how could we fail? We had decided that Ruth would do the swim and I would adopt a managerial role, i.e. I would stand around and watch (of course, this was because Ruth had a wet-suit and I didn't - nothing to do with me not wanting to get wet, or drown). She did this with what seemed remarkable ease to me, and I was then faced with the task of connecting together all the bits we had brought into a 20 metre Tyrolean that was going to have to get me across. Inspired by not wanting to get wet, or drown, I managed this relatively successfully. Of course, I had complete faith in it, but I did send across a fairly heavy rucksack first to test things out. When that worked, and I was unable to think of any other reasons to procrastinate, I was forced to cross over myself. I did this with a certain amount of trepidation, but I made it unscathed. Now all we had to do was the climb.



Ruth at the summit

There is a lot of information about the climb in various guides and on the internet, so I won't go into it much here. Most guides say that there is one 5a pitch on the route, they just don't agree on which one it is! Personally, I felt that both pitches 1 and 3 were 5a (we did 5 pitches - some guides run our pitches 1 and 2 together so only have 4 in total). Anyway, whatever the grades, the climbing was excellent. Exposed and exciting but not desperate, on good rock and well protected. The 4th pitch, although straightforward, was particularly exciting, being a traverse across an undercut ledge, with a view straight back down to the channel and the Tyrolean rope. All in all, the

route thoroughly deserves the 4 stars. We even had good weather, until the final pitch when the wind began rising towards gale force.

Due to the rising gale we didn't hang around long on the summit. From the summit it is possible to abseil straight back down to the starting platform on 60m ropes - you can line yourself up above your Tyrolean rope to figure out where to start (slightly daunting abseil, in mid-air for quite a bit of the way). Having watched a party make a complete hash of getting down on 50m ropes, I would say: don't even think of doing it on 50m ropes.

Unfortunately, we arrived back at the platform to find that the tide had come in and 6 foot waves were sweeping up the channel, driven by the gale force wind, and crashing across the platform - and had swept Ruth's wet suit away! Fortunately, the rest of the gear was still there, so I rapidly sped back across the Tyrolean (getting hit by the waves, so I ended up getting wet after all, but at least I didn't drown), and dragged all the gear back, and then dragged Ruth back through the waves on the end of the rope. Despite the slightly frantic ending, it was a tremendous day out, which we celebrated with a bottle of wine back at the hut at about midnight.

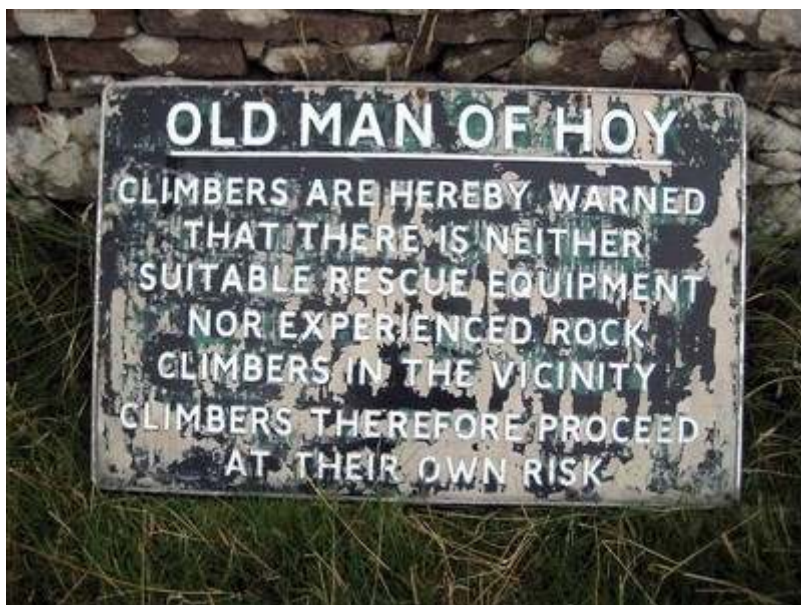
Old Man of Hoy

Having successfully bagged what seemed to be the premier British sea stack I felt confident that I could rest on my laurels (whatever they are) and would not be called upon to go anywhere near the sea, or another sea stack, again. Unfortunately, rather perversely I thought, Ruth interpreted this success as meaning that we should go after the Old Man of Hoy this year. Even when I pointed out that it was a lot further away and a lot harder, she failed to see sense. I even described Tom Patey's account of doing it - it took them 3 days - why did



Me on the Tyrolean on the way back.

Ruth think we could do any better? These arguments were not treated with the degree of serious consideration I felt they deserved. In fact, I believe it was suggested I was talking nonsense.



Warning sign at the start of the walk in.

So, one Friday evening in mid August we set off on the long march northwards. We arrived in Rackwick hostel on Hoy at 7.00pm on Saturday evening. On Sunday we did the 45 minute walk round to the stack. Unfortunately, about 15 minutes before we got there a heavy drizzle started up which persisted for quite some time and meant that we could not do the climb that day. However, we had allowed ourselves a day's leeway to deal with this eventuality, so we returned to the hostel.

Monday morning dawned very damp, grey and cold - things didn't look promising! However, we headed off back to the stack and sat on the cliff top and ate

our lunch. After that, things at least seemed to be drying, so we descended to the foot of the stack (an easier descent than the Old Man of Stoer, and no Tyrolean - a ridge of rubble links the stack to the land). By the time we had geared up, a band of blue sky seemed to be spreading from the north, and although it hadn't reached us we thought we ought to go for it. Pitch 2 is the 5b pitch, so we thought that if we could get past this in the dry we might just be able to keep going if it clagged in again (we were of course climbing in our Scottish summer climbing gear - thermals, fleeces and gore-tex jackets). With this cheerful thought to buoy us up, we got going. Ruth led the initial pleasant, straightforward pitch, and I then struggled up the 2nd pitch, the 5b corner-crack. Despite being covered in fine sand this was an excellent pitch. An initial daunting but straightforward traverse across an undercut ledge, followed by steep bridging up the corner on small rounded holds, with a small and a large roof to surmount. A wide crack runs up the corner, so large friends are useful for protection. We had brought enough large friends with us to open a small climbing shop, so I happily rammed these in left, right and centre, only stopping when I ran out of quick-draws. This was, of course, slightly disconcerting, but on the positive side it meant that I was much less laden down and Ruth had to carry most of the heavy friends up the crux for me. When I emerged from the corner the sky was blue, the sun was out, the birds were singing and it was rapidly turning into a very nice day. We alternated leads thereafter to the top, with Ruth getting the final, excellent, 4c pitch up another bridging corner.



Old Man of Hoy from the ferry.

We reached the summit just after 8.00pm, and since it was getting dark soon after 9.00, we again couldn't hang around. This time the descent needs 3 abseils, and again the final one is much easier

with 60m ropes. Forget the faffing with back ropes that the guides describe for people with 50m ropes, buy yourself a pair of 60m ropes and get straight to the ground from the top of pitch 2 - you know it makes sense. After 3 slightly frantic abseils (and adding tat in various spots) we ended up back on the ground at 9.45 - in pretty dim light! Despite the slightly frantic ending, it was a tremendous day out, which we celebrated with a bottle of wine back at the hostel at about midnight ... bit of a pattern here.



Me needing a rest on the return journey for some reason.

One could summarise this route as 2 excellent pitches (2 and 5), one fun pitch (1) and 2 poor pitches (3 and 4). However, overall this was a tremendous trip and well worth doing. I will remember this for a lot longer than I would remember 4 days of cragging.

Overall, two excellent expeditions. No other stack in Scottish Rock Climbs seems as good, so there is clearly no need to do any of them, and I am going out to get those laurels before Ruth comes up with another scheme.

For anyone for anyone interested in doing this climb, see

http://www.ma.hw.ac.uk/~bryan/jmcs/om_hoy_notes.html for some notes on various aspects of the journey and the climb.



Ruth on the summit.

Our summer: Lucie's charity challenge



Our daughter Lucie (9) doesn't like just going for a walk: she needs a goal! To this end, my wife Agnès suggested to her that she could climb Ben Nevis for charity. Lucie took this as an excellent opportunity to raise money for her favourite charity (Camfed) so the target was fixed in her mind. I knew that I would have to accompany her and wanted to maintain my record of having never walked up the top half of the Tourist Path so it was necessary to find an alternative way up.

Since Lucie has done some climbing, and since I've been up the Ledge Route in winter (twice) and up (and down) it in summer, it looked like a good option, but could Lucie cope with it? As training, Lucie (and her six-year-old sister Katya) went up the Cobbler from a base camp at 550m in full Scottish summer conditions of mist, wind and greasy rock: to howls of protest, I vetoed any attempt on the Centre Peak! In the Queyras we had an excellent opportunity to test out Lucie's head for exposed situations when I spotted the "Voie Normale" up the Dent de Ratier (2661m). After a 600m approach walk, mainly up steep grass, the final 50m was a

grade III climb with three in-place carabiners and then rock spikes for slings along the summit crest. I could safely lower Lucie on the fixed gear and then abseil off myself. Lucie was calm and did what she was told (for once!) so I was happy to tackle the Ledge Route with her.

A date of "some time in August" on her charity webpage meant that the attempt had to be made on the first decent weekend after our return from France. So it was that on 8th August we arrived in a very wet Fort William with a forecast of better weather for the following day. The rain stopped at 15:30, just as we began the walk in to camp near the CIC hut, where only the base of the cliffs was below the clouds. Lucie later said that this walk was the worst bit of the weekend. Sunday was dry and windless but the clouds were no higher as we set off up towards Number 5 Gully. My biggest concern had been the first ledge (above the Curtain) and it was, indeed streaming with water. I had brought enough rope to bring Lucie up it on a belay and after a shorter wet slab that was



protected similarly, the rest of the route was thoroughly enjoyable. What is an easy scramble for an adult became a decent challenge for someone of Lucie's height—and it goes on for a long way! Eventually we topped out on the summit of Carn Dearg, where the sun immediately started to break through the cloud so the trudge over the plateau was rather more interesting than I'd feared. With no wind on the summit, we could cook our lunch in the

ruins of the observatory before the long walk back down. After having been away for 24 hours and 10 minutes, just after we got back to the car it started to rain heavily.

Camfed were delighted to hear of Lucie's story: they say they will put it up on their website and it is thanks to them that it appeared (on page 11) of the Evening News on 20th August.

Cabin Update



As most members will be aware there has been considerable progress with the Cabin refurbishment over the last year.

After being awarded a second grant from Awards for All for £10,000 work began in earnest on the project and many of the design plans originally drawn up by JMCS member Fraser have been put in place.

The main progress may be summarised as follow:

- Integration of 'Old West Bedroom' and 'Old Kitchen' into one large cooking and sitting room area with newly fitted kitchen units and electric hobs. (A decent electric oven has been kindly offered to the hut by Ruth and Simon Love and will hopefully be fitted later in the year)
- Purpose built hearth constructed in one corner of this room and the old faithful Jocks Spot wood burning stove now occupies pride of place with a large but attractive insulated flu that goes straight through the roof. (This arrangement means that there is less heat loss)
- 'Old Sitting Area' at centre of the dwelling has been separated off by a stud wall and the room divided into two independently accessed rooms, one designated as a drying room and the other a new toilet and shower. As I write the drying room remains incomplete but will hopefully be finished off at the next work meet.
- Alpine bunks (sleeping 8) constructed in 'East Bedroom' and equipped with high quality mattresses. (another smaller bedroom sleeping two has been freshly painted and is also in use)
- Twin fuse box system in place – one with a £1 coin meter and the other to support the numerous trace heaters fitted around the building.
- Fire Safety System (again it is hoped that this will be completed at the next work meet)

The bulk of this joinery work has been completed by Alan (who along with his partner Sandra is now applying for club membership!) and most of the electrical work has been done by our own Ali. Many others less technical jobs both inside and out have been undertaken by members of the club during the many work meets organised throughout the year. My thanks for everyone's support and we also gratefully acknowledge donations of furniture and equipment etc from some members.

Marketing / Publicity

The Cabin is now listed and described in the MCoFS Hut Directory and earlier in the year a short promotional piece about the hut was published in The Scottish Mountaineer. Also (thanks to Ruth and Bryan) the hut is now well documented on the club website

The Cabin is expected to be a popular hut but as much marketing as possible will now be undertaken to help attract as many bookings as possible, now that the opening of the hut is imminent.

Financial

The costs of the Cabin refurbishment have been higher than estimated (which is semi – expected). It is hoped however that sufficient funds will be available or will be found to complete the project without making undue inroads into the Clubs reserves. More financial information about the Cabin expenditure will be available in the Treasurer's report at the AGM.

Official Opening 21st November 2009 (2pm at the hut)

I hope to see as many of you as possible at the Cabin's Official Opening on the 21st November (also AGM day)

The Cabin will be declared open by landlord Richard Spencer and his wife Sally with one or two other guests present.

Refreshments will be served.

(Please see Helen's flyer also in this circular regarding possible 'Cabin warming presents ' should anyone feel inclined.....

Hope to see you there.

50 years ago: Jekkevarre, "The Mont Blanc of the North"

Extracted from the archives and illustrated



The South Lyngen peninsula looking East from the Ullsfjord with Jekkevarre the rounded summit, to the right of centre.

NORWAY, 1959.

A combined Liverpool University M.C. and Edinburgh J.M.C.S. party, consisting of H. Brunton, J. Clarkson, G. Hendry and G. Lee visited Norway for four weeks from 11th July. We crossed by boat to Bergen, then travelled 1200 miles northward to Lyngen by car, a journey over rough roads which was accomplished in $3\frac{1}{2}$ days.

We arrived in Lyngen at the start of a week of perfect weather and our first climb was a scramble up Njalavarre (5020 feet) which lies immediately above the village of Furufalten, on the east coast of South Lyngen. Then, we carried a camp up the Lyngsdal valley to a point about a mile short of the Lyngsdal Glacier and immediately below Jekkevarre (6052 feet). On our first day there, we were defeated on the S.E. ridge of the main peak, by incredible heat and loose rock. On our second day, we climbed Laurettatind by a buttress of sound rock, up to severe standard, on the N.W. face.

We had heard quite a lot about the "south face of Jekkevarre" which is up to 2500 feet high and was previously unclimbed. More accurately the south-east face, this is swept by frequent and considerable ice avalanches over most of its width. We climbed the face by a route resembling the Observatory Ridge of Ben Nevis, except at the final pitch which was very difficult. Another route climbed was the N.E. face of Balkisvarre, a route up a steep hanging glacier which went easily in the soft snow conditions then prevailing.

This area of South Lyngen ^{is} ~~was~~ full of possibilities for new face climbs giving attractive routes of a mountaineering character. Unfortunately, after our first week, the weather broke and there was a long succession of hopeless wet days. Eventually, we gave up waiting, and travelled south to the Romsdal, a very fine rock climbing area west of Trondheim. We arrived there in sunny weather, but shortly afterwards the weather broke again, and there was drizzle throughout our last week. Our only climbs were the N. face of the Romsdalshorn (5100 feet) and the N. ridge of Store Trolltind (5886 feet). Both these ascents are graded severe in the Norwegian guide book, but would be quite easy for that standard, at home. The area contains much steep sound rock and there are large areas of faces up to 4000 feet high still unclimbed. A strong British party should achieve worthwhile results here, given reasonable weather.

James Clarkson

Store Jekkevarre - Southeast Face

Climbed on 21st July, 1959, by G. Lee, J. Clarkson, H. Brunton and G. Hendry. This is the face previously described as the "south face of Jekkevarre". The line taken started almost directly below the summit of the south peak of Jekkevarre at the point where a rib of easy rock and rubble descends furthest out into the glacier. Climb this rib for about 1500 feet (easy) until it merges with a steep snowfield. Climb the snowfield diagonally leftwards to reach a rib of clean rock on the same line, and immediately left of a snow gully. The vertical face of Store Jekkevarre lies just across this gully. Rib gives pleasant climbing of moderately difficult standard. At its top, it merges into scree covered shelves leading upwards, still to the left. Eventually, shelves end above an impressive ravine. Turn upwards to right and reach summit by very difficult pitch of steep rock. Climb took six hours.



Looking North West across the upper Lyngsdal valley with the South Peak of Jekkevarre left of centre. Snout of Lyngsdal Glacier in middle ground with location of camp far right.

Balkisvarre - Northeast Face

Ascent on 24th July, 1959, by H. Brunton, G. Hendry and G. Lee. The large snow couloir containing a small hanging glacier, to the left of the main rock buttress of Balkisvarre, is little more than a long (nearly 2000 ft.) steep snow walk, given soft conditions, with the ice-fall providing interest. From the bottom bergschrund, keep right all the way up. Negotiate the ice-fall at the right edge and cross the upper bergschrund at a debris cone. Keep to the right branch of the upper couloir. Finally make towards the centre (left) for an easy exit via a snow ridge above rocks rather than via a large cornice. Time - approximately five hours. (In hard conditions much step-cutting would be required.)

All these ascents were carried out during a week of unbroken fine weather, from a camp about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles below the snout of the Lyngsdal Glacier. Although almost all the ridges in the area have now been climbed, many of the faces are still untouched, and offer a wide variety of routes of a mountaineering character. Very great technical difficulty would be fairly unusual.

BSES trip to Ladakh

I spent five weeks with 41 youths and 12 other adults this summer, lured by the prospect of a trip to the Greater Ranges. I'd call the youths 'young adults', but they were actually teenagers, or, in the vernacular of the trip, they were Young Explorers. I was a mountain leader on an expedition with the British Schools Exploring Society – www.bses.org.uk is the place to look for more information on this youth development charity.

The mountains we explored were in the Palzomphu Valley, slightly north and west of Leh, Ladakh. All of the mountain leaders had been at altitude before this trip, and the YEs (as we called them to their faces) got their first exposure to 3500m on arrival by plane into Leh. Not including the pop over the Khardung La (highest motorable pass in the world at 5360m), acclimatisation was a gradual process, largely consisting of lounging around Leh for a couple of days and walking from Hundar (3200m) to the base camp (4500m) over 4 days. Heat and sun were the major health considerations – we had nearly perfect blue skies until the last few days of the trip, so that sunburn, sunstroke and dehydration, as well as newly-found dust allergies because of the sheer quantity of dust, kept the doctors busy.



Now that's what I call conglomerate. On the walk-in from Thanglesgo to Palzomphu.

Once at base camp, the science part of the expedition kicked in and the YEs worked with the Chief Scientist – Kath Baldock, formerly a lecturer at Edinburgh Uni – and the Assistant Scientist Emily Baker to run transects across the river valley collecting data to tie in with the World Wildlife Fund's research into this remote part of Ladakh. Glacial fluviology studies were conducted, relating the depth, speed and sediment content of the glacial rivers (which were the only rivers) with meteorological conditions. Ladakh is of particular concern to climate change scientists because it is painfully subject to fluctuations in climate. The glaciers are the water source for millions and millions people, but the glaciers are receding at an incredible rate – the local government brochure given to us in the airport said that they were forecast to last only another 15 years, a gobsmacking fact. Ladakh is out of the monsoon region, so rebuilding of the glaciers by precipitation doesn't happen quickly, and in many years now, not at all.



YEs trying to identify a plant that may never have been seen before.

We even did a couple of peaks while we were up there; both had had ascents the previous year, but that's all that had trodden on them. Samgyal (5805m) and Dawa (5935m) were straightforward snowplods, once the recessional moraines were overcome. The YEs quickly found that amongst the new set of mountain skills, going up and down the hill was only part of the game – scree slopes, boulder fields and seemingly endless moraines were even more taxing.



4.30am heading up Dawa glacier, Sasser Kangri in the background.

The trip wasn't what you would call completely self-sufficient, unlike other BSES trips. We had ponies carrying our gear between camps, sherpas with us on the hills, cooking for us (I actually put on weight while on the expedition), and playing rounders with in the evenings at base camp.



Susan's group on summit of Samgyal, unclimbed peak of next mountain over visible behind them.

We spent another week slowly walking back out the Thanglesgo Valley to Leh, crossing over the Lasirmu La (5500m) – which one of the Sherpas did in his Crocs just to prove a point (although he was wearing some incredibly thick socks) - and the Sanitse La (4200m) before dropping back into the comparatively very green Leh. Two days in Delhi before the flight back to Heathrow and my high-altitude haemoglobin levels were tested by running up the 5-floor staircase at the Delhi YMCA and not getting out of breath.

Returning home, arriving in Edinburgh and stepping outside the airport at the end of August, I had apparently arrived on a day that was unusual in this August in that it wasn't raining. But it was cool and green and indescribably, unbelievably lovely, a very pleasant homecoming. Shame that my garden hadn't weeded itself while I was away.

Riglos, Spain

Present:

- Patrick
- Bryan

Inspired by photographs and an article in a Climber magazine a few years ago Bryan and I finally journeyed to Riglos in Northern Spain, which lies about 150 miles west of Barcelona, just south of the Pyrenees.



Riglos village, and the towers. Mallo Fire: on left; Mallo Pison: obvious main wall in centre; Visera: overhanging wall on right.

Riglos is an extremely impressive place. The climbing is on unrelentingly steep pillars, (typically 1000ft) of conglomerate rock, welded together (or so we are assured) in a sandstone matrix. The sandstone and limestone cobbles range in size from small potatoes to space hoppers and all looks most improbable as far as climbing is concerned, but during the week we never managed to pull anything out despite our mistrust of these holds! The atmospheric climbing here is enhanced by griffon vultures circling overhead or sometimes below us.

We were quite fortunate with the weather and climbed everyday. The climbs are equipped with bolts but nuts and friends came in useful as the in situ protection was often quite spaced. The climbing is exposed and strenuous but on fairly positive holds. A common feature on these climbs is the pancha or belly, a bulge that must be surmounted on usually good hand holds above, but little for the feet below so a bit of desperate thrutching was often required!

Perhaps the best climb we did was **Los Mosquitos** 6B on a stunning leaning tower known as El Visera (the Visor). A series of steep interesting corners culminated in a thrilling wall traverse, and finally a steep headwall. On some of the climbs in this sector the rock is so overhanging that at belays the climbers let the ropes dangle down in space!



Mallo Pison leaning above the village.



Patrick and Bryan on the summit of the Mallo Pison.

Accommodation was in a guest house in the village just below the crags. In fact we were so close to the climbs that we usually geared up in our room and then walked to the start of our route in less than five minutes! We had hoped to buy a guide book from the local bar but the guide book we discovered was out of print and the local bar closed all week. Not to worry as we had some topos with us and ate and drank quite well each night at the local refugio for about €15 each.

On one of the days we made a round trip of about 150 miles to revisit **Terradets** (see Trip Report - Costa Dorada 2007) to tackle the classic **Smoking** 6B,

a six pitch route on the huge wall of **Paret de Bagasses** on immaculate limestone. A great climb which left us exhilarated and drained in about equal measure!

All in all another great climbing holiday!

The routes we did are as follows

- **El Puro**, 260m, 5b
- **Murciana** (first 2 pitches), 80m 5b
- **Pany Haus**, 300m, 5a (one A0 move) plus Normal: col to summit
- **Adamelo**, 170m, 5b
- **Mosquitos**, 270m, 5b

(see the first photo; dashed lines on the photo means the route went round the back):



Three of the famous vultures cruising past.

50 years ago: The Club Weekend Meets 1959

The 3rd volume of the club log book covers 1958 through to 1977. With no Forth Road Bridge, no motorways and no ski road, blasting up the A9 for day trips to the Northern Corries was not an option in 1959. The club's weekend meet program reflects this fact with a considerable focus on the Central Highlands, in particular Glen Coe.

Glen Coe	17 th to 18 th January
Kinlochleven & Glen Coe	14 th to 15 th February
Glen Coe	27 th February to 1 st March
Aviemore	14 th to 15 th March
Spean Bridge & Fort William	18 th to 20 th April
Glen Coe	9 th to 10 th May
Glen Coe	13 th to 14 th May
Glen Coe	15 th to 16 th June

Winter Weekend Meets

<u>KINLOCHLEVEN & GLEN COE FEBRUARY 14TH/15TH.</u>	
Good weather - Good attendance, both welcome.	
S. WATT A. M. KENZIE S. FERRIER MRS B. FERRIER S. CAIRD R. JONES	Stob Coire a' Chairn, An Garbhannach Na Gnuagaichean Dorral Arda - Stob Coire nan Lochan
R. STEWART S. STEWART A. STEWART D. GORDON C. MC PHERSON R. SWANSTON	Bidean nan Binn via Gully right of Church Door Butters Curved Ridge. Buachaille E.M. & Tops.
MISS H. CLARK W. STODDART D. LAMONT P. CHISHAM A. DUNZAN W. WALLACE S. RUSSELL	Sheeving Meal & Bhuidh
J. MARSHALL J. STENHOUSE D. HASTON	Loch Valley & Broad Gully.
D. LEAVER G. TISO MRS. S. BROWN P. BROWN M. FLEMING J. WADDELL A. BARCLAY C. MC PHERSON R. SWANSTON	Crowberry Gully, Buachaille E.M. & 3 Tops. Curved Ridge, Buachaille Etive Mhor & 2 Tops. Attempted Aqap Groove - iced up.
D. HARDY MISS E. KENNEDY	Stob Coire nan Lochan via Gully left of Church Door Butters
"YETI"	

Although this meet and all the other meets in 1959 were bus meets, one member certainly did have a car back in those days and it would appear to have been put to great use by several club members during February 1959. Exactly one week prior to this meet, four club members ploughed their way north up the A9 in Graham Tiso's car – destination Creagh Meagaidh. Graham Tiso was only away for the weekend and made the 1st ascent with Jimmy Marshall of Smith's Gully on the Saturday. In "Cold Climbs" Jimmy Marshall wrote "we others were out for a week and jumping fit" - referring to himself, Jim Stenhouse and Dougal Haston. The trio brought to a close the Creagh Meagaidh leg of their holiday with a 1st ascent of 59 Face Route, while Graham Tiso returned to Edinburgh for another week of work before he again headed off for the hills on the club meet to Kinlochleven & Glen Coe on the 14th & 15th February 1959.

Hitch hiking was the next mode of transport for the trio as they headed for the Ben and further 1st ascents; this time of Minus Two & Hesperides Ledge before joining the club meet and their transport back to Edinburgh. As the SMC Glen Coe guide & meet report records, the trio's last 1st ascent of their holiday was Right Edge on Lost Valley Buttress on Bidean.

Exactly one year on from this meet the JMCS bus meet to Glen Coe came into play once again to provide the transport back to Edinburgh at the end of another one of Jimmy Marshall's winter week holidays; this time it was to the Ben, and this time accompanied by Robin Smith. As in 1959 a collection of 1st ascents were made including Minus Three, Smith's Route and Orion Direct. In Robin Smith essay "The Old Man and the Mountains" where he records an account of this week he brings the essay to a close with "Late in the Sunday afternoon I ran my pack over the CMD arête and the lowest pass in the Mamores for a lift on the JMCS bus from Glen Coe to Edinburgh. James went down the Allt a' Mhuillin and round by the road on his thumb, but then he's getting old".

So back to 1959; conditions during the first half of February 1959 would appear to have been pretty good, however, the entry in the log book for the meet at the end of the month sounds all too very familiar to any Scottish winter mountaineer.

GLENCOE FEBRUARY 27th - MARCH 1st

This should have been the annual long week to Aenis, however to start with it was very poorly attended and secondly the weather was more than usually inclement - A last was called at Glencoe.

Summer Weekend Meets

The Coe provided the venue for the three summer weekend meets and the log book entry for the first of these records good weather and a good turnout with a range of activities by those on the meet. Miss J Ross managed to fit in ski-ing at the White Corries, so hanging on to the winter of 1959 just that bit longer.

GLENCOE 9th - 10th MAY

A perfect weekend at last. Blazing sun cloudless sky - much skin should be lost after this.

A. PATERSON C. McPHERSON J. CLACKSON R. PHILLIPS S. WADDELL K. MURRAY	AGASS GROOK. SLANTING GROOVE. 1/2 CHACHAN GULLY - SATURDAY. QUIVER RIB. ROWANTREE WALL. ARCHER RIDGE.
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MISS G. LEACH	
MISS E. MORRISON	
MISS E. STRACHAN	
MISS S. TIBBITS	AONACH EAGACH
S. KERMACK	
M. GUEST	
S. POTTER	
R. FORSTH	BIDEAN NAM BIAN
S. KINROSS	
I. FRASER	GREAT GULLY . BUACHAILLE RIDGE
M. BONE	LOWER BOW , QUIVER RID
MISS S.	STOB COIRE NAM BEITH . BIDEAN NAM BIA
D. GORDON	BOWSTRING.
A. STEWART	AONACH DUBH.
MISS M. BILLING	
A. BARCLAY	
B. EARLE	BIDEAN NAM BIAN
R. SWANSON	FROM HONTS IN WEST VALLEY
S. CAIRD	
MISS S. ROSS	SKIING MEALL A' BHURIDH
	"YETI"

The next meet was once again blessed with good weather and an equally good turn out with 21 attending. Ascents were made of No.3 Buttress on Stob Coire Nam Beith by several parties (including by Miss H. Clark – now on the rock rather than snow now that winter was over) while on the Buachaille several ascents were recorded of D Gully, North Face Route, Agag's Groove, No.1 Route, Crowberry Ridge, Slanting Groove, Slanting Ledge and January Jigsaw as well of a traverse of the Aonach Eagach. Yeti summarised the meet as follows in the log book.

GLENGOE 13/14 JUNE

Another great weekend with blasing sunshine throughout. Many climbs were done on Saturday night with at least one party not getting down from the Buachaille until 11:40 p.m. Just for a change most people did in fact camp on Gunpowder Green.

After a good run of weekend meets, going back to the start of the year, things were bound to balance out a bit and Yeti brings the log book reports for 1959 to a close with the following entry – possibly composed while he himself festers at Gunpowder Green thinking of the Buachaille's summit above and what the meets would be for next year.

GLENGOE 15/16 AUGUST

A storm tossed weekend, with strong gusts of wind and fierce squalls of rain, replaced by hail above 3000 ft. Judging by the log entries, or rather lack of entries, many people must have sat and festered all weekend.

So 50 years the changeable weather in Scotland is still changeable and a Munro is still 3000 feet (well 914 metres). As far as travelling to the hills is concerned though, Scotland is certainly a much smaller place with bridges replacing many ferries and far better roads. 50 years on from now in 2059, if they ever duel all the way from Perth to Inverness then Scotland will be even smaller. Imagine the Northern Corries in 2059!

Lastly we are indebted to "YETI" for the excellent entries from 1959 – but who was this elusive Abominable JMCS Snowman who frequented the blizzards and storms that blew through the Central Highlands during 1959....?

The Steger Route in the Dolomites (July 2009)



(The climb follows the crack system in the centre of the wall)

The East face of the Rosengartenspitze (or Steger Route named after one of the first ascencionists) is a long route even by Dolomite standards at 600 metres.

Climbed in 18 pitches of tremendously varied climbing and graded VI- (about HVS) this was definitely the rock adventure of the year for me.

We were aware of the route during our first visit to the Dolomites in the summer of 2006 and were hoping to give it a go then but unfortunately our holiday had to be foreshortened because our Dad was seriously ill. We vowed to wait until the following summer but had to abandon our plans after Francis was diagnosed and then treated for a hernia. We would have to wait until the following summer (2008) but when that came around it was my turn to be indisposed with a broken collar bone. Our trip had already been planned but did not need to be aborted completely as club member and mutual climbing friend Dave Amos was more than happy to step into the breach.

The pair did several good and long climbs but fortunately the Steger Route remained inviolate so we resolved to tackle it this year unless ill fate once more thwarted our plans.

Well we got to the Dolomites together once more and duly arrived at our valley base in Canezei. Our aim was to do a few warm up / training climbs in the Sella area and then perhaps go for the Steger Route mid week. However our hearts sank when we saw the weather forecast for that week – it looked very unsettled.

However undeterred we managed to climb for the first few days, dodging the showers and occasional thunderstorm. By Monday it was looking as if Wednesday was set to be the only dry day of the week. After some deliberation we managed to book a room in the famous Rifugio Vajolet Hut. Now for many club members it will be quite routine to stay abroad in an Alpine Hut but this was our first time! When we got there after a short walk from the end of a narrow asphalt road we surprised to see that all manner of creature comforts were available (albeit at a price!)

The route we planned to do was visible from the hut and loomed up rather forbiddingly. Our climbing guide advised an early start as 'there are often long queues for this route' but we were not expecting much competition as most of the other residents in the hut were evidently walkers. Nonetheless we

rose at 5am to clear skies and made a stealthy plod to the foot of the route. Needless to say there was no-one in sight.

The route is essentially a huge wall split by parallel cracks that extend all the way to the summit.

The climb starts off on the left crack for the first few pitches and then switches to the right hand crack via 'a crucial traverse'

The climbing was steep and the rock a bit wet in places. It was also going to be an hour or two at least before we got any sun on us! Route finding was not as straightforward as we expected and at times we were not sure if we were on the correct crack system but we found our 'crucial traverse' across a yellowish ramp after the 7th pitch by which time we had successfully climbed the two VI- pitches. Down below the views were fantastic. This was the first really sunny day of the holiday and all the walkers were out in force on the charming valley trails below. This valley is not called Rosengarten for nothing!

By now the time was about 12pm as I recall. The guide rather unrealistically suggested 6-7 hours for the route but not in this case! A number of easy but interesting pitches followed. At one point while squirming up a very narrow chimney there was a loud clunk as my metal water bottle had somehow parted company from my rucksack. 'Below, below' we screamed no doubt causing some consternation to the hordes of walkers below. After another pitch surmounting the mother of all chock stones we ate our first peanut butter sandwich of the day. A few pitches further (by which time we had lost the sun for the duration of the climb) we reached one of the best pitches on the climb – a steep pockety yellow wall where the right line was far from obvious. A few odd pitons suggested a rightward traverse but fortunately Francis has good route finding sense and he went up and left instead until he disappeared from view. I was very relieved when a loud 'safe' could be heard some minutes later. This was the 'upper crux' of the climb beyond which only one pitch remained. Surely the climb was in the bag now! Another long delightful pitch followed until I reached the top of the climb. We had done it but it had taken us much more than 6-7 hours. Nonetheless our elation was considerable. The descent now followed which involved a scramble along a rocky ridge and then three abseils. Everything went fine. No stuck abseil ropes for a change!

We were not intent on staying at the hut that night because of the expense. We knew that we had missed the last bus from Rifugio Gardeccia (about 30 minutes away) and that we would have to walk about six miles to the car but 'c'est la vie!'

However Francis reached our Rifugio a few minutes before me during which time he had enquired about vacancies for that night and visited the bar. A pint of lager was proffered and his wise counsel was that we spend another night in the hut and do another route the following morning before returning home. How could I refuse!

We had a lovely evening celebrating this ascent and counting our blessings as getting caught in an afternoon thunderstorm is a very REAL possibility in the Dolomites as we can testify!

The following morning we climbed one of the celebrated Vajolet Towers before making our return.

A great couple of days and definitely the highlight of the trip.