



OREAD MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

*75th Anniversary
Journal*

1949 – 2024



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*Edited by
Nigel Briggs*

*This Journal is dedicated to the past, present and future
members of the Oread Mountaineering Club.*

All views expressed in this journal are those of the individual authors and not necessarily of the Oread Mountaineering Club.

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Editorial – Nigel Briggs

Some anniversaries carry more significance than others 25th, 50th and 100th for example. To complete the sequence the 75th should be included. For the Oread this marks a watershed moment. There is still a founder member alive along with other members who have witnessed most of the club's activities. In another 25 years when the club reaches its 100th anniversary it is highly unlikely that there will be anyone around with first hand experience of the early years of the club.

The book, *Climb if you Will*, was produced on the 25th Anniversary and the 50th Anniversary Journal was produced 25 years later. It seemed fitting that the 75th Anniversary should see some sort of publication and I volunteered to make that happen. I decided to include articles that reflected the events of the last 25 years or so along with ones that highlighted changes. Most of the articles contained here have been written specifically for this journal. Although my focus was on the last 25 years it was not limited to that. Initially I thought I would just include the presidents of the last 25 years but then I thought why not use the opportunity to contact all the living past presidents and invite them to contribute? That is what has been done.

As the years have gone by the age profile of the membership has increased. The difficulty of routes climbed, or the distance walked may have changed but the passion and camaraderie remain. As new members join, they bring new ideas and a fresh approach. These are needed and welcomed for the club to continue to flourish. These days there are new 'routes' into climbing, traditionally this was from experiencing the outdoors, often walking or scrambling. Now we are getting members who want to get outdoor experience after learning to climb on indoor climbing walls. One of the articles describes such a journey.

Conditions in the mountains have changed over the last 25 years. The years of guaranteed Scottish winter climbing are a distant memory. Yes, winter climbing is being done but it is grabbed when conditions are right or by travelling further afield. Maybe this has helped the development of dry tooling, now a discipline in its own right. The Alps have seen receding glaciers and higher summer temperatures causing a reassessment of what can be climbed in the summer Alpine season.

An area that has changed completely in the last 25 years is how we communicate both within the club and with those outside. This period covers all of the club's online presence. Internal communications have developed through email groups; and now the use of Whatsapp has given a new dimension to how we communicate. However, throughout this period the Newsletter has been a constant, although it has changed in style and size.

Some of the changes seen are for the better, some possibly not. Whether you view changes for good or ill, change happens and we need to adapt to it. I hope in these pages you find something of interest. In compiling this journal I have spent a lot of time looking back but I am also filled with optimism for the future. Whilst we need to be aware of and proud of our history we also need to look forward.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank members and former members who have contributed articles and photographs for inclusion in this journal, without them it would be nothing.

Thank you everyone who has tolerated my discussions with them about themes and topics for inclusion and for their input of ideas over the last couple of years. I will have to think of new topics of conversation now! Thank you also to those who have provided help and research to clarify dates and details in certain articles and lists.

I am always cautious about naming individuals for fear of missing anybody out however I would like to thank Ruth Gordon for help and advice on producing the journal and proof reading and Janet Briggs for helping with the final compilation.

Any errors, misrepresentations or omissions that have found their way into the journal are my responsibility for which I apologise.

Nigel Briggs

November 2024

Foreword – Dennis Gray

Can I congratulate all involved who have been a part of the Oread story, I am lucky I think in that I did meet those who were most responsible for the establishment of the club; Cyril Machin, George Sutton, Eric Byne and Harry Pretty. In fact the latter became a close friend, especially at the time when he was most responsible for the founding of the Derbyshire hut, Heathy Lea.

By the time I moved to live in Derby at the end of 1959, the Oread had become the 'go to' place to meet the active mountaineers of the area, and over the preceding years many club members became climbing partners, and fellow expedition members; Ray Handley, Bob Pettigrew, Derrick Burgess and Jack Ashcroft.

But the Oread was about much more than climbing and exploration, despite how important they remained, for the annual dinner was always a memorable social occasion, the cabarets at these were often hilarious, and Nat Allen's jolly meets in South Pembroke were not to be missed. As was Ray Handley's festive gatherings at Rhyd Ddu the Welsh Hut. Unlike many other climbing clubs, women were members and families always welcome, and in fact one family The Hayes were involved through several generations.

Over the years the Oread has always been re-invigorated with a slew of new members, and some of these were at the sport's cutting edge, in fact three of these made ascents of the Eigerwand when it was still thought of in popular media as the Murderwand; Colledge, Scott and Radcliffe being those involved.

New members brought new vigour, and new concepts; training and climbing walls came in, ice climbing with trips to Scotland and more afield e.g. Norway were usual, as was the acceptance of The Sports Climbing revolution, where warm winter crags were just as popular as the windswept Peak edges. In recent years dry tooling has been a challenge that some Oread members have met, enjoyed and become somewhat expert in.

We are fortunate that climbing clubs in the UK follow the administration they do, this is so different than in the majority of the countries that operate within our sport, it is usual for them to have a single national organisation, with each area of their country covered by a section of this.

In the UK we have a system of both national and local climbing clubs, and the Oread is so typical of this. Formed just after the war, the club relied on the enthusiasm and drive of its originators, equipment was rudimentary, travel was limited but the spirit was one of make do and get on with it. This enthusiasm was still much to the fore at the 75th year celebrations, camping and a BARMY competition were organised and this was followed with some light hearted, mickey taking but once again it showed that once it decides to organise something.... the Oread will achieve its ends.

Long may it be so!

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The Presidents

Each president usually serves a two year period in office. Since approx. 2010 most presidents have also served one year as vice president before their presidency, and one year as vice president after their presidency. This has given some continuity in the changeover from one president to the next.

The president has the pleasure of chairing the club committee and general meetings, dealing with any issues that arise during their period in office, and steering the club forwards. The president takes office at the AGM, which is held in the spring each year. Office is held from the AGM not the calendar year. For example, the period listed as 1975-77 ran from spring 1975 to spring 1977.

Period	President
1949-51	Cyril Machin
1951-53	Eric Byne
1953-55	George Sutton
1955-57	Harry Pretty
1957-59	Phil Falkner
1959-61	Robert (Bob) Pettigrew
1961-63	Brian Cooke
1963-65	Jack Ashcroft
1965-67	Peter Janes
1967-69	Ray Handley
1969-71	Derrick Burgess
1971-73	Paul Gardiner
1973-75	John (Nat) Allen
1975-77	Gordon Gadsby
1977-79	Colin Hobday
1979-81	Chris Radcliffe
1981-83	Peter Scott
1983-85	Keith Gregson
1985-87	Robin Sedgwick
1987-89	John Linney
1989-91	John (Rock) Hudson
1991-93	Robert (Bobby) Gilbert
1993-95	Ron Chambers
1995-97	Brian West
1997-99	Clive (Rusty) Russell
1999-2000	Harry Pretty ⁽¹⁾
2000-02	Michael Hayes
2002-04	Daryl Kirk
2004-06	Tony Howard
2006-08	Robert Tresidder

2008-10	Simon Pape
2010-12	Chris Wilson
2012-14	Pete Lancaster
2014-16	Pam Storer ⁽²⁾
2016-18	Derek Pike
2018-20	David (Snod) Helliwell
2020-23	Nigel Briggs ⁽³⁾
2023-25	Jan Wilson

Notes

- (1) Harry Pretty served a second period as president for one year to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Club.
- (2) Pam Storer was the first female president of the Club.
- (3) Nigel Briggs served for three years due to the Covid pandemic.



*The President and past presidents gather at the 75th Anniversary camp, September 2024.
(left to right, Pam Storer, Simon Pape, Michael Hayes, Paul Gardiner, Jan Wilson, Pete Lancaster, Chris Wilson, Nigel Briggs, Bob Pettigrew, Derek Pike, Robin Sedgwick, Dave (Snod) Helliwell, Chris Radcliffe)*

Each president has a unique view of the club from their period of office. The surviving past presidents have been invited to give some thoughts and reflections of their time in office, or to reflect on anything connected to the club! The contributions have been split into three sections, each covering a 25 year period.

In the Presidents' Words (1949-74)

Bob Pettigrew (1959-61)

My interest in mountaineering began at Nottingham High School at the age of 11. Unbeknown to me another Oread M.C. member, one Phil Falkner was ahead of me at school but was a later convert to the Oread together with his housemate, Charlie Cullum, the legendary newsletter editor.

I made my first ascent of Kinder Scout at the age of 11 solo because no one wanted to come with me! In compensation the school library provided a treasure trove of mountaineering literature, probably donated by an earlier schoolmaster mountaineer.

Whilst academic topics were prominently displayed, hidden underneath were mountaineering volumes, particularly "Mountain Craft" by Jeffrey Winthrop Young, "High Heaven" by Jacques Boel and many others!

My first encounter with rock climbing was when Norman (Nobby) Kershaw arrived at my home on his motorbike to take me for a weekend of rock climbing at Black Rocks, Cromford.

Having the forethought to join the RAF Mountaineering Association at the age of eighteen I was conscripted for national service in the Royal Air Force mountain rescue service and posted first to RAF Harpur Hill (Buxton) and subsequently RAF Valley on Anglesey.

My good fortune at Buxton was to be invited by Sir Jack Longland, director of education for Derbyshire, and Mount Everest veteran of 1933 to the inaugural weekend of the opening of his revolutionary residential centre for open country pursuits. Also invited were George Sutton, founder of the Oread M.C. and Harry Pretty. That encounter led to my being elected first to the Oread M.C. and then to the Lyngen Arctic Norway expedition on special leave from the RAF.



Bob Pettigrew on the summit cornice of Hanuman Tibba, 20,000 ft.

After national service I continued my education at Loughborough University before embarking on service in Malaysia and subsequently India. Service in India with the British Council gave me the chance to make a foray to the Himalaya in the Kulu region of Punjab. During my ascent of Deo Tibba, 20,000 ft, I reconnoitred the approach to the virgin Peak of Indrasan, 21,000 ft. That I thought might make a suitable objective for a Derbyshire Himalayan expedition. I returned to England and a teaching post at Derby School and promoted the idea to fellow members of the Oread M.C. Shortly after my return to Derbyshire, I was elected president of the Oread M.C. and leader of the Derbyshire Himalayan expedition of 1961 with members drawn mainly from the Oread M.C.

My presidency of the Oread led to subsequent presidencies of the BMC and the Access Commission of The International Union of Alpinists - the UIAA.

Some of Bob's [Himalayan photographs](#) can be seen on the website.

Paul Gardiner (1971-73)

As 1970 rolled over into 1971 and outstanding alpinist, Derrick Burgess stepped down from his term as president of the Oread the committee set about looking for the next occupant of the position. I suppose that in a club of then only around 130 members, it was reckoned to be about my turn, though I'm sure it was not on climbing ability. It seemed to me, looking back, that I rose to the position in view of the number of bricks, bags of cement and baulks of timber I had trundled down to Tan yr Wyddfa, Rhyd-Ddu during a period when the hut maintenance budget was almost non-existent.

But reflecting on those early 'seventies' I began to think on a broader scale. To think about becoming president of what? Of something that came into being in the austere days of 1949 when no one had any money or personal transport, and many things were still on ration. When a few disparate individuals decided to form a club and had no idea whether it would survive and, at that time, probably didn't care! So, we sat in my parents' kitchen and planned to go to Black Rocks to see what this rock climbing was all about.

By 1971 so much had been achieved, both at home and abroad and, as I took up office, the club was continuing healthily. Easter 1971 saw a well attended meet in Glencoe, Spring Bank Holiday in both Cornwall and Arran, but the outstanding event, not only of the year, but in club history, was the ascent of the Eiger Nordwand by Peter Scott and Chris Radcliffe. Peter's quote, well worth repeating here was, "Every day for nearly two years now the Eiger had presented to my mind a question mark forming the centre of my ambitions as a mountaineer". The Summer meet in Zermatt also saw outstanding performances by others including the North Face of the Dent d'Herens and the Taschorn-Dom ridge. However, I must make mention here of the events of the 11th/12th of September with the tragic loss of Geoff Hayes and injury to Lloyd Caris. I mention it here only to put it in Oread context as a sad occurrence during my term of office.

Moving into 1972, after a busy Easter at Linn of Dee, we came to the AGM at which John Welbourn was appointed Hut Warden at Tan yr Wyddfa and a decision was made to appoint

a Booking Secretary to assist him. Just how long Colin Hobday held that position I have no idea! The Welsh 14 peaks were high on the agenda and there were members in Grindelwald, The Dolomites, Chamonix and Arctic Norway. The Rhinogs were trodden underfoot. We never found out where to purchase Rhinogs meat?..... (see The Oread 50th Anniversary Journal for a Rhinog smile). We concluded 1972 with Tony Moulam (Climbers Club) dining out at the Oread dinner for the 21st time!

I suppose I did finish my term of office as President with something of a record in that, on Clive Russell's Blencathra meet, 49 members attended. His comment in the newsletter was, "160 miles from home in winter indicated that the Club was an uncommonly healthy corpse!"

And so it continues after 75years. GOOD LUCK EVERYONE (Nono)



*Paul Gardiner, Gardom's Edge,
April 2024.
Photo Spike Johnson*

My Climbs with Presidents – Rob Tresidder

I seem to have known all the Oread presidents bar four. Some I have just known, others I have cragged with or walked with, some I have crossed swords with. I have tied onto the same rope with at least a dozen.

When I first climbed with the Oread, Colin Hobday had just become president but I don't think I ever did a climb with him.

Colin was succeeded by Chris Radcliffe, with whom I climbed a great deal, but not very much before spending a week in 1978 with him in Zermatt, trying to climb the North face of

the Matterhorn. Conditions were not good, soft snow and warm temperatures meant we never even got onto the glacier. We shifted our attention to the Lyskamm with an eye on the Norman-Neruda. We planned to bivi outside the Monte Rosa hut and slept instead in an empty dog kennel. Exploring in the late afternoon Chris fell into a crevasse. He extricated himself after three quarters of an hour. I just held the rope. Over the years I have enjoyed many more adventures with Chris. I can vividly recall the planned bivouac on the top of Ben Nevis, preceded by Hadrian's Wall and followed by Point-five Gully. All this was accomplished in a weekend with Chris doing all the driving and with five people in the car. On a week's holiday in Scotland, we enjoyed another bivouac under a boulder on a bed of dry grass, before and after ticking Dragon, Gob and a couple of others. We ran together a lot, and in the Dash, Chris was always the man I had to beat. By the time we had both stopped running he had just three or four more wins than me. Grrr! We also ran the Loweswater triathlon, a sadly discontinued event which took in Whinlatter Pass, Scafell Pike and Honister Hause.

I climbed very little with Peter Scott. I think the first time was when I struggled behind him on Delicatessen, (High Tor) something of a party piece for Pete. This was training for Kharchaund which we climbed later in the year, behind the lead Beadle/Gilbert rope.

I didn't climb a lot with Keith Gregson, but one event does stick in my memory. We were climbing on Gardom's with an Oread group and I had just started to attempt a VS crack without a rope. I remember Keith saying: "I've seen Pete back off that." I can't remember whether it was Holden or Boardman; he knew both. It put me in a quandary, should I back off and allow the suggestion that someone else decides which routes you can do, or hammer on regardless: "I'm my own man". I think I compromised, pressed on for a few more moves then reversed to the ground. Much later, I enormously enjoyed Greggo's BARMY competitions.

Robin Sedgwick is another climber with whom I did little before embarking on a big route. We failed in an attempt on the Matterhorn in 1978. I had retreated from above the Difficult Crack on the Eiger in 1982. I knew Robin had his eye on the face too so we paired up the following year and had something of an epic. In spite of bright clear skies at night which usually mean sharp, freezing conditions, the face was never solid so instead of stonefall being confined to late afternoon onslaughts, it was a constant threat for 24 hours day and night. Was this an early indication of climate change? Certainly few are foolish enough to attempt it in midsummer now. When my son did it some years later, he wore crampons the whole way and didn't see a single moving stone. That was late September though.

I had never climbed with Michael Hayes or with his regular alpine partner, Pete Lancaster until Michael's Hohe Tauern meet in 2006. Exercising I fear a degree of *droit du Président*, I attached myself to their rope on the NE ridge of the Großglockner. Considering how experienced they were in each other's company, it was very generous of them. Unfortunately I and my lactose intolerance were fighting a losing battle with my hunger/greed from the night before when I had found two large bowls of cream of tomato soup too appetising to resist.

I have mentioned Bobby Gilbert already but we had one or two other adventures. We were both keen to climb the North face of the Matterhorn. As Bobby worked for British Rail, he

could manage almost the whole journey for free. I remember his dismay at discovering that the railway from Visp to Zermatt was not covered by the pan-European scheme. On the way up to the Hörnli hut, we met Alison Hargreaves coming down saying that conditions underfoot were not to her liking. Not a good sign! I was able to show off the hut which I had helped build in 1965. There were a lot of climbers trying the North face. Those that had actually got onto the ice field had found it free of snow and unrelentingly steep so a lot had been abbing off on Abalokovs. When Robin and I retreated from the top of the snow in 1978, it was so banked up that I was able to descend the bottom half facing outwards.

I had climbed quite a lot on grit with Tony Howard before we agreed to pair up for an ice cragging trip to Rjukan in 2008. He and Neil Weatherstone flew there with my axes and crampons. I took the Newcastle-Bergen ferry then the train to Geilo, then I skied across the Hardangervidda and met the other guys a day late after an unplanned snow holing adventure. Tony and I got into the swing of things and finished the week with a fine Scottish V on very steep snow/ice between the bridge and the power station.

Simon Pape was on that same trip climbing with Neil Weatherstone. At the time we were all four on the committee. Simon pointed out that there were enough of us to have a committee meeting, but there were more interesting things to do! I've enjoyed climbing off and on with Simon over the years. I think the last time we tied on together was in Colehill Quarries. He had become quickly adept at the bolt clipping game. I had never really taken to it. "Why can't I **do** this, Simon?" "You don't go out often enough Rob." Wise words that signalled a rapid spiralling decline in both getting out and getting up climbs.

Chris Wilson is the very first Oread I climbed with way back in 1977 when we were both living in Derby. I was on North Street in a hospital house. Chris was part of the Kedleston Road mob which included Pete Lancaster and Snod. I can't remember the routes we did on Willersley but Chris provided a lovely introduction to a club which has become such a big part of my life. I discovered too that when he was a teenager living in Kenya he had climbed with another friend of mine, a biologist who discovered the vector of blue tongue disease in sheep.

I climbed with Pam Storer, the first woman president of the Oread, just once on a Black Rocks night meet when we found our way up Sand Gully.

I did several routes on Jersey with Derek Pike and probably one or two in Cornwall too. Very steady. Very laconic. I was once the shamed recipient of the bent ice screw award. I spent some of the year I held the trophy, admiring the craftsmanship and the innovative design. Not many people know that it has a left hand thread!

I have enjoyed almost all the climbing I have done with the Oread, but looking back now, there has been something special about the routes done with climbers who had been president, were president or later became president. They have sort of anchored my time with the club, the running belays on a very long and sometimes perilous journey. [^](#)

The Summer Alpine Meet

The popularity of the 'Alpine' meet has varied year on year. On these meets families and partners have often attended making them have a 'holiday' atmosphere. The venue has often been chosen because it has numerous attractions, high mountains, long mountain rock routes, valley cragging, good walking, swimming spots etc along with the necessary shops, bars and restaurants. On some of the meets there has been forty or more attending whilst others have been as low as ten and exceptionally in 2023 no meet ran. Changing weather and mountain conditions have had an inevitable consequence on what is 'in' condition and climbable. Over the last few years the traditional late July early August school holiday slot has been too late in the year for good 'Alpine' conditions in the mountains with night time freezing levels way above the summits.

Time will tell how this type of summer meet will develop.

Year	Venue	Meet Leader
2000	Val Ferret, Italy	Richard Hopkinson
2001	Lofoten Isles, Norway	Graham Weston
2002	Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland	Pete Lancaster/Michael Hayes
2003	Val Di Fassa, Italy	Derek Pike/Steve Bennett
2004	Saas Grund, Switzerland	Michael Hayes
2005	Aosta Valley, Italy	Tony Howard
2005	Alagne, Monte Rosa, Italy	Michael Hayes/Pete Lancaster
2006	Heiligenblut, Austria	Michael Hayes
2007	Cortina, Italy	Simon Pape
2008	Argentière-la-Besée, France	Tony Howard/ Simon Pape
2009	Corvara, Italy	Tony Howard/Roger Gibbs
2010	Innertkirchen, Switzerland	Steve Christian
2011	Vicosoprano, Switzerland	Chris Wilson
2012	Val Ferret, Italy	Pete Lancaster
2013	Val de Mello, Italy	Nigel Briggs
2014	Ailefroide, France	Pete Lancaster
2015	Cortina, Italy	Roger Gibbs
2016	Argentière, France	Nigel Briggs
2017	Arenas de Cabrales, Picos de Europa, Spain	Mike Mowbray
2018	Vicosoprano, Switzerland	Michael Hayes
2019	Otztal, Austria	Spenser Gray
2020	No meet - Covid	
2021	No meet - Covid	
2022	Argentière, France	Gill Radcliffe
2023	No meet organised	
2024	Lofoten Isles, Norway	Nigel and Janet Briggs

In some years conditions have not been favourable for the meet. In 2006 the first week of the meet was apparently glorious, when we arrived the weather turned and the second half was memorably wet. Innertkirchen was another wet trip with isolated dry sunny days amongst the wet ones, so much so that most of the meet moved on to sunnier climes in France. In 2016 the meet leader never made it on the meet! However, the meet ran successfully. In 2020 a return to Lofoten was planned but as the world shut down due to the Covid pandemic and travel became more difficult the only sensible option was to postpone the meet. The ongoing travel uncertainty continued into 2021 hence no meet. 2022 saw a small group back in a very warm Argentièrre. Lofoten was returned to in 2024.

The list of meets does not record all the Alpine activity that Oreads have been involved in over the last 25 years.

Oreads and the Alps, a Personal Reflection - Pete Lancaster

My involvement with the Oread Mountaineering Club began in 1978. I was introduced to the club by Dave Parnham who was a member and also worked at the school whose staff I had just joined. I have a vivid memory of the first Tuesday pub meeting and later going round to Robin Sedgewick's flat along with others to see Robin's slides of that year in the Alps. What hit me like a thunderbolt, with pictures of routes like the North Face of the Drus, was that Oreads, not just Robin, but many others in the club, were doing what I had dreamt of but assumed was the province of people who were somehow special, apart from the ordinary. I soon discovered that the club had a proud legacy of members past and present doing top end routes in the Alps, South Georgia and the Himalaya. To say I was impressed would be an understatement and in stark contrast to my own experience. I was raised in Ambleside so walking and scrambling, initially with my dad, later with friends, led to rock climbing but all this was a world apart from what the Oread was doing. I joined the club.

I gained some experience of Scottish ice first with Robin Sedgwick in 1979 and in 1980 saw my first trip to the Alps with the Oread. We camped at Argentièrre, I climbed with Martin Musson who sadly died too early last year, together we climbed the NNE ridge of the Aiguille de l'M and the North Face of the Aiguille d'Argentièrre plus an interesting but aborted attempt of the Matterhorn. That was my first alpine experience with the Oread, the first of many, each one being the highlight of the year. While never managing to match the achievements of Ray Colledge, Pete Scott, Chris Radcliffe, Pete Holden and others, I have climbed some fabulous routes and had magnificent experiences but needless to say, I inevitably witnessed many changes over the past forty some years.

I was originally approached to comment on the Oread annual Alpine meets and those changes since my first trip in 1980 but I think it more appropriate to consider Oread activity in general not just club meets because many of the more notable ascents did not take place on club meets. For example, when Pete Holden and Chris Radcliffe climbed the Croz Spur on the Grande Jorasses in winter conditions, a summer club gathering was not an option! They like others, including myself, have had specific targets which were not consistent with the annual meet. Notwithstanding, plenty of significant ascents have been made on those meets.

The meets have always been a steady and reliable chance for club members to get together, enjoy each other's company, and climb in Europe's finest mountains. There was always a very important aspect to this; as we get older, get married and have children the meets became as much family meets as climbing meets. Countless numbers of Oread children have grown up within the social fabric of the club and this contact has often been maintained into adulthood; the club is like a big extended family and the centre of most of our social lives. This is why the Alpine meets have invariably been timed to coincide with the school summer holidays. Times change and currently there aren't many active mountaineers in the club with young families; the need to time meets for the school holiday period when prices are higher and conditions in the mountains getting increasingly uncertain, make this less attractive.

The popularity of club meets has ebbed and flowed with different generations of Oreads. Typically there have been healthy numbers in the upper teens but occasionally many more. I remember Dave Penlington counting nearly forty at Pont in the Gran Paradiso area in 1997; contrast this with a count of ten at Argentière in 2022. However that year was exceptionally hot and the mountains were in a particularly sad state with the permafrost thawing resulting in so much unstable rock and ice that the authorities closed access to many mountains and huts. This was probably why and sad pointer to the future.

Climate change has affected the Alps for many years but is getting ever more pronounced. Over the decades I have witnessed some startling things. In 2016 I climbed the Forbes Arête on the Aiguille Du Chardonnet with Tim Sellears, Mike Mowbray and Mike Moss with good views of the Aiguille d'Argentière, it was depressing to see that it was no longer the magnificent, pristine white ice face, elegant and beautiful that I climbed in 1980 but a rotten decaying grey and black face that would be suicidal for anyone to attempt to climb. The route we were on, clearly, had little similarity with its description in Gaston Rebuffat's classic 'The Mont Blanc Massif, the 100 finest'. I climbed the Frendo Spur on the Aiguille du Midi with Brian Wright in 1988, it's clearly visible from the valley and in 2022 that splendid ice arête on its upper half has shrunk considerably and the small rognon at its top is now more prominent than that arête itself.

The day after being on the N Face of the Drus in 1990 an area of rock the size of a football pitch sloughed off, killing 13 climbers and injuring another 23; George Battenberg, famous Himalayan climber was killed by rock fall a few years earlier also on the Drus and later the tremendous Bonatti Pillar and parts of the West face were subject to a similar law of entropy. I have read in the last few days that there was another major rock fall this year on the 16th July; all this on what used to be considered a 'safe' mountain.

When Mike Mowbray and I couldn't find the start of the Battenberg Route on Pic Adolf Rey in 2012, Mike pointed out when walking back to the Torino hut, after climbing the Saluard route instead, that the bottom fifty metres of the pinnacles were grey not that lovely red colour characteristic of Mont Blanc granite so our route started fifty metres higher up! Our guide book was written in the early '90s and that is a lot of ice to disappear from Le Mer de Glace in twenty years.

Many saw the horrifying footage of what was a beautiful mountain, the Piz Cengalo, crumble into a huge rock avalanche leaving debris as far down the valley as the village of Bondo in 2017. Those on the club meet at Vicosoprano in 2018 could see the devastation. Events like these have always happened in the Alps but seem to be becoming more frequent. That said, mid-summer does not seem to be a good time to be in the Alps any more.

What does the future hold for climbing in the Alps and club meets in particular? Summer meets as we have known them could well be a thing of the past, is winter the time to go now? Certainly conditions will be more stable and the mean temperatures are much higher making rock routes more amenable. Curiously, in 1980 we left our freeze packs outside the tent on the Argentière campsite and they were frozen by morning; in 2022, on the same campsite the night temperature was in the high teens; in those days it was inconceivable the freeze height would be above the summits, not now. With the vast expansion of bolted rock climbs and more Oreads spending more time enjoying this very accessible sport, climate change and the sad state of the Alps, perhaps our traditional summer meets really are reaching the end.

On a lighter less gloomy note, something less existential, the developments in gear have had a significant impact on climbing style. In 1980, it was breeches, old heavy leather boots, woollen shirts followed by smelly synthetics. Cagoules were not breathable but tough, therefore heavy, because the Alps were tough! On my first trips, Pete O'Neill told me you take four pegs, five nuts and two slings, so we did and we climbed all routes in big boots. Now clothing is lighter including waterproofs which are breathable and only worn if you get the forecast wrong which nowadays is rare; mobile phones keep us up to date and in touch, such a contrast. Big boots are lighter and truly waterproof, we have light weight equipment, carry more of it, ice screws are reliable and easy to place single-handed, and we climb the harder rock climbs in rock shoes. Let us not forget walking poles which greatly reduce wear on our knees allowing us to keep going longer into old age.

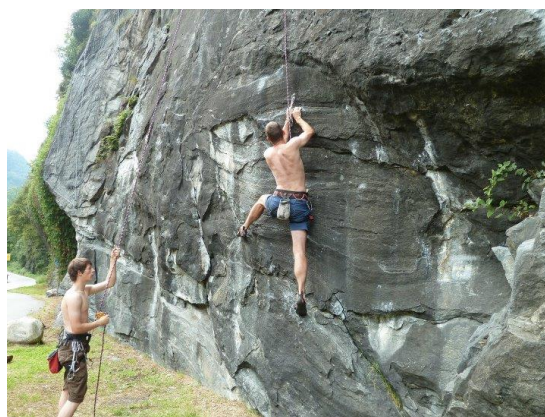
Climbing in the Alps is definitely more enjoyable and less arduous than it used to be, we just need to alter our approach to them. It will be interesting to see how future generations of Oreads go with that.



*Chris Wilson and Pete Lancaster
on Lyskamm, 2005.*



*Pete Lancaster, Premier Point de Natillons,
Val Feret meet, 2012(Photo Mike Mowbray).*



*Above: Valley Cragging, Vicosoprano, 2011
Below: Family Walk, Heiligenblut, 2006*



Upper Slopes of the Aiguille de Midi, Argentière meet, 2016

(all photos Michael Hayes unless otherwise stated) [^](#)

Do Icemen Dream of Electric Cars? – Steve Christian

The Ramp, South Gully, Chicane, The Screen, The Curtain names drip from the guidebook pages for Clogwyn Y Geifr. One Saturday morning, 6am February 1985 in Ogwen, car parks and roadside chock-a-block with cars, word has spread, ice climbing is in and it's busier than the Birmingham Bull Ring.

As twenty-year-olds it's our first venture out with newly bought axes, crampons and ice screws as we gawp at the volume of parked cars and head up the track behind Idwal Cottage. Light is only just breaking, it's cold but overcast. As we yomp up to Llyn Idwal there's a hint of clear frozen lines on the background cliffs. Not much snow this low down but slowly we realise there are icefalls. And climbers queuing. It's not yet 7am. Justin has The Screen and The Ramp in mind but it's all new to me. Queuing is what we do best in Britain so we do and get both climbs done.



Devils Kitchen, Idwal.

The author in The Ramp belay cave, Feb 1985.

It was the start of an apprenticeship and a love affair. The start of Friday night drives to North Wales huts and early morning weekend starts chasing the ephemeral. Halcyon days of turning up, exploring cwms, crags, nooks and crannies and always getting something done. At times only a grade 1 snow plod but other days were near perfect ice, neve or mixed climbing. A typical Ogwen day might be solo Idwal stream, climb Clogwyn Du left hand, descend Y Gribin. Whereas over on Snowdon, Trinity Buttress, Cave or Ladies Gully or maybe a visit into Cwm Las for Sinister Gully then across Crib Goch or a descent of Parsley Fern Gully. Some winters we went to the high cwms for what seemed like several months and always came away with something.



*Parsley Fern Gully, Cwm Glas,
Dec 1990.*

These weekend trips filled the void between Scottish weeklong winter holidays, where through the 1980s into the early 90s turning up pretty much guaranteed getting some winter routes climbed. Never any thought of stuff not being in nick. As an example Ben Nevis routes getting ticked included NE Buttress, Tower Ridge, Castle Ridge, Glovers Chimney (via a solo of Garadh Gully), Vanishing Gully, Hadrian's Wall, Orion Face Direct, Smith's Route, The Curtain, Green Gully and Comb Gully along with routes on other crags. A week in Scotland outside of half term would often be quiet mid-week with maybe a few teams in a corrie or on a mountain.



*Chokestone Gully, Cairn Toul,
Caingorms, May 1992.*

As we rolled through the 90s, we started to experience occasional lean years, even in Scotland. Wales started to disappear off the radar as good winter conditions became rarer and Scotland winter weekends became more common. Partly because of conditions but also because of our aspirations to experience bigger and better routes. The lean years leading into the late 90s made it hard for visiting climbers from England to read what might or might not be climbable, in the true sense of it constituting winter conditions (in the words of Joe

Brown, “not being able to climb the route more easily in my rock boots”) led to some fruitless trips north and a degree of frustration.

Some of us started to look towards other continents for more guaranteed winter climbing. It led to my first club winter trip abroad to the Canadian Rockies. It was a mouth opening experience and a game changer. I remember a harrowing four hour drive in the dark on compact snow with fresh snow falling, from Calgary to the Mosquito Creek hostel on The Icefields Parkway. We were grateful for the free vehicle upgrade to an SUV with winter tyres. The following morning we woke up to snowbound car parks, tremendous winter alpine views and pure blue icefalls rising from the roadside. The upgrade vehicle was fine on the compact snow, even if we were periodically overtaken by less cautious locals, but it took us an hour of floundering up to our armpits in powder snow before realising we needed snowshoes to advance off the highway. Fortunately the local hotel where we had parked up, The Lodge at Bow Lake, were able to hire us snow shoes for the week.

We breezed across the edge of Bow Lake to climb Bow Glacier falls. This, for us, started the pure water ice climbing learning curve, successfully getting up steep ice on curved picks with old fashioned ice screws. You were more pumped hand screwing in any protection than just carrying on and drive in screw out (DISO) protection had a tendency to ‘dinner plate’ fracture the very cold ice during placement. So bold leads were the order of the day, though our trip a year later called for specialist gear obtained from Mountain Equipment Co-op in Calgary. Black Diamond express ice screws and mono point crampons made steep ice leads a little less spicy.

Those of us intent on continuing our pure water ice climbing continued to book trips to Canada, the Alps or Norway. We saw that guaranteed water ice climbing was bookable and we continued to build our water ice climbing experience, though in those days such trips were a special event rather than the norm, as initially we didn’t go every year. Into and through the 2000s Scottish winter climbing required good local knowledge to know what was good or a lifelong experience of knowing where to look or some combination of both. The lower crags typical of good water icefalls in particular were far less reliable to even non-existent and we were driven ever higher up mountains in search of a good climb. Fruitless forays became frequent and the winter climbing weeklong holiday in Scotland died. For many winter climbers the yearly week abroad ice trip became a calendar routine.

Spin on another decade or more and current trends indicate mountain areas in the UK south of Scotland rarely cough up anything worth climbing for more than a few days if that. Scotland is little better for the purist winter climber, often conjuring up mixed climbing opportunities more than genuine snow and ice. That said the level of information on what is being climbed and likely conditions is far better and more obtainable than ever it was, so spontaneous opportunities can exist, which seems to be the best way to winter climb in Scotland nowadays. Summed up we might say here today and gone tomorrow; such has been the crag stripping temperature swings of more recent years. This now seems to be the way of things with the addition of the fluctuation of winter temperatures in European Alpine resorts further adding uncertainty to whether we are in a period of a dying sport. [^](#)

Do Attitudes Change? - Roger Gibbs

When Nigel asked me to write something for the Oread 75th anniversary I was flattered of course. Then I wondered how long Nigel thought I'd been in the Oread. And how old he thought I was. Anyway, it set me to thinking about how people's attitude to climbing, and indeed life, changes. This is very much not about my climbing career, as I certainly don't have one of those, not even in the sense of hurtling downhill. And it isn't my climbing journey because we're not on some TV talent show. I just wondered how that enthusiastic, reckless younger climber would view the slightly more measured older version.

Folk wisdom has long held that people become more politically conservative as they grow older. Apparently academic studies have shown that this isn't really the case. Do climbers drift to the "right" as they age? A little more guile and a little less ethical purity? From gritstone terror and Scottish winter mayhem to practised, polished (in both senses) limestone sport? Let's see.

Here are three stories, and you can be the judge.

When I started climbing, I was often warned about a shadowy organisation called The Ethics Committee. The merest dangle on a runner, a crafty tug on a sling, even peering over the top to spy the way would result in the old hands shaking their heads and muttering darkly about a referral. If someone mentioned a top rope these veterans and guardians of the true faith would become positively apoplectic.

Perhaps it is appropriate, in these days of presentation being more important than substance, that top roping has been rebranded. It's called "headpointing" now. It means you can do whatever you like as long as you don't damage the rock and it results (eventually) in a clean lead. I suppose if it was good enough for Joe Brown on Great Slab in the 1950s, it's good enough for an aging punter now.

So here's how it works. Pick a "project". Something that terrifies you, but that you suspect deep down inside that you probably could do. With a following wind. On a low gravity day. When the conditions are right. When you're feeling good. With the right partner, i.e. never.

Next, go and have "a look". It should be very clear that you're not actually going to do it on this occasion or else you'll be so wound-up thinking about the lead that you'll probably screw it up on top rope. Remember that this process is supposed to last a long time - years even.

I had my first look at Project X in 2001. It honestly didn't seem that bad. It even had runners, just not really where you'd want them. I had a fabulous Sunday poking around, doing a few routes and casually chucking a cheeky top rope on it. It went like a dream in the perfect cold conditions. Fortunately, it was getting a bit too late for any serious action.

Then I started going to the crag a bit frequently - twice in four days!

It had rained on the way over, but it cleared, and we even had some sun by the time we got there. There were friends at the crag who probably wouldn't know or care about headpointing. No pressure, have a fun night out.

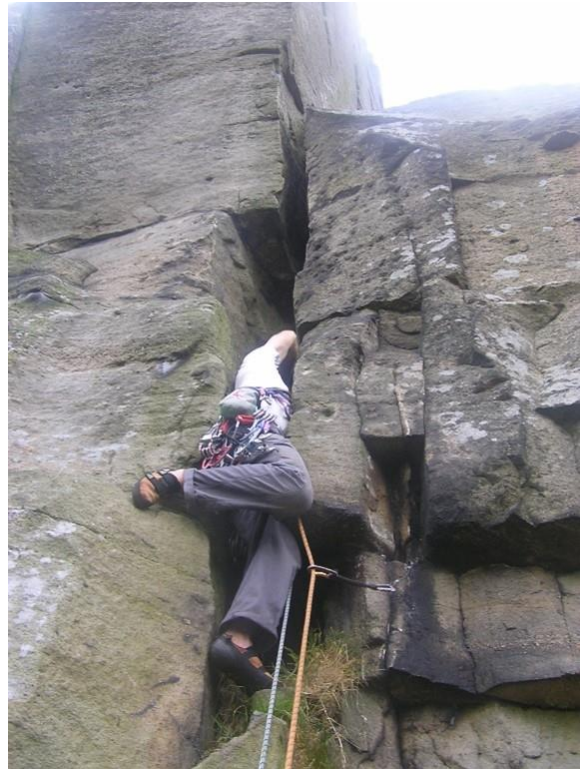
But it's there, nagging in the back of my mind.

Sharon and I warmed up on Allen's Slab, which I'm sure I've done lots of times before, then we did Sickie Buttress, which I'm pretty sure I haven't. It was very good!

My turn to pick now. I'll just have another look. I top roped it four times without managing to fall off, but it felt more tenuous than when I top roped it with Andy a few weeks ago. Each try seemed more sketchy, not less! I scoped the runners and got on with it. It felt a bit tenuous, and I didn't really want to do it. Sharon said, "You've got to want it."

I seriously considered not bothering. We could go and have a pint. All this fuss and still no tick?

After a conversation about what I was going to hit if I fell off (never a good idea with Sharon!) I decided to do it. And then climbed back down. The breeze blew and it was a little cooler. Just do it. A struggle to get my foot up. I could reach the sloper but it felt tenuous. Step up. Push. Foot better not pop. It won't. It didn't. The top is easy, but I still did it scrappily.



Sharon was a bit cold now, so we went to the pub. I didn't tell anyone; it was nice to have it as our little secret!

And if anyone mentions the Ethics Committee, this is just between you and me, ok?

The call came at about Scotch Corner.

"Roger, it's John. I'm in Waitrose. I've got the carpaccio, but do you want green olives or black?"

"Hill food, John, hill food."

"Oh....", he trailed off. It was going to be one of those weekends.

It had started out pretty well, my lift had arrived on time and we'd had a good run north with the obligatory interruption for barely edible service station food. Then the German member of the team went missing. Well not missing exactly, we knew where he was, but unfortunately it was in a bothy a good hour's walk from the road. We peered out at the darkness and listened to the howling wind. We pushed on further North, hatching ever more complex plans to unite the team, with a deafening silence from our European friend. We grabbed a pint in Ballater and decided that we would have to split up into two teams.

After a refreshing night's sleep in one of the Royal Estate's premier car parks, John and I headed for Lochnagar, while Andy headed into Bob Scott's bothy to find himself a climbing partner.

It was already getting light and the new car park was busy with teams kitting up. John and I forced down some of Mr Waite and Mr Rose's finest hors d'oeuvres (very reasonable priced John assured me) and set off. It was gusting fairly hard into our faces but the sky was bright and there was a good covering of snow on the hills. I stopped and looked around: it was stunning. I breathed a bit deeper and my shoulders relaxed. John and I grinned at each other: it was great to be back. A couple of hours saw us into the corrie despite the headwind and the crag looked in sparkling winter garb. I'd already counted fifteen other climbers ahead of us and I was starting to regret the extra half an hour in bed. Still, I thought at least we're not stuck behind a load of students.



As we approached the first aid box, the unmistakable sight of Edinburgh University's fresher meet in all its chaotic glory greeted us. It became a frantic dash to get kitted up. Now John will freely admit that he doesn't really do frantic dashing. I raced off up the snow slopes to the base of the snow ramp. Halfway there I paused, sweat streaming into my eyes. Hang on, I think I'm supposed to be enjoying this. I laughed at my own stupidity and greeted the lads ahead of us on the belay with a big grin.

The first belay was not very accommodating and devoid of gear so I pushed on up the gentle snow ramp past the team ahead without roping up. "We're not pushing in lads, we'll just wait out of your way in that little bay up there." Of course the little bay had no belay and we ended up perched next to a little rock spike while they climbed all over us. Very alpine. Maybe the students' incompetence was rubbing off on us. Still there was no rush, I could still see two teams just up ahead.

The snow ramp ran out at a real belay complete with a peg festooned with ancient tat. "I see all the gear is in place," I joked weakly to the guy belayed in front. He warmed up and we chatted while John came up. Might as well be civil if we're going to be spending the next few hours in pretty close company.

The route curved out of sight across easy but exposed ledges where the protection left a little to be desired. A long pitch ensued with 60m ropes just getting me to a decent rock belay. And then the waiting began. The next pitch was the crux on rock and the recent departure of a block had made it a little trickier. After watching three people struggle furiously up it I was starting to get a bit worried! Eventually it was my turn. A solid looking peg and good wires gave reassurance. A solidly torqued axe and walk the feet up. A high step and a reach for a solid hook. I was nearly up. A few more moves and my axes whacked

into solid turf. I belayed rapidly on a big rock spike. We needed to get a move on if we were to have any chance of getting to the top in the light.

Another easy snow pitch led us up to a solid belay. A superb, complex turf pitch got us into a small bay as the light faded. I raced off, barely pausing as I passed the team ahead. They had opted for the harder direct finish but we scooted past them on easy snow. From the col it was only a short pitch to the top but there was a keen wind and the moon was obscured by cloud.

John and I shook hands and grinned. What a superb route! We threw the kit into our 'sacs and headed off around the corrie rim, staying well clear of the cornices. The moon came out as we trudged down. I swear the stovies in the pub in Ballater tasted better than anything from any posh Edinburgh supermarket. To cap off the day Andy arrived with wild eyes and wilder stories. There are plenty more adventures to be had in Scotland.

Cormot was baking in Spring sunshine. The crag smelled of heat and dust, it was virtually deserted. We warmed up on long routes with big holds and stout bolts. It was getting hotter, all very pleasant. It was a holiday; we were having fun. Lunch was bread and cheese of course. I could do this all day.

"You're not enjoying yourself, are you?" someone asked.

Then a bundle of panting enthusiasm arrived from the other end of the crag. He hurriedly reported on the exploits of the children, grabbed rope and harness and started pawing the ground at the bottom of his chosen route.

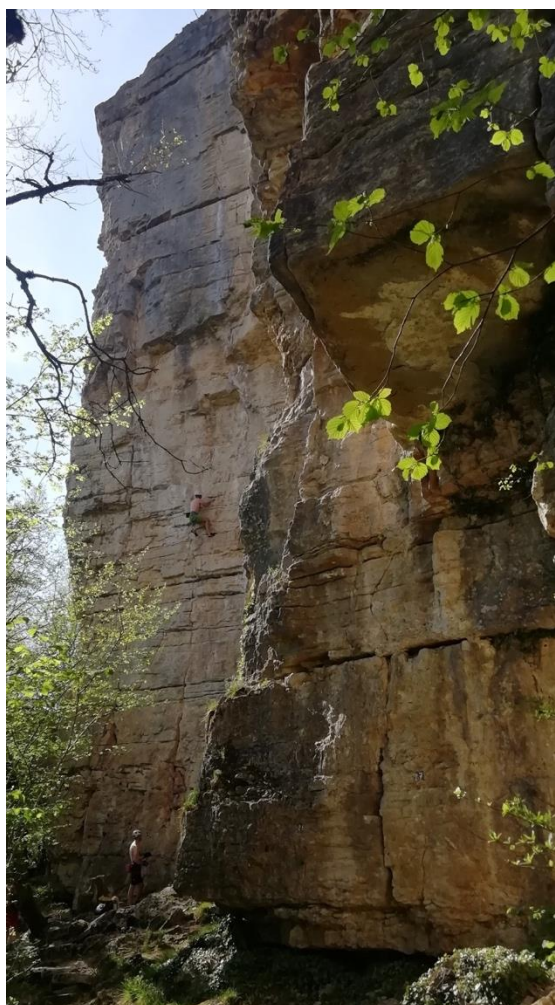
"I was going to have a sandwich, or I can belay you now..."

"Yes, now please," came the instant reply.

The enthusiast, let's call him C, raced up the first half of his warm up, got hopelessly lost on the top half and eventually contorted his very tall and rather talented frame up some decidedly tricky looking territory. There may have been some gentle ribbing about climbing talent and route-finding ability not always overlapping.

The crag classic up the middle of a pretty steep wall was still in the sun, but a butch looking crack line to the left was creeping into the shade. It was called Les Raisins de la Colere, (The Grapes of Wrath). C debated knee bar pads and jamming gloves but set off without either. These French dudes can't jam can they, so there must be holds right? There was definitely a knee jam at one point and a worrying amount of grunting from C. Eventually he disappeared from view and made slow but steady progress to the lower off.

A call from the right asked me if I wanted to do the route over there next. It looked really good and quite a bit easier. Now the French grading around these parts is what even the locals refer to as "tres dur". Which as far as I can tell translates as total sandbag. But the route to the right just looked like it was going to be too enjoyable. The butch crack was theoretically within my pay grade. Life is suffering, as the Buddha said. As long as the quickdraws are in and you're climbing with a strong team he probably didn't add. Let's go.



There's a really nice sensation of observing myself climbing that I get on occasion. This was one of those times. I cruised up the first third of the route – steep but positive, bolts slightly spaced but nothing to worry about. The crack narrowed and the rock leaned out. Suddenly I'm impaled on the crux. I heave up to a flared jam and try to get both hands into the constriction. It's all very pressing. A slap out right brings only average holds. Another slap to nothing. I'm off. I go a fair way to a nice soft catch. Bugger. I haul back up and instantly discover a positive dish inside the crack. Some grunting and sweating and I'm into a contorted rest. I wriggle round and can stretch to a big positive pocket which should enable easier ground to be reached when I'm properly recovered.

"Can you get that big pocket? If you can get to there the rest is fine. Come down, have a rest and do it on redpoint." C says. I wonder. It would be great to get the tick, but there's a lot of climbing below me. Remember the Buddha's words, especially the sport climbing version. I have a last quick fondle of the crucial holds and lower to the ground for a rest.

Take two. It's a little cooler now and I'm feeling ok. the crux arrives and of course I do it differently this time. The slap out right feels ok and I'm soon hauling up to the rest. I'm laying away to the right, walking my feet high. All I need to do is throw my weight over to the left and I can lean my shoulders into the niche. My fingers are unpeeling from the layback. A frantic slap to a big dish with my right and I fall leftwards into the niche panting furiously. That was close. A long rest, then the big pocket and I haul over to a proper rest. Right, now to enjoy the steady away part to the top. I'm pretty shot but this bit was "fine". This is the problem with climbing with people who operate four grades above you. It very much wasn't fine. Not as steep as the crack but fingery and balancy. I launch up and beat a hurried retreat with fading fingers. Another long rest. I go again and now I'm committed with no way to reverse. A full "elbows up" fight for survival ensues with every move feeling droppable. Sweat stings my eyes, the forearms are screaming and I'm deep into the red. It's just like those first gritstone HVS battles. A final desperate lunge gets me level with the belay. My hands and forearms are flat on the rock staying attached through friction. I can feel the grit under them as they slide gently. I reach up to unscrew the crab, hardly daring to breathe. I let out an anguished howl as I realise the screwgate is one of those hideous symmetrical things so you can't tell which way up they are. Panicking now, it dawns on me that I have a single quickdraw left. With frantic fingers I clip in and sag back. That was close. I'm lowered to congratulations and some gentle ribbing.

"I had to try really hard on that."



Women in Climbing

A collection of thoughts and personal experiences from Janet, Gill, Steph and Jan.

Janet Briggs

My real introduction to the world of outdoor activities was through joining a university caving club in the late 1970's. In those days the club seemed to try to sign up as many new members as possible at the freshers fair, and then having got their money didn't do much to encourage all but the very keen to take an active part in club activities. However, I did find that as a female I got a lot more offers of transport, or the loan of equipment than my male counterparts. I think it would be fair to say that I got quite a lot of offers of another sort from the many single male cavers over the next few years, these needed careful management!

Looking back with hindsight it does strike me that whilst the female members were encouraged as equals on certain trips, caving in the Mendips, South Wales and regular trips to County Clare in Ireland, I don't remember any of us taking part in the harder 'SRT' trips in Yorkshire or going on cave exploration expeditions in mainland Europe. Some of the cavers also climbed, but again that was only the men. However, I am aware that this was not the case everywhere. There were some very active female cavers in both university and other caving clubs at the time. To be honest I was very happy with what I was doing and didn't yearn for more.

I did finally succumb to the charms of one of the single male cavers and as our relationship developed Nigel introduced me to rock climbing. He was by then an experienced climber, so he led and I followed. As we did more climbing, he was always much stronger and climbing at higher grades than me, so it made sense for him to do the majority of the leading, and for me to be a rope holder and second. I have done a bit of leading but not enough to get proficient at placing gear and setting up belays; however these days I really enjoy being on the sharp end of the rope on many sport climbs. Through the Oread I have also enjoyed the opportunity to climb just with other female members, it is a different atmosphere when you know the buck stops with you. When it comes to hill walking and mountaineering, I have always been equal to my male companions, taking my fair share of route planning and navigating.

It wasn't really until I became involved in the Oread that I came across female members who were climbers in their own right, not as a second to their partner, or who climbed as an equal to their partner. I know there have been strong female mountaineers in the Oread throughout its history, but my impression is that women climbing as equals to men is much more prevalent amongst youngsters now than when I was younger. If I was there now, would I be one of them, who knows? At least I am a member of the Oread's first all female Chair, Secretary, Treasurer team!

One more thought about changes for the better: all my caving oversuits used to split around the hips and upper legs, my first Goretex kagoule was really tight at the top and over the

hips, but baggy in between – why was that? Because until about 25 years ago no outdoor gear was made to fit women, we just had to try to fit our bodies into man shaped garments. It seems such a luxury having outdoor clothing that really fits nowadays. Looking back at outdoor magazines from the 70's and early 80's it makes me shudder at the way women were objectified in the adverts for clothing and gear. Some things have definitely improved.

Steph Ward

I was introduced to climbing and the outdoors as a child by my dad. Keen to pursue climbing more, I joined my university climbing club 13 years ago and was completely hooked within a few sessions. I was fortunate the year I joined to have several female role models in the club. Emma was leading me up routes on the first university trip of the year, I watched girls try hard on sport routes, taking whips, and some of the best climbers in the club were the women!

The indoor climbing scene has changed significantly in the last ten years. Since climbing was announced as a new Olympic sport in 2016, indoor bouldering has been one of the fastest growing sports, with most cities now having at least one decent gym on offer. This coincided with the This Girl Can campaign, which started in 2015 with the aim of breaking down some of the barriers surrounding women and exercise. At my local centre, The Depot, Nottingham, there's been a noticeable increase in the number of new climbers, and there's now a lot more women bouldering indoors than when I started. The Depot offers a weekly women's hour, where they could meet, and climb with other women. I have never joined in with these sessions, but speaking to other climbers, they said these sessions have been great for encouraging more women to participate in the sport, creating a friendly and safe environment where they feel empowered and confident to push themselves. However, at most gyms it is still quite rare to see a woman ticking off the hardest boulders (the likes of Sheffield is probably an exception!), although hopefully that will change in the future as more and more women participate in the sport.

I find the outdoor scene is quite different, trad climbing is still male dominant, and I'm often the only girl at some of the sport crags I frequently visit. Whilst this was intimidating at first, I've always found the climbing scene to be very friendly and welcoming, and I've never felt like I've been treated any differently to my male partners, other than maybe getting a few extra compliments!

As a follow on to Janet's comments, one of the biggest changes I've noticed in the last few years has been the representation of female climbers in magazines and guidebooks. After a flick through a few of my dad's climbing guidebooks from the 80's and 90's, I only found one picture of a female climber, and they were belaying. This is quite contrasting to guidebooks nowadays, where women are now frequently featured on the front covers, not only climbing but climbing hard! Similarly, at the top level, the gender grade gap has shrunk rapidly with 8c+ boulders, 9b sport routes and hard trad being sent (*climbed*) by the elite female athletes. Climbers are now spoilt for choice for female role models, as women are establishing themselves as not only top female climbers, but top climbers of either gender.

Impressions of a Climber - Gill Radcliffe

I first touched rock as a climber in 1984, just after my 18th birthday. My brother had joined a local climbing club, the Mountaineering Club of Bury, commonly known as MOB by its members. As far as I recall, I was the only female who met 'the lads' in the pub and went climbing. The lads were young, keen, working class, swore continuously and drove erratically. For a shy 18 year old girl it was heady stuff. I barely spoke, but I was keen to climb and was dragged up VS's and HVS's as their warm up routes and hung around to watch them climb into the E2's and E3's. As I didn't have a car and always got a lift, hanging around was my only option. It was a great opportunity to watch better climbers in action. Wilton Quarries near Bolton was the regular evening venue. Sundays were sometimes spent in the Lakes or Wales (very early starts de rigueur). Derek Kenyon was the key enthusiast in the club and was keen to see me progress. He suggested I go on a Pinnacle Club meet and learn to lead. I'd never heard of this club, but somehow he had and knew they had a beginners meet at their hut in North Wales, Cwm Dyli.

My first weekend with the Pinnacle Club was glorious. I led my first VS – One Step in the Clouds – at Tremadog and was seconded by the two women who had collected me from my parents' house in Bury. I don't remember much else, though I remember being amazed at all these women eating (vegetarian) and chatting together (no swearing) and a stream running along the floor of the hut, which was the water supply. No doubt there were many active women around in the UK and abroad, some of them climbing hard routes, it's just I hadn't come across them.

In 1985 I went to University and left MOB and climbing behind for a while. In 1996 I got a job in Derby and picked up climbing again. This time I stuck at it and joined the Oread. One clear difference between my early days in MOB and the Oread was the increased number of women in my immediate circle who climbed. Julia Stowell, Wendy Lawrence and Lisa Welbourne were regular attendees and I climbed with all of them.

I can't explain why more women had entered the sport in the intervening years; maybe it was the extra publicity, moving climbing from a niche to a mainstream sport; it could be the proliferation of indoor climbing walls that attracted women and of course sport climbing holidays were becoming more popular. The ease with which one can access the sport must be a contributing factor to its popularity...plus better equipment to climb with!

Some rock types and styles of climbing are of course more popular than others. In 1984 limestone was the rock of choice for the Bury lads and I remember many visits to Stoney Middleton crag and its café (for a big breakfast and a huge mug of tea before climbing) and occasionally at the nearby Furness quarry (the old name for Horseshoe).

In those days we didn't go abroad for sport climbing holidays but got cold at the crags or went to what passed for climbing walls on wet evenings. Horwich sports centre had a painted brick wall (therefore no friction) with mortar chipped out for hand and foot holds. Altrincham sports centre had a climbing room with bolt on holds but no mats, and a bar which served pints of milk and orange juice. I do remember almost always being the only woman there, though a visiting French climber certainly wowed the lads on one occasion. I

certainly prefer our modern climbing walls with their well thought out problems, soft mats and good coffee.

Whilst today it seems ever easier to participate and it isn't always necessary to join a club to learn how to climb, I'm pleased to say that the Oread continues to attract climbers. Thankfully some of these are women. The recent club meet to the Lofoten Islands was well attended and it was a pleasure to see Victoria, Emma, Steph, Nea and Janet active on the rock. I know that they're out climbing on a regular basis but these days I'm in many clubs and my time is unevenly divided between them.

However, I regard the Oread as my first proper club. It's where I became independent as a climber, with my own transport, rack, guidebooks and list of routes. In my first few years of membership I did all my climbing with the Oread and have strong memories of meets to Cornwall, North and South Pembroke and of course to the club hut in Wales. I also joined the annual two week meet in the Alps and through these trips developed my love of the higher mountains. I'm proud to be a member and it's the name I give to people who ask if I'm in a club, this despite the fact I'm also in the Derwent MC, Pinnacle Club and the Alpine Club. As we come up to our 75th anniversary I believe there is a lot to celebrate in our membership and I hope that the number of active female climbers continues to grow.

Reflections – Jan Wilson

As I sit and write my brief contribution, the Oread WhatsApp group are debating the origins of Oreads and their representation in fine art. I understand they were mountain nymphs and deities of Greek mythology preferring the wilder terrain. They were most definitely female!! I muse on the interesting theory that our founder members were early feminists and congratulate myself on joining such an organisation.

Back in 1949 as I understand things, there were few female climbing role models with notable exceptions. For me Gwen Moffat's book really provided inspiration when I first became associated with the Oread around 1980. I came as a partner and have enjoyed plenty of experiences in the hills with lots of Oreads over the following 40 odd years, but a career and a family meant I didn't devote a vast amount of time to climbing. When I retired, I decided to give it two years to test my commitment and see if I could find the 'rat to be fed'. I am pleased to say I've had a ball particularly with sport climbing and getting up into the high mountains. One of my proudest moments was leading Apple Arete which was put up by Dave Penlington back in 1952. I had the advantage of modern gear and excellent coaching. The early Oreads were just incredibly brave and talented with, I think, character formed from some tough times.

Today what a difference 75 years has made in our club and climbing in general with plenty of women performing at the highest level and some notable achievers in our club. So, I see around me a plethora of opportunity for girls to develop not just their climbing skills but resilience and the mental toughness that's needed to make a significant contribution in this modern world. I am certain our club will continue to play a part in developing women's climbing and I'm also certain some members would be most surprised to be thought of as unconscious feminists.



The Perfect Game - Steve Christian

An account of an ascent of Trinity Buttress on Snowdon, North Wales on the 13th of January 1991 by Steve Christian and John Turner.

The walk in from Pen-y-Pas along the well maintained pyg track was its usual breathless race against time, man, beast or indeed anything else which loomed ahead on the horizon. We knew that being early at the cliff has the distinct advantage of placing you at the front of any queue that may form later in the morning.

When we arrived in the cwm it was nice to be able to study and admire the whole of the Trinity face. In the past, enshrouding mist had prevented any view, which often meant we had to guess our way to the base of the cliff, with the accompanying disorientation which results.



Snowdon January 1991.

This time, from our vantage point, we picked out the lines of the gullies and buttresses and noticed queues already forming at the base of the most popular climbs. This helped us to decide on which particular route to attempt and so we began the steep three hundred foot snow ascent up to the foot of the cliff.

We headed for Trinity Buttress, a steep direct line up the centre of the face and arrived gasping, having passed the back of the queue for Trinity Gully, paranoid that someone might beat us to first place for our chosen climb. The fact that no one else seemed to want to climb the buttress, didn't lead us to any conclusions, we assumed we were either lucky or early.

We positioned ourselves below a vertical corner groove set at the back of a small amphitheatre. Looking directly up, all we could see was vertical rock, lightly covered with snow, with the occasional snow covered turf clump perched indiscriminately on the cliff. Looking down, steep snow slopes dropped away to a wintry cwm with a distant view of the

white capped Snowdonia mountains. People were arriving in the bowl of the cwm every few minutes on what was turning into a cold, clear and silently beautiful day.

"A steep snow groove leans slightly left, climb it and move left to a small snow field", John quoted from the guide book.

"Looks more or less straight up to me", I replied and set off up the cliff.

The first half rope length followed the corner on unconsolidated snow with some useful frozen turf and moss patches underneath. The ice axes gripped firmly in the vegetation and whilst progress was steep, it was straightforward. I reached a small ledge to stand on in the corner with some good rock features on which to secure myself and bring John up to join me.

"I'll belay here John there's an insitu peg" I shouted, "Okay", floated the reply.

I was relieved to tie onto the cliff having had no protection from a ground fall so far. Above, the groove narrowed and steepened considerably, if not overhanging slightly, seemingly ending sixty feet higher, where it silhouetted against the sky. People continued to head up to the foot of the cliff and queues for climbs lengthened. Still nobody waited behind John. I took in the slack rope and clipped John onto the mountain.

"Climb when ready", I yelled and John set off towards me.

"Climbing! I hope I like this Christian, this gear cost me a fortune."

"You'll love it", I enthused wondering quietly why we all did.

John grunted his way up the groove teaching himself the delicate art of reshaping moss and turf, whilst bridging across a rocky corner in crampons. I took in the slack rope as he climbed.

"How's it going", I asked as he reached me.

"How good's the belay?", he spluttered.

"Bombproof", Why?"

"Good, let me get tied on then. Looks like those ice screws were a bit optimistic".

"I might get one in the turf higher, who knows?"

I turned to face the groove. A couple of hard frozen sods encouraged upward progress and I reluctantly left the haven of the ledge. As I climbed higher the corner became narrower, squeezing me like an angle vice on either side. The turf placements thinned out and protection was non existent.

I panted, moved onward and upward, the adrenaline now in full flow, my eyes searching longingly for a feature to clip the rope into. But there was nothing, no protection from a fall. There was no turning back as I bridged irreversible moves, scratching my way from one mossy crack to the next, hanging from my ice axes for dear life. Above, just out of reach, I could see a small ledge which offered a brief respite with an open crack in the left wall of the corner, which promised the first chance of some welcome fall protection. I reached high

on crampon tips and wiggled a large hexagonal shaped wedge into the crack. It locked perfectly. I sighed as I clipped the rope into it using a carabiner and mantleshelved precariously onto the narrow ledge for a rest.

I contemplated the next upward moves and at full stretch I could just plant my ice axes high to the left into snow covered turf. There were no holds or rugosities for crampon placements, the groove was featureless. I breathed hard and pulled out left, crampons skating on smooth rock. Below, the groove and steep snow slopes sucked hungrily at my feet and I braced my body to swing one axe at a time higher into the frozen turf, heaving myself just high enough to get a foot stretched out left onto a turf ledge. I rocked across onto my left leg, carefully regaining balance, and stepped through with my right. I instantly looped a sling over a detached block, clipped in the rope, sighed again and glanced down at John hanging sixty feet below. He disappeared from view as I moved onto easier angled terrain.



Trinity Buttress pitch 2 exit.

The buttress was now more open, less steep and I worked my way between snowy ledges to a comfortable stance thirty feet above the groove. I tied onto a large rock flake and admired the view. The sweep of Lliwedd's black towering cliffs dominated the scene below, even with the light covering of snow that veiled them. They contrasted against the sharp rocky crest of Crib Goch on the opposite side of the cwm, with the lakes of Glaslyn and Llyn Lydaw nestled calmly between, mirrors of cold blue amethyst.

As John moved up the corner his progress became painfully slow and I inched in the slack rope.

"Keep it tight" came a drifting request and I reined in.

A helmeted head popped over the lip of the groove, followed immediately by two axes whacking into the turf.

John panted, "how's the belay?"

"Reasonable", I informed him and he cast me a sheepish look, glanced at the belay and moved carefully out of the top of the groove.

"Fancy leading on?", I asked.

"Yeah, why not seems easy enough".

I paid out the rope and watched John carefully as he moved steadily up easier ground.



Trinity Buttress pitch 3.

As I moved up to follow, I relaxed a little and for the first time considered the fine situation in which we found ourselves. The sun had disappeared westwards over Crib-y-Dysgl, the sky was still a perfectly clear, deep blue and the atmosphere one of clarity only experienced on frosty winter days. We soon reached the top of the buttress and as I pulled over the cliff edge onto the ridge above the view around was breathtaking. The sun, now low on the western horizon, was setting across the expanse of the Irish Sea, casting an orange sparkle across the snow covered mountains.

“What do you think then?”, I enquired of John as he stepped out onto the ridge beside me.

A smile erupted over his face and he sank down onto the snow and gazed at the view. There was a twinkle of setting sunlight in his eyes. He turned to look at me.

“I didn’t think it would be as good as this” and he returned his gaze to the view.

Sandwiches and warm flask tea seemed an anticlimax as we crouched in silence, mesmerised by the dwindling sun. It finally disappeared completely below the horizon signalling our time to descend. Neither of us wanted to leave. The scene was all too beautiful, and leaving was not a satisfying way to end such perfection. Lower, as I turned into the shadows once more, the chill playgrounds of the winter mountaineer, I studied the gullies and hollows of the buttress we had climbed, those which remain to be explored. I wondered at the beauty of the landscape and of the whole experience. In my heart burnt a desire, which like a drug I would not be able to resist, to return again one day.



*Trinity Buttress,
looking down the final pitch to Glaslyn below.*

Oread Dry Tooling - Rob Beck

A new form of climbing currently finding its way into the Oread, Dry tooling is a form of mixed climbing using ice axes and crampons on bare rock.

Sometimes seen as controversial, with lengthy forum threads debating the ethics of using winter gear in a non-winter setting, “tooling” is showing no signs of melting away, with national championships now elevating it to a sport in its own right, and competitors travelling from all over the world to compete in the UIAA dry tooling continental cup.

Specially designed tools, pics and “Fruit Boots” are sought after gear in this niche sport and are slowly finding their way into the mainstream climbing marketplace.

Tooling specific venues have been developed all over the UK, with crags in Scotland, the Works in the Lake District, the epic Clogwyn Mannod in North Wales, and our very own cave of dreams at Masson Lees in the Peak District.

Tooling is on the up.



Tim Sellears on Hidden Dragon (D7) at Clogwyn Mannod.

I came into climbing reading about the exploits of Chris Bonnington and local hero Doug Scott and have always been keen to get into the world of winter climbing.

After a fair few trips in the Highlands, a place known for rapidly changing conditions, made even more unpredictable by climate change, and a travelling distance of around 300 miles, it was a real challenge to gain the experience needed to get onto steeper ground in winter.

Mixed climbing seemed to be the best option. Developed by the late, legendary winter climber Andy Nisbet, mixed climbing relies more on rimed up rock and icy cracks than pure ice and snow. These are conditions that occur much more frequently in the UK, but even if that opened up the timing window, there was still getting to grips with using axes and crampons. When Tim Sellears and Jeff Ingman ran the first Oread Dry Tooling meeting in November 2022 I was excited to get involved. Both keen winter climbers, it was clear from the off that Tim and Jeff had put in some serious time at the cave of dreams.

After first putting pic to rock on Mount Chossmore, a sandy mound of cruddy rock at the bottom of the crag, Tim offered to lead the “Warm Up” (D6) and left a top rope in place for us newbies to have a go.



*Ed Bloomfield on The Warm Up (D6)
Masson Lees*

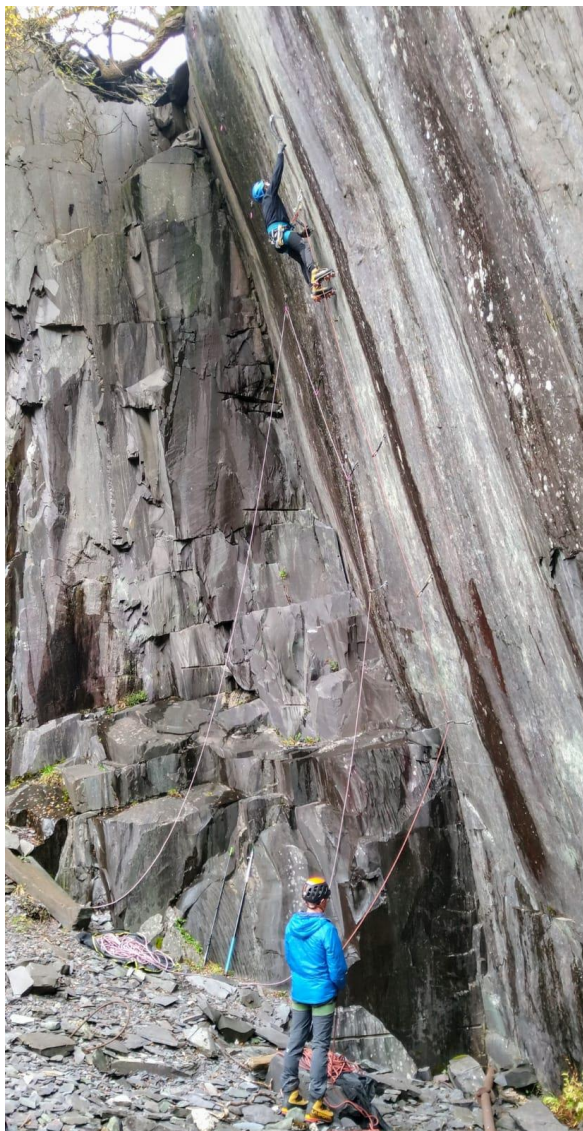
Watching Tim double hand his axe and move his feet over from one overhanging wall to another and then “goose neck” his axe to reach way up to a small pocket to make the next move, my immediate thoughts were “what have I gotten myself into?”.

We all then took it in turns to get completely boxed while Jeff, with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the route, pointed out beta with a laser pen. A little bit of dry tooling goes a long way and within a couple of hours, I was too pumped to carry on and hadn’t come close to making a clean ascent. But I was hooked!

Over the next year, members of the Oread would have regular tooling meets at Masson Lees, trips to North Wales and Scotland, and a well attended joint meet with the FRCC in the lakes.

Along with Ed Bloomfield, regular head torch lit Monday night blasts at Masson meant that by the winter of 23/24, I had gained more experience with axes and crampons in the previous twelve months than the five years before. Dry tooling had proved its worth as a training tool as myself and Ed both feeling confident, were able to push the grade on mixed ground much further in Scotland the following winter.

In 2023, the first dedicated guide book (Dry tooling Great Britain) was released, covering almost 250 routes from North Scotland to the south coast, putting dry tooling firmly on the map.



Rob Beck on the Deerhunter (D7) at Never Never Land, Gwynedd.

So whether as a tool to improve winter skills, or just a reason to get outdoors climbing when the weather is too bad for Trad and Sport, tooling is a great way to get pumped and gain some endurance. And in a warming world with alpine climbing seasons becoming shorter and more unpredictable the popularity of dry tooling seems likely to increase. [^](#)

A Journey into Climbing: From Indoors to Outdoors-

Dave Mason

In the ever-evolving world of climbing, there is a shifting landscape of how individuals find their way into this exhilarating and challenging sport. Traditional routes into climbing often included first experiencing the mountains through walking, scrambling, or hiking. However, in recent times, a new avenue has emerged: the indoor climbing route. I'd like to share my personal journey into climbing, which all started within the confines of four walls, a roof, and ample padding.

The indoor climbing gym where it all began was the Climbing Unit in Derby. This bouldering gym became my introduction to the vertical world. Unlike traditional climbing walls, the Climbing Unit focuses on bouldering, which meant there were no ropes and harnesses—just me, the holds, and the padded landing below.

At first, my visits to the Climbing Unit were driven more by the allure of the after-work social gatherings than a deep passion for climbing. It was a place to unwind, chat with friends, and attempt increasingly challenging routes. The social side was an integral part of the experience, and it kept me coming back.

However, as I continued to frequent the gym, something began to change. The thrill of successfully completing a bouldering problem, the physical and mental challenges, and the sense of accomplishment gradually grew on me. The more I climbed, the more I found myself captivated by the sport.

As my skills improved and my passion for climbing deepened, I yearned to venture beyond the walls of the Climbing Unit and experience the raw beauty of outdoor climbing. The transition from indoor to outdoor climbing was not without its challenges.

One of the primary hurdles I encountered was the need to acquire new skills that were essential for outdoor climbing. While the Climbing Unit had been an excellent starting point, it became clear that the gym environment, with its padded floors and plastic holds, could only take me so far. To fully embrace outdoor climbing, I needed to learn about anchors, rope management, and the complexities of belaying on natural rock faces.

This quest for knowledge led me to explore various avenues for learning these outdoor climbing skills. What I quickly discovered was the prohibitive cost of private instruction. Hiring a personal climbing instructor was an option, but the expense associated with one-on-one lessons could be daunting.

Surprisingly, I also found that classes designed for adults looking to make the leap from indoor to outdoor climbing were scarce. The indoor climbing community had grown significantly, and clubs for children to learn and grow were widely available. But it seemed that the infrastructure for transitioning to the outdoors as an adult was not as well established.

While the internet was full of instructional resources, especially for learning lead climbing and outdoor techniques, the risk of misinterpreting them and the potential consequences of doing so presented a unique challenge.

It was then that I found the Oread, a club that had seemed to have faded into obscurity. Their outdated website and low social media presence had led me to believe they were no longer active. However, my scepticism was dispelled when a small A5 brochure suddenly appeared on the notice board at the Climbing Unit, announcing that the Oread club was alive and well, meeting right here every week...

By the time I joined the Oread club, I was already familiar with outdoor climbing, specifically sport climbing. However, the Oread club introduced me to the world of traditional climbing. Here, I learned how to place gear and create safe anchors, skills that are crucial for climbing on natural rock faces.

The guidance I received from the club members, who collectively have an incredible wealth of experience, was invaluable. Their mentorship allowed me to safely and confidently transition to traditional climbing, opening up new challenges and adventures.

Through the Oread, I not only honed my climbing skills but also discovered the camaraderie and shared experiences that make climbing such a unique and fulfilling sport. The transition from indoor to outdoor climbing, and then to traditional climbing, opened up a world of adventure and personal growth that I had never imagined.

In conclusion, while the path from indoor to outdoor climbing may be fraught with challenges, it is a journey well worth undertaking. The skills, experiences, and friendships gained along the way are invaluable, and the sense of accomplishment that comes from conquering natural rock faces is unparalleled. For anyone considering making the leap, I encourage you to seek out local climbing clubs, embrace the learning process, and enjoy the incredible journey that climbing has to offer.



In the Presidents' Words (1975-1999)

Colin Hobday (1977-79)

I was president in 1977-1979 some 44 years ago, it proves difficult to remember that far back. In those days the Oread was very much a family club with lots of members having young children, sadly quite a few of the parents are no longer with us.

We had an excellent Alpine meet at Trafoi, camping in the Ortler region, Northern Italy with many routes done and over 40 people attending, some looking after the children while others climbed.

As well as climbing meets long distance walks were on the programme, Wales, Yorkshire, Derbyshire and of course the Bullstones every December. There was very little use of huts in those days, mostly a bivvy.

The photo competition was another meet with Douglas Milner judging and held at the Prince of Wales, Baslow. What happened to the two trophies?

The annual dinner was held at the Green Man, Ashbourne with an attendance of about 150 members and guest, speeches, cabaret, and bagpipes to pipe the newly weds around the room. We seem to have lost some of these traditions, good or bad?
Times change.

Chris Radcliffe (1979-81)

My term as President was from 1979 - 1981. The club was in excellent shape with younger climbers coming through making good ascents both at home and abroad. At the same time the long-standing traditions of the Oread were maintained. "Digger" Williams was secretary in my first year, then he passed on the role to Ron Sant, who in addition was the key mover and shaker behind the cabaret at the annual dinner. Lol Burns had become treasurer in 1957 and was still occupying this role throughout my presidency. It meant a huge amount to him to be so involved with the club, although his record keeping techniques were a cause of some frustration to auditor, Reg Squires.

The annual dinners were held at the Green Man, Ashbourne and over 150 members and guests were present. There were several formal speeches as well as Oliver Jones piping the newlyweds around the room before receiving their tankard. This was followed by a cabaret, a long-standing tradition which required a lot of work before hand and was famed across the UK climbing world. I find it hard to imagine how we fitted it all in. Chris Wilson organised the 30th annual dinner in 1979 with George Lowe (Everest 1953) as chief guest and other guests including Doug Scott. In 1980 Tony Smedley was the organiser for the 31st annual dinner with chief guest John Barry, Principal of Plas y Brenin and well-known raconteur, also Alan Blackshaw (President of the BMC).

The dinner was a big deal and the highlight of the social calendar. The Photo Meet held in October was also a well-attended social meet held in Baslow Village Hall. In 1979 our own Ken Bryan was judging and in 1980 it was Alf Gregory, the photographer on the 1953 Everest expedition.

The regular social scene was the Tuesday night at the pub where plans were made for evening climbing on Wednesday and for the following weekend. All this pre-dates social media and climbing walls so contrasts with the way we communicate today. Early in 1979 we moved the Tuesday evening venue to the Derby Rowing Club. As this was a different ambiance to the traditional pub, there was some initial criticism, but the beer was good and it ran successfully for several years.

There was a full meets list and many of the venues were similar to today, such as the Fylde hut in Little Langdale, Glan Dena in Ogwen, camping in Borrowdale, Cornwall and North Pembroke. Keith Gregson organised the Fell Race from Heathy Lea and Derek Carnell a camping meet at Alstonefield. There were plenty of willing leaders to push us into some new venues – Avon Gorge (Martin Musson), Baggy Point (Robin Sedgwick), North Wales Limestone (Pete O'Neill) and Swanage (Stuart Godfrey). The club was very active and younger members like Paul Addison and Robin Sedgwick were climbing at a decent level for the day.

There was no organised Alpine Meet in 1979, but about 30 Oreads were very active across the Alps – Gran Paradiso, Bernina, Oberland, Graians, Pennine Alps and Mont Blanc. Probably the stand-out partnership was Robin Sedgwick and Paul Addison who climbed the Blaitière, West Face; Ochs Fischerhorn, NW face (probably second British ascent) and Matterhorn, North Face. At a personal level, I did not go to the Alps that year but made my first trip to USA with Pete Scott. We met up with Dez and Ann Hadlum, originally from Nottingham and associated with the Oread before going to the States. Pete and I climbed in Colorado and briefly in Yosemite. For me it was the beginning of many memorable trips to USA that continued until 2016.

In 1980 there was another hugely successful Oread presence in the Alps. Colin Hobday led the official meet to the Ortler which was attended by 44 members, their families and friends. Elsewhere Dave 'Snod' Helliwell and Chris Wilson were climbing in Chamonix: Forbes Arete, Midi-Plan traverse, Point Lachenal, NE ridge and Cosmiques Arete on the Midi. Pete Scott was acting as an 'assistant guide' with Roger Baxter-Jones and their party climbed the Rochefort Ridge on the Grandes Jorasses and Tour Ronde, North Face. Paul Addison and Robin Sedgwick made an impressive ascent of the Grandes Jorasses by the Walker Spur. Again, I was absent from the Alps in summer, having used up my holiday to climb the Grandes Jorasses by the Croz Spur in winter conditions with Peter Holden. This was to complete unfinished business where we had failed twice previously – in 1975 and 1976. Although just outside the official alpine winter, we had tough conditions over five days to finally complete this objective. Although I have continued to have many fine mountain adventures since then, in retrospect our ascent of the Croz Spur proved to be my swansong for hard alpine ascents.

I felt privileged to be elected as president, but I was happy and relieved that my term was not marked with any great upsets and the club continued to thrive.

Peter Scott (1981-83)

The club was thriving when I was President in 1981 – 1983 with active young climbers and a core of established mountaineers who had been active with the club for years and continued to make solid ascents across the UK and in the Alps.

On committee Chris Radcliffe having stepped down as president was now VP and Ron Sant was the highly efficient secretary. Richard Freestone took over the meets secretary role from Ken Hodge at this point. Lol Burns continued his long running stint as treasurer. Dave Penlington organised the 32nd annual dinner at the Green Man, Ashbourne while Chris Jonson organised the winter lectures at the Royal Oak, Ockbrook.

The meets list reflects the breadth of activities in the club: well established venues like St. David's (Les Peel), Borrowdale (Gordon Wright), Patterdale (John Linney) and Cloggy (Brian West). John Linney also led a meet to Bryn Hafod, the Mountain Club of Stafford hut near Machynlleth which was popular with the club at this time. In the tradition of Oread long walks, Ron Chambers led a round of the Derwent watershed. Less frequent and more distant venues included North York Moors limestone (Pete Lancaster), Crowden (Pete O'Neill) and Wharnccliffe (Dave Helliwell). Chris Radcliffe led a meet at Spring Bank Holiday to Gairloch and from there he and Rob Tresidder bivvied under Carnmore Crag to climb the classic Hard Rock routes, Dragon and Gob.

The venues for the club Alpine meet in 1981 were Arolla and Visp with an impressive number of 81 members, families and friends attending. Despite mixed weather a lot of routes were climbed including the North Face of the Petit Mont Colon (Rock Hudson, Derek Mountford and Chris Bryan) and the Dent Blanche (Bev Abley, Tony and Vince Smedley). Over in Chamonix John O'Reilly, Dave Helliwell, Roger Larkam and Chris Wilson had a slightly epic ascent of the Old Brenva route on Mont Blanc. Instead of the Alps I went to Kenya with Chris Radcliffe, Howard Lancashire and Chris Astill. Chris and I climbed Mount Kenya by the NE Buttress of Batian, summiting in a storm and staying at the minuscule Top Hut before continuing to Nelion the next morning. We also climbed Olympian in Hells Gate Gorge and enjoyed seeing the wildlife on a trip with Oread Bill Kirk who was then resident in Nairobi.

For 1982 the Alpine meet was at Champex in Switzerland with 55 members, families and friends present. It was less than ideal weather so some moved elsewhere in Switzerland, into Italy (Gran Paradiso) and even cragging in the Belgian Ardennes. But it was still impressive support for climbing in the Alps and the best attended meet on the calendar. However, I decided on a last-minute decision to walk the Pennine Way which proved to be a trip of lasting memories.

Then it was back to the social season and preparing for the 33rd Annual Dinner – with chief guest Don Whillans who lived up to his reputation as a master of the one-liner and gave a hilarious speech. We also had as guest speaker Will McLewin, the first British alpinist to

have climbed all the Alpine 4000m peaks. In those days the dinner was a grand affair and we invited guests from other clubs to our top table, so in addition we welcomed Angela Soper (Pinnacle Club) and Mike Mortimer (Climbers Club).

I think my reflections on being president are best summed up by a response I gave at the time when interviewed by Robin Sedgwick for the 1981/82 Club Journal. This was my verbatim response to the question:

“What are your impressions of the Oread at the moment?”

“The Oread, to my mind, is in a very healthy state. When Radcliffe and I were in our early days in the Oread in the early 70’s, we didn’t consider it to be all that healthy because we weren’t recruiting a lot of young people. In those days Pretty was God, Janes was the court jester and Burgess was an up-and-coming hard climber, but there was no young element coming into the club. Radcliffe used to write very strong editorials in the newsletter that we produced, complaining about this and asking what was going to be done about it. Now, I think, the reverse is the situation – we don’t see enough of Pretty; Janes I haven’t seen on the crag for years, Burgess is still getting out, but the main driving force of the club, climbing-wise, lies with the younger people, both male and female; these are the people that are getting out on club meets. My only worry now, and I mentioned it at one of the Annual General Meetings a couple of years ago, is that although the old order changes yielding place to new, that old order should still be encompassed within the Oread environment, simply because I look upon the Oread as a club having great breadth and depth – now this covers all activities, such as walking, skiing, photography, rock-climbing and mountaineering. It also encompasses people from many facets of society and a broad spectrum of ages, and it would be a pity to me if the Oread suddenly became a group of people who were in a particular age range, say 16 to 40, and the older element faded away. We do see them at the dinner but I would like to see them on meets more regularly. We do now have founder members on the committee, though, as well as younger people. I personally find the Oread a very satisfactory club to be in and I always have done. I find the fact that the Oread is there is rather a nice thing because no matter how much you get involved in the hassle of everyday living, you always know that the Oread is there. You can go out, you can get to the hills, or you can go down the pub, and it’s a great facility.”

Well looking at the situation today, there is certainly no chance of saying the older members are no longer involved! It was a great privilege to have served as president all those years ago and I have the fondest of memories of all my years with the club.

Robin Sedgwick (1985-87)

In casting one’s mind back nearly 40 years it becomes very difficult to remember specifics and even more difficult to place them within a narrow time frame; in this case my presidency of the Oread in 1985 and 1986. Fortunately, I am somewhat of a hoarder (or so my daughter says) and putting this piece together would not have been possible without copies of the Oread journals from 1985 and 1986/7. Members with better memories than I may spot that some of the events I recall fell just outside the required period. If so please

forgive me; my intention being to highlight the vibrancy and variety of the club and the wide range of achievements in the mid 1980's.

Current members of the club will recognise many of the meets recorded in the journals; hut meets in Derbyshire and Wales, The Lakes, Pembroke at Easter, Bullstones, the summer Alpine Meet, winter night climbing at Black Rocks to name just a few. The extensive and varied meets programme provided the core activities of the club with something happening most weekends.

Additional to the club meets programme of course, are individual member's activities, or should I say adventures. Detailed in the journals are accounts of : A Land Rover trip from the UK to Kenya, walking the Pennine Way (impressive!), walking Lands End to John O'Groats (unbelievably impressive!!) climbing on Mt Kenya, the Shawangunks, the Baltoro Glacier, Eldorado Canyon, the Devil's Tower and the Tetons. What was undoubtedly the most impressive mountaineering achievement may well have been just outside my presidency period but I couldn't leave it out: The first ascent of the North Ridge of Kharcha Kund in the Gangotri Himalaya by an extremely strong and experienced four man Oread team, three of whom had independent ascents of the Eiger's 1938 route on their CV. Not to be outdone, the fourth member subsequently went on to summit Everest.

One item in the journals that was definitely within the time frame was the annual dinner attended by 132 members. Guest speaker was Will Herford who was well known in climbing circles at the time for having done all but one of the routes in Ken Wilson's bumper fun book, *Hard Rock*. The route that eluded him was Doug Scott's A4 Aid route *The Scoop* on Strone Ulladale in the Outer Hebrides which Ken had deliberately included as a route ticking "stopper". I mention this as the route had received its third ascent several years previously by an Oread pair!

Still relating to the annual dinner, I can't finish without a little self-deprecation. In the mid 80s aid climbing was still respectable and a way of getting out and doing something in winter. An outing to do *The Bat* in Dovedale saw us hoping to beat the crowds by bivvying at the bottom of the route after a long session in *The George* at Alstonefield. The large cave taken by The Bat was unsuitable for a bivvy so we dosed down in the cave next door. Having overslept the next morning we awoke to find another party on "our" route. ☹️ This unfortunate episode generated much mirth within the club and was immortalised at the annual dinner cabaret in the form of a blues song presented by a four piece lycra clad vocal combo. Hopefully someone has the original colour photo reproduced in black and white in the 85 journal.

Good Times!

John Linney (1987-89)

I felt highly honoured to be asked to become president of the Oread on February 10th 1987. Here are some of the activities I became involved with during my presidency.

The lease for Heathy Lea was due to be renewed and it had been agreed negotiations with the Chatsworth Estate commence. Harry Pretty, who knew Mr Penrose, the old Estate Factor, offered his services to me in meeting the Estate Factor at the time, I think it was Mr Penrose junior. The Estate was happy to extend the lease for a further ten years however we raised with them our concerns regarding the roof which showed signs of collapse and accordingly we were reluctant to continue with the lease. The estate agreed to investigate the matter and in due course gave assurances that the roof would be repaired. The club would continue to use Heathy Lea and carry out improvements to the barn and the cottage kitchen. Sub-letting was also agreed for other BMC member clubs.

Dennis Gray was the General Secretary of the British Mountaineering Council, BMC. He asked me to meet a Mr Braithwaite who owned Rainster Rocks, Brassington Derbyshire and had put notices up declaring a ban on access to the Rocks. I met him at Rainster and apparently, a group of young people, not climbers, had been meeting there week ends camping overnight. His concern was the lighting of fires and leaving a considerable amount of mess. Eventually he had evicted them threatening to prosecute them for trespass on his land. At our meeting he offered to lift the ban and remove the notices providing only BMC Members climbed there. I explained that I could not agree to this as not all climbers are members of clubs affiliated to the BMC, but I would take steps to make known his concerns through local clubs and its members and the BMC Peak Regional Committee at which I represented the Oread. We would also ask local club members to monitor the situation. He agreed to this and eventually the matter was resolved amicably.

As president I represented the Oread at various functions, these included 'Club Dinners' of the Stafford Mountain Club at the Red Lion in Dinas Mawddwy and the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club at the Glenridding Hotel in Patterdale. The most memorable function was the official opening on 22nd March 1986, of the new Midland Association of Mountaineers (MAM) Glan Dena Hut, in Ogwen Valley, Eryri (Snowdonia) North Wales. The old wooden hut had a reputation for being rather cold! The principal guest was the author and mountaineer Showell Styles. It is a fine brick-built building but as with the old hut, as I remember, the new one was still rather cold!

The annual photographic competition was held on Saturday 21st November 1987 and Ian Smith of Sheffield, had agreed to do the judging. Ian was editor of High and Climb magazines and as such had to select photographs for his publications. My job as president was to meet him so he could have a preview on the afternoon of the competition day. We met in Bakewell, and I asked him if he wanted some lunch and if he had any preferences, he chose to eat at a small restaurant and devoured a large plate of crocodile meat! I had a burger and chips. That afternoon we went to Baslow village hall to preview the photographs and Ian very carefully viewed all the entries and rated them. So, on the evening all was set to commence but no judge! He eventually arrived about twenty minutes late. Nevertheless, it turned out, in my opinion, a rather good evening and the judge was impressed by the standard and quality of the photographs. Richard Hopkinson was judged the overall winner.

I hope my presidency was satisfactory to the members, as for my part it was indeed an honour and a privilege to be president of this great club the Oread.

Bobby Gilbert (1991-93)



Samson Stones, Eskdale, 1991. Steve Bissel, Tim Whitaker, Roger Penlington, Roger Larkam, Katie Bolt, Liz Whitaker, Bobby Gilbert, Mike Moss, Chris Radcliffe. Photo Bobby Gilbert collection.

OMC: Would you mind telling us a bit about the era around when you were president?

BG: Sure, ask away.

OMC: Who did you mostly climb with at this time?

BG: Probably Gary Burgess on rock. In the mountains Roger Larkam, Rob Tresidder, Robin Beadle.

OMC: What were your most memorable climbs?

BG: On rock perhaps A Widespread Ocean of Fear on Lundy which I climbed with Mike Wynne. It was on our last day, time was limited, it was very windy with a threat of weather coming in. There are some big runouts. Somehow, I really enjoyed it while simultaneously thinking it lived up to its name.

In the mountains both Kharchakund and The North Face of the Eiger are still strong in my memory despite being nearly 40 years ago. Robin Sedgwick told me he thought that climbing the Eiger was like going through the pages of a story book, like a dark fairy tale. Every pitch has history. I climbed it with Jan Karvik in what may have been one of the last years to have good conditions in summer. I can still remember who led every pitch. Fortunately I hadn't read The White Spider or I might never have attempted it!

OMC: Are there any climbs that feel like unfinished business?

BG: Right Wall. I tried it at the end of a long day and by the second crux had completely run out of strength. I barely managed to escape up Cemetery Gates. I wished I'd gone straight onto it instead of Left Wall and some other routes. I believe I might have done it. In the Alps it would be the North Face of the Droites. Tony Walker and I got a few pitches up but there was a continual stream of slushy micro-avalanching coming down the face. We decided going for a beer seemed the thing to do. It's a fantastic looking line.

OMC: What was your favourite Oread Meet?

BG: We did one to the bivvy cave at the Samson Stones boulders. It's a few miles walk from the bottom of the Hard Knott pass up towards Scafell. Pretty remote. Radders and Richard Hopkinson joined us from the Langdale direction. There were about a dozen of us. Next day the weather was poor but we managed to get the whole party (except for one photographer?) on top of Napes Needle. I recall the last two or three were hoisted up as outriggers just long enough for the photo.

OMC: What is your favourite bit of gear from "back in the day"?

BG: My Rohan salopettes. Totally indestructible, warm when wet or frozen. I still wear them to go skiing. Rohan stopped making them, possibly because they realised people would only buy one pair in a lifetime.

OMC: What is your favourite modern gear?

BG: Modern ice tools are incredible. They allow you to climb at least a grade harder. I want to get out and do some of the ice falls that would have scared me back then. Mind you, they probably still will.

OMC: Did you go on any international Oread meets?

BG: Not as such. Kharchakund was a four-man Oread team. What I really enjoyed though was going out to Chamonix and camping at Pierre D'Orthaz with a big group of Oreads. At any point some teams would be "on the hill" others relaxing in the valley or preparing for the next route. People I remember being there include Rob Tresidder, Pete Scott, Robin Sedgwick, Roger Larkam, Robin Beadle, Tony Walker, John O'Reilly, Tim Barnett. People who came out in cars had luxuries like deckchairs, those that came on the bus, or hitched would be sat in the mud but would grab a deckchair until the owner returned. I remember having to bivvy on the campsite for almost a week after my tent owning partner went home and I was waiting for my girlfriend to arrive with another tent.

OMC: What was your most memorable night in the mountains?

BG: Robin Beadle and I were bivvied on a ledge a few pitches up the Walker Spur. As it got dark the biggest thunderstorm I have ever witnessed hit us. It was non-stop lightning (literally – you could have read a book by it - though strangely I didn't). The noise of the simultaneous thunder hitting mountains all around us was louder than any party in the Choucas bar. Hail was pouring down the mountain slowly forcing us off the ledge as it built up behind our backs. At one point the whole ledge shook quite violently after the loudest explosion yet. The fact that we were tied to the mountain with wet ropes, (lightning conductors?) was not particularly comforting.

OMC: What was your best ever beer while out climbing?

BG: After completing the Walker we had a long descent into Italy. It got hotter and we got thirstier. We could see an alpine hotel in the valley and started imagining how good a cold beer would be. The last hour of the descent was a discussion on whether they would accept our French Francs. Fortunately they did. It was delicious!

OMC: Do you remember good social events?

BG: Heathy Lea was the best ever party venue. The barn was made for dancing, with a great place for a sound system on the upper bunks. There was a big party there before I headed off to Australia for a year. I was meant to be taking my mum out for lunch the next day but I felt so terrible I had to cancel. I don't think I managed to get up until well into the afternoon. I remember Annie Carrington laughing at how ill I was. How thoughtless.

Brian West (1995-97)

Thank you for the invitation, as a Past-it President, to reflect briefly on changes noticed over the intervening years. A little intemperate rhetoric goes a long way, so all I shall do is tell you of a visit made to a mountaineering club hut: what I found there; and some possible implications. You may even have been there yourself.

The stairwell was barricaded—not to be trusted above drops. The top bunks carried warning notices—not to be trusted at height. The swing was long gone—certainly not to be trusted with ropes and knots. No-one went to the pub—navigational skills suspect, and would only lead to unfortunate confrontations with stairwells, bunks, and - heaven forbid!- midnight swings.

Almost everyone went to bed early - understandable. Jigsaws can be so very tiring. We are plagued with jigsaws here, foisted upon us in the name of mental stimulation and----Must stay calm! Nurse says that if I get too excited she will have to call for the Men in White, and I know what that means. They are allowed ropes and they tie very efficient knots. They cannot be Oreads.

Time to smile sweetly and sip my Barleycup.

I'll be back.



BARMY Competition

The first, Gregson, series – Rob Tresidder

The first Best All Round Mountaineers of the Year competition was held in May 1993. Keith Gregson explained in his notice that it would be a ten hour day. Points were to be awarded for crags, trig points and pubs visited and of course for climbs completed. In somewhat characteristic style, Keith was always reluctant to declare anyone a winner and on this first occasion, the results were never published.

The following year the event was organised at very short notice by Colin Hobday. A similar scoring system was used but the day was shortened to seven hours. The start was once again at Heathy Lea. This time there was a much bigger field of 26. Results were published in the June newsletter. These were unsigned but read more like Greggo's style than Colin's! The post event score tallying was very creative with Chris Radcliffe and Rob Tresidder emerging just one point ahead of Roy Eyre and Pam Storer who had scored a five point bonus for crossing the main road while roped up.

In June 1995, the event returned to the same format, rules and scoring as in 1993 with another long day. In miserable weather there were only four pairs at the start but several more seem to have joined during the day leading to a jolly evening arguing in the Robin Hood at the end of the day.

In 1996, the event was held much later, in mid September. Keith had tweaked the scoring a little by eliminating points based on the grade of climb, but giving an extra point for each star and increasing the limit to ten routes per crag. No results were published.

In 1997, Keith re-sited the competition in North Wales using the club hut as start and finish. Looking for optimisation in scoring became much more complicated. A single point was awarded for every foot of ascent. Each crag climbed scored 1000 points. A 5000 point penalty was threatened for calling out the mountain rescue. I have been able to find no published results for this competition. I believe the winning team was Chris Radcliffe and ANO.

In May 1998, the event was again based at Tan-y-Wyddfa. Scoring was similar to the previous year except more points were awarded for rock climbs accomplished with the use of a rope. Again there were extra points for a climb or a summit never done before in order to attract new members to join the competition. There was another new point scoring opportunity: 500 points for each swim in a lake or river. Perhaps an opportunity for the solo competitor. There was an excellent turnout and a good time was had by all. The winner was a swimmer.

I can find no trace of an event in 1999.

In June 2000, towards the end of the second millennium, the competition returned to Heathy Lea. The scoring system remained much as previous events based on Heathy Lea. In

the October newsletter Keith said that he had finally been persuaded to publish the results. There were five teams and no solo competitors this time. Extraordinarily, all five teams ended up with the same score of 236! This was kind of central to Greggo's whole concept of the event. It *was* a competition, but you were not supposed to be competitive or take it seriously. It was just supposed to be a fun day. On the six occasions I ran I admit I was competitive but I also had a lot of fun. I must have driven Greggo bonkers but then I think he had a lot of fun goading me and Chris. He is sorely missed.

That was the last BARMY of the Gregson series. The Heathy Lea Fell Race, which was started by Nat Allen in 1997, ran for the last time in 2001. Mike Moss revived the BARMY a few years ago and it has run successfully since then. Sad to say the fell race has not. One day I may write a history of that event.

The return – Michael Moss

The BARMY competition returned for its second run in 2020. This year, 2020, was the year the pandemic arrived, not the ideal first year to become meets secretary. Most of the meets that year were cancelled but luckily restrictions on outdoor gatherings eased in the latter part of summer with the "rule of six" allowing groups up to six. After some soul searching in the committee, we went ahead with competition with teams limited to maximum of six. The aim behind the rules was, as with Keith, a good day out as a club, with the opportunity to be competitive if you wanted. Bonus points were awarded for fancy dress, starred routes, the hardest pitch, trig points, pinnacles, stone circles and monoliths. We had a good turnout. I can't remember who won.

In the 2021 edition the rules were pretty much the same as in 2020 and again it started from the car park between Froggatt and the Grouse Inn. This time, with the pandemic restrictions fading, we were able to meet up in the Grouse afterwards. Folk started to explore the envelope set by the rules. Keen competitors were the Briggs, Larkam and Radcliffe parties. Bonus points for bringing a child or someone aged 70+ on a team led to some trying to pass off their 80+ kg athlete offspring as children, they failed! Planning paid off, Roger studied the Derbyshire Heritage Guide to Stoops, stoops counting as monoliths. He planned a route with Tom to turn in the best score a little ahead of Nigel and Peter Briggs on foot, and Chris and Gill Radcliffe on their bikes. Ruth Gordon and Richard Hopkinson walked to fourth place.

For variety the 2022 edition started and ended at the Robin Hood, Baslow. Pretty much the same rules as in 2021 were applied. Roger and Chris competed hard, each going solo, and conclusively proving the obvious, that small teams would win over larger teams, Roger nosed ahead of Chris at the finish.

2023 suffered from poor weather and the BARMY event didn't happen. It returned again, superbly, in 2024.

The 75th anniversary episode of the BARMY competition was organised as a centerpiece of the Oread's 75th anniversary celebration in Sept. 2024 at Chatsworth. Chris Radcliffe changed the rules by defining checkpoints to specific crags, trig points, cafés etc. and

limiting the number of climbs or boulder problems counting at any one location to six. The aim again, was for a good day out, with plenty of entertaining scope for competitiveness. Chris also produced a map and score sheet which helped get more folk, unfamiliar with the competition and from other clubs, involved. It worked well, a combination of the occasion, Chris' planning, and a team at the campsite preparing tea and cake for returning competitors brought out a record turn-out for the event. Once more exploring the edge of the rules envelope helped the winning team. Mike Mowbray and Alan Monks carried a bouldering mat, winning with an impressive score ahead of team Roger and Tom Larkam, and team Ed Bloomfield, Simas Jermosenka and Tom Roberts.

It is a great club event; I hope it continues. It's up to the members to make it happen. [^](#)



*Start of the BARMY competition at the 75th Anniversary Camp, September 2024.
Photo Kev Fidler*

A History of Weekend Curry Meets -Tony Howard

Communal meals are a good way of bringing people together and generating a sense of belonging. The Annual Dinner is a celebration of the year's activities, and is often the 'social highlight' of the year. However communal meals are also held on meets. Tony Howard has had a leading role in these meets over the last 25 years. He has written a very detailed description which is published in full on the club website: [History of curry meets](#).

Here is an 'aperitif'....

Introduction

I have been running curry and other self-catering meets since the turn of the millennium. My sources of information were my meet planning and costing spreadsheets, descriptions in the newsletters and my own personal diaries and photo collection, plus photos from others. Inevitably this has produced a personal slant to the stories.

Origins

To paraphrase Blackadder, there are two things you should know about weekend curry meets; 1) they were at weekends and 2) we ate curries. Except the latter was not always true. We didn't *always* eat curry. Critically though we always ate together in a communal meal with a party atmosphere, and I think this has been the key to their success and longevity. Communal eating was not new to the Oread. Multi-family gatherings with growing children had been held for years over the Christmas period. Each family would provide food coordinated and balanced by informal arrangement. The Curry Meets were on a different basis though. Because some of the attendees had little interest in cooking, a flat fee was charged, and the money used to buy food and pay the volunteer cooks for their ingredients.

To depart from the Blackadder analogy, there is a third thing you should know; our eating meets were born from a contentious and inauspicious beginning.

In 1997 the small group of Oreads I usually climbed with decided to sign up for the Annual Dinner. Unfortunately, the venue chosen was small and there were no places left for us. So, I suggested we hold our own celebration based at the Church Hall in Coniston and a table for all of us was booked at the Yewdale Hotel for Saturday 22nd November. This was enjoyed by all, and I was asked to book a similar informal meet the following year. I got word later that this "supplementary dinner" was frowned upon by the committee, but as I recall nothing was said to us about it at the time, presumably because there were no places left for us to have attended the official dinner.

In 1998 I booked a table at the Black Bull, in Coniston, for Saturday 12th December and booked the Church Hall for the weekend. Afterwards, I was told that I had upset the committee. Sure enough I was soon dealt my punishment; I was asked to join the committee! At my first meeting I was taken to one side by our lovable, iconic and

formidable president. Harry Pretty told me that running such an unofficial meet so close to the annual dinner could damage club unity. I had sympathy with his argument and offered to run communal dinners at Tan yr Wyddfa instead. He readily agreed and the Curry Meets were born. Autumn seemed to me the most promising time to start such meets, because the days are shorter and there is less time for the hill and more time to socialise. The idea was shelved in 1999 perhaps because of our 50th Anniversary Annual Dinner. In the autumn of 2000, I trekked in Nepal and then worked in Indonesia.

So, the first curry meet took place on 10th - 11th November 2001. Twenty-four people attended, many of them younger members and guests. Parties climbed Dream of White Horses on Gogarth, Anglesey, Christmas Curry and Oberon at Tremadog, and Outside Edge at Cwm Silyn. Others went walking, running or mountain biking. A great time was had by all despite dull and damp weather on both days; a promising start for Oread curry/eating meets. Because of the success of the first meet, a second curry meet was held on 9th – 10th March 2002. Twenty-four people came along; eight full members, seven provisional ones and nine guests including many young people.

After this meet, in order to provide a lively social scene for our members and to draw in new ones, my plan was to hold three social meets per year, summer, October, and November/December. The October meet would be a curry meet or similar and based at Tan yr Wyddfa. The one in November or December would be similar and based at the Church Hall in Coniston. The summer meet would be a BBQ, also based at Tan yr Wyddfa.

Our first meet in Coniston took place in December 2002. Twenty-two people attended, Saturday morning brought a dull aspect and snow on higher ground. Most people went walking over Wetherlam and Coniston Old Man etc. followed by drinks in the warmth of the Black Bull. A convivial atmosphere developed in the Church Hall. Music was played. Curries and other delicacies were provided including Gluwein and beer. The highlight was chocolate-stuffed baked bananas.

The first BBQ took place in June 2003 at Tan yr Wyddfa with 25 people in attendance. Using some cash left over from previous meets I provided free drinks to accompany our BBQ in the evening. G&T's and Pimms were distributed but, being the man with his hand on the gin bottle, I was suffering by late evening. By the time I remembered the lamb chops I had put on the BBQ some hours earlier, they were just cinders!

The pattern of the next 20 years was established. Since then Tony has organised 20 curry and BBQ meets, with gaps in the sequence in 2014-2017 due to Autumn trips abroad and then the habit being lost, and in 2020/2021 due to covid restrictions.

Here are Tony's descriptions of a few memorable meets....

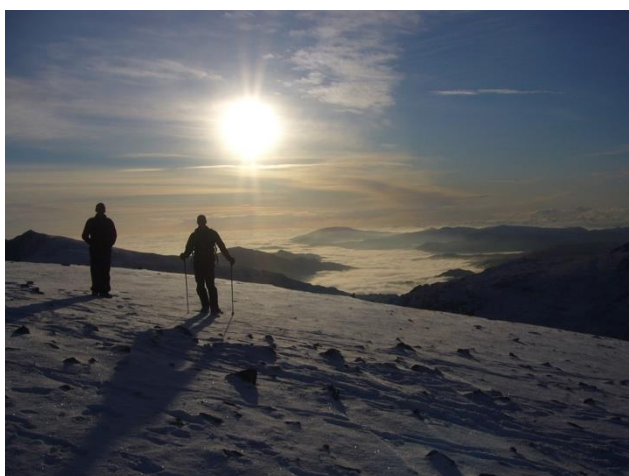
October 2003: Eighteen people came to Tan yr Wyddfa in October. The weather was poor on Saturday and Radders led us round the 'Five Cols Walk', a new one on me but an Oread tradition. We had a lovely spread in the evening. This included chicken, beef, seafood, and a vegetarian option plus a chilli, nasi gorang, naans, and cheese and biscuits. Better weather on Sunday saw most of us climbing at Tremadog.

October 2005: On our October meet at Tan yr Wyddfa the traditional curry took on an alpine theme. Seventeen people came along. We dined on goulash, dauphinois potatoes, frankfurters, sauerkraut, cheese, apple strudel and Gluwein.

November 2008: At the end of November 2008, we stayed in the Church Hall in Coniston. It was to be our last. The hall was to be converted into housing. Another change also took place. We chose not to cook for ourselves, but to eat in the Black Bull – although we did eat together on one table, 17 people attended.

On Saturday we followed a plan hatched by Nick and Tim and this would turn out to be one of my most memorable days out with the Oread. We scrambled from the Coppermines Valley via Long Crag Butress to reach the snow-covered plateau at about 400m altitude. The mist enveloped Coniston, but left the white fells bathed in the pale autumn sunlight. As the clouds rose the scene was like that from an aircraft window; mists obscuring one feature, then another. We walked on to Wetherlam and on towards Swirl How, but before getting there, Roger Gibbs and I descended into a corrie to the north of the ridge, before climbing a gentle gully to emerge on the ridge leading to Great Carrs. Dave Roscoe joined us there. The others were now well on their way to the Old Man and subsequently Dow Crag.

The light was fading by the time Roger, Dave and I reached the Old Man. We descended to the Coppermines Valley via Low Water. It was pitch black by the time we reached the track in the valley, but this led conveniently to the Sun Inn. We sat down next to the fire with our beers. It was only about 5:30 pm. We had had a full winter's day on the hill and a long social evening was still ahead of us. Soon afterwards we were joined by others, we drank more beers and whiled the hours away. Bliss! Eventually we had to return to the Church Hall and clean ourselves up before going to the Black Bull for dinner and more beers; what a wonderful day!



Swirl Howe – November 2008



Nantlle Ridge – October 2009

October 2011: The curry meet in October attracted a group of very long-standing Oread members. -We were 23 in total with two sleeping in their camper van. The weather was, very wet and fairly cold. A fine spread was provided. In place of raucous behaviour there

was sober debate about future meets, the hut, and other constructive or cerebral topics, I think. Well, I never!

July 2022: Eating meets recommenced after covid with our BBQ at Tan yr Wyddfa in July 2022. Twelve people attended, some staying on from the hut working party. On Saturday evening, we christened the new BBQ, and ate and drank while enjoying the warm sunshine, good food and good company.



On Sunday by lunchtime all except three had gone home due to the heat! Despite the heat it was still a very enjoyable weekend, to be repeated in future years.

October 2022: Our autumn curry meet took place on the weekend of 1st and 2nd of October 2022 at High House, the K-Fellfarers hut in Borrowdale.

It rained heavily on the Friday morning and by the afternoon the road was flooded between Seatoller and Seathwaite and also at Rosthwaite. Three Oreads; Nigel Briggs, John Dobson and Pete Amour had arrived on Thursday and due to badly swollen streams had experienced some excitement getting back to the hut after a tour of Sty Head, Angle Tarn and Langstrath Dale. Meanwhile those who had set out from home were exchanging information en-route and in Booth's supermarket car park in Keswick. We spoke in the afternoon by phone to the farmer at Seathwaite who told us that water levels were dropping and the road near Seathwaite was now passable by Land Rover. We chose to get there via the Newlands valley and the Honister pass. Three cars arrived by this route on Friday evening and later another two via Rosthwaite. By Saturday morning 18 of us had made it.



The Saturday evening began with cake and bubbly to celebrate Chris Radcliffe's 80th birthday. This was followed by enough 'Bombay' mix to sink a ship. Seven curries were presented and consumed. These were accompanied by yoghurt, rice, naans, pickles and chutney. This main course was followed by a tropical fruit salad. Despite the weather, those who got to Borrowdale appeared to enjoy the weekend of exercise, food and good company.

My Personal Highlights and Strongest Memories

- Climbing Dream of White Horses at Gogarth in November 2001 with Graham Weston, Mike Hayes, and Sharon Fletcher (now Gibbs), It was my seventh and probably my last ascent of the route.
- Climbing Curving Crack on Cloggy with Steve Christian on a beautiful summer's day in June 2003. Unfortunately, we witnessed a man just in front of us being struck by a falling rock as we all crossed Eastern Terrace. We gave assistance to him until a helicopter came to take him off. He made a good recovery over the following months, we were told.
- Climbing Angel Pavement with Dave Roscoe in July 2004. For the grade of Hard Severe, this is a serious route with some poorly protected sections and a fair bit of loose rock. The situations higher up reminded me of Cloggy.
- In October 2004, Chris and Gill Radcliffe, Richard Hardwick and I climbed Charity on the Idwal Slabs, continuing over Glyder Fawr and down the Devil's Kitchen in steady rain, returning to the hut very late. This sort of experience invokes in me and many of us feelings of satisfaction in being in the heart of the mountains and at one with them.
- In November 2008, a walk in the snow and above the clouds over Wetherlam, Great Carrs and Coniston Old Man with Roger Gibbs and Dave Roscoe and others initially. After descending the Coppermines Valley in the dark, we drank local beers at the fireside in the Sun Inn where other Oreads soon joined us in this warm comfortable and convivial environment. Afterwards we returned to the Church Hall for a shower before eating and drinking more beers at the Black Bull. Apart from type 2 excitement this day had everything and what it didn't have didn't matter. Smile!
- Walking the Nantlle Ridge in October 2009 with Jan, Sue, Annegret, Chiz, and Reu. A great day on a superb ridge with excellent company.
- And finally, the fun and enjoyment on the mountain, in the pubs and in the dining rooms and kitchens of the huts we have used over these years.

In conclusion I would like to thank all those who came along to make these events so enjoyable and memorable. Additional thanks go to all the cooks who have worked so hard and been so inspiring to me over the years.



The Annual Dinner 1999-2024

Year	Venue	Organiser	Speaker
1999	Royal Victoria Hotel, Llanberis (50th)	Shirley Wainwright	
2000	The Green Man, Ashbourne	Shirley Wainwright	Steve Hilditch
2001	The Green Man, Ashbourne	Shirley Wainwright	Roger Payne
2002	The Green Man, Ashbourne	Shirley Wainwright	
2003	Royal Victoria Hotel, Llanberis	Merle Gartside	Dennis Gray
2004	The Dog and Partridge, Swinscoe	Merle Gartside	Jamie Andrew
2005	The Lion Hotel, Belper	Derek Pike	Terry Gifford
2006	The Lion Hotel, Belper	Neil & Tracey Weatherstone	David Craig
2007	The Lion Hotel, Belper	Neil & Tracey Weatherstone	Andy Kirkpatrick
2008	Bear Inn, Alderwasley	Neil Weatherstone	Nigel Vardy
2009	New Bath Hotel, Matlock Bath (60th)	Neil Weatherstone	Richard Mayfield
2010	The Bluebell Inn, Tissington	Victoria Paterson	Jack Ashcroft ⁽¹⁾
2011	The Bluebell Inn, Tissington	Richard Hopkinson	Chris Radcliffe & Pete Scott
2012	The Bluebell Inn, Tissington	Richard Hopkinson	Chris Radcliffe
2013	The Bluebell Inn, Tissington	Chris Wilson	George Sutton
2014	The Bluebell Inn, Tissington	Tony Howard	John Fisher
2015	Matlock Golf Club	The Committee	Oread Choir
2016	Matlock Golf Club	Tony Howard	Rusty Rocks and the Bent Pegs ⁽²⁾
2017	Matlock Golf Club	Tony Howard	Rusty Rocks and the Bent Pegs
2018	Matlock Golf Club	Tony Howard	Rusty Rocks and the Bent Pegs
2019	Fox and Goose, Pudding Hill, Chesterfield (70th)	Ruth Gordon & Nigel Briggs	Graham Hoey
2020	No dinner Covid		
2021	Fox and Goose, Pudding Hill, Chesterfield	Chris & Gill Radcliffe	
2022	Fox and Goose, Pudding Hill, Chesterfield	Chris & Gill Radcliffe	Brian West
2023	Fox and Goose, Pudding Hill, Chesterfield	Chris Radcliffe	
2024	The Maynard Arms, Grindleford (75 th)	Rachel Walker & Chris Paice	Johnny Dawes

Notes

- (1) Jack stood in at the last minute
- (2) Rusty Rocks and the Bent Pegs comprised of Helen Hayes, Mike Wren and Gill Male

The Annual dinner is a long standing and much valued event on the club's social calendar. As the years pass and trends change the attendance fluctuates. Whatever the circumstances at the end of the evening most people have had a good time, the opportunity to meet friends and enjoy the company wins out. As the club and its members have aged the youthful raucous gatherings have matured into more sedate evenings. As with society in general the dinners tend to be less 'formal' as we move through the 21st century. Some people will find something to have a moan about such as the quality or quantity of the meal, promptness of service, the queue at the bar or who they are sitting near! Awards are presented, members' achievements are celebrated, and new honorary members announced, sometimes guest speakers entertain and the President presides. The dinners follow a similar pattern year on year but they are all different.

However, before the dinner takes place the organiser has plenty to do and thanks must be given to them, the smoother the evening goes it is likely that more background work has been done. This article appeared in the December 2013 newsletter, comparing experiences of the dinner in 2013 with the 1970's:

Random Thoughts of a Dinner Organiser - 2013 - Chris Wilson

I last organised an Annual Dinner in the 70's. Competition for the over 170 places (at the Black's Head in Ashbourne) was high and prospective members went on a waiting list. With post being the only way to receive bookings life was fairly simple, except that some (and they know who they are!) wouldn't book until the very last second (but they always came and places had to be kept for them, thus keeping those on the waiting list on tenterhooks). A few days before the dinner a small group would gather to decide on the seating plan. Speakers and other guests had been booked, but on that occasion the main speaker got delayed in the Himalayas and so, with a few days to go, panic set in. Fortunately Bob Pettigrew came to the rescue and helped organise a stand in (Doug Scott). The privileged few prospective members were always seated furthest from the top table and I had spotted the advantage of this location – near the bar and on the way to the kitchen (seconds might be available). Thus the dinner would come, we'd all have a great time and weary heads would eventually find their way to sleep somewhere – the bar shut at midnight but hotel residents could carry on, with a few invited guests, until late.

Organising the dinner today is slightly different. Members have to be cajoled into coming. They book by post, email and phone, and pay by cheque, cash and bank transfer. And some still leave it until after the last minute! The data is all put on a computer spreadsheet and seating plans printed. Last year we had 67 attendees, this year 59. We had one of our founding members, George Sutton, as a guest, thanks once again to Bob Pettigrew. George's reminiscences of the early days of the Oread and his escapades with youngsters on Kinder in foul weather were enthralling. Pete Lancaster recalled the year's events, and Rock's trials and tribulations in Tan yr Wyddfa's car park won him the Bent Screw award. A recent working party has now placed large stones around the steep bank and painted them white,

but car owners are still advised to engage their handbrake. Brian West brought the formal part of the evening to a hilarious conclusion, reminding some present of an ex-treasurer's infamous stag do.

Thank you all for coming – please come again next year and book a little earlier please!
'Events' can throw the best laid plans into disarray, as happened in 2019:

Organising the 70th Dinner - 2019 - Ruth Gordon

The 2019 70th Anniversary Annual Dinner was planned to be a special occasion and it was decided to have a change of venue. For several years Tony Howard had organised the dinners at Matlock Golf Club and he had developed an impressive set of spreadsheets for recording everything - menu choices, food lists, table plans etc. He felt it was time for a well earned rest and handed these over to the new organiser.

At first everything went well, the Maynard at Grindleford was booked and the deposit paid by mid February. The menu was decided, various speakers were suggested and Graham Hoey was chosen. Then on 22nd July the organiser told the committee he could no longer do it. Just as well so much of the work had already been done! Nigel Briggs offered to liaise with the hotel and I said I was happy to deal with the bookings and get the menu cards printed. I'd helped Tony with the bookings once before so the prospect held no fears – what could possibly go wrong?

I was going on a two week climbing trip to Sardinia in mid October so I got on with the job, putting the menu and booking information in the September newsletter – with the customary plea to book early! Quite a lot of people did.

On October 2nd the phone rang. It was Wim Clarke to say he had just tried to book a room at the Maynard and had been told that he could not – the hotel was being sold and would close at the end of October!

Nigel phoned the Maynard to discover that this was indeed the case – when did they plan to tell us? We urgently needed another venue so I sent out a round robin email to the club explaining the situation and asking for suggestions. Lots of people replied and much telephoning and checking ensued. Most were too small, and those that had a room big enough were usually booked up. An anxious few days followed - until Chris Radcliffe came up with the Fox and Goose and they were happy to have us – phew!

Just one problem – by the time we'd sorted out a menu and got everything agreed it was 9th October and I was off to Sardinia the next day! I hastily rejigged the menu choice form, wrote out details of the new venue and emailed it out to the membership amid packing my bags! I did it in exactly the same way as I had emailed out every newsletter since March 2012. (Addressed the email to myself, put around 30 addresses into the blind copy box, attached the menu choice form and sent it out in six separate emails.) I was a bit concerned that I got my own copy of the first email but not the rest. It was after midnight by then so I hoped they would have come through by morning. Which they had not. Snod confirmed my fears – he had received nothing. I phoned Nigel: Briggs being at the beginning of the

alphabet and he had received his. My suspicion that BT had chosen this very moment to decide I was sending spam and to block me was becoming a certainty. I asked Snod to send me an email and it didn't arrive. I was well and truly blocked! I had to be on my way to Snod's so I saved all the files onto a memory stick, transferred them onto his laptop and emailed them out from his Outlook address before catching the bus to Manchester Airport. As we sat waiting to board a few emails started to appear saying "I can't open the file!" I poured out my woes to Simon Pape and Mike Wren - then realised that in my haste I had failed to convert the menu form into a pdf and some people could not open the document file. Then Snod started to get delivery failure messages – and every one of them was to people with BT email addresses! It was starting to feel like one of those horrible dreams where you need to achieve something and, no matter what you do, one thing after another stops you doing it!

Luckily this wasn't a dream and Simon and Mike came in shining armour to rescue me. In spite of dodgy wifi at our accommodation Simon managed to convert the file to a pdf and Mike used his gmail address to send it all out again. After that we set our minds to enjoying Sardinia!

Back at Snod's on the 25th I worked thorough all the email responses to his address and compiled a list before returning home to a deluge of postal bookings. After that it was just the normal fun of phoning the usual suspects who hadn't yet booked but "Yes, I was just about to get round to it."

By the 12th November, when we had to send the food list to the Fox and Goose, 87 people had signed up – the most the Fox and Goose could accommodate so all's well that ends well.

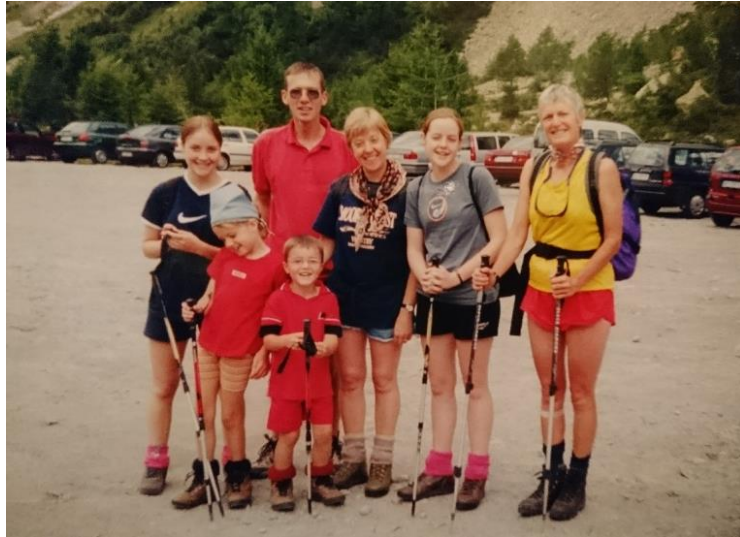
I have not volunteered to organise a dinner since.



*A gathering of 100
Oreads, 2009 Dinner.
(Photo Chiz Dakin).*

Growing up in the Oread – Emma Hayes

Growing up, the Oread club was at the heart of almost all our family holidays. Summers meant heading to the Alps—17 trips in total I believe! From climbing my first 4000m peak at just ten years old to countless hut walks and playing marathon Monopoly games during the inevitable alpine rainy days, the Alps were a playground of memories.



When I was 15, I remember being taken climbing by Dave, Victoria, Simon, and Roger, on a multi-pitch route in the Dolomites, although I'm not sure if Simon has ever forgiven me for knocking a rock that narrowly missed his head!

Over the years, I've seen the club evolve. I remember when Pete and Sue were the only ones with a campervan—I was envious of Bryony and Sarah's hammock beds. By the time I was eight, our family had our own van, and now (at least at the 75th anniversary weekend), it felt like we are officially a campervan club!



The club has always felt like a big family. I was lucky to go away with friends my own age like Sophie, Andrew, Peter, and Mark, as well as my German cousins. Summer holidays with 20 people felt like the norm.

Cornwall and Pembroke became annual fixtures too, and it was at Bosigran where I led my first multi-pitch route, Doorway. I still remember the chaos with the ropes—Dad had to finish the climb wrapped in coils of rope because I couldn't haul them up with the rope drag!

Luckily since then I have had more successful leads, Suicide Wall being a memorable one with Steph Ward. I started climbing with Steph at Nottingham University. In fact, my first memory of Steph was her unsuccessful second of a VS at The Roaches which led to me retrieving the gear in the rain while she went off to the pub! Needless to say, she now drags me up routes and after only a few years of persuasion, she has joined the Oread!

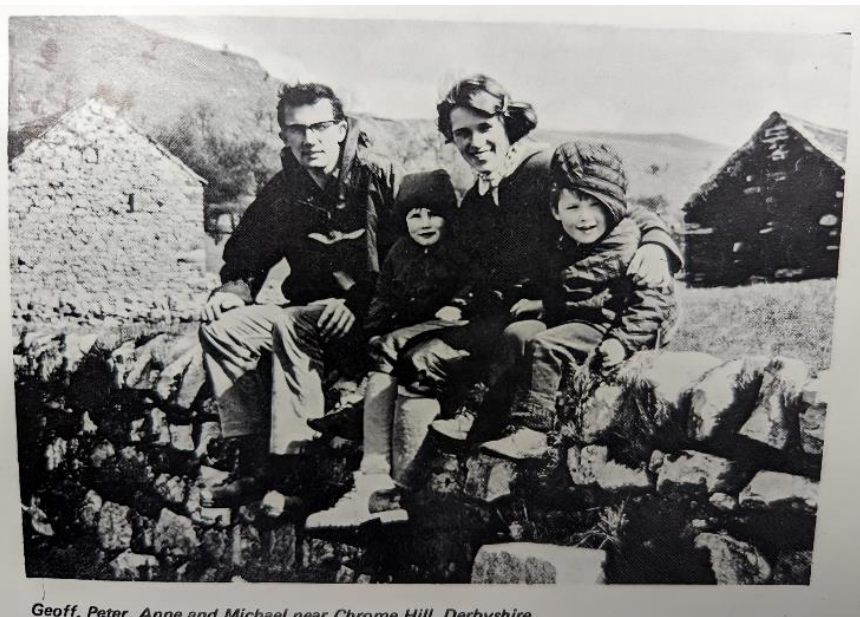


Our latest trip to Lofoten in Norway (summer 2024) was a special one. Nea and I climbed a route called 'Child's Play'—a route our dads first put up 20 years ago when we first came with the club. Back then, I was eight, and Nea was just 18 months old. While our dads climbed, I spent my time pulling her along the shore on a bodyboard and making sandcastles. This time I also got to climb Pianohandler Lunds with my dad, a great introduction to Lofoten climbing which took some getting used to, slabs and cracks, not normally my forte! The picture above is me having a play on the first pitch of this route 20 years ago!

Neither of our parents ever pushed us to climb, but I think seeing the joy it brought them — yes, even Graham! — naturally drew us into the sport ourselves.



The club huts have also always held a special place in my life. One of my fondest memories is of the working parties and Uschi's soups. Credit to the club members, you even managed to convince Tom and I that painting and cleaning the hut could be fun! It's hard to imagine how many other kids got the chance to run wild and chop down firewood at the age of six though. Knowing that my grandad used to visit both huts before I was born creates a connection to him that feels incredibly meaningful, especially as I never had the chance to meet him. In a way, the Oread club has given me a tangible link to a part of my family history that I might otherwise not have had.



Geoff, Peter, Anne and Michael near Chrome Hill, Derbyshire.



Some people ask why I climb; since I lost my grandad to the sport and it isn't without its risks, however, climbing is more than just a sport to me. It's about the shared experiences with a community of like-minded people who are always ready for adventure. The spontaneity, love of the outdoors, and the friendships are just as important as the technical side of climbing. I honestly can't imagine my life without being a part of this group. I hope that it continues to grow and that my brother and I are not the only 3rd generation members!



The Club Huts

Huts play a central role in club life, they provide a mountain base for the club and economically priced accommodation. Our huts, and other mountaineering club huts, are often the focal point of meets. Some huts are visited frequently and others less so. They all have their own charm, and everyone has their favourite. The network of huts available to use is a fantastic resource and the Oread has two huts Tan yr Wyddfa, Rhyd Ddu which we own, and Heathy Lea, Baslow which we lease from the Chatsworth Estate. These huts are well used by us and visiting clubs.

The huts do not run themselves, the hut custodians supported by the Hut Committees oversee the upkeep and maintenance of the huts. The following pieces are contributions from the custodians of the three huts that the Oread has administered. Yes three; before the purchase of Tan yr Wyddfa the club rented Bryn-y-Wern, the first Welsh hut.

Finding Bryn-y-Wern, the first Oread Club Hut - Dave Penlington

The Club decided that it needed a Hut, and that it should be in North Wales and we had been looking for two to three years. I went to do National Service and when I came back, I was disappointed to find that they hadn't found one. On the first meet to which I went at Froggatt Edge, Mike Moore and I were very angry about it, so I said that we would go to buy one next weekend. Very few clubs had huts in those days. We went on Saturday morning to look between Portmadoc and Nant Ffrancon and we went to see Bob Parry, in Portmadoc. He had one which he thought would be suitable. Many properties were derelict. We had details of a cottage up the Pennant Valley. This was Bryn-y-Wern, a former vicarage, and he gave us the key to look around. We needed a brush and shovel because there was plaster etc everywhere.

We were very excited to have found such an ideal place. We asked Bob Parry what we needed to pay. He said £1 per week. The deal was sealed, and we kept the key for next weekend. Bob Parry was asked to draw up the paperwork. It hadn't electricity so we had Tilley lamps and a small range.

The following week, a number of us went and swept it out. The chimneys were full (top to bottom) of twigs – jackdaws! Some of the newer Club members were very enthusiastic.

Laurie Burns' dog, Taffy, would not go in through the front door – so, some of us went in at the back and Laurie carried Taffy in. Sometime later on, Taffy was at the bottom of the stairs and his hair stood up. It was decided that it was the ghost! It was Christmas. We got a bit of an old bed, climbed onto the roof and bashed the debris down and eventually we could light a fire.

Mike Gadd was a surveyor for Nottingham Council and got things moving so that we could start to establish it as a Hut.

We got some old bed frames and made bunks. Old chairs and settees and carpet were donated. We made tables and we were very comfortable. The water supply was good. There was plenty of wood for fires. It had a toilet and a bath. More facilities were added later.

We had about three years and then our landlady, Mrs Gill, decided to sell. It had been “so good”. Then came the hunt for a replacement which ended at Tan yr Wyddfa. I was Hut Warden throughout the time at Bryn-y-Wern. [^](#)



Ernie Marshall fixing the name plate. (Dave Penlington)

Tan yr Wyddfa

Tan yr Wyddfa, July 2024. (Steve Christian)



Tan yr Wyddfa Hut Custodian 2010 to 2013 - Tony Howard

Twenty-two people attended the curry meet at Tan yr Wyddfa in October 2008. On Saturday it was raining and most of us went walking. We were all soaked by the time we got back to the hut in the afternoon, and we put our wet clothes in the drying room. On Sunday morning, our clothes were still cold and very wet and there were pools of water on the floor, despite it having been mopped up at least twice on the Saturday. During the meet a large fruiting body of dry rot in the corner of the first floor landing window at the front (South) end of the hut was discovered.

Dry rot on the landing window 25th October 2008.



The weekend highlighted the ineffectiveness of the drying room when the hut was full and the impact of moisture on the fabric of the hut. This can be from water ingress into the hut and moisture brought in on damp (wet) mountaineers. Dry rot requires a source of moisture in order to propagate.

The drying room problems were exacerbated by the fact that operation was intermittent because of a faulty timer and the sliding doors did not stay in place. Although the drying

room might cope with wet clothes of three or four members, 'It was considered inadequate to cope with the needs of a full hut over a wet weekend'.

A work plan was developed, a program was initiated, and initial timescales were agreed, for both dry rot treatment and building repairs for the drying room and utility room. Plans were circulated for a drying cubicle re-positioned further north and closer to the toilets, thus re-positioning the food storage area well away from the toilets.

Chuck Hooley had been custodian of **both** of our huts for 36 years in total and had done an outstanding job over this time. This, for example included defending the property from designation as a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO). He also project-managed major fire/safety upgrading works and rewiring of the building throughout the years 2004 to 2006. However, he was by now 83 years old and caring for his wife Margaret who had limited mobility and needed special care which Chuck was providing. He found it difficult to get out to Tan yr Wyddfa. Most of the other HSC members had also been in post for many years and were getting on in age.

The Oread Committee decided that it would be prudent to introduce a younger Oread to the HSC to work with Chuck, learn the role of hut custodian and eventually succeed him in this post. I agreed to take on this position.

A year later, at the 2010 AGM Chris Wilson was elected president. I was elected hut custodian for Tan yr Wyddfa, a post I continued in until the AGM of April 2013. During this time Chuck supported me as a member of the Hut Sub Committee (HSC). Throughout my time on the HSC from 2008 till the AGM of 2013, the HSC managed the affairs of the hut, minutes were taken and reported to the Oread Committee.

We dealt with the normal business of work meets, wood cutting, routine cleaning, painting and general maintenance. We also dealt with the unusual and extraordinary threats to the hut. The normal business is not listed but the unusual situations that were dealt with are listed here:

Dry Rot Treatment at South End of Building: October 2008 – April 2009

This work was completed by the 17th of April 2009 and the final cost of the dry rot remediation and associated building work was £12,418¹.

Back Room Restructuring: November 2008 – September 2010

Repositioning of the drying room and food storage, fitting of a new vanity basin, new shelving for food storage, new shelving for boots and rucksacks.

The Drying Room (or 'Cubicle') Design and Testing October 2008 – December 2010

Design of a drying room that was based on the need to dry the gear of a hut full of wet mountaineers overnight. The use of a scientific approach and optimisation led to an efficient drying room.

The details of the design make a fascinating read and can be found on the website within [Tan yr Wyddfa 2008-2013](#).

Removal of Chimney at North End of Back Room: June – September 2009

The chimney was no longer used and water was leaking in.

*Tackling rising damp,
exterior repairs March
2009.*



Rising Damp in The Front Bays December 2009 – October 2011

New drainage system installed to the front of the hut.

Health and Safety Issues 2010 – 2013

General risk assessments, fire safety assessments and inspection protocols were established, with recommendations implemented.

New food storage shelving in the corridor: 2010 - 2011

New shelving designed and installed.

Dry Rot Treatment at North End of Building: August 2012 – February 2013

Treatment of the dry rot and remedial work to prevent further outbreaks .

After my retirement as Hut Custodian, I continued to support Dave (Snod) Helliwell, the new Custodian for many years as a HSC member.

Tony has written a detailed account of all the work undertaken whilst he was Hut Custodian and serving on the Hut Committee. This record is available on the club website, it is well worth reading. [Tan yr Wyddfa 2008-2013](#).

Tan yr Wyddfa Hut Custodian 2013 onward - Dave (Snod) Helliwell

I took over custodianship of Tan yr Wyddfa in 2013 (not until 27 April as the AGM was postponed due to snow). Nobody else seemed to be up for doing the job and I like going to

the hut so it seemed time to give something back.

My first objective was to keep the place warm by installing loft insulation as, for many years, we had been heating up Snowdon. An air pump was later installed (2016) to obviate recurrence of dry rot.

The Fire Safety inspection was due in October 2013 and proved a bit tricky! Arriving the day before I found that the last club to use the hut had removed and hidden one of the Dorguards. Luckily a keen eared younger member of the party heard it beeping plaintively – wrapped up in old curtains in an upstairs cupboard! It was fitted with new batteries and replaced in time and all was well.

The highlight of 2014 was getting work done on the drains to cure problems of standing water.

In November 2015 we had a couple of the sycamores felled due to safety concerns and complaints from the neighbours. It provided some welcome firewood!

A key safe was installed in 2016 to save time and money on the constant posting out and return of keys to visiting clubs. It has worked well. Chimney sweeping – always a working party job, took a turn for the worse in 2016 when the brush detached itself from the rods. A second brush was employed to push it out of the chimney top – but there it remained. I had to go up onto the roof to retrieve it!

In 2017 the hot water heating was changed from overnight every night to an “on demand” system. It is unclear how much money this has saved due to constant energy price rises but it feels more environmentally friendly.

A new cooker was fitted in 2018 but it didn't take long for a visiting club to break one of the knobs.



Derek Pike made a lovely cast aluminium club badge which he fitted beside the front door in 2019 to proclaim ownership.

In January 2020 new beds were fitted in one of the back rooms as the old bunks had woodworm! A new stair carpet was fitted just before the sad day in March when I had to go to the hut to get the P.A.T. and fire equipment testing done and to close up the hut due to the Covid lockdown. The hut was fully re-opened in July 2021.

In 2022 the bay windows were dry lined, a glass balustrade fitted around the landing banisters and new wood-effect flooring fitted in the kitchen, dining room and lounge – and very good it is too – so much easier to clean.

In 2023 a small strip of wood in the front of the men's shower was found to have dry rot. It was removed and burned. Then at the working party the shower tray was removed to check underneath. No sign of rot was found – the timber was treated with a good coat of preservative and subsequently a new shower tray was fitted – a memorably hard and horrible job.

What does the future hold? Who knows - but there will always be something that needs doing – of that there is no doubt. [^](#)

Heathy Lea

Heathy Lea Hut Custodian 1975 to 1977 - Reg Squires

It seems like a lifetime ago when I held the lofty position of Heathy Lea Hut Custodian. It was of course less developed than today. Most of what I did was day to day stuff checking supplies and minor maintenance. For anything technical it was send for the adults such as Nat Allen!

More seriously it involved negotiating with the estate over rent and lease terms etc. On one occasion I sat on a wall with Mr Pelley, the agent. At issue was whether the breakpoint in a seven year long lease (when rent increased) was year four or five. I opted for year five whereupon Pelley produced a coin and tossed it, I won. In life you don't need to be clever, just lucky.

On another occasion I was at Heathy Lea with (I think) Peter O'Neill to discuss with the estate their wish to park a railway carriage in the woods nearby. The Duke's former chauffeur was living in a stable at the Devonshire Hotel until it was sold. He was given the railway carriage near Baslow but due to a serious love of alcohol and loud foul language he had to be moved. We both felt sorry for the man but in the end we said no as the prospect of young female members being confronted by a drunk swearing recluse was not acceptable. Another memory is that Nat Allen often turned up when I was there and proceeded to drag me up desperate routes on Chatsworth Edge. Happy days.

Heathy Lea, a Special Place, Hut Custodian 2016 to 2018-Pam Storer

Over the years I've helped to support Heathy Lea its surroundings became more overgrown and shadowed by trees. The cottage and barn began to show their age and needed much tender care. Thankfully our members' passion helped us to fight through and maintain our very special place.

We all have many fond memories of the times when we delighted in meeting our friends and having fun there. Bonfire parties lasting all day; children creating effigies of Guy Fawkes; adult children delighting in collecting wood to build the fire; the pleasure of a feast to be devoured; fingers scorched on toasted marshmallows. We shared the breathtaking spectacle of watching fireworks lighting up both the trees and the sky. Fortunately, not the cottage or ourselves.



Bonfire at Heathy Lea.

Our summer BBQs and Barmy Competitions gave us chance to catch up with old friends and hear their news, share our adventures and achievements from around the world. Mountains of food and drink kept us huddled around the obligatory bonfire late into the night talking and listening to the music performed by our friends.

Heathy Lea is one of a small number of climbing huts in the Peak. Thanks to us it has given so many clubs from outside the area the opportunity to enjoy the experience of tough gritstone and challenging limestone.

For me some of my most precious memories are from sharing the fun and the freedom Heathy Lea gave my grandchildren. They learned so much about the freedom of the great outdoors. Where else would you experience falling into a stream in your pyjamas?

This makes all the effort and hard work of looking after this special place so worthwhile.

Heathy Lea Hut Custodians 2018 to 2020 - Phil and Yvonne Waterson

We took over the custodianship of Heathy Lea at a particularly challenging time; with the lease up for renewal, opinion was divided as to whether or not to renew at all.

With a vision for change we were able to put together a plan to take Heathy Lea forward which involved making improvements and addressing concerns over sleeping arrangements and providing an indoor toilet.

Once the plans were approved by the majority of members we embarked on the arduous task of sourcing materials, furniture and labour to come in under a strict budget.

A work schedule was drawn up and members pulled together to make the transformation happen. Stripping out the alpine style bunks bought back a lot of memories for those club members involved in building them in the first place.

Deliveries were challenging too with groups of members forming a human chain to transfer bunk beds and chairs from delivery vehicles from the road along the track to either the wood store or hut. One brave soul alerting traffic to the large delivery vehicle parked on the bend ahead.

With a blank canvas deep cleaning and redecoration could begin. A few late nights saw the essential work completed before the work party to fit bunk beds, although we were definitely worried that the varnish on the bedroom floors would not be dry for the next day.



That first work party, fuelled by copious amounts of tea and cake, saw beds assembled, new heaters fitted in the bedrooms, old sofas removed (but only after getting one wedged in the doorway) walls and floors scrubbed, paintwork refreshed, and the kitchen revamped.

It was with trepidation that we opened the Visitor Book after the first booking, but so rewarding to see positive comments on the changes.

When we were alerted to the fact that there could be structural issues with the bridge our hearts sank. Not being able to drive vehicles over the bridge could have huge implications for the future of Heathy Lea. Chatsworth arranged a structural survey and thankfully the news was positive.

Ageing bladders required an indoor toilet, eliminating those trips outside in the cold in the middle of the night. Calling on the knowledge and expertise of some members, a trench was dug to bury a pipe to the septic tank. Digging under the wall was the biggest challenge of all.

One donated toilet, a lot of 'you tube' videos and several leaks later the toilet and macerator were installed successfully. 21st Century luxury was enjoyed, until one party decided to put food down the toilet and blocked the macerator. Not a pleasant job to sort out.

Plumbing for the inside toilet.



When you think everything is ticking along nicely the challenges continue. The T bar to turn off the water went missing, then we arrived for one hut inspection to find the driveway blocked by garden waste (thank you Charlotte – Chatsworth had it removed within days before the next hut booking).

As custodians we could not have done what we did without the support of those members and committee members who supported us and gave up their time to work so hard at the work parties. The Chatsworth Estate too, removing overhanging trees, which were causing concerns, making the hut and surrounding area so much lighter. It was with heavy hearts that we relinquished custodianship to move to Cornwall, but we were certain that Heathy Lea is in safe hands with her new custodian and Heathy Lea will always have a special place in our hearts.

Heathy Lea Hut Custodian 2020 - Chris Wilson

Heathy Lea holds many special memories for me. We stayed there a lot when I was much younger, in the 70's and 80's, when a great deal of fun was had. I always preferred to sleep in the barn as the noise from the Severn Trent Water (STW) pumping station was quite loud in the cottage. Later on, there were bonfire nights, children's meets and so on. In the early years I didn't give much thought to the hut custodian's role or what managing the hut entailed. Every few years when the club renewed the lease the running costs were discussed, and arms were raised to indicate a willingness to help and we always muddled through. The last time Phil and Yvonne came to the rescue. In a few years they transformed the place. Everything was great, and then they had to move to Cornwall.

The call went out for a new custodian, and the silence was deafening. So, I agreed to look after it on a temporary basis. The STW building had by now fallen into a bad state of repair causing damage to our property. We had meetings with Chatsworth who had been trying to get repairs carried out, but they explained the legal process they needed to follow and that it would take time. The roof of the building fell in leading to damp in our cottage and barn. And then we had the Covid lockdowns. As custodian all I needed to do was visit every once

in a while, (which conveniently meant passing the Peak ales shop) and check things were OK.

When we reopened lots of notices were needed, along with sanitiser and cleaning materials. Chatsworth eventually managed to get STW to get working on the repair to their building, which was now an almost full rebuild. The regular jobs on our hut were, and still are, carried out mainly by the small group on the hut committee – cleaning, washing tea towels, washing pillows, cutting back vegetation and making sure there's enough toilet paper and firewood. The other essential task is checking the foul water holding tank and getting it emptied before it overflows. A disorganised working party every once in a while manages to restore the hut to something like it was in Phil and Yvonne's time. There are other aspects to the hut custodian's job such as safety audits and fire safety checks, getting windows repaired and changing batteries in fire alarms, but nothing too onerous.

The STW building work is now completed (although more is required in the years to come) and the change to the character of Heathy Lea is remarkable, especially now that most of the trees in the vicinity have been harvested by the estate. Everywhere is sunny and open which is helping Heathy Lea dry out and recover. I have said that my role as hut custodian will end soon. It's not a difficult job and the pleasure it can bring to the many visitors is worth that little effort. A new face or faces is now needed to take over and keep this wonderful asset part of the Oread so that it can be enjoyed by many more generations. [^](#)



Heathy Lea after the tree harvesting 2024. (Michael Hayes)

How We Communicate

Club members need to know what is going on if they are to feel part of an active vibrant group, the Newsletter in some form or other has been present throughout the life of the club and fulfilled this role. Reports of meets and other activities members have taken part in have entertained and inspired. Frequency, content and style have varied over the years as with different editors. I have heard it said that the Newsletter has been responsible for the success of the club! Maybe it has not been the only factor, but it has certainly contributed.

Thoughts from the current and a previous editor are in the following two articles.

Newsletter Thoughts - Ruth Gordon

Anniversaries tend to turn thoughts to the passage of time and, realising with something of a shock that I have let myself in for the 14th year of editing the newsletter I wondered how many Oread editors there have been – the answer is 27 though some of them did a job-share. Most had the wit and evasive skills to slither out of the job after a couple of years. Chris Wilson must have recognised a soft touch when he talked me into the job in 2012! Charlie Cullum, the first editor, did a five year sentence, Geoff Hayes lasted out nine years in the 1960s and Rusty Russell manfully did it for seven from 1993 – 1999.

Of course, the newsletter has changed in appearance, format and content and the job of producing it now is very different from the early days. The earliest surviving item is a Club Circular no. 2 May 1950, then the monthly newsletter begins in June 1953. These newsletters of the 1950s and 60s were surprisingly substantial given that they had to be painstakingly typed onto Gestetner stencils, duplicated, collated and stapled before being handed out in person or enveloped, stamped and posted. A daunting task given that the membership was already in the 90s by 1958. There were Journals published as well from 1960 -1964. What a task!

Like most club periodicals there have been numerous changes of numbering, frequency, name etc plus lots of unintentional number and dating errors. A librarian's nightmare – but I've been guilty of failing to change the month on the cover myself so I can't criticize! The newsletter was run alongside the Meets Circular until April 1980. In the early 1970s there were monthly meets circulars and only two more substantial newsletters each year. In 1976 and 1977 these were retitled "Bulletins" and from 1978 changed to an annual (or less than annual) "Journal," of which the last was published in 1992*. Have you got all that? Keep up!

Since 1980 there has been a regular monthly newsletter posted out to a membership of around 170 or more. The format and production has varied to suit what the editor could access – either personally or through work. (I shall not name and shame the editor who turned them out on folding, perforated computer printout paper. Surely he didn't have a main frame at home??) There were occasional daring attempts to include black and white illustrations from those with access to photocopiers but generally the drive was to keep it short to reduce the work of typing, copying, collating, stapling and stuffing envelopes. In 1992 Rob Tresidder started using A4 reduced to A5 to turn out a four page newsletter as a single folded sheet.

Early in 1994, after Rusty took on editorship, it starts to look a little less home-made - as if a computer might have been involved. (Indeed it was - see Rusty's account below). These little A5 newsletters contained most of the same things as today – forward meets, committee notices, occasionally brief meet reports, obituaries, brain teasers, letters to the Editor (unusual these days!) advertisements for second hand gear, plus, in those happy pre-Data Protection days, changes of address and contact info. It was just all very brief.

By May 2002 the world has changed - Tony Howard, new editor, is asking people to send him material by email or on a floppy disc, though post is still acceptable. He asks for longer articles about people's climbing adventures which will be gathered into an annual publication. He is also asking people with email addresses to receive their newsletters by email to reduce the work and cost of posting paper copies. The carrot is you will get the longer articles immediately! I resisted at first but gave in at the second time of asking - early in 2004.

In May 2006 new editor, Steve Bashforth daringly suggested: "Our newsletter has been monochrome to date – would you appreciate colour? Or photos?" The issue sported headings in three colours and in June the first colour photo (of the Easter meet to Croatia) appeared. The July issue ran to eight pages. A year later 10 to 12 page issues were becoming normal. John Green took over the job in 2008 and under his four years editorship the newsletter became the substantial publication that I inherited. He experimented with fonts and layouts and found out what worked for his readers. Photos had become a regular feature but the need to keep the overall file size down to something downloadable by older computers limited the resolution. Ten pages in July 2009, 12 by November, and by the time I took it over in April 2012 16 to 20 pages were becoming the norm. These days I am inundated with photos – digital photos are so easy everyone sends me far more than I can use – and I sometimes wonder if anyone actually reads the words any more!

In 2012 I was spared all the stapling and envelope stuffing of the past – all I had to do was to send a pdf to the community print shop at Noel Baker school and they printed and posted it for us. There were still around 50 members receiving postal copies at the time. When that print facility closed in 2017 we found a similar service at a Matlock based charity – Greenaway Lane Workshop. Sadly, that closed early in 2022 so now I am back to stuffing envelopes and buying stamps – but Matlock Print do a cheaper and better job, and only 16 people still need paper copies. Do not weep, dear Reader, they have not all passed away (though some have, of course) others have embraced technology late in life and love the clarity of images and text adjustable to a size to suit their eyes.

In conclusion I know there are still members who read and value the newsletter but increasingly people prefer the quick, immediate photo record offered by Facebook, WhatsApp etc. although the meets info on the website and Facebook is taken from the newsletter text. All the same, I feel it may be that the newsletter needs another facelift and re-invention for the next phase of the Oread's activities.

*Most of these old newsletters, journals etc are available to logged on members to read on the club website, (largely due to Mike Wren's hard work) but it is a work in progress.

OREAD MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

NEWSLETTER FOR DECEMBER 1999

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Summary

December 4/5	Bullstones
December 7 (Tues)	Indoor Meet Ockbrook
December 15 (Wed)	Black Rocks
Jan 1 2000 (Sat)	New Millennium Walk

Dec 3-4-5 Bullstones David Jones (Repeat)

There may be some readers of this 'preview' that aren't at all sure what a 'Bullstones' meet is, so here's a quick introduction. 'The Bullstones' is named after the original venue on Bleaklow, but nowadays it is an itinerant meet, returning occasionally to its birthplace. It is a walking and bivvying weekend, featuring pubs. The last 'Bullstones' of the century continues in this vein, but with a couple of differences of detail, so

The list of officers willing to stand at the AGM was prepared:

Obituary: Keith Axon 1926 – 2006

Keith was a founding member of the Orshead Mountaineering Club and its first treasurer. He was a sturdy rugged individual supported by events that to most people would be regarded as a major disaster. His characteristic was to roll a cigarette whilst quietly contemplating the problem. During one year's tenure Keith had been a 'transgressor' (aka a member of the 6th Airborne Division, a notorious mal-who were finally debauched after the battle in Egypt).

I first met Keith in the Bradens' Union in Barton which he was working as a rubber chemist with BWC/White, the manager of the then young Joe Brown with whom we climbed and went. Keith was a very active climber as can be seen by the reference to the early Gratiotian climbing club, he was also a voluntary instructor at Wharfedale.

Keith and Nan South were the first Orsheads to marry and they were presented with the Orshead trophy at an unusual annual dinner by Oliver Jones, writing a tradition in motion which continues today.

Dave Pennington.

2006 Dovecote Dash report by Bob Trezidder

Well! Above James for topping the Orshead rankings. It is reassuring to find the younger, stronger and swifter Orsheads are picking up the pace. Conditions underfoot this year were excellent as was the social atmosphere of the event. A field of 1157 runners was the highest for some years so we can all take a little consolation from not falling positions as there were fewer Orshead supporters than in the past and the relative 11 percent drop in starting numbers on the way home was deafening. Well! Farmer Orshead, Ian Trezidder made it to second place this year after being in the top 10 in his last three outings. It was beaten by Simon Bailey, a first timer in the Duath.

The placing of Orsheads is an arrow of woe:

302 James Tabbly

335 John O'Reilly

183 Richard Hopkinson (36:30)

144 Clive Russell (2nd over 40)

281 Chris Radcliffe (18:04)

334 Gill Hays

514 Bob Trezidder (42:34)

383 Chris Wilson

788 Chait O'Reilly

799 Tony Raphael

892 Jeremy O'Reilly

893 David Fidler

918 Jeremy Raphael (31:18)

BT





Newsletters from 1999, 2007, 2009 and 2024



May 2009

Oread M.C. Newsletter

Editorial. (Last Date for next edition 29/05/09)

May once again. Very definitely Spring in full flow. I write this, having just returned from a great weekend in the Lakes, on the Spar meet. The Fyde club have built a new entrance extension to the hutte, makes a lot of difference. This month we have a write up for the Oread Fell Race and an article about winter climbing on the Cobar. Keeping the winter theme probably for the last time this year we hear about an ascent of Kinder Dowlall from Roger Gibbs. Keep the write ups and info coming. It's your newsletter and it's only as good as your input. Attached to this edition' is a copy of the updated handbook. If members who receive there copy by post would like one, please contact the secretary.



2009 Fell Race – Ready to Go!!

OREAD FELL RACE - 22ND MARCH 2009 - FINISH LIST (INCLUDING BONUS)							
	"TORTOISE"	"HARE"	START	FINISH	ACTUAL	BONUS	FINAL
1	Pete Scott	Simon Page	11.07	12.18	1.11	Yes	1.04

 **Oread Mountaineering
Club Magazine**

October 2024
75th Anniversary Camp Special Edition!



Countdown to the start of the R.A.S.N.T. Competition: note Larkham preventing Mowbray from an early breakfast. Photo Kev Fidler.

For a video replay of this historic moment by Spike Johnston visit
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7-cbaW3dF9g>

Editorial

Well! The Anniversary camp has been and gone and what an amazing, fun-filled occasion it was. How wonderful to have good weather for the two camping nights so being outdoors, socialising, was a pleasure – if chilly. Shame about Sunday's rain but still a good day enjoyed, ending with the last of the cake at Hearty Lea. More fun times coming soon with local walks, meets to Wales and the Lakes, and more celebrations – first the famous curry meet at Tan yr Wyddfa, Bonfire Night fun and then the finale of our Anniversary year – the **Annual Dinner at the Maynard!**

Have you booked? If not do it now!
Absolute deadline for bookings is 28 October – and places are limited so do not leave it to the last minute!

Looking forward to next year – the 2025 meets list is in here – is there a meet you would like to lead? Have a look and see what you can do.

Meets recruit only once for the big one this time! (Other meet recruits and

Clive "Rusty" Russell, Editor April 1993- March 2000

My spell as newsletter editor was based on circumstances appertaining around the club a good few years ago. The active membership in the earlier days were generally operating from a more compact geographical base. After initiation in Burton on Trent the centre of gravity oscillated between Derby and Nottingham with weekly meetings at the Bell in Derby, the Moon, a little closer to Nottingham, and then Derby Rowing Club. There was more face to face contact and a more rigid and pre planned structure of official meets. Later, with the gradual introduction of internet based communication and a gradually widening geographical base, the requirement for a more voluminous news vessel arose. I always tried to prevent the volume and quality from being too constrained by the mechanism of producing and distributing the document, but I also tried to control the speed of modernisation so that the older members and those who were less “internet savvy” would not be disadvantaged. Our fondness for old “Digger” and his ilk, and the amusement and

entertainment generated by their participation epitomised this view but it led to compromise between conflicting requirements.

Up to the end of my period as editor (about year 2000 so far as I recall) there had always been a requirement to have a typed hard copy reproduced by either the notorious “skin” or by photocopier, followed by postal or other means of distribution. The cost and labour involved had led to a tacit agreement that the document should be limited to four pages. Technology had evolved such that I was able to type on a computer rather than a typewriter, thereby enabling painless correction of errors. I also had the advantage of a word processor program by Lotus, far superior to the present Microsoft equivalent which made formatting and fonts etc very simple and led to a degree of consistency. Subsequently came the gradual introduction of email distribution and the tyrannic deadlines for completing the process and catching posts from a rural box were eased. At the time I had a very unreliable internet connection and so asked my successors for the continuation of a hard copy service, with the result that the document often arrived after the first meet of the month.

The newsletter process has now modernised by leaps and bounds and I have great admiration for those who have brought this about, especially our present incumbent. To conclude, I wonder whether Mike Moss remembers an occasion when I had stuffed 100 plus envelopes single handed then cycled to Derby to personally deliver as many as possible to save postage. I got home knackered and sat down to contemplate the next month's operation when he telephoned to discuss the incorporation of some late material. He subsequently made an accusation that my tact and diplomacy was at fault.

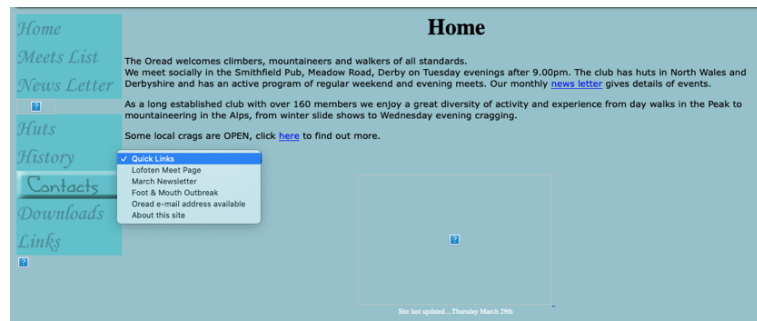
One aspect that has changed over the last 25 years is how we communicate. The development of the website has occurred completely in the last 25 years and other platforms more recently. These allow communication both within the club and to the world beyond providing a route of introduction to potential members. The speed and ease of group communication has meant arrangements can be made and further altered effectively on the way to the meet.

Oread Communications over the past 25 years – Janet Briggs

The way we have all communicated with each other and received information has changed a lot in the past 25 years. The newsletter has clearly been the mainstay of communication throughout the history of the club, some of the developments in the newsletter and experiences of editing have already been described by Rusty and Ruth. In 1999 the newsletter was pretty much the only form of communication, apart from face to face meetings, the telephone and maybe even letters.

By 2000 changes were happening. In February Graham Weston launched the first Oread website, with the not very memorable address of *crosswinds.net-oread/menucont.html*, The August newsletter reports that the website was also accessible through the BMC site under the ‘clubs’ section. By the summer photos were being added to a photo gallery on the website and the newsletter was available through the website.

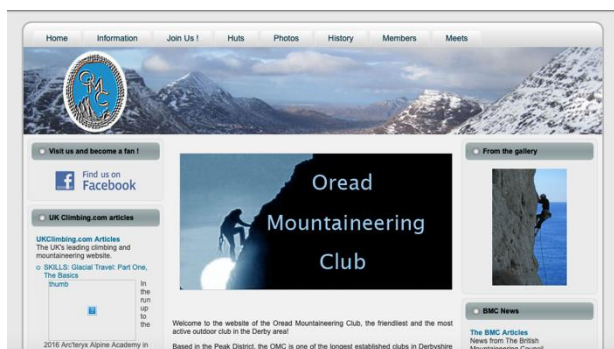
In February 2001 the current domain name www.oread.co.uk was registered and by April Graham had moved the website over to this, I imagine this made mistyping of the address less likely.



In 2005 Mike Wren set up the first Oread email group through the Yahoo groups platform. Simon Pape described it in the newsletter: *'Members can send e-mails to the group, and they are automatically distributed to all other group members. We're already using this to organise evening and weekend venues and make rude comments about each other (although mostly about Tony Howard).'*' Simon added that *'if you don't have a computer, you can always phone or text me for news of where we are going on a Wednesday night'*; communication by telephone, whatever happened to that!

The Yahoo group continued successfully until 2018, by this time it was found to be becoming unstable, people would send messages to the group but they never appeared. Spenser Gray researched alternatives and the committee agreed to replace it with Groups.io. This worked successfully but led to the club making a donation to a charity supporting the people of the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean in lieu of them receiving financial benefits from the use of the .io domain. Interestingly at the time of writing the otherwise little known Chagos Islands have been in the news because UK has handed over sovereignty to Mauritius.

Mike Wren also took over responsibility for the club website around 2006, and in 2010 the site underwent an upgrade, including a members' area, into which members could login to access, at various stages, the club constitution, members handbook, committee meeting minutes and information about the Yahoo group.



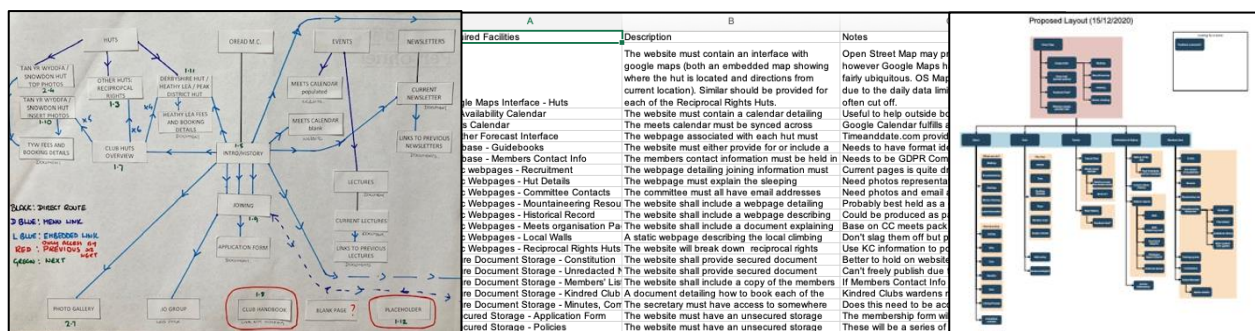
Website front pages after 2010, and 2016 upgrades.

A further upgrade followed in 2016, many current members will remember the format of the website at this stage. The site had information about the club, an introduction and its history; the club huts, with details, the booking process and reciprocal rights huts; membership with the joining process and a link to the application form; events with the

meets calendar and lectures; the current newsletter, links to previous newsletters, some journals and archived reports, details of a guidebook library; committee contacts list; and a members' area with committee minutes, constitution, links to Facebook, the club handbook, and information about the Yahoo/io group.

In late 2020 the website was considered to be in need of a further revamp. Mike Wren was looking for at least some help with, if not a handover of responsibility for the website. In addition to this the committee were looking at IT options for hut bookings and membership administration. A group consisting of Michael Hayes, Michael Moss, Mike Wren, Spenser Gray, Janet Briggs, David Mason and Simon Wren was formed to move this forward. Interestingly, this being the time of covid lockdowns, much of the meeting was done using another, new to some, communication method – Zoom meetings.

Janet did an analysis of the content and links of the old website; Spenser produced an analysis of needs which the rest of the group filled in with our ideas.



Planning for the 2021 website update.

Other club websites were examined, Spenser alerted us to the websites of the Climbers Club, Fell and Rock and Yorkshire Ramblers Club which did all that we wanted from our website and had a good modern look. We contacted Peter Sterling who had developed all these sites and he agreed to produce our new site.

Dave produced a summary of the desired new structure. During the first part of 2021 Peter Sterling worked on the design of the new site. Members were invited to submit photos for use on the site and these and the content were added by members of the group. Training was given by Peter on editing and particularly in the use of the membership, hut booking and meets areas.

The new site was launched in June 2021, all members were sent details of their personal login and after a few glitches, most succeeded in logging in. The site is now used for all hut bookings, for the updating of personal information and is regularly updated with meets information. There is a comprehensive archive of newsletters and other publications and a members' area with

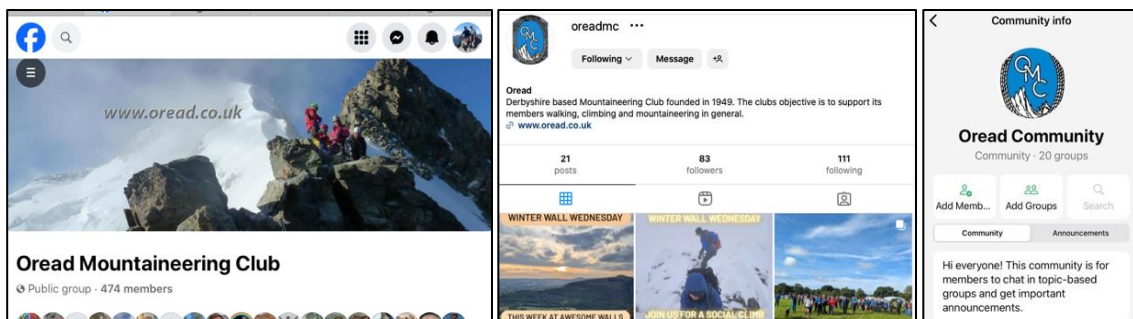


club contacts and a lot of club information including that formerly contained in the club handbook. A new section has subsequently been added relating to celebration of the club's 75th anniversary. If you have not browsed the website recently please do!

And so to social media. 1999 does not seem so long ago to many of us, but life was very different then. Facebook, the first of the social media platforms, was not launched until 2004, others followed over the next 10 years.

In 2016 the first Oread Facebook page was set up, with the main aim of showcasing the club and its activities to non-members and hopefully attracting new members. The page was soon converted to a group, to allow group members to post and participate in conversations. Group membership has never been confined to club members to allow interested potential members to see what the club is doing. Whilst events are posted on the page it is not considered to be the primary means of communicating club activities to members.

The Instagram account was added in 2023, Instagram is used both to advertise upcoming activities and to share pictures and updates from past events. It's a great way to engage visually. Younger members are generally more active on Instagram. However, there's been a growing interest from older members as well. There are links to both Facebook and Instagram on the club website. When we post on Instagram, we can simultaneously share the same content on the club's Facebook page. This helps maintain a consistent presence across both platforms with minimal extra effort.



Facebook

Instagram

WhatsApp

Finally, during 2024 the use of the .io group has been replaced by a WhatsApp community. This has the advantage of allowing a series of groups within the community, so members choose to only see content relating to their interests, such as midweek climbing, or walking. It also allows groups to be set up for specific meets, then removed from the community once the meet is over. As of late 2024 about half of the members of the club are members of the WhatsApp community and it is being well used.

So, a lot has happened since 1999, when we used to communicate by the newsletter, face to face, telephone and by post. Is it better? I guess we all have our own opinions on that, modern technology certainly allows for more instant decision making. One thing is sure, we will not go back entirely to the 'old ways' and in another 25 years' time the picture will probably be very different again.



Running the Club through Covid - Nigel Briggs

I must start off by saying this is my recollection of how events unfolded during the Covid pandemic. I am writing this in October 2024, looking back I still place events as Pre - and Post Covid, with the Covid period (Mar 2020 - Dec 2021) itself, the 'missing years' that we lived through, but not in the way we lived before or after. I did not keep a diary, so this account is based on my memory and e-mails that I have languishing in the depths of my inbox. Some of my recollections and interpretation may not stand up to rigorous scrutiny but the general picture should come through and it is all based on events that did occur!

The arrival of Covid should not have been a surprise. Since the turn of the year the news had carried stories of a new respiratory illness in China. As the weeks passed the 'illness' spread West, it was well established in parts of Europe and by early March it felt inevitable that similar scenes would soon be acted out in the UK. As far as the Oread committee was concerned it was business as usual with an AGM to organise, it was scheduled for the 28th March at the Robin Hood. However, in February we learnt that the Robin Hood was closed for refurbishment and would not be available to host the AGM. We needed an alternative venue fast. The Miners Standard was duly found and booked and all was well, or so we thought.

I was preparing for leading the Spring Stride, which was due to be held the day after the AGM. On the 16th March, Janet and I went out to check the route. The weekend before we had been in the Yorkshire Dales; 'things' were different, people were getting uneasy about the close proximity of others. The sign of unusual circumstances was in evidence, there was no toilet paper in the shops! We got back from our walk to hear the Prime Minister speak. He said 'now is the time for everyone to stop non-essential contact and travel'. That threw up a question about what we, as a club, should do. At this stage we heard of at least one mountaineering club cancelling all forthcoming meets in the UK, until April, and then reviewing on a rolling basis. Some felt this was over-reacting.

The club received its first cancellation for a booking of Heathy Lea for the last weekend in March along with a question about payment. Usually a deposit is non-returnable, but these were not usual times. We decided to be reasonable about hut deposits and that transferring bookings to a future date would be the preferred option.

The situation was discussed by the committee on email, those who did not look at the computer for a few hours would come back to 18 or so emails. At this stage the advice was for no 'non-essential' contact, you just had to decide what 'non-essential' meant. There was talk of movement restrictions being enforced, but 'they' would never do that would they! One email had a good summary 'while climbing is a really important part of people's lives it isn't strictly necessary'. There was consensus that we would have to cancel some meets and the AGM would not take place as advertised. One heartfelt email read "Hope this doesn't mean I'm still President after next week".

There was a further flurry of e-mails about whether the huts should be closed completely or whether individual groups could book them. There was support for the value of having

some visits to the huts, but this was tempered with advice to limit travel and the recommendations for deep cleaning between visits.

Late on the 17th March an email went out to the members:

Dear Oreads,

Sorry folks -

The committee has reluctantly decided that, in view of current Government advice, the **meets programme** must be **cancelled** until further notice.

Also the **huts must be closed** to protect our members, others who had booked them, and the communities in which they are situated.

Please contact Michael Hayes if you wish to discuss bookings you have already made or may wish to make.

Hopefully we can all still keep ourselves sane getting out in family or small groups meeting outdoors on an ad hoc basis.

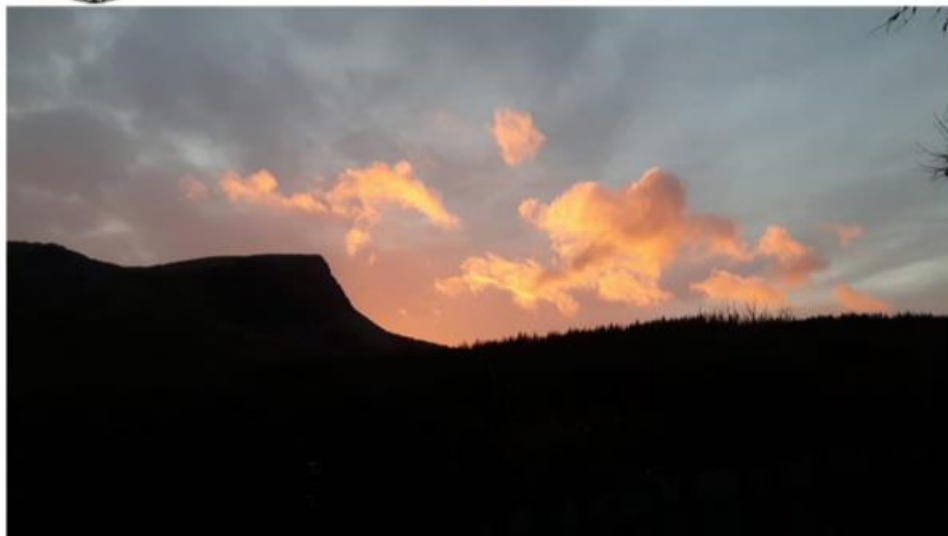
The **AGM** will **not** take place as advertised and a further communication will follow on how the essential AGM business will be dealt with in the immediate short term future.

Within the space of a couple of days we had shut down, along with most other organisations. The huts were bedded down and closed. The announcement on the 23rd March ordering people to “stay at home” was expected. The lockdown measures legally came into force on the 26th March. All we had to do was sit tight for a few weeks and all would be back to normal!



OREAD MOUNTAINEERING CLUB MAGAZINE

APRIL 2020



Sunset over Y Garn taken for you all from Tan yr Wyddfa as the hut closes on 19 March. photo – Snod Helliwell.

The AGM was postponed, but as all the reports had been circulated the opportunity was made to submit questions which would be answered via the newsletter. At this stage we thought the AGM would be held later in the year when all this was over.

In the first few days of lockdown we were introduced to Zoom, some had previous experience of group meetings on line and for others, like me, it was new. As a club we got together to celebrate birthdays online, never had it been so easy to provide cake and drinks!

Some little bits of administration crept up. It was noticed that the hut insurance policy included a clause saying that if the huts were unoccupied for over 30 days certain conditions had to be met, such as boarding up ground floor windows and checking monthly. This could be a problem! However, a quick 'phone call to the insurers and we were told the period was extended to 90 days; we could relax. We also found we were eligible for a business interruption grant of £10 000 for each of the huts. With this grant immediate concerns over the loss of income from the huts eating through reserves were eased.

A relatively short email exchange concluded with us deciding to use Zoom for committee meetings. One useful tip that was highlighted was 'the mute button is useful'. The first Zoom based committee meeting took place on 14th April and it worked remarkably well, the committee could still function.



The attentive participants in a Zoom committee meeting.

Our proficiency in the use of Zoom increased, initially we used the free version which limited you to 40 minutes before everyone had to re-log on, we later paid for a licence for the full version allowing us to have essentially unlimited meetings. I also learnt to set up meetings with participants joining with their microphones turned off after experiencing people joining late and the meeting enjoying their commentaries of joining.

And so we settled into lockdown, fortunately we were 'allowed' to have daily exercise in our local area within household groups. This caused discussion both within the club and nationally as to what all these terms meant and how local was local. However, the weather

was good, it was one of the best springs I can remember. The roads were quiet, and great for cycling. Those who lived close to the hills could enjoy them, usually in splendid isolation.

On the May bank holiday we decided to combine social isolation and Zoom with a meet and hold our first (and only) Zoom meet.

8 – 9 May The Oread's first ever Socially Isolated Camping Meet Janet Briggs

It is a Bank Holiday weekend, so please join us for this unique camping meet.

Venue: a tent or bivi bag in your garden, or in your campervan on the drive; if those don't work for you how about a sleeping bag on the living room floor.

Once you have your tent set up we will meet for a virtual evening drink get together at 8pm on Friday 8th May. If you have access to Zoom let me know and I can send you an invitation to join an online meeting, if you can't access Zoom send a text or email and maybe a photo at the time so that we know you are with us.

Following our evening drink we will retire to our tents or other sleeping places to prepare for a busy day on the Saturday.

Saturday, after breakfast of your choice at your tent, a variety of activities will be available; maybe a walk, run or cycle ride from your home, if you have a suitable garden pond you could indulge in a bit of open water swimming. If you are feeling less energetic many will have an ample supply of guide books to read and wallow in nostalgia, or dream of better days. The more philanthropic of you may wish to help the camp site management team with a bit of grass cutting or grounds maintenance.

The meet is officially for one night but if you wish to arrive early or stay on longer these options are available with the agreement of your camp site managers.

Please let me know if you are taking part in the meet, and if you will be available for the Zoom meet up. After the meet please send some photographs for the meet write up.

The meet was a great success, 'at least 26 phones, tablets or laptops were pressed into action and we had over 90 minutes of banter, drinking together but not together, and socially distant social interaction before fading light stopped play.' The full report is in the June 2020 Newsletter.

Once into mid May people were starting to venture further afield but there were various bits of advice floating about, such as for sport climbing 'Keep two metres apart, each person uses their own rope and clippers, use hand sanitizer after each climb and handling other gear and use gloves to belay'. This could be achieved in single pitch sport but more difficult to achieve in other climbing activities.

In July activities began to happen again, the first tentative walks with social distancing and new restrictions and issues to content with. Was it better to have one person touch a gate

and hold it open at arm's length for others, or have each person open it for themselves, and other such dilemmas. Whatever choice was made much hand sanitiser was in evidence.

The huts were opening up again but with restrictions. There were still regulations about mixing so bookings were for single household/social groups with at least three days between groups. Pillows and tea towels were removed, and parties advised to bring their own. The situation was further complicated as England had slightly different regulations from Wales. Reopening the huts required the Hut Committees to undertake a considerable amount of work taking on board advice from the BMC and Government. One of the issues with guidelines is that they are open to interpretation. I recall sitting in on a BMC Zoom meeting about reopening huts; on reflection it was evident that there were many interpretations and views on guidelines, and that was before some started questioning the wisdom of the guidelines!

As the situation seemed to be easing, groups of up to six could meet outdoors but social distancing of at least two metres was to be maintained. This led to some discussions about whether meets could recommence. This is where the club had a thin line to tread, we could and should not tell members what to do, self-accountability is essentially the basis of how we operate. However, the club could not promote or encourage members to contravene the rules. It was felt it would be difficult to restrict meets to six. A compromise was implemented:

'At the moment the club cannot re-commence the Wednesday evening meets (or any other meet for that matter). Within the new regulations coming in next week meets would have to be limited to a maximum of six. Given that evening meets are open to all members these guidelines could not be guaranteed. I hope you understand, even if recent events have shown that the guidelines appear to be open to interpretation!

Please use the groups.io site to make contact with people who may wish to climb or walk but once contact is established could you make arrangements using private mail and keep any meeting within the guidance, practice social distancing and climb safely. We are not over this yet!

We continued into summer and from what I recall the weather remained good, one of the best springs we have had! I spent time completing sections of the Handbook that we had talked about adding but never getting around to it. A sub group used the opportunity of looking at updating the website.

We were hoping that a stage of the Peak Boundary walk could take place in September and trying to guess what the situation might be in a month's time, the best we could say was:

'We need to follow the current guidance at the time as regards numbers and social distancing' and hope!

As we moved through the summer, the question of the Annual Dinner came up, we had a date booked at the Fox and Goose, when this was discussed in July, the maximum number allowed would be 30 with 'household groups' on separate tables; this did not sound appealing. We decided to cancel for 2020 and carry the booking over to 2021. We were all getting used to the 'rule of six' and meeting outdoors and things seemed to be easing

however, there were rumblings that all was not as positive as we hoped. It became very apparent that we were unlikely to hold an AGM at any time soon, so we announced we would 'miss' the 2020 meeting, also the Heathy Lea 50th party had to be cancelled. On a positive note Mike Moss revived the BARMY competition.

It was difficult to work out whether we could run formal weekend meets. Going walking and climbing in small groups was working well but it was overnight that caused the issues. The BMC put out some notes but it wasn't always straightforward to implement them. Huts weren't fully open, some would only take a couple of household groups and each group was meant to isolate. We eventually put together our 'Covid Protocol' at the end of the summer and Mike Moss took on the role of Covid Officer.

Just as things were opening up, they started to close. Travel restrictions were reintroduced initially in parts of Wales. Then 'the three-tier' system introduced in England with restrictions on moving between them and then at end of October, a second lock down was announced! The tier system caused a flurry of activity as the planned next stage of the boundary walk went from South Yorkshire, which was Tier 3 into Derbyshire which was Tier 2. The advice was clear, if you live in a Tier 2 area you should not meet in Tier 3! The final two stages of the PDBW were postponed until restrictions were lifted and an alternative 'Tier 2' only walk was planned. All the mitigations became academic as a few days before the proposed walk was to take place the second national lockdown came into force!

As the year drew to a close the committee had to think about subscription rates for the next year. 2020 had been far from normal with many cancellations, a decision was taken about 2021 fees - this was published in the Newsletter.

Oread Membership 2021

It's time to renew your membership for 2021. As a result of a very challenging year with restrictions to normal club activities continuing into 2021 and financial pressure on some individuals not helped by lockdown, the committee has decided to make a temporary reduction to the subscription for the coming year.

For 2021 we are asking all members to pay a minimum of **£20** which will cover the cost we pay to the BMC for your membership.

If you would like to contribute more than that is also OK and as a guide, we have included last year's fees ...

Despite the loss of hut income, the support grants and reduced costs meant the club was in a good financial position and this would allow us to support our members. While we were considering the future, the decision was taken that an AGM in 2021 would have to take place and the only way to guarantee it would be by holding it virtually.

As Christmas approached all was quiet on the Oread front. We were out of lockdown and the Government were talking up the situation, reported cases were saying otherwise. Tier 4 was introduced, if you lived in a Tier 4 area you had a 'stay at home' alert. We did not even

get to New Year before we were all in a Tier 4 area, National Lockdown number three started on 6th January. All meets were cancelled again. On the bright side the vaccination programme had begun.

By the third lockdown I think everyone was just getting into the groove. In an attempt to raise the spirits we ran the first Zoom based evening talks, these went down well and have been run in subsequent winters. The AGM was held on Zoom. 51 members logged on for the AGM which worked well. The general situation was getting brighter and on 29th March outdoor gatherings of up to six were permitted. This was good timing as 31st March was the first outdoor evening meet of the year. There were many groups of six Oreads out climbing at Harborough and then enjoying a socially distanced beer as the sun set.

From April on it was not all plain sailing, meet formats or locations had to be adjusted due to local restrictions but meets were beginning to take place. Camping was the most straight forward option. The final stage of the PDBW took place on the 24th July. We were able to hold an annual dinner, at the Fox and Goose, our 2020 booking having been carried over. The indoor meets at The Royal Oak, Ockbrook recommenced in November 2021. There were a few periods of Covid based debate and activity, the writing of a Covid Risk Assessment for example, and the interpretation of the different regional local rules. I recall using Scottish Huts caused a flurry of emails. We got used to self testing before going on meets or indoor gatherings and keeping away if positive. Committee meetings went back to in person in June, the first few meetings were held in members' gardens before returning to The Boat in Cromford. We had to go back to Zoom when various committee members had Covid and were isolating but otherwise it was the gradual return to 'normal'. Covid items gradually drifted off the agenda. The 2022 AGM was held online but the attendance was reduced from 2021, maybe the novelty had worn off.

In 2023 the AGM returned to 'in person' format, I mention this as after three years as President this was my first AGM. Jan Wilson took over as President. We had effectively returned to 'normal' and could make plans without having to worry about changing regulations. We did not have to worry about tiers or mixing with others and we could encourage car sharing.

I have recounted how the Covid pandemic affected the running of the club and what we did to keep the club ticking over. Every one of us has our own experience of the Covid pandemic and the effect on our lives. Many will have had Covid and experienced the symptoms, for some minimal and for others tragically more serious. Some had to cope with work and home schooling, others just had to deal with boredom and frustration, and really what we faced as a club was pretty trivial. I am surprised how much I had forgotten, maybe on purpose! The use of technology certainly made the episode easier to deal with and communication was relatively easy, I don't know how we would have coped in a different era without the technology.

It was a strange time, from a few years down the line it makes interesting reading, about a very different period in all our lives. [^](#)

In the Presidents' Words (2000-2024)

Daryl Kirk (2002-04)

I could take up your time waxing lyrically with tales of adventures and of daring do during my time with the Oread and I am sure, if you're reading this, you have many to tell of your own. But if I may, I would like to take a small moment of your time to tell of an event that had a profound impact on why I enjoyed the kindred spirit of the club and why I found myself needing to give something back to the services of the club, by first being on the committee, then serving as treasurer for many years before becoming President.

For me it started on one of the Derbyshire edges, Birchens with Mike Hayes and Gordon Gadsby. It was a warm summer's evening and I found myself standing at the bottom of a lump of rock looking up ready to take my first lead. I turned, with some trepidation, to Gordon as he was about to belay me as he proceeded to wrap the rope around his waist and arms, (who needs those modern belay devices anyway!) and asked what grade it was. He looked at this petulant young climber and simply said "Well, there's those you can and those you can't, climb when ready". Better not fall off then, I thought!

I sat on the top of that climb, feeling proud of what I had achieved, looking out over the dales and brought every one up using more modern belay techniques. I had found something I loved, and I spent many years proving Gordon right.

I joined the club to climb and that I certainly did, on rock, on snow and ice in too many places to mention, but, as importantly, I found friendship and a sense of purpose in that the more you put in the club to maintain its longevity for future generations to enjoy, the more you get out.

Today I don't climb, but have found other adventures of equal daring do and yes Gordon's words are never far away.

Tony Howard (2004-06)

I was invited to join the Oread committee in Harry Pretty's presidency, that is 1999 – 2000. After a short spell as acting Assistant Secretary under Mike Hayes, I became Newsletter Editor from 2002 – 2004 under Daryl Kirk. In March 2004 I was elected president. My role as president was to be, as always, 'to chair all official functions of the club, including committee meetings and to guide the club in its aims and aspirations.'

The Climbing

First and foremost, this would be to lead and encourage the club's mountaineering activities. My modest personal contributions included leading six meets over the two years. There was a full calendar of meets over the two years, including several meets I could not attend. Highlights included the Alpine meet at Saas-Grund led by Mike Hayes in July to August 2004, where he and Pete Lancaster climbed the North Face of the Lenzspitze.

Committee and Official Activities

At the 2004 AGM I took over as president of the club. During this meeting, the membership was made aware of the possibility that Tan yr Wyddfa could be designated by Gwynedd CC (GCC) as a 'House of Multiple Occupation' (HMO). This could mean that the hut would be subject to new and higher standards for example in terms of fire safety, maintenance, and access. The issue was to be pursued by our hut custodian Chuck Hooley.

A good deal of progress was made over the coming months through meetings between Chuck plus other members of our Hut Sub-Committee (HSC) and Gwynedd CC, the local MP and the BMC. The outcome was that Tan yr Wyddfa would not be designated as an HMO, but that a lot of fire safety related work would be carried out at Tan yr Wyddfa. GCC would provide a grant toward the cost of this work, which included new fire-resistant doors throughout the building, full rewiring of the hut and a hard-wired fire alarm system. This work was project managed on behalf of the club by Chuck and the HSC and entailed complete closure of the hut throughout August 2004. The work continued on for more than a year afterwards. It was a major undertaking for which the Oread Committee and the club were very grateful.

Our 2004 Annual Dinner was in November at The Dog and Partridge at Swinscoe, organised by Merle Gartside. Jamie Andrew of the SMC was the guest speaker. He is a quadruple amputee who lost his limbs through frostbite in the Alps and gave us a truly inspirational talk on his rescue and the challenges of re-learning the tasks he could do before his ordeal. We celebrated Mike Hayes' and Pete Lancaster's ascent of the north face of the Lenzspitze earlier in the year using a model of the face made from two buckets-full of mashed potato decorated with two model climbers strung together with wool.

My wife Jackie and I were invited to the ABMSAC Annual dinner in Glenridding in January 2005 where I would also be the guest speaker. The speech described the changes in climbing grades, our climbing environment, our equipment, means of travel and accommodation from the 1960s to 2005.

Chris Radcliffe was formally offered and accepted Honorary Membership of the Oread at the AGM in 2005. He seemed to feel that he was too young to receive this honour, but nonetheless his award was very popular with the members present.

In November our 2005 Annual Dinner was held at the Lion Hotel in Belper. Our guest speaker was Terry Gifford of the Climbers Club and a literary notable of the climbing world. He sang as well as giving a short speech which included a list of his favourite classic climbs, a refreshing and entertaining performance. His list included a favourite climb of mine; 'The Night Watch' at Whitestone Cliff.

The 2006 AGM took place on 25th March. We paid our respects to Dawn Hopkinson, a well-loved Oread member who had passed away in December 2005.

The election of Officers of the club for the coming year took place towards the end of the AGM. Rob Tresidder took over as president and I took on the vice president's role as expected. Rob chaired the meeting from this point.

Robert Tresidder (2006-08)

I am perhaps unusual in that I actually asked someone to nominate me! The pushy sort; though I had turned down an invitation to stand some years before. I didn't have any particular plans to shake up the club or dismantle its bureaucracy or anything like that. What I resolved to do was climb less away from the club, go on as many meets as possible and lead a few as well. I think I succeeded in those modest objectives.

The standouts for me in 2006-8 were being allowed to nominate the principal guests at two annual dinners. David Craig, poet, university lecturer and guidebook author in 2006 and Andy Kirkpatrick and his then partner, Karen Dark in 2007. I was lucky to be allowed to accept the invitation to the Pinnacle Club's annual dinner and represent the Oread. They didn't ask me to speak!

The meets that stay best in the memory are of course the overseas ones. I attended the Hohe Tauern meet in 2006 and climbed the Großglockner as well as a large family oriented trip to stay in a mountain hut, *without*, then climbing a route. I remember also attending an open air meeting in Heiligenblut addressed by, I think, Herbert Kickl, the man who now leads the largest party in the Austrian parliament, the far right "Freedom" Party, FPÖ. Even with my limited German, this was not a heartwarming experience!

In 2007, I travelled to Rjukan to climb with three others. A fabulous place to go that I would recommend to anyone and memorable for being my first time using ice tools that I felt really confident with. Later in the summer I joined the club in Cortina for the annual summer meet. We had mostly good weather. I did too much on my own but did have a couple of good days with Steve Bennett and a day climbing the Fiammes Arête with Roger Gibbs. He talks a lot but is always interesting and asks interested questions!

On the bureaucratic front I remember we introduced the club's first child protection policy. I persuaded the office holders to write a few lines to describe the work they did in their rôle so as to smooth the transition to their successor. With proper updates, these lasted a few years but are now long gone.

Mine was not a distinguished presidency, but it was distinctive in one respect. I am the only president ever to have been the target of a no confidence motion. At the 2008 AGM in the middle of a debate about Heathy Lea, the motion was moved by one very senior member and seconded by another. They alleged, slanderously, that the debate was rigged. I vacated the chair, and the procedural motion was debated. When it came to a vote, I was relieved that the only votes for the motion were those of the proposer and seconder. I played out the remaining hour of my presidency and we are still tenants of Heathy Lea.

Simon Pape (2008-10)

I started writing this thinking about my climbing memories whilst president. Climbing the Big Micheluzzi in the Dolomites, followed shortly afterwards by Debauchery on High Tor, since it was only a little limestone outcrop in comparison and pegs were the new normal! I also went on my first February visit to Costa Blanca with Chris, Snod and John Dobson. The fact I had to check in my diary what I had done during those two years just confirms that I went climbing as much as possible, just like all the years when I wasn't president!

What really sticks in my memory is the amount of work the committee had to do during those years. I was elected at the end of the longest and most acrimonious AGM that I've attended as we debated the future of Heathy Lea for the first time. The fallout was the first thing we had to deal with, as one of the trustees and the Heathy Lea hut sub-committee resigned, before we could even work out what the club really wanted to do with the hut. (The state of the pumping station roof was also a concern!) This was all followed by the discovery of dry rot at Tan yr Wyddfa.

All of which was dealt with admirably by my fellow committee members. As have all the other problems faced by the committees over 75 years. So, my thanks go to all who have served on the committee at some point. Without your service the club wouldn't be where it is today.

Chris Wilson (2010-12)

I was president from April 2010, just before Jan and I celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary. It was, as I recall, a most enjoyable two years. My Oread experience had begun in the 1970's. Becoming a member took a while, but once Robin Sedgewick had shown some slides of a few alpine routes I was in! In those early years I tended to go mainly on meets that coincided with my objectives and these were essentially climbing related. I had a great deal of fun with lots of good friends. Marriage followed, then a close encounter and several weeks in a Geneva hospital dampened my enthusiasm for hard alpine routes. I rejoined the committee in the 90's and after a stint as secretary and a year as vice president my president's experience began.

At the start I decided that I wanted to go on as many meets and get out in the hills as much possible. Revisiting meets of old led by the Craddocks, at the end of May Jan and I led a meet to Arran where we camped at Lochranza. On our anniversary we all sat down to an interesting meal at the campsite restaurant, and I recall that later that night the awning almost blew off our van. As is usual on an Arran trip a visit to South Ridge Direct on Cir Mhor was undertaken, this time approached from Glen Sannox. Of interest was Annegret's disappearance on the way and her re-emergence a bit later to explain that she had fallen. Not to worry, Simon took out his first aid kit only to find that the antiseptic wipes were like dried parchment but still sort of worked! Several of us also spent a few hours disgracefully bouldering on the standing stones near Blackwaterfoot. From Arran Jan and I travelled on north in perfect weather without midges – those were happy days.

The alpine meet that year was at Innertkirchen and it was well attended. It was one of the wettest I can remember, with downpours almost every day. Dave Roscoe had a new tent, unfortunately he only had part of it and no groundsheet. Richard and John Green got trench feet in their waterlogged field. But we did climb almost every day and Simon did take to the air on a route. October was a time for another enjoyable, as ever, Kalymnos trip and then a president's speech at the annual dinner. A few weeks in New Zealand over Christmas showed me what proper rain could be like although we walked the Tongariro crossing in glorious sunshine and took the opportunity to visit old members Ron and Yvonne Sant up on North Island.

A Costa Blanca trip in February 2011 preceded the AGM and an enjoyable walk with lots of friends the next day. The alpine meet was in the Bregaglia. Jan and I meandered down there slowly, climbing and walking in lots of places on the way. In Epinal the tourist office even photocopied a few pages from the climbing guidebook for us. The crag was across the road in the city centre. It was a good well attended meet and the only bad weather was when Richard and Martin brought it with them. The dinner came and went and then it was time for the Bullstones.

I had never participated in this annual ritual it but felt that as president it should be added to my repertoire. The route passed close to Cray where we had camped at the pub on the Dales Way and I thought we could call in for a pint as we went by. It rained hard, very hard, all of Friday but after a meal in the West Burton pub it started to snow, and snow. We spent the night on Harland Hill, Jan and I sleeping on top of the pegs and the tent sort of supported by trekking poles. Saturday was wonderful weather but with a strong wind blowing all that lovely snow against the walls and obscuring all the paths. By early evening we could look down to Cray but the need for a pint had long since gone. It was still miles to the camping barn and the track and its gates were deep in snow. Reaching the barn long after dark we were rewarded with tea, soup and beer brought up by Nodge. After a cold night Sunday's walk back turned out to be easy and enjoyable. I was hooked and have tried to do every Bullstones ever since, even trying it with crutches on the ice (I only went a short way and decided it was madness!).

Soon it was March and the Oread baton was handed over. Two really enjoyable years had gone swiftly by. I had met so many new friends, found so much more to do and wouldn't hesitate to recommend the position to anyone.

Pete Lancaster (2012-14)

I joined the Oread Mountaineering Club in 1978 and quickly realised that the club had great mountaineering credentials; this club was the real deal with members doing things in the Alps and beyond of a type that I had only read about. I wanted some of this myself and mountaineering remains my main passion but as we get older, the nature and style of our activities inevitably becomes toned down: most of those who had been active in the past were getting old. At the time that I was president the club lacked a healthy intake of new young active members so if the former health, vitality and past levels of performance were to reappear and then we needed more of them joining the club.

As president, I wanted to put the 'M' back into the OMC and therefore we needed to promote an image that would entice keen mountaineers into the club. As we hoped, with promotional posters at climbing walls and a new and exciting website plus Mick Hayes and others actively promoting new membership we did get the new members we desperately needed. Climbing changes as people change; it diversifies and what they want from a club changes accordingly; coupled with global warming. These factors have their effect on what members do but the club is healthy and doing what the membership wants which is how it should be and who knows how it will change in the future.

The biggest, most existential debate that arose while I was president was centred on Heathy Lea and I suspect will continue to be an issue each time the lease is up for renewal. The problem here is that the hut mostly gets used by Oreads for the odd BBQ and bonfire party and an unwillingness of members to get involved in the running and upkeep of it begs the question: do we need it? We had a Special General Meeting to discuss this which was very useful and surprising in that many members went to the meeting clear in their minds on whether to keep it or let it go but after good discussion left with a different perspective, myself included. I went biased towards letting it go but left delighted that we decided to keep it: we don't use it much as a club and people, despite what they said at that meeting, are still not coming forward help run the place, however I regard it as an important symbol of the club. I felt it was the most useful general meeting that I have attended.

Finally, I very much wanted my successor to be a woman, the committee agreed, and Pam Storer was the result and happily we currently have our second female president, hopefully not the last.

Pam Storer (2014-16)

When I was a lass of about 40, I decided to join the OMC,
I learnt to climb and other skills, and took to wearing blue Ron Hills.

She took to wearing blue Ron Hills

I wore Ron Hills which were often holey,
And now I am the leader of the OMC.

*She wore Ron Hills which were often holey,
And now she is the leader of the OMC.*

As provisional member I made such a hit, That I was given full membership.
On my first Alpine meet I had such fun, I even climbed the wrong mountain.

She even climbed the wrong mountain.

I climbed that mountain so gleefully,
That now I am the leader of the OMC.

*She climbed that mountain so gleefully,
That now she is the leader of the OMC*

I attended many meets and travelled far, to South America and the Himalaya.
Once more in the Alps on the Piz Badile, I was seen to wear my knickers away.

She was seen to wear her knickers away.

I bore this shame with humility,
And now I am the leader of the OMC.

*She bore this shame with humility,
And now she is the leader of the OMC.*

On working parties I made so much tea, I was appointed to the hut committee.
I cleaned the windows and scrubbed the floors, and attended meetings that went on for hours.

She attended meetings that went on for hours.

At the meetings I said little, as you can see, so now I am the leader of the OMC.

*At the meetings she said little, as you can see,
So now she is the leader of the OMC.*

I said so little they appointed me, vice president on the main committee.
I learnt to listen and concentrate, through endless long, important debates.

Through endless long and important debates.

I learnt to listen so carefully, that now I am the leader of the OMC.

*She learnt to listen so carefully,
That now she is the leader of the OMC*

SLOW

Now, Oreads all, wherever you may be, If you want to climb to the top of the tree,
Say very little and don't climb E3; and you may be the leader of the OMC.

Derek Pike (2016-18)

A few notes pinched from past Newsletters to make up for a fading memory.

Newly promoted to President I find myself along with Snod (Dave Helliwell) at TYW installing a new toilet, later that year a unfortunate accident at the TYW working party saw me banned in perpetuity from sweeping any more chimneys.

I notice that during my term of office I even managed to lead some meets.

Most of the time I remember chairing committee meetings and trying to write some notes for the next annual dinner.

Thanks to all who helped.

Dave (Snod) Helliwell (2018-20)

My stint as president, from March 2018 to March 2020, was mostly quite unremarkable – club business moving along in its normal manner – walks, local climbing, away meets - apart from two major instances.

The first was an Extraordinary General Meeting to discuss the renewal – or not – of the Heathy Lea lease. This was held in the Robin Hood, Baslow (no longer the welcoming hostelry it was then) at the end of September 2018. At the vote there was overwhelming support to renew the lease. Mention should be made here of the transformation of Heathy Lea that followed under the custodianship of Phil and Yvonne Waterson.

The other momentous occurrence was, of course, Covid. My tenure ended in such a devastating way as there was no A.G.M. The huts were closed, the meets list cancelled, the lifeblood of the club put on hold. It is good to record that after the lockdowns club life has returned pretty much to normal.

Nigel Briggs (2020-23)

There is one thing that overshadowed my time as president and that was Covid!

One of my first roles as president was to lead the Spring Stride, we had been checking the route a week or so before the AGM when we heard the announcement to restrict unnecessary travel and mixing. This threw up a dilemma as to whether the AGM and the Spring Stride could go ahead. We did not have to make a decision as the first national lockdown was implemented shortly after and that was that! The AGM never happened, meets never happened, the huts were closed and we all stayed local within our household groups. As the months passed more meets were cancelled, as was the trip to Lofoten planned for the summer. As autumn approached other annual events such as the dinner and the Bullstones meet had to be cancelled. The committee met on Zoom and kept the club ticking over, and not getting out so much led to updating of policies and the design of a new website.

In my first year as president I had only overseen the closing down of club activity and I, and all the committee, had not even been elected by an AGM!

In 2021 things started improve, we had an AGM on Zoom, the committee and I were endorsed. This was taken as the start of my two years in office and explains why I was president for three years. As the year progressed we did begin to return to pre Covid activity, meets were run, the huts were opened albeit with many restrictions and procedures to adhere to. I have fond memories of the first evening meet of the year, at Harborough Rocks at the end of March. It was during one of those glorious warm spring periods we can get at that time of year. Many members were out all keeping to their groups of six and maintaining social distancing! Later that summer Janet and I went on a weekend camping meet with the Pinnacle Club to celebrate their 100th anniversary, that got me thinking about the Oread's 75th...

We started the winter Zoom talks in this period, which proved popular and a good way of getting together under the circumstances, but it was no substitute to actually going out to the Royal Oak at Ockbrook and meeting people, although you didn't have to travel as far!

In 2022 we still had limits as to what we could do, but we were getting out and doing it! The AGM was on Zoom again but the Spring Stride actually happened. Gradually we were returning to pre Covid activities although it was noticeable that numbers attending meets, particularly hut meets were reduced. On a personal note we enjoyed walking the Coast to Coast route with some other Oreads, something that had been planned for 2020 but cancelled, and in July we joined the Alpine Meet; a small group of Oreads enjoyed two sunny weeks in Argentière, although two of the party did get Covid whilst there! A Peak District based Bullstones meet also went ahead, with a bivi above Wetton and a night in the bunkhouse at Sparklow.

In 2023 we had an in-person AGM where I handed over the presidential baton to Jan Wilson. My main memories of the period were Zoom meetings, trying to interpret 'guidelines', and wondering if we would ever get back to 'normal'.

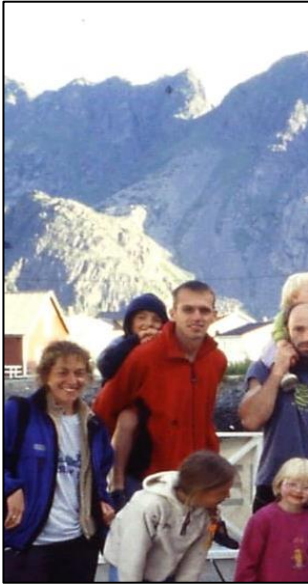
Jan Wilson (2023-25)

An historic time for the Oread with the 75th Anniversary of its foundation in 2024 is anticipated as I write. What a difference seventy five years can make. The Second World War had not long finished when the early Oreads got together and it was very much a time of austerity. The war had, I think, given many folk a sense of adventure, an appetite for risk taking and living in the moment. Gear was generally improvised and transport difficult. Today we expect to see a good forecast and go for it. The number and types of activity available has mushroomed with climbing ice, trad, sport, bouldering and dry tooling. Mountain biking, wild swimming and walking or trekking are also mainstream.

Social media and cars have revolutionised how we organise our going outdoors so the regular away meets are now augmented by grabbing opportunities as the weather and people's availability permits. Our age range within the club has also broadened dramatically but then so have the abilities of participants at every age. I sometimes reflect on some of the current early members and wonder what they would have been doing if they had the gear and access afforded to today's 'tigers' who go from strength to strength with their climbing.

After more than forty years the one constant in all of this for me is the 'good craic'. Whether on the hill, in the hut, in adversity or when celebrating and particularly in the pub the banter is somehow some of the best you will encounter. Is this because there is nowhere to hide so your fellow members know all of your strengths and often all of your weaknesses? Or is it the mix of people and particularly some of the 'characters' a club attracts? Whatever for me the joy of a climbing club and particularly the Oread is its wonderful camaraderie. As I sit and write this we are planning some amazing outdoor events and a celebratory dinner for the 75th and I am certain the Oread will make it a year to remember. [^](#)

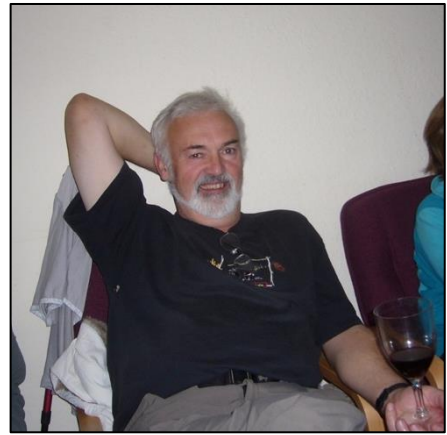
Presidents – the Last 25 Years



Michael Hayes



Darryl Kirk



Tony Howard



Simon Pape



Rob Tresidder



Chris Wilson



Pete Lancaster



Pam Storer



Derek Pike



Dave (Snod) Helliwell



Nigel Briggs



Jan Wilson

The Bullstones Meet

For members who enjoy a certain type of adventure the first weekend in December is a highlight of the year. This is when the Bullstones meet takes place. The meet takes its name from the long demolished Bullstones Cabin. In recent years the meet has generally followed a standard pattern as follows. We meet in a pub on Friday evening, leave around closing time, then a (shortish) walk takes us to a bivvy site (although these days lightweight tents are often preferred). Saturday is a walk to the overnight accommodation. The route taken by the participants will vary depending on the conditions, enthusiasm and single mindedness! By whatever route taken everyone eventually arrives at the overnight stop. On the Sunday a more direct route is taken to return to the starting point. Throw in the December weather and you are guaranteed a memorable weekend. What those memories actually are, well that depends on the mix of ingredients!

Bullstones a History from 2009 – John Green

Way back in 1980 I had my first Bullstones experience. Anyone who has not been on this meet cannot understand its appeal. As a club we have had this meet on the meets list since the fifties and it is still popular. The early meets were far more “basic” than the ones we have today, consisting of a walk from, usually, Edale on the Friday night starting when we were ejected from the Nag’s Head, going over Kinder and staying at either a bivvy or the Jubilee Cabin overlooking the Snake Pass. Then doing a walk over Bleaklow and staying the Saturday night somewhere, mostly Lower Small Clough cabin or other cabins that existed then such as Bullstones, Oyster Clough and Far Cat Clough. The number of these cabins is now greatly reduced as they have been taken down due to vandalism or lack of use by the landowners. As members aged, they wanted more comfortable beds on the Saturday so bunkhouses and hostels began to be used and this still applies today. The location of the meet has also changed, taking in all the mountains and moors of Wales and England.

Having been on most of the meets since 1980 my logs show some interesting outings and I have tried as best my memory allows to note these below. These are from 2009 onwards.

2009: This was from Dunsop Bridge in the Yorkshire Dales. A highlight being when a passing christmas tree on the back of a trailer almost knocked us over. We reckoned it had been stolen, the track being single and the tree overhanging, there was nowhere to go! The usual problems with route finding made the day interesting. We stayed in a bothy on Friday and a village hall on Saturday allowing plenty of time for refreshment.



2010: Saw us back in our homeland of the High Peak. It should have been a two-night bivvy weekend, but only the meet leader was on it as the rest of us revolted! We did a two-day outing staying at Oyster Clough cabin after a very civilised dinner in the Snake Inn and walking around Kinder. Snow was lying in the groughs and some streams in spate had to be crossed which made it interesting.



*Inside Oyster Clough Cabin,
2010.*

2011: This was a hard one, around Bishopdale, we met as usual on the Friday evening in the pub, snow was deep on the fells but the bivvy was OK if a little chilly. The Saturday walk was done by the meet leader in summer, so no snow, but with 10-20 cms of lying snow the going was made much more difficult. With a total of 26 kms to cover there were some tired people in Marsett bunkhouse that night. In the morning we found the bunkhouse had started to flood due to heavy overnight rain, we just got out in time.



Reu Dakin at first light, 2011.

2012: A Welsh one from Rhayader. A cold dry night spent on the village green. Dog walkers wondering what all the tents were? The 23 km walk to the bunkhouse in Beili Neuadd gave great views of the mid Wales hills. I think I should mention here a tradition on Bullstones, which started relatively recently, of the whisky tasting, where members bring an unidentified bottle containing a small quantity of the water of life for the rest to identify, interesting!



*Whisky tasting,
Mungrisdale Bunkhouse,
2016.*

2013: This fairly local one started at Rudyard in Staffs. The bivvy was wet and muddy but OK. With 25 wet kilometres to go to Upper Hulme, we have had better conditions. Shutlingsloe is a great little hill and was well worth the effort to climb it. A bunkhouse in Upper Hulme was a comfortable stay for Saturday night, Sunday seeing us walk back to Rudyard by Tittesworth Reservoir.

2014: The Howgills were a new area for us. From Sedbergh a short climb had us on the side of Arant Haw, where a good frost led to a cold walk over the tops to a bunkhouse at Green Slack. Heavy rain overnight made for wet going when getting back on the Sunday with rivers in flood.

*Sunrise on Saturday
morning, 2014.*



2015: The little village in Wales called Llanrhaeadr-yrn Mochnant led to a very wet bivvy above the Pistyll Rhaeadr waterfall. Probably the wettest Bullstones I've done. It was so wet I took no pictures!!! Interestingly it was so wet and windy, only two of us kept to the tops everyone else moved into the valley. Plas Nantyr Centre was our comfortable overnight stop.

2016: Cumbria, Back o' Skiddaw. From Hesket Newmarket to Caldbeck mine for our bivvy. Next day was dry and we set off for Knott at 710 m, then Great Calva and Skiddaw House for lunch. There were snow patches on high ground which added interest. An "interesting" descent of Bannerdale brought us to Mungrisdale for our bunkhouse overnight after a 20k day!



Bivvy Site, at the old mine area above Hesket Newmarket, 2016.

2017: Shropshire was our destination. Starting in Church Stretton and walking up the Cardingmill Valley, we bivvied on The Long Mynd. Next day over to the Stiperstones and a bit of Gabbro. After a cold day we had great accommodation at Bridges youth hostel. A 9k walk on Sunday brought us back to Church Stretton.

2018: This was a different Bullstones, being based on Section 16 of the Peak Boundary Walk. We stayed at Whitehouse Farm. Members did different walks ending at the Olde Rock pub at Upper Hulme.

2019: Another local meet, from Peak Forest, with a bivvy in Eldon Quarry. It was difficult to get pegs in for tents. From here we went over Rushup Edge, Mam Tor and down to the Cheshire Cheese pub. Somehow, we then ended up at The Fox House and walked back to Heathy Lea!

2020: Covid – no meet.

2021: Another local meet, starting at Wetton and after a bivvy on Wetton Hill, we walked to the Royal Oak in Hurdlow and stayed in their bunkhouse. A short but interesting meet.



The Sun rises on the 2021 Bullstones Meet (photo Neil Weatherstone).

2022: Yorkshire, From Clapham, to Clapham Bottoms. Bivvy, then on to Helwith Bridge and a comfortable caving club bunkhouse. A great pub meal!



Saturday morning below Ingleborough, 2022.

2023: Walked from Ringinglow to Stoney Middleton. The weather was very poor, rain most of the time. I spent the Friday night in my car then caught up the next morning! The bunkhouse was very comfortable.

Although earlier Bullstones had more character the 12 since 2009 have certainly had their moments. Personally, I think the Bullstones meet is the nearest we can get here in Derbyshire to mountaineering in the big hills of the Alps and Greater Ranges. [^](#)

More photographs of Bullstones Meets during this period are on the website: [Bullstones photos.](#)

Location of the Bullstones Meet, 1999-2023

Year	Venue	Friday Night	Saturday Night	Meet Leader
1999	Yorkshire Dales	Malham	Gritstone Club Hut, Ribbleshead	David Jones
2000	Peak District	Marsden	Yorkshire Bridge	Daryl Kirk
2001	North Wales - Eryri	Slate quarries above Llanberis	Bunkhouse by Little Tryfan	David Jones
2002	North Pennines	Melmerby	Garrigill Village Hall	Brian West
2003	North Wales - Berwyns	Llangynog	The Coach House Bala, Llanfor	Derek Pike
2004	Peak District	Lower Small Clough Cabin	Upper Booth Camping Barn	Michael Hayes
2005	North York Moors	Egton Bridge	Lion Inn	Derek Pike
2006	Yorkshire Dales	Birkwith Moor	Kirby Malham	Simon Pape
2007	The Black Mountains	Llanthony Priory	Perth-y-Pia Farmhouse, Llanbedr	John Green
2008	Peak District	Fieldhead	Wheel Stones (bivi)	James Tubby
2009	Forest of Bowland	Whelp Stone Crag	Gisburn Bothy	Derek Pike
2010	Peak District	Lantern Pike	Grinah Stones (bivi)	Rob Tresidder
2011	Yorkshire Dales	Harland Hill	Marsett	Pam Norris
2012	Mid Wales	Rhayader	Beilli Neuadd	Derek Pike
2013	Peak District	Meerbrook	Upper Hulme	Kevin Fidler
2014	Howgill Fells	Above Sedbergh	Fell End Bunkhouse	Pam Storer
2015	North Wales - Berwyns	Pistyll Rhaeadr	Nantyr	Derek Pike
2016	Lake District	Above Hesket Newmarket	Mungrisdale	Pam Norris
2017	Long Mynd	Carding Mill Valley	Bridges YHA and Pub	Simon Pape
2018	Peak District	Whitehouse Farm above Upper Hulme		Chris Radcliffe
2019	Peak District	Eldon Quarry	Heathy Lea	David Helliwell
2020	No meet - Covid			
2021	Peak District	Wetton Hill	Royal Oak, Sparklow	John Green
2022	Yorkshire Dales	Clapham Bottoms	YSS Hut, Helwith Bridge	Janet Briggs
2023	Peak District	Houndkirk Moor	DPC Hut, Stoney Middleton	John Gwyther

Notes

2010 – Only the meet leader completed the route in the table. Two nights in the rain was not appealing to the rest of the group who spent the weekend on Kinder but stayed in Oyster Clough Cabin.

2017 – The meet leader was unable to attend due to illness.

2018 – Some spent Friday night at a bivi near Merryton Low.

Peak District Boundary Walk - Stuart Firth



The ubiquitous waymark sign which guided us along the route

In 2017, the Friends of the Peak District published a guidebook entitled 'Peak District Boundary Walk - 190 miles around the edge of the national park'. A great deal of research and signposting had been necessary and full acknowledgment is given here to the instigators.

The official walk is broken down into twenty sections each of which is walkable in a day. In an ideal world one would walk them continuously over about three weeks. However, not many people can or wish to dedicate such a block of time. As the national park is the home territory of the Oread Mountaineering Club, the idea was born to undertake the walk over a period of time. It would be woven into the club's busy calendar, seek to attract as wide an attendance as possible and draw on multiple leaders. Where possible the walks would be made circular, utilise public transport if possible and encourage lift-sharing and car-shuttling where necessary.

The route was modified to enable a celebratory start and finish at Heathy Lea - the club's hut near Baslow - and several weekend sections were incorporated. One section doubled up as the traditional annual Bullstones meet. Covid threw a spanner in the works but workarounds for the "rule of six" were found.

In retrospect, the most striking things for me were the enthusiasm members showed for the project and the joy of discovering so many new places in what we had all thought was familiar territory.

Naturally I must thank all the leaders and attendees who made it all such fun. I also thank Ruth Gordon - for her meticulous and creative contribution in editing the club newsletter which printed the individual stage reports.

The project began on the 26th November 2017 by departing from Heathy Lea and walking to Rowsley



The walk begins.....

The Stages:

Stage 1	Heathy Lea to Rowsley	26th November 2017
Stage 2	Rowsley to Winster	21st January 2018
Stage 3	Winster to Minninglow	17th March 2018
Stage 4	Minninglow to Ilam	6th October 2018
Stage 5	Ilam to Onecote	4th Nov 2018
Stage 6a	Onecote to Thorncliffe (Bullstones Meet)	8th Dec 2018
Stage 6b	Thorncliffe to Tittesworth (Bullstones Meet)	9th December 2018
Stage 7	Tittesworth to Wildboarclough	13th Jan 2019
Stage 8	Wildboarclough to Bollington	16th Feb 2019
Stage 9	Bollington to Whaley Bridge	17th Mar 2019
Stage 10	Whaley Bridge to Buxton	21st Sep 2019
Stage 11	Buxton to Peak Forest	9th Nov 2019
Stage 12	Peak Forest to Hayfield	30th Nov 2019
Stage 13	Hayfield to Old Glossop	18th Jan 2020
Stage 14a	Old Glossop to Greenfield	15th Feb 2020
Stage 14b	Greenfield to Marsden	16th Feb 2020
Stage 15a	Marsden to Holme	14th March 2020
Stage 15b	Holme to Langsett Barn	15th March 2020
Stage 16	Langsett to Low Bradfield	20th Sep 2020
Stage 17	Low Bradfield to Ringinglow	10th Oct 2020
Stage 18	Ringinglow to Millthorpe	24th Apr 2021
Stage 19	Millthorpe to Heathy Lea (Finale)	24th Jul 2021

On the 24th July 2021, almost four years and 19 stages later, after a somewhat extended period due to the Covid restrictions, the 19th and final stage left Millthorpe with Heathy Lea as the destination and the completion of the Peak District Boundary Walk.

The final stage was led by Paul Gardiner, in his words:-

Well, it finally happened. The day long awaited since November 2017 and one which, in an unguarded moment on the top of Teggs Nose or somewhere, I had volunteered to lead.

Descending steeply to the Robin Hood, and with all finally seated, my head count was 17. Orders were shouted to a very patient table server and drinks, courtesy of Jack Ashcroft and A.N. Other, and were enjoyed in an hour of banter and creeping green things! Eventually the cream tea team set off to prepare a spread at HL and the rest followed shortly after. Full marks to Stuart and Sue for plates full of calories and fresh fruit eaten outside to round off a very satisfying end to the PDBW. Thank you everyone for coming. Rumours that Stuart is planning to do the walk again in reverse have not yet been confirmed.....

Here follow some (interesting or boring depending on your point of view) statistics courtesy of Stuart and Radders:

PDBW started - 26.11.17. Distance - 220 miles. Ascent more than 10,000 metres.
Number of Leaders - 15. Number of Participants - 85.
Bent Screw nomination: Radders and Gill, doing a catch-up stage twice, having left the keys to shuffle car 1 in shuffle car 2.



Inspirational – Paul Gardiner shows the way on the final leg of the Peak District Boundary Walk.

Photo Peter Amour.

Reflections

Here are some reflections of participants once the whole project of the boundary walk had been completed. Not quite "Tripadvisor" but there are similarities...

Paul Gardiner:

The abiding memory was that I soon found out that I was no longer up with the pace! Something that manifested itself more and more as the stages rolled on. Of course, completion took several years so one obviously aged.

I enjoyed the first few stages, particularly in the snow going from Rowsley to Winster but then a lengthy course of radiotherapy intervened so that I missed a few sections. On resumption, only three days after my final dose, we left Wildboarclough and went straight up Shutlingsloe which I found a severe test. It was somewhere on this stage, high on a moor that, in an unguarded moment, I found myself offering to lead the final stage, whenever that might be. The section from Marsden to Holme covered very interesting ground with an overnight camp on Saturday night. On Radder's penultimate stage, much delayed by Covid, I managed one of my tumbles and was tended by Oread Angels. The final section was memorable for the number of ways people arrived at the start, some making it a circular walk. The passage along this section being the one occasion when I could lead off at my own pace with everyone else trailing behind!!

Colin Hobday:

Memories that come to mind are walking on the High Peak trail in a blizzard to Gotham car park, the pouring rain on the Morridge and staying at a farm house. Also, many new footpaths in Staffordshire and Cheshire - an area we tend not to visit. Favourite sections - they were all enjoyable each section having its own character with the challenge of finding the footpath on new ground.

Jan and Chris Wilson:

The night in the Greenfield bunkhouse with the shared meal was also a real highlight as was the final section back to Heathy Lea. Hats off to the Elderly Sage for leading that last day and to the organisers for yet another great cake stop.

Both Chris's and my abiding memories were the company and the craic. Completing a long day sometimes tired and or wet and hungry whilst still laughing with the team has to be one of the most fun experiences in life. There is a humungous amount of knowledge wit and wisdom in the club.

Nigel Briggs:

My abiding memory is that of a project which seem to appeal to a wide cross-section of the membership. Having it as a project seemed to create more of a 'buzz' than day walks.

Cream tea at Heathy Lea seemed a very fitting finale!

All in all a good project that captured folks' imagination, thank you for making it happen.

Peter Amour:

The most memorable stage for me was one of the out and back ones: Millthorpe - Ringinglow-Millthorpe. I arrived at Ringinglow to hear the very clear tones of Ms Leach addressing her companions, I stated that she was audible on the moor, to which she cheerfully responded with "It's my teacher voice!"

Later, while having a coffee stop at the south end of Blacka Moor I made some innocent comment which could be construed in various ways. Without even a pause Paul Gardiner delivered a high-speed put-down of me, which had all around howling with laughter, including me! I only wish I could recall the content.

Pippa Leach:

What an excellent quest for Oreads, to circumnavigate our own 'back yard'.

I loved the sociable atmosphere on the walks, a little mini-adventure. Sadly, I also missed the very last leg, as I had departed for Scotland. I did catch up later though - I couldn't leave unfinished business!

John Green:

Abiding memories of the walk - The company of kindred spirits all up for a challenge. Achieving a goal that made it all worth it. If it had been done alone it would not be as good as it was with the Oread members for company.

My favourite sections were the northern part where we made it a weekend meet. Walking in country that was new to me and where I enjoyed the discovery of new places including breweries. The atmosphere on those occasions was really great, almost like being on an expedition.

Big surprise - Paul Gardiner being still able to cover the distance needed at his age. Gives all us oldies hope.

Sue Todd:

My abiding memories were the weekend of the two days at the Bunk House in Greenfield. Battling through the high winds and blizzards. The great community evening meal on the Saturday. The slug on the cake-cover and having to clean everything we used in the kitchen! The second weekend away on a waterlogged campsite and getting the communal pub meal in just before Covid lock-down!

My favourite sections were:

- a. John Green's section. It was a high-level walk in lovely countryside but we could still see the conurbations of Manchester and beyond.
- b. The Marsden section, on the high moors of the Dark Peak and following the water channels serving the dark satanic mills of the industrial revolution.
- c. Colin Hobday's section that went from Peak Forest and brought us on to Buxton golf course, from an amazing wilderness with lakes. That was a beautiful warm sunny day.

The biggest surprises were:

- a. How varied the landscape was generally.
- b. How many areas I had never walked in over 50 years of living in Derbyshire.
- c. The raw beauty of the Dark Peak.
- d. How near and yet so far we were from Manchester and its environs.

Stuart Firth:

I have many long-lasting and delightful memories of the Peak District Boundary Walk project. First of all, it was great that so many members bought into the idea and contributed to its execution in many different ways. All the leaders put their own stamp on their sections and the participants made it all a fun experience. At several points we even had three generations of the same family - the Gardiners.

The terrain covered was remarkable ranging from isolated hidden valleys, through industrial archaeology to extensive wilderness views over neighbouring counties. There was a fascinating blend of familiar territory and new ground - even within our own backyard.

Pubs, cafés, cakes, communal meals and accommodation added to the variety as did the wide range of weather conditions - generally surprisingly favourable.

Although the logistics were a challenge, we did make use of public transport where feasible and car-sharing encouraged the strong community spirit. Despite the Covid pandemic and the extended timescale - nearly four years to walk 190 miles - people sustained an interest throughout.

So - a final thank you to all who came and saw and conquered. See you on the next walk...

An [*unedited version of this article*](#) containing reports of all the stages is available on the club website along with a [*spreadsheet detailing the leader and participants*](#) for each section. [^](#)

Reflections on the Peak District Boundary Walk – Chris Radcliffe

Stuart's initiative to walk the whole of the PDBW starting and finishing at Heathy Lea captured the imagination of many members of the Oread and Gill and I were pleased to complete the walk, albeit after several catch up days.

We were there at the beginning – the first section from Heathy Lea to Rowsley and back via the Heritage Way, on November 26, 2017 and we were there for the finishing walk from Millthorpe to Heathy Lea on July 24, 2021. It seems remarkable how long it took to complete the walk, in part because the scheduled Oread meets avoided the summer months and of course the impact of the pandemic.

The inaugural meet was on cold and cloudy day with a few showers, but a large group set off from Heathy Lea including founder member Paul Gardiner (86) and a recent new member, Francesco Comin (24). It was also cloudy for the concluding walk with a cool easterly wind, but some hazy sunshine after lunch made it an ideal walking day. Seventeen walkers called in at the Robin Hood and were treated to a pint by the most senior members of the club - Paul Gardiner and Jack Ashcroft – before a final celebration at Heathy Lea with tea and scones.

Our winter trip to Spain precluded us from joining the second section from Rowsley to Winster, but Gill had committed to lead the third section from Winster to Gotham car park, near MInninglow. We did a recce in arduous conditions on March 12, 2018, but the weather was even more dire for the actual meet on March 17. It had snowed over night and there was a wintry mix of frequent snow or hail showers throughout the walk and it felt particularly dire on the exposed part of the High Peak Trail leading to the finish. Despite the conditions 23 members joined the walk and most went for a coffee or a pint at the pub in Winster at the end.



*Huddled behind a wall at lunchtime.
Photo Tomasz Janiki.*

One of the main attractions of the PDBW is the opportunity to walk on rarely visited paths giving a fresh perspective on the landscape. Some sections were a bit tedious and we weren't in the most scenic parts of the Peak but there was always something new. A downside of walking linear sections was that in most cases we had to leave cars at the end to shuttle people back to the start, but in reality, it was never a major problem as often the road connection wasn't far from the start.

We missed the Gotham to Ilam scheduled meet, so the next opportunity was Ilam to Onecote with a group of about a dozen Oreads on November 4, 2018. Having had the Heathy Lea fireworks and bonfire the night before and then invited to join a "Sardinian" evening in celebration of a friend's wedding after the walk, we had a busy weekend.

Enthused by this project, Gill and I wondered whether it could be combined with the traditional Bullstones Meet in early December. The committee agreed, so we studied the maps to try and make something work – more difficult than we first thought. Finally, we put together a plan based on Whitehorse Farm, owned by our friends Bill and Elen who very kindly agreed to my outrageous suggestion that we take over their home for the weekend. They generously agreed to this since they were away on the DMC winter meet at Glan Dena. Whitehorse Farm, near Thorncliffe, Staffordshire, is close to the boundary walk between Onecote and Tittesworth so we would spend the weekend only achieving one section of the PDBW but with two good circular walks in traditional "Bullstones" weather.

A group of 25 members assembled at the Rock Inn, Upper Hulme at 7pm on Friday December 7, 2018. Of these, 10 set off at 11pm to walk to a bivvy in the best tradition of the Bullstones Meet and we would not see them again until Saturday evening. The rest of us set off earlier to walk to Whitestone Farm. Strong winds and sustained rain overnight ensured that the bivvy team had rigorous conditions. On Saturday December 8 the main team followed Hamps Way from the farm to Onecote where we stopped for lunch at the Jervis Arms, before returning along the line of the boundary walk through Mixon and Morridge back to the farm. More rain and wind made it a pretty miserable walk but it was great to



reach the comforts of the farm where we ensconced ourselves and enjoyed a great "pot luck" supper to which all had contributed. Everyone seemed to have enjoyed themselves – the hard core had their fix and the rest of us completed a bit more of the boundary walk.

The group in the Hamps valley.

Sunday December 9 was a brighter day, but still with the strong winds... a group of 18 completed the official boundary walk section to Tittesworth reservoir before a long loop back via Naychurch, Swainsmoor and the Mermaid – at 17km we walked a little further than the previous day. Gill was leading without a recce, so navigation was a little more challenging!

Mike Wren and Colin ascending towards the Mermaid late Sunday afternoon.



We missed a couple of scheduled Oread Meets due to our winter trip to Spain, but picked up the thread again on March 17, 2019 with a group of about 20 on the section from Bollington to Whaley Bridge – a day of sunny spells and showers. The continuation from Whaley Bridge to Buxton was a meet on September 21, 2019 – well attended in magnificent weather. Starting under the stricken dam above the village – still under repair – continuing into the Goyt valley, then over the hill into Buxton, the official beginning and end of the PDBW. On this occasion we were able to catch a bus back to our start point.

Then the Buxton to Peak Forest section on November 9, 2019 continued the theme with the group catching a bus from Peak Forest at 10:40 (it was late) to the start in Buxton. Although cloudy and cool there were still some autumnal colours in the woods near Cowdale. Then steeply down into the Wye valley and a tricky river crossing in swollen river conditions. There was a steep climb up the other side as the normal route through Deepdale had been closed. More very wet conditions followed through Hay Dale and Dam Dale.

As we now were tackling the boundary walk sections on the NW perimeter of the Peak District, we were faced with more logistical complexity as the routes were a fair distance from where most people live. Stuart solved this problem by arranging for weekends away with a central base for two successive sections of the walk. On Friday February 14, 2020, 21 folk assembled at the Boarshurst Centre, a large bunkhouse in Greenfield. Despite the ravages of Storm Denis, this proved to be a memorable meet. It rained heavily overnight with strong winds. Elsewhere in the UK there was flooding and havoc, but for us it was unexceptional mountain weather.

On Saturday February 15 it rained most of the day with strong SW winds pushing us along and occasional violent gusts, but we've certainly had worse conditions in the Lakes or

Wales. Stuart had organised a minibus which got us to the start in Old Glossop by 10am for the walk back to Greenfield. Starting with a low-level walk over to Tintwistle (Bottoms Reservoir), Arnfield Lane linked us with the Pennine Bridleway and Higher Swineshaw Reservoir. A higher-level crossing of the moor, briefly turning into the wind (a very different experience!) before heading north and the Thameside Trail around to Dovestone Reservoir. It was quite tedious crossing this and then the roads back to the Boarshurst Centre. It was great to be in the warmth again and we enjoyed a sumptuous communal meal.

The storm continued overnight, but by morning it had blown over and we had a dry day, albeit with continuing strong SW winds for the section from Greenfield to Marsden. We started with a climb along the Oldham Way that led us to the Pots and Pans Outcrop and the Obelisk, a war memorial. We continued across the moor until we reached fields that were totally flooded leading to Diggle and then alongside Standedge Tunnels. A flagged path led across to Blackmoor Reservoir and then Blakely Clough. A steep descent and then a climb to Wessenden Dam before gaining a leat across the hillside and a final steep descent to Marsden. The walking had been quite challenging at times, but it had been one of the most memorable weekends of the PDBW project, combining two days of walking in a more remote section of the Peak in “atmospheric” conditions with a very sociable group.

One month later Stuart had again organised a weekend away – this time based around Whitegates Farm above Holmefirth where we could camp or for some of us park our camper vans. Saturday March 14 began with a fleet of taxis to take 17 of us to the start of the section at Marsden. The walk would take us beyond the official end point at Holme back to the campsite, but that allowed for a shorter day on Sunday. It was a mainly cloudy day and relatively straightforward walking on trails passing Shooters Nab, then around Meltham and eventually Digley reservoir and over to Holme before the final section back to camp. We returned to Holme by taxi for an evening meal at The Fleece.

Overnight rain and strong winds buffeted us at the campsite, but Sunday March 15 was quieter weather for a walk through forestry to reach Harden and Whinscar reservoirs. A tedious walk along the Trans Pennine trail to reach Langsett Reservoir and the finish at the Polka Dot café. Taxis were again required to take us back to camp.

We were extremely lucky to be able to complete these two “long haul” weekends on the far side of the Peak District before the Covid lockdown brought an end to all the planned activity of the club. However, although lockdown brought to an end to all climbing activity and socialising, we found it was an opportunity from our location on the edge of the Peak District for local walks and cycle rides. As various easings in the rules allowed, we also found the opportunity to catch-up on all the sections of the boundary walk we had missed. As we were walking in the summer months often the weather was fine and fewer folk on the hills made these rather pleasant experiences.

May 15 2020 was an opportunity to walk from Rowsley to Winster and back via Birchover. It was familiar terrain but conditions were good and the scenery as good as it gets.

Ten days later, May 25 2020, was another beautiful day with clear skies and light southerly winds to walk from Gotham car park to Ilam car park. Most of the walk was across quiet

field paths, but through Thorpe and again at Ilam it was extremely busy with folk taking advantage of the relaxation of covid restrictions to travel to honeypot areas. This walk was memorable for the wrong reason. We had dropped one vehicle at Ilam before driving back to Gotham to start the walk. Unfortunately, Gill had left a jacket in my car at Gotham only to find out at Ilam that the jacket contained her van key! Covid restrictions precluded us from ordering a taxi, so having already walked 20km, we had no alternative but to walk back to Gotham, even with a short-cut this was another 14km followed by a repeat of the double vehicle shuffle. This debacle was deemed worthy of a Bent Screw award!

More catch-up walks followed through June and into July. June 7 was a wet day for the walk from Peak Forest to Hayfield and the initial section was dull walking anyway. Fortunately, it dried out a bit once we reached the Pennine Bridleway and we had some fine views from Mount Famine. June 14, Hayfield to Glossop; June 21, Tittesworth to Wildboarclough; July 5 Wildboarclough to Bollington. We enjoyed mainly fine summer weather for all these walks and they were memorable because they followed mostly unfamiliar paths and for us, some new views such as Kinder from Lantern Pike, Bleaklow from Cown Edge; Shutlingsloe, Teggs Nose and Kerridge Edge.

At last, on September 20, 2020, we were able to run an Oread Meet, Langsett to Low Bradfield. It was a slightly strange experience as we had to separate into two small groups walking separately to keep within the covid regulations. It was a clear and sunny day and we had quite a lot of road walking, but also elevated views before dropping down to Low Bradfield and enjoying ice-cream while watching a cricket match – a quintessentially English scene.



'Rule of 6' walking:

Team A

and

Team B.



We missed the next scheduled meet from Low Bradfield to Ringinglow, but we completed it as a catch-up on November 13. We were now on more familiar terrain, but we particularly enjoyed Wyming Brook and I was amazed that I hadn't previously ascended some delightful rocky steps and wooden bridges crossing the stream as the path climbs up from the reservoir trail. The concluding walk along the road wasn't so pleasant.

The club was now getting close to completing the PDBW project. I had agreed to lead the penultimate section from Ringinglow to Millthorpe. It was familiar terrain, but Gill and I had done a recce in August 2020. Covid restrictions would result in the meet being cancelled twice before it finally happened on April 24, 2021. It was a great day with clear blue skies and I was joined by 20 folk for the walk, all of whom seemed to enjoy the day. From Wimble Holme Hill I took a variation line up to Totley Moor Trig where we enjoyed lunch with splendid views. Most of us went to the Royal Oak, Millthorpe at the end to conclude a sociable day.



Lunch at Totley Moor Trig point on the Boundary Walk, 24 April. Photo Chris Radcliffe.

This brings us to the last (and first) boundary walk sections with which I began these reflections. Thanks to Stuart who had conceived this almost epic project. I certainly enjoyed all the walks and was pleased I had made the effort to complete all the sections I had missed along the way. It led me to conceiving a cycle ride that followed the Peak District boundary – but that is another story.

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Oread Pachas Expedition to Punjab Himalaya of India -

Paul Bingham

In October 1999 Bob Pettigrew led a group of ten Oreads on an expedition to the Punjab Himalaya of India to celebrate the club's 50th anniversary. Pachas is Hindi for 50. Team members were: Bob Pettigrew – leader, Gordon Gadsby, George Reynolds, Chris Martin, John Welbourn, Colin Hobday, Uschi Hobday, Stuart Godfrey, Edith Colley and Paul Bingham. They were accompanied by ten porters, four horsemen and 22 horses and mules, and a guest dog.



Paul has written a very comprehensive and eminently readable account of the trip from his diaries written at the time. The [full report](#) is an appendix to this publication. Here are some extracts to whet the appetite. We learn from Paul that Pachas the dog is not all that he is made out to be, that there is no problem that cannot be solved by the silver tongue of expedition leader Cap'n Bob, and that the local brew 'Chang' has to be treated with utmost respect.

Objectives: To undertake a high mountain traverse of the Bara Bangahal in the Dhauladhar range between Bir in the Kangra valley and Manali in the Kulu valley via the Thamser and Kalahini passes. To visit the sights of the "Golden Triangle" (Delhi, Agra, Jaipur)

Day 1 Monday 4 October

0300hrs – Departure by minibus to Birmingham airport collecting Bob from Stanton by Bridge en route. 0415hrs arrive airport. Our first slight problem was convincing a rather grumpy check in girl that the baggage allowance should be treated as expedition baggage in spite of Bob's letter confirming this to be the case. Faced with Bob's persistence she gave up. Bob bought a portable TV in duty free, the rest bought whisky! The flight to Amsterdam eventually left at 0715hrs (scheduled for 1610) and arrived Amsterdam Schiphol 0815hrs (0915 local). We soon met Chris who had flown from Stansted to be met with another problem. Initially the officials said there was no room for Chris because communications difficulties at Stansted had resulted in the flight being overbooked. Bob sorted it. Estimated flight time was 7hr 45min. (Delhi is +5 ½ hrs GMT). We duly arrived Delhi at 2245hrs.

After a couple of days of tourism, shopping and, in Paul's case, bird watching, in and around Delhi the team travelled by overnight train, a narrow gauge railway, then minibuses to Kangra and finally to the starting point of the walk in Bir.

Day 7 (Trek 1) Sunday 10 October**Bir (4,940ft) to Billing (7,560ft)**

The day began with what was to become the normal routine and timetable - 0600hrs chi, 0700hrs breakfast, 0800hrs start walking whilst the porters cleared up and loaded the ponies. After passing back through the village we cut off up through a wooded track and took several steep short cuts across the main track hairpins. On one of the hairpins a truck arrived and disgorged several people carrying rifles and cooking pots! Moments later, as we continued to climb, we came across about 30 people partaking in some sort of ceremony involving flute music and goat sacrifice. Unfortunately we arrived very soon after the decapitation of two goats so did not dwell to talk with the locals....

... Cap'n Bob advised us not to fraternise with the guard dog accompanying the horsemen as its major role would not be as a pet but to warn against and ward off bears which we may encounter in some of the later, more remote, camps.

Day 9 (Trek 3) Tuesday 12 October**Palachok (8,440ft) to Panhattu (11,300ft)**

...Leaving the tree line the scenery became more rocky and mountainous with interesting side gulleys and waterfalls. Tiffin was taken on a rocky knoll just above a small ice patch in the valley bottom. As we arrived a large chunk of ice calved off the edge to let us know we had arrived in the real mountains. Our first encounter with Alpine Choughs was soon followed by a close visit from a Lammergeier causing much scurrying from Gordon and the lensmen. Fortunately it provided several flypasts and photo opportunities during the lunch break.

Immediately after lunch we were subjected to Bir Singh's (our lead porter) first of many bouts of altitude sickness. Not the conventional type of malady but an inbuilt desire to go vertical. A landslide had obliterated the original path and whereas the pony team continued contouring on the edge of the glacier Bir Singh led us up the debris for a few hundred feet and back down again to the glacier, Duke of York style. The pony team having "gently contoured" were now ahead. It was during this manoeuvre that the guard dog role of the now named "Pachas" was called into question. She appeared to follow whichever group was in front and was oblivious to any guardian duties. Subsequent discussion with the porters revealed she was not their dog but had just tagged along for a walk at Bir, our starting point. After three days "walkies" the signs were that she had no intention of either going home or paying Bob for the honour of joining his expedition. Pachas, by the devious tactic of duping us of her guard dog role, had become very much part of the team.

The next day involved one of two high passes crossed on the trek:

Day 10 (Trek 4) Wednesday 13 October**Panhattu (11,300ft) to Mir (Jaralu Dhar) (12,540ft) via the Thamsar Jot (15,000ft)**

0430hrs chi, 0500hrs breakfast, 0610hrs depart after hurrying George into what was to become some significant hasty packing.

All morning was spent on a long steady climb up the right side of a stream. From an early stage it was apparent that a combination of yesterday's walk, altitude and limited sleep was reducing the pace to "steady" at best. The views, however, were glorious – we were above the tree line and well and truly into the mountains with rocky peaks covered with light

sprinklings of fresh snow. Was this a monsoon aftermath or did it herald the much more serious early onset of the first winter snows? Anxiety was detected in Cap'n Bob's demeanour. We took a bit of a breather mid morning on a grassy spur before heading up into more rock terrain where tiffin was taken at 1130 hrs. During lunch the pony train caught and overtook us. Watching them steadily pick their way up the rocky route to the horizon it did not seem too far to the top of the pass. Our lunch time altitude of approx 13,500ft did not tie in with the pass being at 15,000 ft but maps and heights in this region are notoriously flexible so lunch continued in a relaxed manner.

Following the route of the ponies after lunch we soon neared the cairn marked horizon to discover the reason for the altitude discrepancy – it was not the top of the pass. Before us stretched a sort of plateau cum crater which held an icy lake under one of its walls. At the back was another steep looking wall on top of which was the true Thamsar Jot. Morale slumped. Out of nowhere appeared two poachers armed with an ancient muzzle loading rifle and with a live Monal (very rare Himalayan pheasant) poking its beautiful multi coloured head and neck out of their rucksack. Now here was a dilemma. Monal was high on the list of target species. Could it be ticked? After a few sign language pleasantries and photographs we parted from the poachers and they continued down our ascent route. Crossing the fairly level plateau was a slow process with several of the team affected by tiredness and altitude. Little did we know (and it was a good job we didn't) that at this stage we were still a further six or seven hours from the campsite. A steep zig zag path wound up the shaley back wall of the cirque and we reached the top of the pass in dribs and drabs around 1500hrs. At 15,000ft it was noticeably cool especially as a stiff breeze was now blowing from the other side and bringing with it light snow flurries. Edith was nominated to attach the prayer flag to the summit construction in the hope of being granted a safe passage down the other side of the pass.

The prospect in front of us was much more one of high mountain scenery – snow fields, glaciers and ice filled gullies. Gordon and Chris had not been going too well on the ascent but the start down an easy angled snowfield gave us all improved physical and mental momentum. A tricky little steep section dropped us on to a large glaciated snow field which we descended diagonally.



Unknown to us at the time was that three of our ponies had already fallen on this section but had come to no harm. Rounding a big black, rocky buttress the snow petered out on to a huge boulder field stretching down the valley as far as we could see. This boulder field will remain in our memories and yarns forever. It was now 1630hrs with, at most two hour's daylight left. After ten and a half hours of hard walking at altitude four more hours of "interest" were to provide the sting in an already tired tail. At the time however we were not to know of the hardships to come as Bob was very vague as to how far away the campsite was. We should have been better able to interpret the vagueness coming from the silver tongue. How naïve we were; but this rapidly learnt lesson prevented our leader from any further wool pulling over our eighteen tired eyes.

Progress was tedious and slow. Gordon eventually took to the pony, but not without incident. A slipped girth turned his world upside down only to be followed by the porter assisted remount being too enthusiastic so that he was thrown completely over the pony instead of into the saddle. Darkness fell and we still were unable to ascertain how far we still had to travel. Gordon's pony descending steep ice and rock in the dark was impressive for spectators if not for the rider. Twinkles of torchlight coming towards us was a welcome sight. The porters, with tiny mouth held torches, were superb at route finding and helping the weary. At 2030hrs, after 14 ½ hours with the last two in the dark, the welcome sight of tents and wafts of soup aroma signalled the end of hostilities for the day. Despite really appetising food, including apple and custard for pudding, only Bob, George and Edith preferred food to sleeping bag. Before retiring we unanimously told the leader that tomorrow would be a rest day!

Whilst we were never in danger the day's events illustrated the need to be prepared for some discomfort, particularly the logistics associated with having 22 ponies. Whilst the loads they carry make for luxury camping and light loads on our backs it also means camping is dictated by the need for finding adequate grazing. Consequently crossing high passes involves long ascents and descents.

Three days later there were signs that an encounter with bears may be imminent....

....There was evidence of much excavation work by brown bears who found the small white radish-like roots very tasty. Lines of claw scratches in the soft soil were clearly visible and the possibility of seeing bears created some excitement and a little apprehension.

Day 15 (Trek 9) Monday 18 October Sini Kurd Dhar (11,940ft) to Garthalagot(11,200ft)

0600hrs chi, 0710 breakfast, 0810 depart. On emerging, Stuart and Edith were faced with a huge bear excavation only about three metres from the back of their tent. That explained last night's noises...

...By way of a change our initial direction was downhill before levelling out to, once again "gently contour". Almost immediately we started our traverse, a few hundred feet below us and about 600 metres away was our first sighting of that whose presence had been felt, the Himalayan Brown Bear. An adult (presumably mum) was galumphing down the slope with two half grown cubs and occasionally stopping to check on our whereabouts. Although they appeared like slow moving furry jellies the distance covered in a short space of time made our progress look pathetic. Reminder – don't ever think of being able to outrun even an unfit, three-legged, half paced bear.

Two days later the highest point on the trek: Kalaheni Pass (15,400ft) was crossed:

The col was really a ridge only about three metres wide and crossable for about twenty metres of its length. The rest of the ridge curved round on both sides in a series of peaks. The view to the north and east was breathtaking. Before us, across the Kulu Valley, lay the great Himalayan Divide stretching away in a series of fading infinite horizons. Mountains familiar from photographs and literature became reality – Deo Tibba (19,450ft), Indrasan (20,410ft) and Ali Ratni Tibba (18,013ft) had all featured previously in the history of the

Oread and were now part of our present. The magnificence of it all, the vastness, the clarity of the air and the achievement of our major objective cranked up the emotions and made for several lumpy throats.



Day 14 was the last day of trekking and the team reached their end point of Manali:

Through a clearing we got our first view of Manali nestling noisily in the valley below. It took us longer than our eyes suggested to reach the valley floor but it was a pleasant walk through big pine trees and clearings. The man wending his way towards us along the path was the first person we had seen since leaving Bara Bangahal seven days previously. We may not have been in the monster mountains but they were far less populated than the more popular trekking areas. Eventually a little path took us between two buildings to our first piece of tarmac since Bir. We were in Manali.

Life back in the town was quite a culture shock:

We hit the town, or to be more accurate, the town hit us. Bustle and chaos are watered down descriptions of life in Manali. We were grateful of our experience gained on the boulder fields of Bara Bangahal when it came to avoiding the man eating holes in the pavements. Electricity poles were covered in the knotted spaghetti that somehow successfully powered the town. All manner of dubious food was being cooked in all manner of dubious pots by all manner of dubious characters.

From here Paul tells of a very eventful journey back to Delhi and on to Agra, some tourist sights, encounters with locals and an elephant ride. However all good things come to an end and he concludes firstly with a tribute to leader Bob Pettigrew....



The man who, despite Ernie Phillips' dire warning that taking us on this trip would be like herding cats, got us all there and back safely. All stories tripping off his silver tongue are true.

After such a trip there was no way to end it satisfactorily. It has still not ended: our memories won't allow it.



Honorary Members

Honorary members are elected ‘...on account of their eminence in advancing the objectives of the Club.’

This is a list of all the people who have been Honorary Members.

Honorary Member	YearAwarded
Cyril Machin*	1951
Eric Byne*	1953
Alf Bridge*	1956
George Sutton*	1959
Harry Pretty*	1960
Nat Allen*	1963
Sir Jack Longland*	1965
Laurie Burns*	1971
Douglas Milner*	1973
Chuck Hooley*	1984
Margaret Hooley*	1984
John Welbourn*	1984
Dave Penlington*	1989
Ernie Phillips*	1989
Ken Griffiths*	1989
Derrick Burgess	1993
Dennis Gray	1993
Colin Hobday	1993
John Shreeve*	1995
Pete Janes*	1998
Ray Colledge*	2003
Molly Pretty*	2003
Tony Smedley*	2004
Chris Radcliffe	2005
Paul Gardiner	2014
Reg Squires	2014
Bob Pettigrew	2019
Jack Ashcroft*	2019
Mary Cullum	2021
Doug Cullum*	2021
Mike Moore*	2021
John Fisher	2021
Ruth Gordon	2024
Peter Scott	2024
Rob Tresidder	2024

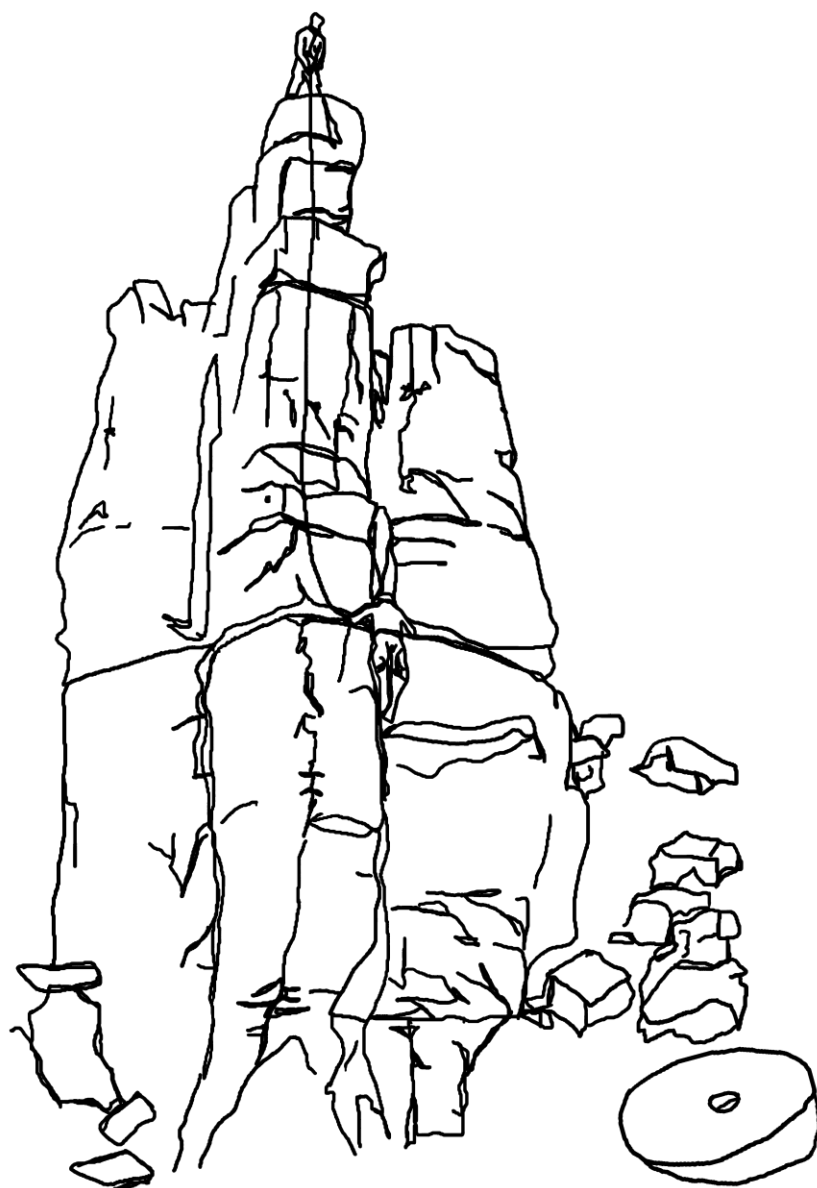
* member deceased.

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Oread Mountaineering Club

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