



GUMC Journal 2008

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Awards 2008

Climber of the year



Golden Boot



Drinker of the Year



Life time Achievement Award





Right, I have put off writing this for as long as possible because I don't really know where to start. This has been my 5th year in the club, all you lot and myself have changed a hell of a lot. Those of you who knew me in my first year will understand when I say I was completely different; I would usually be in bed soon after 12, was quite shy and didn't go out after the pub on Tuesdays, couldn't imagine how or why anyone would drink a Dirty Pint, and definitely would never have even considered wearing a red catsuit and 7" platforms in front of the whole club! (oh the club has taught me so many vital life-skills)

The club changes every year as new people join and some older ones leave and if it didn't it would get boring, however, there are a few

things that have worried me somewhat over the past year. Drinking on the minibuses has been kept just about alive by a tiny minority of the club, and although I must say that it is ILLEGAL and binge drinking is VERY BAD for your health, it is a tradition that I'm sure some of the newer members will be irresponsible enough to re-kindle next year. Along the same lines I feel we should apologise to The Viper for their drop in Tuesday business this year – last year some of us were out after the pub every Tuesday. There is already one Gum Club child in the club but judging by the behaviour, or lack of, this year we aint going to get anywhere near another one for a long time! Finally I know that "crux-moving" is exceedingly important and talking about it is even more important but this can all be done after no sleep while hung-over/still drunk – there have been far too many early bed times recently.

I don't think I really need to add anything about actual mountaineering because the rest of the journal will cover all the great stuff that's been going on but I suppose I just want to say that I hope all of you have had a brilliant year and that next year will be just as exciting, preferably minus the mountaineering accidents and without further minibus breakdown problems!

I am a scientist and do not believe in superstitious nonsense but after the events surrounding the Torridon meet over the past two years I am reluctantly beginning to think that it may be cursed.

Torridon 2007: Problems were first encountered at about 6pm on sat night when Jamie and Dave were not yet down from their first winter climb and they called to say although they had needed to down-climb the gully they had done earlier they were OK and would be down in a hour or two. After about 4 hours panic hit Torridon hall and before we knew it we were working out what they were wearing and preparing to call the mountain rescue. Thankfully Geoff and myself decided to take one more drive out to see if they were down and, luckily (the only good luck for a while so make the most of it) they were. Sunday was uneventful, except for its part in the birth of the study of Path-ology (detailed in another article in this issue), until the journey home. Our bus (SB05 GMG) was about 5 miles down the A9 when Helen found she was struggling to overtake a lorry and in actual fact was decelerating. We pulled into a lay-by and it was only then that Helen remembered she had filled up our trusty DIESEL minibus with petrol. Then began some rather challenging phone calls to the ever helpful call centre staff employed by the RAC. The highlights from the conversations were: "How do you spell Inverness?", "I'm trying to locate you on my map, are you near a big pond?", and "We will tow the minibus but we don't have transport for the passengers". The one successful conversation was conducted by Mr Simmons as he persuaded the pizza place that it was worth their while delivering pizzas to the "white minibus in the lay-by". There was a certain amount of nervousness as we sat praying that the pizzas would come before the RAC – probably the only time you wish the breakdown service will take its time. Oh, there is one more piece of luck in this story, one of our passengers was Cathy Mac who happened to have parents that not only lived in the area but were also willing for 12 rather dirty students and all their gear to stay the night (probably something to do with them being ex-Gum clubbers themselves). I don't know if anyone else slept that night but I had awful nightmares about minibuses! Helen, Cathy and myself got up early to be at the garage when they opened so we could try to persuade them to fix the bus as soon as possible. As we approached we thought we could make use of our female attributes until we took a second look at ourselves, unwashed and in the same dirty jeans and hoodies from Friday, and decided to go for the sympathy vote instead. After amusing ourselves in Inverness for a few hours we could eventually leave and we arrived back in Glasgow at 4.30 on the Monday afternoon, only 23 hours after we left Torridon.

Torridon 2008: One year on and we had left the GU promptly, just a few miles on the motorway out of Glasgow, the minibus I was driving (SB05 GMG, oh fuck!) started making a rather horrible sound and this time we pulled over to the hard-shoulder. We still had one minibus that was functional so after a rather dangerous exchange of people and gear between buses, some people didn't care about going and swapped with others, 12 of us set off up to Torridon again. The meet was surprisingly uneventful from then on and I think we thought we



had got away with it until we had set off on our way home, nice and early so we would get back to Glasgow not too late. Less than a mile out of the hall a phone call was received saying that Barnyard had taken a fall and needed to go to hospital! Back we go to see what the idiot had done to himself. He was OK, i.e. not unconscious or bleeding to death, but he needed to go to hospital. We left Torridon



hall again with Barnyard and left Yorkshire Mike to find Dougie, retrieve gear and then follow us on to Raigmore Hospital (slightly illegally) driving Barnyard's car. Raigmore A&E department was quite nice and I think I may consider working there in the future, sorry back to the story. The doctors were obviously very worried about head and spinal injuries but it was not until afterwards that Jamie suggested this worry could have been made worse by the fact Barnyard can be very selective with the spoken word. Although me and Jamie knew that to answer "what happened?" with "I fell" and nothing more is just normal for him, the doctors may have thought he was a wee bit confused. I think we had a better time in A&E than the others did waiting out in the minibus thanks to Barnyard's entertaining comments. Example conversation while having knee stitched:

Barnyard, "Oh fuck"

Doctor, "It's alright, you can swear if you like"

Barnyard, "Don't worry, I will!"

So, Barnyard was surprisingly alright and was quick to point out that comparing the event to Pickard's accident last year the obvious conclusion is the harder the climb you fall from the fewer injuries you sustain. We left Inverness at about 8pm, not bad but still a hell of a lot later than intended. Now everything was alright and Barnyard was being taken home by Dougie and Yorkshire Mike we started joking that wouldn't it just finish the weekend off beautifully if they were arrested for driving a car uninsured.....never speak too soon, but on the bright side Yorkshire Mike was only stopped and breathalysed, he wasn't arrested!

I have heard that bad luck is supposed to come in threes so I don't even want to think about what will happen next year!!!

The Torridon Minibus Saga 2007

Helen Thompson

After filling up with fuel just outside Inverness, tired and hungry- was putting my foot down along the A9 to get chips in Aviemore. Was in the outside lane overtaking a lorry... foot down to the ground- but just weren't getting past him. By the time we were pushing only 30 miles/hr and slowing... panic kicked in. We then ground to a halt into a very well placed lay-by, when it hit me, @#*&%\$*#!- 3 miles back, I'd just fed the minibus with 2/3 of a tank of petrol.

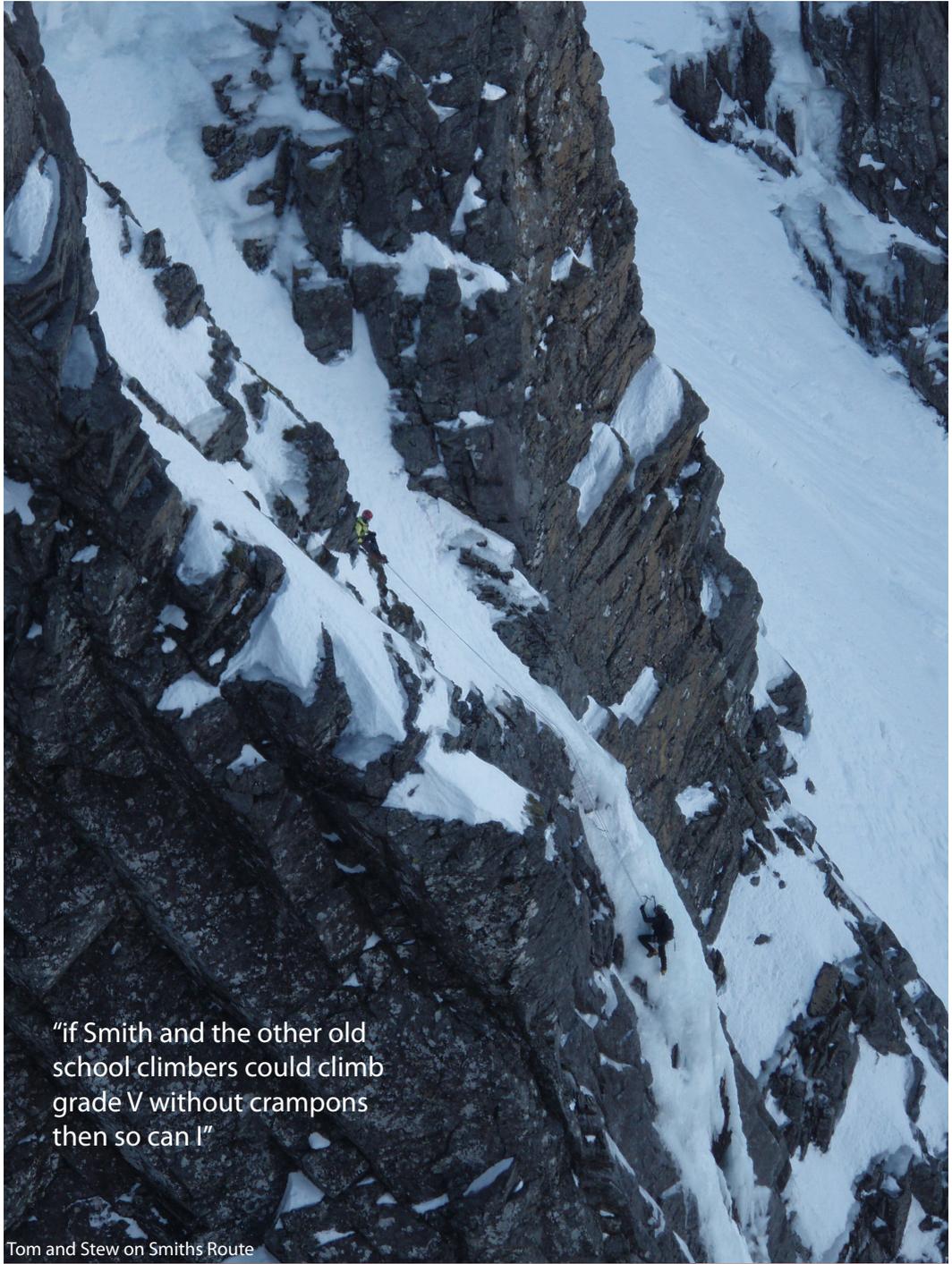
Cathy was then told by the RAC that no.1- with it being a long base vehicle they couldn't tow us and then no.2- that they could tow us but only 10miles and could only transport 8 people, leaving the rest on the A9 hard shoulder. They were then trying to locate us, asking bizarre questions like have you passed the wee pond on the right and the left hand bend in the road. Are they having a laugh?! Waiting for the RAC to arrive, with little confidence in them, thought we'd at least make the most of the time and had 6 16" pizza delivered to the lay-by!!- Tom's ingenious idea. Our biggest concern then was that it would arrive before the RAC did.

Anyway- one way or another, 3hrs later we arrived at Cathy Mac's house in Inverness. Her dad (randomly being an ex GUMC member!) took the 12 of us in, so turned out we didn't have to either sleep rough in Inverness or find a hostel.

We were at the garage this morning, trying to persuade them to do whatever they had to do to get it working. With the mention of possibly having to change engine cylinders if we were unlucky, escaped lightly to have it all sorted and back on the road a few hrs later. What really finished it off and took the piss, when we drove back along the lay-by in question- on the roadside board next to it- was a "Check your fuel" message.. and later when I noticed the multiple "Diesel" stickers on the outside of the minibus, too late hey.

Anyway, an eventful weekend- and a 24hrs journey from Torridon to Glasgow, but it makes a funny story.





"if Smith and the other old school climbers could climb grade V without crampons then so can I"

Tom and Stew on Smiths Route

A Year and a half of climbing

Stewart
Whiting

My very first proper trad lead was in Pol Dubh. Pol Dubh is probably my favourite climbing venue, hidden away in Glen Nevis with inspiring surroundings and some memorable lines. It offers a good range of single and short multi-pitch climbs going from VDiff right through to high E numbers. It was here that I chose to lose my trad virginity and get climbing. It was also here that I was to take my very first trad fall!

Anyway, on a sunny afternoon back in early spring of 2007, myself and Ron, a mild-mannered beast of a Scotsman decided to climb what looked like a nice easy pitch whilst Imelda filmed for her art project. Unfortunately, neither of us actually had rock boots, so Ron was in his trainers and I was in my Mantas. After a while of faffing with gear, Ron set off on lead but soon decided that it wasn't to be in trainers. So, desperate to get some cragging done, with my Mantas I set off up the slabby route. After getting a few reasonable pieces of gear in I realised that maybe mountain boots weren't the greatest idea. Tricky smearing doesn't really work in size 11 mountain boots. None the less, I have to say I was enjoying the climbing, until, I got to the final crux move just below the belay tree. Wary of the slimy wet rounded ledge for a hand traverse and smooth slab for feet I thankfully managed to place the blue hex. Not too surprisingly, I took the knee-skinning whipper – to the delight of Ron belaying below!

With a dented confidence (ego), we then decided to abseil off the top of the route to retrieve gear. Even the abseil didn't go too smoothly, with Ron taking a big swing and then letting out a blood-curdling scream as he landed crotch first onto a thorn bush. After consulting the guide book, we realised that the climb was in fact graded HS – not bad for a first attempt. Me and Ron reformed the trad dream team during the freshers meet '08 and again went to Pol Dubh where I managed my first (scary) E1 lead – 'Storm' (with the E1 finish). I hope to get back when the good weather comes to do more.

Winter climbing is something that Scotland is all about. The mountains might not be big by world standards but the routes are without a doubt world-class. You tell another climber you climb in Scotland, and you're likely to get respect. It's as much about the climbing as it is putting up with the hell you're going to have to endure at some point along the way. Where else would it be acceptable (perfectly normal?) to be climbing in the middle of a storm with 90mph winds and wind chill down to -25c? After a bit of a lazy learning season in 06-07, I decided to try and get onto some decent routes this year. Me and the legendary Mr Simmons have partnered together on a number of routes throughout the winter and have worked together to get through some fairly challenging times.

The first of these testing moments was during the Kincaig meet. Me and Thom decided that rather than reside in the luxury of the hall, we would drive direct to the Cairngorm carpark on the Friday night to do our walk in and bivy. We finally arrived at Loch Avon at about 3am. Absolutely nacked we were looking for the Shelterstone – a 5* bivy accommodation situated beneath a propped up boulder. Being dark, we didn't find the 'special' boulder that happened to be in the middle of a boulder field, so, an open bivy out was the only option. It was windy and chilly but I was so tired I didn't care.

The next day, we woke up to a nightmare. The stove didn't work so there was no coffee or hot



water. Even better, I'd bought fizzy water in. Let me be the first to say that cold fizzy coffee and oats are not a particularly nice way to start the day. Anyway, after a cheeky (frozen) Snickers, me and the fellow country boy (we're both tractor lovers from the flatlands of Suffolk!) headed on up to a grade 3 winter route on Garbh Uisge. It wasn't particularly in condition but was fun none the less. Whilst I was hanging from the belay up high we had a personal fly-by and some thumbs up from the rescue boys in the yellow skycab out on training – what a sight! After descending, we actually found the Shelterstone itself (sods law it was 50m from where we slept in the open), fixed the stove and basked in relative luxury for the night. The next day we went back up to the plateau in beautiful sunny weather after a night of snow and then descended Fiacaille ridge to get back to the car.

Myself and Thom's allegiance to the hard ice kicked off in Ballater this season. With good weather after a long cold spell, conditions were looking promising, so along with Ron and Alex we set off on the three hour walk in to Eagle Rocks see what was in. When we got within viewing distance, one route stood out. It was Lethargy – a stunning frozen waterfall line, complete with icicle going at winter IV/V. We all wanted to climb it. Me and Thom waited and got photos whilst Alex led up with Ron seconding the steep but perfect ice pitch. It was worth the many hours of waiting. Me and Thom then continued rapidly upwards with Thom leading the first pitch and me the exposed but incredible second pitch. After a long walk out in the dark we were tired but still eclectic from the awe-inspiring route which made for some great banter in the pub.



Not long after climbing Lethargy, getting the grade up, Thom lead the Cascade on Ben Nevis – a steep sustained grade V ice fall. Ben Nevis was seeing some good ice building up in a number of areas. So, whilst most people went to Torridon to experience warm miserable weather (and a broken minibus), we instead drove to the Ben Nevis car park to take advantage of the extremely cold conditions.

With a cloud inversion and blue sky we set off up the grade V classic hard ice Smiths Route. How it was first climbed with step cutting I'll never know – now that is skill. I took the crux middle pitch (the exposed original route – not the icicle variation). It was long with some thin ice in places (my axes clunked into rock a few times!) and with a few technical moves. Everything but my forearms and calves really enjoyed the climb. We topped out to a busy but sunny plateau and made for number 4 gully – the elevator down from the top. Upon getting out of bed the next day I realised that I could hardly walk. It really felt as though someone had taken a baseball bat to my calves.

Now we were both enjoying the steep ice. With conditions looking reasonable two weeks later, we heard that the famous Point 5 Gully was possibly in. After eyeing the route from Smiths, we

were both desperate to get on it. For the uneducated, it is a long highly-regarded classic steep ice line – a serious day out! So, after leaving the car park at 5am, we arrived in worryingly warm weather at the CIC hut. Trudging through marsh and mud wasn't much fun, but as the clouds cleared a little we could see the snow slopes and the route itself – and it looked absolutely incredible. At 8 in the morning you can't help but stop and take in the breathtaking view whilst at the same time feeling sick deep in your stomach.

We got on route and Thom danced up the first steep pitch with ballerina-like grace, carefully ensuring he chucked as much rotten ice onto me as possible. Seconding up, whilst fully enjoying myself my crampon suddenly popped off! This was not good news! I obviously couldn't stop to put it back on as I would have probably ended swinging upside down. Swearing like never before, getting a pumped left-leg from hopping up the route, it suddenly occurred to me that if Smith and the other old school climbers could climb grade V without crampons then so can I. So, I proceeded to cut steps and successfully complete the pitch – much to the comedy of Thom. I continued up the next pitch, bashing through some rotten ice but bridging the technical moves through the tight chimney – certainly not recommended for fat people. Being on 60m ropes I continued well into the next pitch (the Rogue pitch). However, the weather was closing in. Snow was falling heavily. As I was leading up, spin-drift started coming down onto me. The light spin-drift soon started getting heavier. Quickly I placed two screws on a steep ice face and kicked a small ledge for a solid belay, trying to get out of the snow coming down the route. By this time, the snow was piling down the route. This was no longer spindrift. With the fresh snow coming down, we were getting avalanched from the upper slopes. I could literally hear the mountain moving outside the gully, there were constant groans and thunder-like noises coming from all around – it was getting ugly. I started bringing Thom up on second, and he was experiencing the full force of the snow driving into him as it was funnelling through the narrow chimney of the gully. I was getting covered in snow but poor Thom was having to stop on the steep ice for minutes at a time whilst getting blasted, waiting for a clear moment to finally make a move. He couldn't see his feet and just had to bash his way up. Finally he made it up to my stance, we'd climbed all the hard ice the route is world famous for, and only had to get up the easy final few pitches moving together, but, with the conditions as serious as this, the safest thing to do is descend down what you know. Whilst on the belay we both stood getting covered in snow, constantly hearing the rumblings of nearby avalanches. We knew when it was about to come down on us again as it would suddenly go dark, we both kissed the ice as snow blasted over the both of us. The tat near the stance was under three inches of ice – useful. So, we constructed three Abalokov anchors and using the threader and tat I thankfully packed, equalised a bomber abseil anchor. It took us two 60m abseils to get down to the snow slope. Upon reaching the snow slope, we realised how much it had actually snowed. There was another 6 or 8 inches down and Point 5 had not surprisingly ejected a serious amount of powder onto the steep slope. A quick avalanche pit proved that the slope was now dangerously unstable and so a roped descent was in order. Thankfully we made it down with no problems. We were unhappy we hadn't been able to finish the last easier part of the route, but, we can always go back and finish it properly another day. The snow blizzards followed us all the way back that night through Glen Coe and Tyndrum and even Glasgow the next day. What an adventure!

All in all, it has certainly been an excellent year for the climbers of the GUMClub. We now have



a good number of climbers not only enjoying all aspects of the sport but also making notable ascents of very respectable winter climbs, trad routes and boulder problems. The last year has seen a lot of people being introduced to the sport and the standard can only continue to increase. With such a good ethic the mountaineering club can continue to thrive in what we do best!

This article arose whilst sat in a tent near Aviemore, rain was drumming against the fly and I had become preoccupied with the lid on Jonnies thermos flask, after inspecting from one angle or another I finally unscrewed the intriguing item and promptly spilt coffee all over Jonnies sleeping bag. After cleaning up the worst of the mess Jonnie was generous enough to reflect on the nature of my character and in summary pointed out that I do stupid things with surprising regularity. In my defence I returned that I was relatively new to this mountaineering thing and I rarely made the same mistake twice and thus after a short discussion it was suggested that I find some way of communicating the wisdom I've accumulated in my short but enthusiastic foray into the world of steep rock and ice so that others may also reap the benefits of my mistakes.

Fresh from the Alps, sick of the bolts and fired up for the trad I found my self in Glen Coe on the fresher's meet. The damp forecast did little to curb my enthusiasm as I feverishly selected potential routes, setting my heart on Bludgers Revelation (HVS) and began coercing climbing partners to join me on the adventure (Emily finally relinquished along with a lad called Nathaniel, whom we never did see again). I woke for the alpine start on Saturday gave the sky a cursory check and after imagining that there might actually be a small gap between the clouds went inside to kick Emily out of bed. We arrived at the "Buckle" as the sun rose and the rain changed from a light spit to a heavy down pour, the days plans were quickly suspended in favour of some training at the Kinlochleven indoor wall. However a days hard plastic is never quite as fulfilling as its equivalent on the trad and with only the knowledge that I hadn't been stupid enough to attempt the Clachaig Gully to soothe my spirit I went to sleep stronger in the resolution that we would climb Bludger's the next day. Sunday dawned and Emily, Nathaniel and I began the trek up the "Buckle" to Slime Wall, it did look wet from a distance but you can never tell if the routes in nick till you stand at the bottom of it. Upon arriving at the base of the route it quickly became apparent that Slime Wall had been named so for a reason. However the rock looked like it might be slightly dryer up higher and the bottom pitch of the route was probably only vdiff in standard. I led off up the first pitch, set up belay and sat just below the crux pitch to bring up Emily and Nathaniel; water dripped steadily down my back and soaked my trousers. I reflected that the route might be out of condition, Emily on joining me point blank refused to let me up the thing. Instead I was instructed to lead off up a wet looking chimney that at vdiff again would possibly be more appropriate for the conditions, this subsequently lead to a large ledge which appeared to be completely isolated on the face. The only way off the ledge was to abseil down or climb the only dry line on the face, Bloody Crack (E1). The crux of the route is confined to the first four or five meters the first decent bit of gear was slightly above this. As I moved off from the first placements (two rps in flared cracks) I could not claim to be confident in my gear. The crux hold, a side pull that sloped, was also inconveniently wet. Mindful of the fact that a fall at this point would probably result in me hitting the ledge and then rolling off down slime wall I lunged for a piece of in situ slipping my middle finger through the end of the wire. Instantly I was faced with the very real prospect of ripping my finger clean off, this



combined with the ledge bounce and slime wall plunge did little to improve my prospects other than prolong the agony of their duration. Frantic struggling ensued to wrestle my finger out of the wire and replace it with a quick draw after which I slumped on the rope feeling utterly spent. Cursing my stupidity I composed myself and finally got round to leading the rest of the pitch. It was late by the time I topped out and even later by the time we had soloed in the dark up a mod and then walked off from the top of the Buckle. By the time we reached the bus it was past eleven at night and those that had waited were looking far from impressed. Once again I thank them for their patience.

Next up was the Lakes, the Gum club descended upon Shepherds Crag and set about surmounting the challenges of the most inspiring lines. Various ascents of mcg?(E2) took place and I think in the end Barnyard, Ron, Carbery, and Dave led it before I summoned up the courage to give it a go, finally overcoming the crux after demanding the previous leaders gear be left in place for me to clip; much like a sport route. Despite this and the barnyards negative intonations about reducing trad to bolt clipping I was feeling quite happy with my efforts, however not happy enough to put the buttress to the right of the route which had caught my eye out of my mind. The buttress was in no guidebook that we had and looked quite hard, it was late on the Sunday afternoon that I finally decided to 'just' try it on top rope. I flashed it first attempt which did little to quench my desire for the lead, then set about inspecting the gear placements, the first part of the route looked to have potential ground fall onto a large rock spike and the second part looked run out but above bomber gear. Again I pre placed the gear and persuaded Ron to belay me, there was some talk of Ron standing on the spike and preparing to jump off, if I fell, to absorb the slack in an "End of the Affair" style act of heroism. As I stood, clammy handed, at the bottom of the climb I began to realise that I might just be stepping into territory well above my league, however in the face of the growing crowd I was left with little option but to climb the thing. The first and most dangerous section passed almost before it had begun, the moves flowed easily and I reached the flake that held the final piece of pre placed pro. The safety of the gear got me thinking about the route ahead and from the comfort of the ledge I began to mutter things like "a bloody stupid idea" and "what the fuck am I doing". My fast ebbing bottle was not helped by the timely removal of certain key hold and it was only when Emily shouted up that I should "go for it man" that I screwed up my courage and swung into the final sequence. Each crimp felt larger and more positive than before, each move easier and more obvious. Too high to back down I focused solely on the rock, the resolution of the situation lay only in heading up and every thought in my mind focused on achieving this, to quote Dean Potter "I had no fear because falling was not in my reality". As my hands clamped the top holds and I flopped inelegantly onto the ledge, sound rushed back into my conscious, I became aware of the periphery of my vision and my head may have increased in size. I spent the following week on the kind of high you can only get by doing really stupid things and getting away with them. But in reflection I realised although the climb had been one of the best of my life it was ethically inelegant. In my zeal to climb hard I had flown in the face of the best British trad traditions and felt slightly like I had cheated my self, next year I will climb it ground up.

The guidebook stated that routes on Garbh Uisge Coire were often in condition when most others were not. The only problem with Garbh Uisge Coire was that it was near the shelter stone which meant a fairly long walk in. The cunning plan was to walk in Friday night bivvy under the shelter stone, climb Saturday and then after a second bivvy, walk out on Sunday. Problems arose at around 1 o'clock Saturday morning. Stewart and I stumbled off the Cairngorm

plateau after having enjoyed some of the most forgiving conditions I have ever experienced on it; clear starry night and no wind, and began looking for the shelter stone. Tales of Jonnies mate trying to find the stone in bad weather, failing and taking a restless night in the lee of another boulder had done little to make me stop to think that I didn't have a clue where the actual shelter stone was and that where in Scotland you get one large rock you often get many. About an hour of fruitless searching amongst the boulders that grace the base of shelter stone corrie resulted in Stewart and I lying between two boulders. Our bed was a slope most folk would consider impassable without the use of crampons or rock boots. With the snow falling we were in for a restless night. The next morning we awoke to see in daylight that the shelter stone was spitting distance from our bivvy spot. Stewart began cooking porridge and I looked forward to a meal that would build me up for a hard day on the hill. A slight wisp of steam rose from the bowl and I eagerly dug in. Saying that Stuart surprised me with the level of his culinary skill is an understatement, he completely surpassed my expectations of how appalling badly made porridge could taste. The combination of lukewarm carbonated water and oats gave a peculiar twist to the dish. It was only when Stewart explained that he had accidentally brought carbonated water from the garage the previous night that I fully grasped what had been served up. Stewart bravely picked his porridge over and managed to inject a note of false enthusiasm into his voice as he claimed; "it's not too bad really". Personally I am not given to such stoicism; my reaction can clearly be judged from a video on the club website. I tucked into my 'emergency' snickers and Stewart almost as if to prove that carbonated porridge really was rather good then proceeded to make the coffee with the same lukewarm carbonated water. I would rather have eaten the coffee granules dry. Despite the debacle of our first bivvy together we had a fantastic day and succeeded in climbing Garbh Gully (III).

Fingers ridge, Coire an t'snechder, up and back in a day, midweek was the plan. Blearly eyed at four thirty I meet the Barnyard and Stewart by Charring Cross, got in the car and woke again when we reached Aviemore. The poor visibility was only a minor hindrance as we followed the path into snechter, we crossed the stream rather early however the footprints we were following clearly went in the right direction so we continued on. We crossed the boulder field quite high, somewhere up near the Mess of Pottage and then traversed along the bottom of the snow slope towards Fingers ridge. Quickly we reached the slope that the goat track runs up, decided to head up this slightly then traverse back left contouring along the bottom of the rock till we reached the desired route. After about twenty minutes of going back and fourth, Barnyard, exasperated by the rocks refusal to materialize, exclaimed "its just not there". We decided to back track and then go directly up the slope in the hope of finding something to climb, a short while later we came across a small rocky outcrop. This was evidently not the main face but as we had walked this far we might as well climb something. Belays were constructed and I searched for a good spot to take photos of our short but overhanging test piece, as I rounded the corner and looked up to a huge wall towered above me, shouting for the Barnyard and Stewart to join me I gazed at the stunning lines. It was only when Barnyard pointed out that he could see the Hoar Master that I realised I was looking at Fallout Corner and in fact we were in Coire an Lochain.

Another midweek escapade with the barnyard saw us heading for the Ben; conditions were thin to say the least and the possibility of climbing the line we had originally intended to climb



quickly disappeared with the melting ice. Green Gully looked tempting if quite mixed but the Barnyard had climbed IT before and was looking for a new tick. Subsequently I was drawn to the fattest looking line in the corrie and headed for the cascade (IV/5). Unfortunately we were just beaten to the route by another couple who generously said it would be fine by them if we climbed the right, steeper side. Assuming the barnyard would want to make up for his choice of route not being in condition I said it was fine by me if he wanted to lead the route. The barnyard said that if I wanted to give it a go that was fine by him, I said something to the tune of him being a better climber, he should have the first crack at the lead. The barnyard looking slightly uncomfortable about the whole affair began his lead. He placed his first ice screw at the top of the slope leading in and then battered on up, a few meters later he placed his second ice screw and called tight. I looked up and with the illusion of foreshortening could not see the problem, after all the last time I had climbed with the barnyard he had climbed technical six, this guy was a pro. He started up again but quickly slumped on the rope eventually requesting that he be lowered down. The Barnyard's valiant efforts on the lead did little to appease my growing fear in the now inevitable effort I would have to put in on the lead. Gingerly I stepped forward to the steep ice, and quite quickly I made progress to the Barnyard's point of retreat, but it was getting really steep and I was suffering the pump in both arms and legs. This ice climbing business was actually quite hard. Switching weight from one leg to another and alternating which arm was relaxed I shook out and psyched myself for the effort to come. Spying an inch deep bulge in the ice just above head height I resolved to climb till my feet were upon it and then try and place my first screw. My axes were swung from the shoulders and each one a nightmare to get out; I kicked huge steps and generally demonstrated that I hadn't a clue about what I was doing. I reached the bulge and frantically tried to place a screw. I found that by placing my chin on one end of the ice screw and twisting with my hand, I could leave one hand free to grip my other ice axe, it was a messy and vastly inelegant business but it worked none the less. The rest of the pitch consisted of an insane level of pump, absolute desperation and sweet utter relief as I topped out. It is still the most physically demanding ice climbing I have ever done. Barnyard told me that in his first winter season he had come to do Rayburn's easy and in his inexperience had assumed that the large icefall was his route, they had got as far as constructing a belay when they had realised whilst talking to other climbers also gearing up that it was in fact the cascade. Afterwards he pointed out that it was "probably a good thing" they hadn't climbed it at the time.

Bad snow and weather on the Ben saw a return to the mixed in the cairngorms as Jonnie and I headed out for Savage Slit (V/6) and Emily and Don for Spiral Gully (II). I fancied the first lead and Jonnie graciously acquiesced. It quickly became apparent that my strengths lie in the steep ice and not the mixed; I leant too close to the rock, racked my front points across the face and generally made a mess of things. Luckily the gear was plentiful and progress although slow did actually take place. Eventually things got so desperate that I had to remove my rucksack and moved inside the slit. All manner of desperate arm bars, knee jams and full body smears were employed to aid progress. My grunts of exertion echoed around Coire an Lochain as I thrusted my way up the slit finally reaching the underside of the block upon which I would belay. One 'thank god' axe placement later and a move that relied less on finesse than brute force and sheer will power saw me belly-flop seal style on to the stance. I quickly clipped into the available tat and brought Jonnie up eager to see what he would make of the pitch. Jonnie didn't even have the decency to make it look hard let alone struggle up the inside of the slit. Instead he daintily moved up the face of the rock paused briefly to receive the rack and continued up

his pitch even finding a hand and feet free rest on the way. The plan was that the upper pitch would be climbed without bags and once at the top Jonnie pulled the rope through and lowered the end to me. I tied his bag in and swung it as far as I could across the face for him to haul up. At first progress was swift, then it caught on an over hanging ledge. Jonnie lowered the bag slightly and it began to swing towards the slit. I shouted for Jonnie to pull faster which drew the bag into the slits grasp with ever-greater certainty. The bag jammed. Jonnie swore. The rope was stuck half way between the belay and me. Whilst Jonnie spent his time deciding what to do I reflected that getting stuck halfway up Savage Slit made you look like a bit of an idiot, not to mention the fact that it could get very cold indeed. In future I would try and avoid hauling bags up routes that are essentially tight constrictions, I also promised myself that if it could be avoided I would never climb tight constrictions with a bag on. Eventually Jonnie rebuilt the belay lowered his end of the rope to me which was luckily long enough and I continued my painfully inelegant progress up the route freeing Jonnies bag on the way. I imagine on the walk out that Jonnie questioned why he would let himself climb with such an imbecile. I merely realised that I had got something right for once; if you're going to climb something hard make sure you know your partner can get you out of the shit.

My thanks go out to all those who have climbed with me since joining the Gum club.



Thom on The Cascade V 5



Drinking Responsibly



In the U.K. there has been an alarming increase in the degree of alcohol related incidents over the past year. As drinker of the year I feel it is important to highlight this as an issue and assist members of the club to keep track of their drinking habits.

The N.H.S. has initiated a campaign to help people keep track of the units you consume in a night out. There are several charts and cards that give you a guide as to what drink contains what units, but lets be honest you look a bit of a prat getting that out at the bar. So here is an easier, less embarrassing guide: memorise these and you will be totally in control of your night/whole day of drinking.

The following guidelines will help the Student Mountaineer adhere to the prescribed units' alcohol per day.

- 1 pint of beer equals approximately 2 units alcohol.
- Glass of wine equals approx 1.5 units alcohol.
- Dram of whisky equals approx 0 units alcohol – as the 'water of life' it is obviously more a re-hydrating tonic than an alcoholic beverage.
- Drinks with ice – subtract 1 unit as valuable time will be lost drinking a diluted beverage.
- Drinks bought for you by friends/acquaintances/random man at bar – 0 units, what proof is there that they ordered you a drink with alcohol?
- Drinks borrowed/stolen/acquired – 0 units, it doesn't count if the units aren't in your glass.
- Units consumed during drinking games such as Ring of Fire, Ibble dibble, Yes/No – whats the point in counting at this stage?
- Drinks consumed in Uisge Beatha – subtract 1 unit, 50 % of alcohol evaporates in the heat of that pub.
- Drinks consumed in the Primary – subtract 1 unit as at some point you will throw your drink over the annoying open mike night 'singer'.
- Drinks consumed in clubs – divide by half the units imbibed as vigorous dancing will burn off the alcohol faster than it can affect your system and any remaining will be lost in sweat.



Cathy Maciver

- Subtract 0.5 units per pakora consumed on a night out - the batter soaks up the alcohol.
- Drinks in crowded pubs – subtract 1 unit per round as some will inevitably be lost to spillage.
- Buckfast, about a unit per gulp? The nickname in Scotland: 'wreck-the-hoose juice' pretty much says it all.
- Large shot of Skittle Vodka – 1 unit, most of it is skittle precipitate anyway.
- Large shot of slimy worm vodka – _ unit, most of the vodka is in the worms.
- A few slimy worms – 7 units, WARNING: will induce short term memory loss.
- Vomiting – use your own judgement to estimate units lost.

- N.B. it was observed that valuable household items such as fruit bowls and cowboy hats may also be lost if vomited in.

And remember, The Department of Health advises that men should not regularly drink more than 21 - 28 units of alcohol per day, and women should not regularly drink more than 14 - 21 units of alcohol per day (or is that week...?). After an episode of heavy drinking it is advisable to refrain from drinking for 48 hours to allow your body to recover. Don't, whatever you do, keep drinking on the Sunday and Monday after a Dinner Meet just to prove you aren't one of those people who quits after they win an award. It's not pretty or cool.



giggle!

What the fuck is that...?



Introducing:



Magic Minibuss Mix

wooooo!



an enchanting blend of
vodka, fruit juice,
tequila beer + confectionary.

guaranteed to
get you merry.

"It tastes a bit like skittles!!"



try some TODAY!

The Colours of the Rainbow

Alison, Cathy Mac and Adam

The choice of alcohol for a GUMC meet is key to an enjoyable weekend. And of course different drinks are appropriate for different stages of the weekend. So courtesy of Cathy Mac (drinker of the year), Adam and myself, here's a guide to some of our favoured choices!

Friday night bus:

This is a tricky one. Drinking on the bus is illegal. So it shouldn't happen. But if you look carefully, you'll be guaranteed to see an anonymous sigg bottle being passed around the gloomy back seats of the minibus on our way out of Glasgow. It goes by the streetname of 'Magic Minibus Mix'. This is a concoction designed to get you a bit merry happy at the start of the weekend. The mix of vodka, fruit juice and lemonade gives it a sweet disguise but don't be fooled- the mix is deadly strong in order to prevent any bladder bursting moments on the twisty roads up to the mountains. These should be avoided at all costs-poor Cathy Mac learnt the hard way after downing a keg of beer on the way to Newtonmore last year.

Saturday evening:

After a long day in the mountains all you want are dry clothes, a hearty dinner and to feel your fingers, toes and face again. After these needs are met a few good beers make you feel warm and fuzzy as you thaw out and recount the day's adventures. Or if your liver enzymes are slightly more primed (e.g. Cathy Mac and Adam) perhaps a bottle or three of shiraz will get you in the mood as a post dinner tipple.

Saturday night:

On to the fun stuff. If there's a pub, the choice is obviously endless. But for meets without one, such as Torridon, its essential to have plenty of supplies. Skittles vodka is our drink of choice for these occasions.

For those of you who have not yet been introduced to this fine beverage:

vodka noun 1 a colourless neutral spirit made by distilling a mash, e.g. of rye or wheat. 2 a glass or measure of vodka.

skittle noun 1 a small, rotund, chewy form of confectionary in a sugar casing, comes in many colours. 2 a bowling game played by rolling a wooden ball at nine pins.

Skittle Vodka noun a dangerous, rather objectionable looking alcoholic beverage, with unpleasant, often embarrassing side effects, frequently causing erratic behaviour in those that consume it.

Skittles Vodka needs to mature for a few days prior to drinking for the skittles to dissolve fully



and pour their sweet rainbow flavour into the vodka. This drink is worth the effort though- it tastes great, with fruit juice or even straight. But there's one question: can you handle The Scum? The Scum – formally known as precipitate - is unavoidable, floats on the top of your beautiful cocktail and gives the appearance of curdled milk. We believe it occurs from the remnants of the skittle shells and gum. Perhaps for the more civilised drinker a tea strainer could be used to refine the drink. However we're usually on a roll by this time in the night and we really don't care. The colours of the rainbow are all that matter and the skittles vodka takes us giggling into the wee small hours!

Thought train: Cathy Mac: "I remember my first experience of skittle vodka, it should have been a magical moment. We waited, all three of us, huddled in the Roybridge Hall cupboard, as the bottle was unscrewed we all peered forward through the gloom with bated breath to finally lay eyes upon our fabulous concoction. There was a moment of silence then Alison rocked backward slightly, 'What the fuck is that..?'"

Skittle vodka made its second appearance two weeks later at Torridon.

Thought train: Adam: We started off with some civilised post-walking drinks whilst cooking dinner. We were all having a marvellous time and after we'd finished our beers and a bottle of wine or 4, Cathy produced the infamous skittle vodka. This particular blend was a very good vintage and had been maturing (and probably fermenting) for a good few days. It was luminous. Unsettlingly so. Aspersions aside, I took a sip. I can't really say I can remember the rest of that night's events, but sometimes have nightmarish flashbacks with chants of "Adam smells of Jobbie", a peculiar vegetable game - "IT'S A LEGUME!!!" and a cold toilet floor. To this day, I refuse to believe all allegations of vomiting, naked-ness, or dancing.

Thought train; Alison: I was the sober one this night. After some elite level badminton which introduced the club to my fiery competitive streak, I was pulled in between Adam and Cathy for the 'Kat Torr' dance. "Kick , kick and SPIN for Kat Torr!!". Needless to say Kat looked unimpressed. For such a good friend we could have come up with some slightly better choreography. Time passed and I noticed an alarming amount of empty glassware collecting around Adam and Cathy. Later in the night we noticed the disappearance of a core member of the group. A few hours passed, and we eventually went on a search and rescue mission (the second of the night, after Jamie and Dave had been discovered). This is how we found him...



Abstract

Our fathers brought forth on this world a series of paths, conceived in liberty and dedicated to their following¹. It has been noted that there was no objective standard for quantifying the quality of a path. In this paper, the relationship between several parameters and the path's craftsmanship will be shown, along with the beginnings of a Grand Unified Theory of Paths and Pies (GUTPP)².

Paths were analysed across several locations in Scotland in order to verify the accuracy of the derived equation. The paradigm shift presented here will be studied and celebrated by billions in years to come.

Introduction

After recent preliminary discussions amongst my fellow pathologists, I believe it is now time for the new standard of path gradings to be unveiled.

The quality grade will range from 0 to 10, with 0 being absolutely awful and 10 being practically orgasmic. The quality grade will have to take into account at least these variables: the quality of ground (including drainage), size, efficiency, terrain covered, the craftsmanship of the pathsmith, exposure on the path and the location/scenery of the path. The quality of a path should not just be about where it's going, but Where it's Going. Mark also suggested that paths may be humorous, although, between you and me, he might not be talking sense.

The Equation

And now, to the solutions. Four score and seven hours ago, a monumental discovery was made. An equation, defining the quality of a path, was uncovered by my painstaking research. Even I, with all my minutes of pathing experience, could not believe what I was seeing. After spending literally seconds wrestling with the problem of how to calculate the path integral³, I realised what so many hadn't: that wasn't even necessary!

Now, the first equation I developed suffered from a fairly major flaw concerning the effect the width has on the path's quality. I realise that someone of my standing should not be embarrassed by the types of mistakes that mere mortals make daily, but I was.

You can imagine what a bitter blow it was that my long struggle to achieve the Grand Unified Theory of Paths and Pies appeared halted by the width problem⁴. In hindsight, I cannot believe there was anything more I could have done to speed this process.



Up to the very last, it would have been quite possible to simply ignore the width crisis. However, I am not a man to stand back and cower in fear from a problem. I made up my mind to attack the issue head-on.

My actions show convincingly that there is no chance that any problem in pathing cannot be resolved with rational, analytical arguments. Although there remains strife between paths and pies, now that we have resolved to finish it, I know that all of you will play your parts with calmness and courage.

Some of you, with less mathematical thoughts, may question the reliability and elegance of the solution. I can assure you now, whilst there are still problems needing resolving, we will resolve them together.

$$e^Q = \frac{E \times P \times T \times \ln N \times S}{W \times D}$$

where:

Q is the quality factor, giving a number from 0 – 10,

E is the efficiency of the path as a percentage,

P is the purpose coefficient of the path, that any good path analyst can calculate, from 0 – 10,

T is the terrain the path passes over, again given a rating of 0 – 10,

N is the niceness density, the number of nice things per kilometre,

W is the effect that weather and exposure can have, as a rating from 1 – 10,

D is the drainage, how wet (under standard conditions) the ground can be, as a percentage,

and $S = \frac{14.7946 \times s^{1.8}}{e^{1.8 \times S} - 1}$ with s being the width of the path in metres,

As an example, a truly sublime path with a 95% efficiency, 10 purpose coefficient, 10 terrain rating, 1000 nice things per km, weather rating of 1, drainage of 10%, and a width of 70cm would have a quality grade of 9.915.

Results

After extensive analysis of the Lower Diabaig to Alligan Shuas path, I have determined the draft results for the quality (Fig. 1). I believe this path should be classified as a 2/3, with a 4+ start and tailing off to a 1- ending.

Further data was gathered amongst the towering Campsie Pinnacles. One 2/3 from Lecket Hill to Cort-ma Law - efficiency of 60%, a purpose of 2 (what was the pathsmith thinking??), the terrain was merely a 3, 90 nice things per km, the average width was 40cm, the weather appeared to have an effect of 5 and a shocking 80% drainage rating – lead into a 4 over Lairs (only a 30% efficiency, the pathsmith got his act together to produce an 8 purpose path, the terrain was a 4, roughly 139.38 nice things per km, 54 cm wide path, the weather had less effect than earlier – a 3, and the drainage was down to 70%).

Similar calculations were performed by my team, objectively discovering a good 6 down to Jamie Wright's well. A snowy Sunday lead to the first winter grades to be published. The expansive south-eastern face of the Whangie was a soggy II, and the mighty North Face - a tricky III.

Lower Diabaig to Alligan Shuas Path Analysis

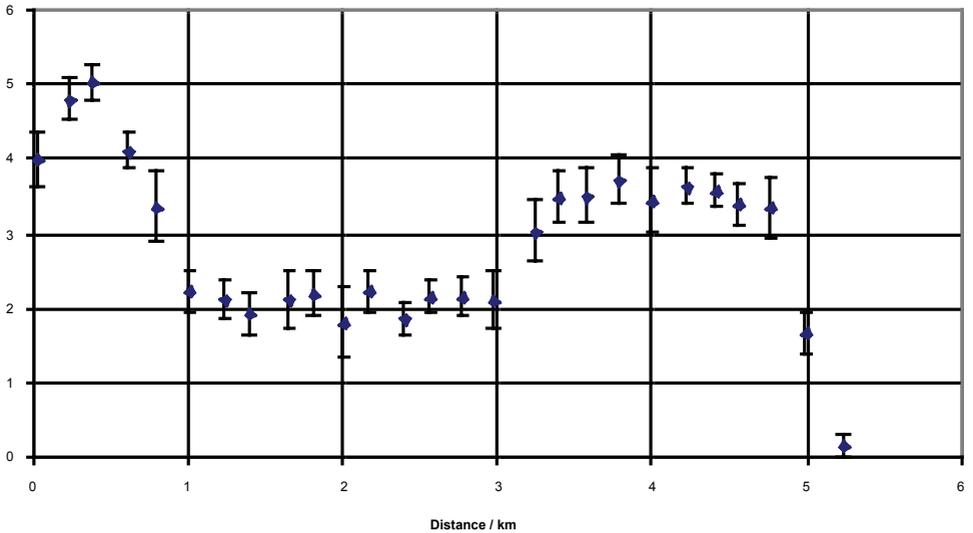


Fig. 1: Plot showing the distinct Grade 2 and 3 stages, plus the high quality beginning and low quality end.

Conclusions

It has been shown at last that the struggle for knowledge, which our fathers began and our brothers continued, may finally have reached a resolution. We were engaged in this struggle, quantifying whether this path or that path or any path, so conceived and so dedicated, is a truly great path. At last, we may have the answer.

So, with one earth-shattering discovery under our belts, what further wonders would await? Well, what greater glory would there be than unifying the disciplines of The Path and The Pie? An astute observation from one of the original disciples, lead to the following breakthrough:

The ideal width of a path is clearly linked to the width of the person who walks upon it. Now, what is the width of a person related to? According to my team's discussions, the width of a person is proportional to the number of pies he or she eats. As a result, I therefore propose that the ideal path width is proportional to the number of pies eaten

Finally, could this be the unifying link between the two great philosophies: that of The Path and The Pie?



This is a glorious moment in pathing that you here are bearing witness to. Let us brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that if pathology lasts for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour."⁶

And Finally

Now, for a few words: during the Torridon walk, I detected certain subversive mutterings as to the extent of the importance of what I am doing. It was even suggested that pies were more important than paths in some respects. I promise you now – show me a life changing pie, and I'll show you the path the piemaster walked upon.

I am a modest man, but I firmly believe this seminal work will rival Elements⁷, the Principia Mathematica and On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection in terms of world importance.

Brethren and sistren in pathology: there may be an old guard, resistant to change, but even they will not be able to resist the turning of the tide. What we will encounter, together, is the dawning of a brave new world in pathing. There is a bright future for us all.

Prepare yourselves.

*"And Ye Shall Know The Path,
And The Path Shall Make Ye Free."*
– The Book of Paths, 8:32

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Ron and Alex after
the Chasm

After a week in the Peak sampling it's finest jammers and Mother Root's cuisine, myself and an esteemed former treasurer of the club, headed to Glen Coe for the mountain routes. As we began the wet walk into Clashgour, our refuge for the night, we decided it was far too wet for our original plan and set about discussing alternatives but nothing sprang to mind. As we enjoyed a number of posh beers left by the previous occupants of the hut (cider next time please!) I delved into the guidebook and on the fourth page, struck gold; a 450m, 4 star VS with a 20 minute walk in climbable in the wet. Alex approved so we retired upstairs to our beds.

In the morning we realised that the independently formulated plan to eat the other's food so as to save money on buying your own was backfiring. After beating a hasty retreat to Tyndrum, individual provisions were procured and we approached the great cleft in the mountainside, The Chasm.

As we entered the grand gully it became apparent to the partnership that this route was some-



what different to any other we had climbed by virtue of the fact a river was flowing through it's centre. Still, it looked like it would be a laugh. Alex lead up the first pitch, fortuitously "forgetting" his sack, I was forced to second with two bags, the crux involving mantling into a pool of icy water which duly decanted itself into my underwear. After several pitches of waterfall based climbing on shite pro the thoughts of deadly hyperthermia increased, the hours of darkness grew closer and the chances of escape diminishing above us, we decided it was time to call it a day.

As we took off our gear and emptied the puddles from our sacks, it was finally time to nibble our newly purchased supplies. Alex had his peanuts; I had something previously described as cake which now bore a closer resemblance to soup.

Once the tent had been erected and spare dry clothes adorned, we made for the pub to find that dinner had ceased being served but ten minutes previously. Twelve beers and four packets of crisps later, our dinner had been served (Alex kindly donating one of his packs to the group). Time to retire to the tents. En route, Alex decided he was still thirsty; Emily's bottle of wine and Dan's bottle of malt later, it was truly time for bed. At this stage I was already regretting my choice of tent guest but duly passed out only to be awoken by my tent mate kneeling over me; his penis a mere two inches above my chest, urine flowing from it's tip. My immediate thought was to form a fist and connect with the offender's jaw, however another thought ran through my mind - this may disturb his flow which was, at least partially, making it out of the tent, albeit mainly into my shoes. He finished, I left immediately for the showers.

Forced to adorn my clothing still wet from the gully, with the only dry sleeping space being the driver's seat of the car and the only dry insulation being my survival bag, I now shivered my way to dawn. Morning came and went. My tent-mate was, unsurprisingly, the last to emerge, blissfully unaware of the reasoning behind my early absence from the tent or to why the doors were flapping wide open.

Whilst the esteemed member was still asleep, I had enlightened the entire campsite as to my reasons for sleeping in the car. When Alex was enlightened to my version of events, he suggested that both the urine AND the vomit could be mine. Thankfully, the evidence of previously refused peanuts secured my innocence. The fact that Alex was too drunk to even clean the tent meant that I was victim, valet and chauffer that day.

We have since climbed together, but I will not, however, share a tent with him again.



Old Man of Stoer

Diamond Face Route Old Man of Stoer

Alex
Carberry

I arrived at the campsite in Reiff on the Wednesday night and was greeted by Ronald with the news that he'd taken the FW. I offered my consolations and we set off to find the GUM clubs resident 70's throwback, my flatmate and part time reckless taxi driver Michael Barnyard. We had been talking about heading for the DFR on the stack all year and so we needed to finalise our plans.

The next day we got up, got in the Barnyard taxi and started making the journey northwards around the peninsula. Ron was having a rest day to recover from the FW and a shoulder niggle and was therefore our designated rope carrier and photographer. As he had spent the previous evening drinking a bottle of some strong green shite from Greece or somewhere we had to bundle him in the back of the taxi. In the years that have past since SATG I think it's fair to say that Barnyard taxi's have got no more responsible and are still employing drivers capable of a DH. It was lucky there were no OAP's on the road as one would almost certainly have been maimed. We were delayed upon arriving at the car park as the nights drinking had taken it's toll on Ron's bowels. We therefore had to wait for him to empty them an ignorantly short distance from a sign informing cetacean fans which whales and dolphins they could see from that very beautiful point.

It takes about 30 minutes to walk to the stack and I spent this time trying to block out the thought of the 8m swim in. Mike had pleaded with me to do it as he was wanting to keep his long locks beautiful for the photographs and because I know how much his appearance means to him I reluctantly agreed.

When I saw the stack rising out the sea for the first time I got a genuine buzz of excitement and there was an rousing chorus of "Phwarr" from the voices in my head. You just have to climb it.

We scrambled down the cliff to the base of the stack (probably the most dangerous bit, I'm not kidding) to find some boys had driven up from the south coast of Engerland overnight, arrived, done the swim, set up a tyrolean and were just heading off to get some sleep so they could come back for the climb tomorrow. We had the stack to ourselves and I didn't have to don Ronalds wetsuit for the day - you dancer!

We checked the tyrolean, they didn't look like clowns but you can never be sure, then me and Mike fired along it to the base of the stack. The first pitch, 30 metres of hard VS style climbing was mine. It took the course of an initial chimney, followed by a wide, thrutchy crack, a traverse under a roof and an easy finish. I seem to remember the main meat of the pitch being the crack and I think I might have nearly fell out of it at one point. It certainly felt a little insecure in places but all the pro is superb, which to some extent makes up for the fact that the great Atlantic ocean is trying it's best to bash down the stack while you climb it.

I reached the end of the pitch, set up a belay inside a very nice cave and began to bring up the barnyard. It didn't take me long to realise that this halfway cave is used as a urinal by the majority of climbers. It was like belaying in some public toilets, minus the glory hole (would have been a good spot for a tricam).

Mike was lucky as he didn't have to stay long in the cave only waiting to switch over gear before he began up the next pitch, this one goes at E1. The crux of the pitch is getting out of the

cave, by surmounting it's roof, and then getting established on the face above. Mike crashed through this with typical barnyard delicacy and was soon lost from sight. I sat back on the ledge and tried to take in as much of the earth's natural beauty as I could, it was an excellent day, the sun was pouring down on us and I could see for miles out to the horizon. Ron was now softly sleeping on the rocks below, curled up like a doormouse. I shut my eyes and heard the most satisfying combination of sounds, the sea rhythmically crashing on the stack way below, the peaceful chuckle of the cormerants nesting above and the soft jingle of rackage on Mikes harness as he made his way up the diamond face. Everything seemed to be right in the world - everything but the awful stench of piss.

Mike got to the top, got safe, gave me the shout and I started climbing up. An initial move off a block is awkward and makes you lean right away from the comfort of the stack and over the sea below. After this you get a little resting point and then have no choice but to fire out along a roof crack - this seemedis hard, I wouldn't have liked to have lead it. A few hard moves remain as you climb out over the lip and then all that remains is about 20 metres of climbing that falls into roughly the severe bracket. Topping out was amazing and the view was truly superb. The actual summit of the stack is only about the size of a kitchen table so there was no thought of untying and having a stretch. We were in no hurry to head on down and so we took a good seat, congratulated ourselves on playing the best game in the world and tucked into some butties.

After at least half an hour of smugness we decided it was getting cold in the wind and a few beers at the campsite were in order. The rock from which we were going to abseil was indeed very large although not as positive as I had hoped, despite this it looked like it definately did the job given the dozens of rotten pieces of tat hanging from it. We had Ron's two 60m ropes meaning that we could just about make it to ground zero in one abseil. Mike went first. I sat there alone on the stack enjoying the late afternoon. I eventually began to feel a bit lonely and realised this was probably because Mike had left about 20 minutes ago, I shouted down if everything was alright. Barnyard fans will remember that he notoriously experiences complications during abseils and may recount the event when he got his wig stuck his belay device. I knew that this hadn't happened this time as he had come well prepared and remembered an Alice band to tie back his locks. Seemingly, he had tied his prussik loop too tight to go over the tape that Ron had wrapped around his rope to mark the 15, 30 and 45 metre points. It was therefore a huge struggle for him getting past these points. About 40 minutes after setting off I finally got the shout from Ron (he's useful for communication because his voice travels so well) to start heading down. He also shouted up; "Whatever you do Alex, do not use a prussik!" I responded with; "You can fuck off if you think I'm doing a 60m free abseil with loose rock and angry cormerants without a prussik." As far as I was concerned there was no debate.

I did at least tie my prussik loose before nervously wobbling over the edge of the stack. I hadn't given much thought to the descent of the stack, only it's ascent. I don't like abseiling, there is an unpleasant sense of vulnerability and lack of control when you're just hanging off the end of a rope. Tom Patey, one of the greats had died descending a stack after all. I found this abseil dead scary, 60 metres seems like an awful long way when it's the quantity of fresh air between your feet and the sea. I couldn't help but think of the grotty tat that I was hanging off as well,



but it had held the barnyard. The cornerants were kind, I quickly sailed off their ledge before they had chance to take objection to me - there was no need to reach for the MH . I sailed over Ron's tape not being sure what all the fuss was about and promptly landed on the ledge beside Mike. "That was awesome" I said, these things always are in hindsight.

All that was left now was the final traverse along the base of the stack from our platform to the tyrolean. The pitch is graded as VS 5a and was looking greasy. Mike wrapped his rope round his neck and started soling. I was like "What the hell are you doing man" as I knew I'd definitely get greased off and take the 6 or so metre plunge into the sea. Mike looked at me like I'd just slapped his arse and grudgingly agreed to rope up as I'd offered to lead it. I started across, it was initially very easy but then swiftly turned into a grease fest. It's graded 5a in the dry and is essentially a traverse with a horizontal break for your hands and then occasionally a break for your feet. Both breaks were caked in slimy green shite out of the sea. There was no friction. I got half way across and started panicking, I could hear Mike sighing from the ledge - disgusted to be out with such a numpty. Ron was actually relishing in my panic, filming the majority of the lead on his camera anticipating the whipper and shouting across the channel; "Would you like me to throw you a top rope Alex?" Ha Ha. When I finally made it across (with only 1 point of aid) I secretly regarded it as one of the finest leads of my life.

Mike started across, really quickly at first so that I wasn't able to take in all the slack as if he was embarrassed to be getting a proper belay on this. All of a sudden, I got the rope in tight and it stayed there, it stayed there for quite a while and then I realised that Mike had run in to a spot of difficulty. Then it was Mike's turn to panic; "Oh no. Oh no, this is bloody dire. The holds are all so greasy. How did you hold on to this?" Me and Ron rolled around laughing as the Barnyard made the traverse across entirely on aid, hanging on to the pieces of gear (of which there were many) that I'd placed along the top break. One of my favourite moments was when Mike was coming out of the traverse at it's end and therefore only had one piece, a size three techy friend, to hang on to. His distance was such from the belay that if it had ripped at least some of his body would have got wet! I'll not forget him gently whispering "stay there friend, stay there my friend" as he put all his weight on the cam, swung round on it and it wriggled in the crack. Upon arriving at the tyrolean he thanked me for the belay and we started laughing about what would have happened if we had tried to solo the pitch. I reckon he would have gone first, fallen in and then just swam to the bank leaving me with no choice but to jump in and swim across too.

I was still buzzing from the stack as we sat around the campsite that night planning our further adventures, made all the sweeter by the fact I had skived off uni to be there. I seriously recommend this climb, there's a great VS on the stack too but I'd leave the E2 round the back well alone unless you're a choss lover. Go and climb it climb it before it falls down!

1. Full whipper i.e. all the way to the ground.
2. Diamond Face Route
3. Shaking at the Grade, a former journal article by Root. Look it up, it's modern Dickens.
4. Dougal Haston
5. Old age pensioners
6. Mother Hex

I stared at the wall. I didn't know what else to do. My phone rang. It was Carberry- news travels fast. "This isn't real," I thought, but I was painfully aware that it had been well over twenty-four hours since I'd last been asleep, and I wasn't about to wake up from this horrible nightmare. Yesterday evening had been just another climb until part of the cliff face collapsed and came crashing down about my ears. Even at that point, I hadn't expected to see him lying there, a few yards away, blood pooling around his face, leg at a tortuous angle. "He's gonna die," I mouthed to Dave. And I believed it. No one could survive a 40ft fall landing on rock.

In casualty, bloodied and barely recognisable, he shouted, "How long before I can weight-bear on this thing?" Well, I guess you can't keep a good man down, especially when he's on morphine. As I held his hand, I caught sight of the horrific X-rays. "It's bad, but we'll do our best," said the orthopaedic surgeon. Needless to say, as they wheeled him away to theatre, I was not reassured. I left, clutching a bin bag full of his stuff, including his harness: cam and nut that should have stopped him still attached.

I was spending the night with a family who had been at the scene of the accident. Neil was a doctor, and had administered the appropriate First Aid as well as offering me a place to stay. I lay on the camp bed all night, running every possible outcome through my head, over and over and over again. Daylight began to break through the curtains. My phone rang. It was Kate, telling me that she and Bob would be there in the afternoon. The doctors were worried he would develop a blood clot at the fracture site in his femur, "and that would obviously be it," she managed to say. He'd been given less than 50:50.

"Right, I'll get to the hospital then," and not knowing quite how to finish the sentence, I added, "just so I'm there."

When I reached the hospital, a nurse from intensive care explained the extent of his injuries. He had broken almost every bone in his face and effectively skinned his right thigh, as well as shattering the bone and dislocating the knee. Totally helpless, I sat and stared at the wall, half expecting someone to come and tell me he, "hadn't made it."

I have so many memories of the ensuing weeks: the police asking questions, meeting Kate and Bob for the first time outside A&E, clearing bloodstained revision notes out of my car boot, the nurse threatening me with a bucket of cold water for getting in his bed. But the one thing I remember most vividly is that I never felt alone. It's at times like that you realise just how important your family and friends are. Thankyou to everyone who showed concern, whether by phoning, visiting me or Alex, or even simply signing a "Get Well Soon" card. Every little gesture made the nightmare more bearable.

So what now? I'm not ready to step back up to that rock just yet. As for Alex, he's back to climbing grades that most of us will never achieve, albeit with a few less teeth. Most people think he's crazy, but I guess they're the ones that don't climb.



Winds gusting 70mph, avalanche category 4, lets climb on the Ben!

Tom, Carol, Stuart and Neil head out for a weekend of winter wonders.



We reached the Real Food Café at 9pm; to find them closing! Luckily, Stuart and Neil had arrived just before us and scrounged the leftovers, which we shortly discovered were a range of battered sausages and white pudding. Luckily, there were still some scones left to hold down the meat.

Having endured the white pudding, we started the next day stomping up the tourist path to the Ben in the pissing rain, which thankfully eased off as we reached the CIC hut. As we took out the guidebook and started

looking up the Ledge Route, another climber kindly pointed out that there was a not inconsiderable avalanche in No.5 Gully which had come down just half an hour before we arrived. Vaguely apprehensive, we still weren't put off, and decided to head in to have a look at No. 2 Gully instead. On route to the gully we passed over several more avalanche paths, but other climbers heading up in similar directions encouraged us onto the bottom of No.2. Just as Neil began to thump up to the first steep section, a dramatic gush of snow came piling down the gully.

It might have appeared dramatic, but the snow didn't bury anyone, and whilst this freaked me out just a wee bit, Neil was determined, and we decided that this was just spindrift blowing off in the gales that we assumed must have been sweeping across the summit. Neil continued up, followed by Stuart, Carol and myself; over a short and difficult (for us) steep section, with no protection other than a skilfully placed deadman,, and with snow continuing to pour on us from above. Near the top we discovered the left route describe by the guidebook had formed an enormous cornice, and decided to top out to the right. Neil again led the way and spent a fair while hacking through while I made my way to him. We both topped out into a full blizzard and zero visibility, and once we brought Carol and Stuart up there was little time to congratulate ourselves surviving the avalanche hazard before we had to navigate down. Reaching the car at 7pm as it was getting fully dark, we returned for a hard worked for beer and curry.

Glen Coe – no.2 Gully, Right (ish)



Neil at the start
of No.2 Gully



A cold belay No.2 Gully

Having not had our fill of peril the previous day, myself and Carol decided on Glen Coe for our next pants filling episode. Intending to go up Dorsal Arête, we discovered on sighting to route that there were at least three groups already on it, and not wanting to freeze our butts off queuing, we decided to take a look at Forked Gully. Neil had reliably informed us that the left route was 'boring and disappointing', so instead we opted for the right fork, which at grade II/III we thought would be a fair challenge for our third proper winter climb.

Having swum through the deep powder to the start of the right fork, Carol led up the first steep section and managed to drive in an ice screw. Whilst this made me feel more confident following her up, I was still slightly perturbed as much of the 'ice' fell apart under my feet. Still, I finally got up to Carol and began to lead the next section which to me looked pretty hairy.

After nearly cramponing Carol in the face, I quickly discovered that either the ice was not very icy, or I had eaten too many pies, as not very much was holding my weight and I struggled to get any solid holds. I continued moan, cry, and smash away at the icy stuff on several attempts at the route, but finally decided that no fun was being had. Still, seeing an alternative off to the right which looked just as iffy, I tentatively traversed a little way along, and heading upwards I discovered some pretty solid protection, and continued on. I have to admit that I was still (metaphorically) shitting my pants the entire way, but at least this time there were a few solids bits



for me to plunge my axe into and not end up with a face full of ice in the process. I continued to head up this right section, and after beating my way through the cornice I was very happy to discover the top. Carol managed the same route with not so much bother, and no hissy fitting at all. Happy we had both survived, we moseyed on down back to the car park for well earned burger at the Café.



Carole walking into
Forked Gully, Glen Coe

French Fresher in the Highlands

Gilles Vache

When I arrived to Scotland, what I knew of the mountain consisted mainly of the Alps. So massive, so sharp, so nice.

Then I came to Glasgow, with trainers, and my old boots, well, to give you an idea my trainers were stiffer. This is hills, it's going to be all right yeah! I knew, though, that it was rainy, so I took my 1£ poncho.

The mountaineering club? Great! I was enthusiast for my first meet, somewhere north, close to the island of Skye, "the Five Sisters".

We set up on a rainy Friday night in late October. After one hour driving on the terrible road that winds along the Loch Lomond, I was really delighted to stop at a restaurant providing some very good fish and chips, ribs and ice creams. Full and comfortable, we hit the road again, and I was impressed to discover such a desert landscape, beautiful under the moon. One road and... nothing on the right, nothing on the left for dozens of miles. Even trees seemed to have given up the battle, and heather thrived everywhere. I felt some awe in there; in the Alps you always had shelters, trails, remote dwellings... here you don't.

Then we arrived in the village hall where we all had a few drinks. I was in the midst of fifty people gathering with drinks and ice axes and food and maps and the atmosphere was really merry, with the bit of tension and excitement that precedes a great day out.

The five sisters, a nice walk, five summits along a ridge, sounded appealing.

When we set up on the Saturday morning the weather was dry, cloudy but dry, it wouldn't rain I hoped. I came from France and had only spent one month in Scotland, I had some excuses to think so.

I was wearing my so called boots that had seen fire too close in their early days, camping by some cold alpine night. I took my jeans, thought they would be tough enough for a walk, anyway I had nothing else. I had a tee-shirt, a sweater and a cotton fleece, plus, I thought for extra precaution, a spare jumper in my bag. My poncho topped it all. I didn't pay much attention to the way everyone had top shell jacket, rain trousers and so on.

The minibus took us up the valley away from the village and dropped us after we had passed the summits we were going up to, walking to Kintail by the ridge route.

We climbed well on the first one hour and a half, trying to avoid the boggy areas, and we soon got a pretty nice view of the landscape, with the winding road in the middle of nowhere below us, strongly evoking me of a life cord in this wilderness. It was indeed a bit oppressing to me. I was used to always be able to see civilisation when on a mountain, the glow of a village in the distance, the shelter of a breeder in an altitude valley, a direction panel saying "civilisation, that way, one hour walk". Well, here I would have to do without it.

The wind was steadily rising, but remained acceptable when we would stop to have some dried fruits in sheltered areas. The sky was in fury and clouds were coming and going, twirling and tearing, and we caught sight of a patch of blue sky and I thought, this is it, it's going to be nice! We could see Kintail and the fiord in the distance, peacefully glittering under a ray of sun.

The walk went on, and so did the wind, stronger though. We had made it to the first top and were getting slightly down on the ridge to the second one. I was quite warm and dry, even if



the mist was denser, even if the patch of blue sky had disappeared for good.

There were around twelve of us now, as the others had formed a second group during the ascent. I had just met another French person and we were chatting about our experience of Scotland. And about the current weather also, as it had gently started to rain, a discreet transition between a thick mist and thin drops that we had just noticed. Only my boots were a bit wet, I didn't mind. I could see that my French mate was only slightly better equipped than me, as I began to consider the fact that rain was indeed about to come.

On our way down from the second summit, it was raining and my trousers were getting wet, my body heat couldn't keep them dry any more. The wind was now very strong and we could nearly lie on it when we passed an exposed col. My poncho showed signs of weakness. I was glad to have my spare sweater to put on, smiling as I remembered of when I wasn't sure whether to take it or not.

At the top of the third summit it was now frankly raining, and the temperature had much dropped. The wind was threatening to push me off balance and I had to concentrate on my walk. My poncho had given up and was only protecting me against the impact of the rain, the water of which was now penetrating my fleece. My boots were soaked and so were my jeans. I was beginning to seriously think of my situation: I had underestimated this country by far; the unexpected violence of the weather was striking.

The trail between the fourth and the fifth summit was going along a cliff about 230 feet high. The path was, say, two meters from the edge and the wind was pushing us exactly towards the void. I was now soaked, freezing, the rain had changed into horizontal stinging darts and I couldn't look but to my right, in the direction of the cliff. We were going slightly below the path, crouching to keep our balance. I thought, this is not the time to wrist my ankle like I did in the Alps last summer. No rescue could possibly fly here and it would take ages for any rescue team to fetch anyone here. It was around half past two in the afternoon and I had known of more reassuring times.

Then we soon arrived at the foot of the last of the Sisters, going straight in the steep grassy slope. The top wasn't far away from the ridge. We climbed it very fast, the wind was hurling on our back, infuriated. I was not feeling the cold nor my legs. My head was quite empty, concentrated only in doing it. We were up there in no time, or so it seemed. Semi sheltered behind the top and facing the cliff we enjoyed a break. My mind was half numb, well, so was my face and chewing a few dried cranberries was not easy. I was beginning to find this humoristic. I was drenched, cold, the weather was terrible, nothing to lose on that side! But I was still fit and quite ready to go, so what else but to laugh at the situation?

I could see that even the gore-tex jackets of my mates had problems keeping the water out. Nobody was willing to linger much. We started down again to a pass, where the wind was tunnelled in the climax of its strength. Rather tall and not so heavy, I could hardly walk. The darting sleet was attacking us even stronger and at some point I could not open my eyes any more. I could barely see the way down; all my thoughts were now focused on that simple goal, go down. Nearly all thoughts though, as there was that amused feeling of, say, absurd that was finding it more and more amusing as both the conditions and my situation grew harsher. Because I knew there was no real threat, it was not a snow storm with temperatures below zero, the walk was not difficult in itself; in fact the mountains were not that hostile. Indeed we had some laugh together along the descent.

We went on. We passed the col, and gradually the wind eased, the rain became rain again, I was able to look at the surroundings. The mountains, in their orange brown tone of autumn, could be seen in the fleeting moments when the mist would tear open. We were all right, perhaps too

much as I could now focus on how cold and drenched I was.

We were going along a tiny stream in the boggy soil. Every few yards I would find myself with one leg knee deep in the mud, struggling to get my foot out of it, producing some funny suction sounds. I could hardly remember that my jeans had been blue a long, long time ago, and that I had once been dry. Funny enough, the mud felt quite warm compared to my wet, wind refrigerated, clothes; I was even close to liking the sensation! We had scattered a bit in the bog and we were making bets on who would get caught in the next mud hole. I reckon only few people were able to avoid them!

Struggling against the cold had become the normal state of mind with me and Loïc, my French mate who was in no better shape. At some point we crossed a stream, thigh deep in the water, not caring anymore. The water felt nicely mild. I don't know what its temperature was then, but I don't think it was that warm in reality!

After the stream, we found a well marked out path again, and on we went in this remote and beautiful valley, where the rain had finally eased. I was feeling rather tired now and I was looking forward to getting back to Kintail. The path went on and on for a long time, and eventually we arrived at the end of the valley, going down for the last descent along a nice waterfall. It was getting dark when we arrived at the village. There were around twenty houses gathered at the end of a sea loch, along the road to the nearby Isle of Skye. But it was not over yet, as our hall, the hall I was longing for, was still about a mile down the road. Go for it then.

I remembered a quite similar situation, when I had been going down a river in a kayak, under cold and heavy rain, for hours. When I had finally made it, along with my group, I got on a platform off the river and suddenly fell back, my senses blurred by hypothermia. Piece of luck someone could catch me in time! At that point only I had realised I was not in the full possession of myself. Well, I was wondering how close I was to this when walking on the road to go back to the village hall.

It was nearly dark and raining again when we finally arrived there. We soaked the little kitchen and restrooms trying to take off our sodden backpacks, boots and clothes. Then everyone had a different way to regain heat, some feeding a pound to the electric heater, some making hot chocolate or hot tea, or throwing themselves in their comforting sleeping bag.

I had some hot tea and threw myself in my comforting sleeping bag.

At night, after a deserved power nap, we headed to the pub across the street for some good time together. As it was Halloween some of us had disguised, and I can still remember a giant panda savagely attacking an impressive mummy!

It was really a great week-end out, the first true taste of the Scottish highlands. It took me three days to recover from tiredness and being cold! During the next months I spent much on equipment, waterproof jacket, trousers, gloves, gators and hat; compass and whistle... and eventually got proper boots for Christmas. All of which very good investment!

Since then we have been to Wales and many places in the Highlands, sometimes with really nice weather. Each time was a great experience. The club really gave me a good opportunity to discover the country (both the wilderness and the pubs!!) and I gained much experience in dealing with bad conditions in nature, in equipment and safety in the mountain; all that in a very good atmosphere. I'm very glad I joined! Thank you all very much, see you all on next meets!



The Cullin Ridge Traverse

The weekend had initially been planned as one in which Ron could go to the Skye festival to see the 'mighty' Peatbog Fairies (yes, that awful stuff he plays non-stop whenever he is in a vehicle), but the lure of the ridge (and the realisation that the weather might actually be good for it) ensured that sense prevailed and the emphasis of the trip placed firmly on the crux - rather than on the drink, chat or generally 'having a good time'. In terms of the crux, it is not a particularly technical move (at no point on the ridge are the difficulties greater than v-diff) but more a very long one - roughly 10km! Unless you are a super fit freak it is usually necessary to bivi out once on the ridge. With the shorter days of September it made sense to do this halfway, leaving us with a good amount of hours both days. Ron did briefly insist on doing the Greater Traverse (a very long-drawn-out masochistic trial of tears indeed!), but relented for obvious reasons. I had at first not been too enthusiastic about the prospect of the ridge, as I had done all the Munros there already, would rather have just gone climbing, and really could not be bothered. It was definitely a blessing in disguise therefore when I acquired a very sore big toe (and so couldn't wear rock boots) and was 'forced' to team up with Ron and root in their attempt.

Being the first to arrive at Ron's flat was most advantageous, as his car is not the biggest and getting the four of us in with climbing, camping and bivi-ing kit was going to be quite a squash. Sitting comfortably in the front I watched as Carberry and Clarke-Williams struggled to hold the rucksacks in place long enough for them both to fit in amongst them. One seat was completely covered - stuck in the middle the root complained of cramp for most of the journey. Other than that the drive up went by without incident, and we duly arrived to put up tents and sort the stuff out. It was only then that Clarke-Williams discovered he'd left his boots in Glasgow. "What are you going to wear for the ridge then?", I asked disbelievingly.

"K-Swiss, mate!"

While I did find this notion - that of the root doing a multi-day expedition, and one involving much rock climbing, in ridiculously inadequate footwear - somewhat amusing, it was probably fortunate that Carberry kindly offered his own boots to the cause.

Compared to the heights of summer the campsite was virtually deserted - had no-one noticed the awesome weather? A couple of other GUMC car loads were making their way up that weekend, and we expected to see them shortly. The last car took a very long time however. We hadn't met Pete before, so the first memory the four of us have of him swerving in to announce he'd been pulled over by the police "for being all over the road" is remembered as being a particularly fine entrance.

We got up the next morning to find the ridge clear and alluring; we hastened to be off as soon as possible. Due to past indiscretions Carberry had been denied access to a tent and was bivi-ing out in the campsite, so fittingly Ron elected to wake him up by pissing right next to him. Once that was done we set off at a relaxed pace (as the packs were pretty heavy), marvelling at the strong autumnal brown the heather had taken on and how it contrasted with the darkness of the gabbro - September is an amazing time to be on Skye. It didn't seem long before we had reached Loch Coir a'Ghrunnda, the last place to fill up the water bottles before we moved up onto the arid ridge. There would be no more water until we had descended the last peak. At this point we were already some way along the traverse - the best idea seemed to be to leave the sacks on the ridge, allowing us to quickly backtrack to Gars-bheinn and just do this section twice. Future aspirants should note that merely starting with the first Munro (Sgurr

nan Eag), and avoiding the first few peaks on the ridge, does not count.

Being lower and lying right by the sea, this first part of the traverse seems to have an atmosphere all of its own. The grassy stretches in the vicinity of Gars-bheinn, and the wonderful views down and out towards Rum, Eigg and Canna, so close by, arguably give this section of the traverse a much more relaxed, open feel than that of the higher jagged peaks. So much so that our leisurely pace had begun to catch up with us, and noticing it was nearly 11 am we thought it was time that we really got a move on. We soon found that we would have to hold fire a wee bit longer however, as on arrival at the Thearlaich-Dubh Gap (the first 'interesting' bit of the traverse) we realised there was a pair already at work on it.

The Gap really is a superb rock feature; steep on all sides and completely unavoidable without leaving the ridge. Some good scrambling leads suddenly to this great cleft. It is necessary to abseil down a short wall, before a struggle up a smooth wide crack (big boots may even be helpful here!) on the other side leads to easier ground. The guys ahead of us were hugely incompetent. It had apparently been decided that they would save weight by using slings for a harness. Our bemusement at this turned to amusement on finding out that one of them (who now insisted on seconding) had taken quite a whipper just before we had arrived! They told us they were doing the ridge traverse as well. Evidently they also felt that they could only climb the pitch if they hauled the bags, which caused no end of problems as the sacks jammed in the crack, under overhangs etc. In the end Ron led up, freeing their stuff as he went; Alex and I followed soon after in alpine style.

After leaving the sacks for a quick bag of Sgurr Alasdair we began the short scramble down towards the next bealach, in anticipation of the fine climbing which would follow up to Sgurr Mhic Choinnich. I had already done Collie's Ledge, and while that is enjoyable enough, we had our eyes set on the large brown wall of King's Chimney, an excellent steep corner taking one directly to the summit of the peak. This must surely be just about the best pitch of Diff there is; the corner crack is climbable by way of pulling up on the chokestones jammed within, before an exposed traverse out right on jugs leads one swiftly to the top. It was certainly not easy with a big pack though, especially on the imposing lower section. Typically, Clarke-Williams managed to find the harder bit easy; the footholds on the easy traverse he however neglected to find at all, and as we were all soloing, much grade-shaking ensued. "I can't do it, I'm not as strong as you boys" he floundered, as Ron and I tried to point out the ample holds (in between taking pictures).

By this time we had almost caught up the pair who had slowed us down on the TD Gap, and I was determined that we should overtake them in case they tried sack-hauling their way up the In-Pinn. In the event Ron and Alex stayed behind them as they toiled up the loose ground by An Stac, and it was quite a relief when they announced that there were so many folk already on the Pinnacle that they would give it a miss. We had no such intention and deftly soloed past all the numpties pitching it, who were actually quite cool about it (not that they had much choice in the matter). The fact that the root did so while chomping away on an apple probably added insult to injury however. While it is undeniably an incredible climb for the grade (best moderate ever), Ron, who had avoided it in the past due to its fearsome reputation, was understandingly a bit disappointed that so much is made of such an easy climb. He managed to 'spice things up' though by leaving his belay device with the rucksacks - I was glad that on the abseil the resultant Italian hitch came to bear upon a rope that someone else had left for us, and not mine!



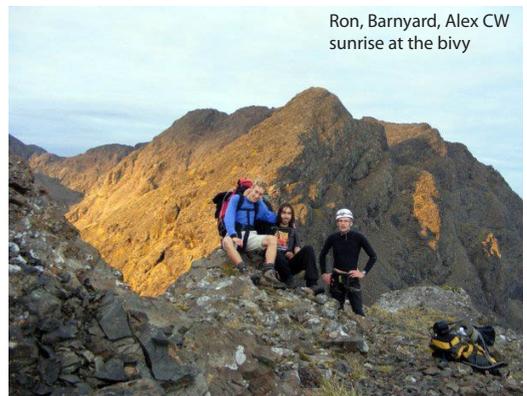
Sgurr Dearg is always a great lunch spot, and we enjoyed a little rest while watching some guides top-roped people up the short side of the In-Pinn - surely that doesn't count?! One of the girls ascending in this way had a wee bag of sandwiches clipped onto her harness. "Is that for the crux?" enquired Clarke-Williams, much to her bewilderment. Eventually we realised we had better move on, and began the long descent and re-ascent towards Sgurr na Banachdich. On the summit, with Ron for some reason still trailing behind, Alex and I successfully bargained for another litre of water from a couple who didn't want to carry it down with them. How much water we should carry had been a tricky decision, and one we had not come to lightly (sorry!). In the end it was decided that we should split it fairly evenly three ways, with Alex and me carrying 3-3 litres and Ron 5 litres. I had also read that one can do worse than take straws up the ridge to suck at the rain puddles as they pass, but that week it had been so dry that we saw not one.

We were all starting to look seriously knackered by the time we had toiled up Sgurr a' Ghreadiadh, and with evening on its way we started to look for somewhere to sleep. On finding a good site just past the Eag Dubh cleft we were at last able to relax somewhat. Having missed the festival, Ron had brought the Faeries along on his Ipad so he could still celebrate the occasion. The plan for tea was to combine the contrasting delights of Stagg chilli and couscous, the latter so we could retain the water we used, rather than have to chuck it away. This I'm sure would have worked superbly, had we brought a stove and gas canister compatible with each other. At least it was edible, even though it took about 20 minutes for the couscous to reach the desired (non-crunchy) consistency. I did not envy the others, who had decided to finish it off for breakfast!

Nevertheless, nothing can take away the wonder of such a sublime setting. We watched as the sun sunk lower, grew redder and day became night. It goes without saying that sleeping out on the ridge with the outer isles lit up under a full moon and sea of stars, is not an experience to be easily forgotten. It was our first Scottish bivouac, and not a bad one at that.

The bivi was also useful as an experiment in what works and what doesn't - the night effectively proved that a crap sleeping bag but top-notch bivi bag is far better than vice versa, with the other two (especially the root in his -20C monster!) getting little sleep due to being drenched in sweat for most of the night. When I woke up briefly around 5:30am therefore, we decided we might as well get up there and then, if only for the complete alpine experience. The highest point of the next peak (Sgurr a' Mhadiadh) was traversed in the dark, though the night was so bright that only a little stumbling about took place. As we reached the steep sides of its other tops, however, it had changed. The far away light of the new dawn had gradually grown extensive enough that we could take to scrambling without (too much) fear for our lives. By the time we had begun the walk up to the triple-peaked Bidein Druim nan Ramh, the orange light had started to hit the tops of the higher peaks. There was still not a cloud in the sky.

We sat on the summit of the central peak, enjoying the panorama. This part of the traverse (the peaks lying between Sgurr a' Mhadiadh and Bruach na Frithe) was the main area that I was unfamiliar with. There are no Munros here, so it is little frequented - one is unlikely to meet other parties. While there are no particularly technical sections like the TD



Ron, Barnyard, Alex CW
sunrise at the bivy

Gap, there are lots of short tricky bits and much of the ridge is quite complex. I had heard that the descents of some of the peaks can be fairly awkward, but was keen to avoid the extra time and effort of abseiling unless absolutely necessary. With good route-finding they're not too bad; rather just the right level of difficulty for this kind of excursion - enjoyable wee problems but ones that can still be dealt with relatively quickly. The most memorable wrong turn left the root and Ron in a position where the only obvious option was a belly traverse along a narrow and exposed ledge. This passage was of a fairly constricted nature, and with the large pack Clarke-Williams was carrying he became helplessly jammed in on more than one occasion - unfortunately the batteries on my camera had run out by then!

Eventually we reached Bruach na Frithe and started to angle down towards the Basteir Tooth. Again I knew from the past that Lota Coire Route offered some nice scrambling, but really fancied the look of Naismith's, which takes an exposed line up the right side of the steep frontal face, and gives great climbing, especially up the cracks in the top wall. From the Tooth an entertaining bulging wall leads one onto the main summit and down the easier east ridge. The west ridge of Gillean gives a fitting finale to the traverse, the narrow sections making for some of the finest scrambling around. The peak is one of the most striking in the Cuillin, and certainly presents a fitting culmination to the ridge, but the clouds had been rolling in over the last couple of hours, and so with cagoules on for the first time we began the long and tiresome descent towards Sligachan.

From here Ron and I hitched back to Glen Brittle, while the root stayed to drink copious amounts of coke.



Northern sections of the ridge
Sgurr a' Ghreadiaidh

How to - Become a Member of the GUM Club

Callum Taylor

This is just the experience I had after joining the GUM Club this year. There is a difference between when I say joining, and when I say becoming a member.

Whilst I joined in freshers week I don't feel like I really became a member until after the meet in Glencoe so this is going to be about everything in between.

After wandering around the hall at the freshers fair, already knowing what I wanted to end up spending most of my money and time on over the next year we finally found the stall we (one of my flatmates, Steve and I) were looking for. The mountaineering lot seemed friendly enough, even if I was 'yet another bloody medic' so we handed over our fee, got cards and agreed to our first part; Kelvinhall that night.

Saying yes is a key part to becoming a member of the club, as a general rule for enthusiastic, slightly naive freshers such as myself I'd say agree to anything. If anyone asks 'Are you up for...?' then the answer is yes.

After Kelvinhall, with the relief that comes from finding out that just because people live in Glasgow doesn't mean they climb like other notable ex-students; we headed down to the pub. This is where the second yes came in; slack lining and bouldering in the cloisters. Apparently people wanted the club to stand out a bit more at the fair, so come Wednesday morning we ended up finding a space between the jugglers and the fencers and started to mess about with the building. We definitely stood out, and although I wondered why as a fresher I was helping trying to recruit freshers I spent far more time trying to get to the top of various arches and pillars.

Bouldering was finished and I was sitting there talking to Jonnie, another fresher (sort of). It turned out people were going to Skye that weekend, and did I want to come along? Well I'd no reason to say no (apart from Steve explaining 'you'll die man, you'll die'), and thought it'd be good fun to get some real climbing done. So I found myself in Skye, after driving up with not much happening apart from getting stopped for Pete's 'frankly awful driving' (according to the Police). My lack of experience showed, with being told 'Ah you're such an alpine baby' (cheers Anna) whilst getting ready in the morning.

The weekend was spent dragged up various routes, and practicing placing gear. I started to get a picture of what else the GUM club meant, through small moments like Carberry's Bivvi bag getting mysteriously pissed on in the middle of the night by someone, and eating in a shelter formed by rockfall I realised that luckily, mountaineers aren't to be taken seriously.

Anyway, moving on to becoming a member, on the Friday night of the freshers meet Steve and I turned up to the GUU, nice and early. Although compared to the rest of the freshers we were ridiculously late so ended up on one of the minibuses, separated from our fellow first years, trapped in a metal box driven by Alex CW. One of the many pluses of this though was that we

spent the early evening bouldering on the stage and managed to avoid the fight for space on the hall floor.

I won't go into detail of our Saturday climbing in too much as other, better, people will in this journal. But there were a lot of firsts. My first (second, third and fourth) ever waterfall pitches happened. My first lead where the only form of protection was, if you were really optimistic, about the qualities of moss. My first mud pitch, cave pitch and finally (and most fun) heather pitches.

The great thing about being new to situations like this is you have no clue that it could be going a lot better. I had no idea that whilst climbing sometimes you get to be dry, sometimes you're warm (ignore those two if in Scotland) and sometimes you aren't bailing out of the wrong side of a gully at the end of the day because aiming for the path means some rock's going to fall on you.

Walking down the mountain on no path, in the dark, still roped up and (for some) without a head torch was what you do on a day out climbing wasn't it? I think the part of me that knew this wasn't what was supposed to happen was, actually, quite happy that we were doing something different.

And that's how I felt whilst we were wandering down the final part to the Inn at the end. A bit relieved that we had got down but far happier we'd been up in the first place, it meant we'd done something and Steve and I could definitely count ourselves as members of the GUM Club.

When I got back to the hall, and sat with friends whilst they told me how there'd been some 'idiot climbers' who'd gone out to 'do some gully and got stuck out late', all I could do was smile.



Clachaig Gully

Me: So who wants to put up with me tomorrow then?

Carberry: I'll take you up if you want.

Me: I'm not a great climber though, where are we going?

Carberry replied with a plan A for dry weather, and plan B for the wet!

Me: OK sounds good! (Should have asked some more questions really!)

The rest of Friday night was good. Drink, slack line, stories, bed!

Saturday morning - early - We head off and on route Jonnie and Alex decide it's too wet for Plan A so go for Plan B.....

Half an hour later the ropes are out and Tanis is teaching me how to coil the rope Alpine style! Some small sections of scrambling and then, Wow isn't that a really nice waterfall... What do you mean we're going up there? What about the really nice waterfall?? Oh well I'll get my waterproofs on then shall I?

Through the first one and thinking to myself well that wasn't bad! Don't even think my feet are that wet! Oh no wait a minute I just couldn't feel them there!

The next couple of pitches were pretty good, Jonnie and Callum racing on ahead and Carberry keeping the level of conversation at a high with all the filth!

Couple of pitches later and we come to yet another waterfall, thankfully no-one really wanted to have their 7th or 8th shower of that day so Carberry came up with the "jagged tree and stuff" traverse with a nice crux move on the end! I got stuck in the tree on the way up and picked the best time ever to fall from the crux (when Jonnie, who was belaying, looked away!)

It happened to be quite good actually because the swing brought me right over to where I wanted to be! On the other hand I still had to climb back up to get gear left behind!

A nice looking cave pitch is where my arms decided that they didn't want to work anymore and so Jonnie set up an assisted hoist to get me up!

A little bit rested and able to climb again brought us close to the end. It was getting dark and we were still in the gully with no hope of getting out to the left as Carberry pulls half the side down, so it's another pitch up and then an escape to right!

Sitting on the edge of the gully trying to plan a route down brings us close to dark, and then

we set off, the soft glow the pub below us drawing us in! Down and across, then up a bit then down again then across another wee bit till we hit a small cliff, abseil from a tree thinner than my arm to head down and across and up a wee bit again! Eventually we hit the path to the pub. One picture and a celebratory pint later we made it back for more "well deserved pints" then bed.

Could not have spent the day better.

"Are you cold?".... "Yep".... "Wet?".... "Yep"....

"Tired?".... "Yep".... "Miserable?"

"Hell no!"



Alex, Steve, Callum, Jonnie,
Tanis to of the gully

Throughout my four years in the GUM club, one of the most heartening features has been the consistency and depth of the disgraceful banter that has so frequently characterised the pub and the long minibus journeys down the A82 or A9. I have come to realise that a combination of any of the following "filth mongers" is bound to result in the offence of most other club members: Yorkshire Mike (a.k.a. the Yorkshire man/ tampon muncher), Ron, Carberry, Geoff, Joris, myself.

Minibus journeys normally begin after an hours wait outside the GUU in the pissing rain because some tosser has forgotten their rucksack. After this, the buses are packed and people make the decision about which one to board. For those who have been on a few meets before, this decision is usually informed by how bad the chat was on the previous journeys or how many of the "filth mongers" cited above are present in each bus. Once the doors have been shut however, anyone who happens to be inside the "wrong" bus will be forced to endure several hours' worth of inappropriate questions, sexual harassment, scary driving, and penis related jokes. Indeed, on one memorable occasion, I recall the banter being so bad that some people spent the entire walk on Saturday voicing their disapproval.

Minibus filth can sometimes (more worryingly) involve physical contact. This is often the case if Yorkshire Mike is sitting behind you. Past harassment has consisted of "cupping", a delicate sounding term that means having your arse/ manboobs groped repeatedly for the whole journey. A spot of groin stroking has also been known to occur on some of the slightly longer journeys. If reciprocated by the front passenger, this has been known to deteriorate into a game of "gay chicken" where the first person to resist the wondering hands of their opponent is deemed the loser. Other sophisticated minibus shenanigans have included games involving the naming of as many words as possible for both male and female genitals. A record of 50 was achieved between Ron, Mike, Carberry and myself last year and has yet to be surpassed. My personal favourite was "Purple headed love truncheon".

Conversation has also been known to move into the realm of bodily functions. Geoff's story of consuming a curry whilst on muscle relaxants for his dislocated shoulder is one such gem. I'm sure that many people will have also been subjected to Geoff's other stories regarding his previous exhibitionist flatmate and the kitchen sink. In more recent years however, a particular favourite of mine has to be the story of when Carberry, in an attempt to relieve himself out of the tent door, accidentally peed over Ron and his spare clothes. If this isn't bad enough, such conversations also tend to degrade into an exchange of rude jokes. These jokes usually revolve around Michael Jackson, babies (if Mike is present), and embarrassing sexual accidents (see me for specific examples). As a result, such a wide spectrum of filth is guaranteed to offend the majority of the bus. To ensure that this is the case, the culprits tend to sit near the front and talk very loudly, allowing everyone else to hear. Ron in particular likes to shout out words like "bumhole" whilst Carberry questions people's knowledge on "squirt facials". It is important to note however, that I am completely innocent in all this.



Scary driving also has to be a key element of minibus banter. Once again, Geoff seems to feature quite highly in this. Whilst driving through Glencoe late at night it seemed that the majority of the bus was somewhat subdued and not really contributing to the polite conversation at the front. In order to correct this problem, Geoff felt that it would be helpful to slowly sway the minibus across both lanes in tune to the music at the time (The Red Hot Chilli Peppers-Snow (Hey Oh)) to see if anyone noticed. This seemed to do the trick as the minibus narrowly avoided a couple of head on collisions causing the oncoming traffic to toot angrily, waking up all the sleepy passengers. Whilst on the subject of scary driving, I also feel it necessary to talk about Danielle's impressive overtaking manoeuvre on the way up to Reiff last summer. Whilst the driver of the oncoming vehicle appeared to be gripping his wheel tightly, the front passenger felt it necessary to raise their entire arm with clenched fist in disapproval.

Regular stops at service stations seem to be another important feature of minibus trips. My favourite has to be the one outside Perth. Despite the overpriced Haribo tangfastics, the toilet walls contain some of the best graffiti I have ever seen. One message read: "don't you hate it when you wipe your arse and your finger goes through the toilet paper" to which someone had responded "Yes. Especially when you bite your nails like me". Other, slightly more down at heel roadside toilet facilities are considerably less amusing. Such examples include the public toilets in Auchterarder where piss covered floors and shit up the walls means that people don't hang around long enough to write any messages.

Although the minibus is without doubt a fertile ground for bad chat, such banter is not entirely confined to it. Extreme filth and inappropriateness can also be encountered at the Uisge Beatha on a Tuesday night, and in any pub that the club happens to visit whilst on a meet. At Kincaig last year, I remember a pretty drunken club member commenting rather loudly on the quality of a certain females behind. I believe that this was one of her first meets, so I'm sure that she was less than impressed. If this wasn't bad enough, after discussing the arse with a number of other club members (right next to her), the decision was then made to ask for the opinions of some of the locals. They were more than happy to oblige due to the shortage of young females in the village and the fact that they were all over 50. Unfortunately, these gentlemen had also had rather a lot to drink and seemed more than happy to ogle and spank the poor girl for the remainder of the night.

On Tuesday evenings, it is also quite common to ridicule certain club members who have allegedly performed a number of sexual acts. Unfortunately, one girl seems to bear the brunt of most of this abuse, mainly as a result of her initials. Previous jests have included "Sperm Bank" "Slut Bag" and "Sex Beast", although new insults seem to pop up almost every week. Further to this, it is also quite common to trade titles of adult films that have been watched recently. My favourites include "Schindlers Fist", "The Bare Bitch Project" and "The Sperminator", although several others have made me chuckle.

As I conclude this brief snippet of GUM club banter (mostly, but not exclusively sexually related) I feel myself asking an important question. Who will carry on this tradition of filth once I and the other "filth mongers" mentioned have left the club?

In light of this, I feel it is my duty, by writing this article to educate any likeminded people of the potential for disgraceful chat. Anyone who feels that they need some advice on stooping to the levels alluded to in this article should feel free to approach me at the pub.

Fri night, Drunk: Agree to go climbing with a crux-mover and a newbie. I'm the token girl for his display of non-clique-ism. Sat morn, Still drunk: Too wet for the original plan... There's a suggestion of something I miss the name of, something The Sergeant's "Always wanted to do". I don't trust their grins. Carberry suggests a waterproof.

Top of 1st waterfall I make a comment no-one else wanted to say aloud: "Did you guys see that dead frog down there?" and, silently, in my own head "If he can't survive the Clachaig Gully, how can we?" Serge, straight off the bat, replies "He didn't have a harness". Top of the first Proper Waterfall – top out singing "I feel like I've pissed myself" to which I get the reply "You should have, would have warmed you up!" I then realise I'm on film. Classic.

I'm freezing. Hmmm – I'll lead the next pitch, don't fancy this one. Warned up – a tiny bit. Another waterfall – I'm Bloody Freezing. Hmmm maybe the next pitch, don't fancy this one. How am I still so stunningly hung-over? I've spent 3 hours IN waterfalls. Second up the Prickly Holly Tree crux – intriguing traverse to follow. Another damn waterfall. Don't fancy leading this pitch either. When it's my turn to (second) the actual crux, Carberry gives me the hysterics – proper shaking belly laugh stuff – thankfully no pendulum plummet into the (overhanging) waterfall below. My non-existent balls have frozen off. Funky cave pitch – another waterfall. S-so d-d-d-damn c-c-c-c-cold.

Potential escape to the left – thwarted as it's disintegrating – too sketchy to even spot Carberry, there are too many rocks to dodge. New understanding of cryogenics while waiting for the next pitch. Carberry, my adopted GUMC Son and much reputed man-whore hugs me "Not in a sexual way, it's purely to warm up".

Found an escape – to the right. Bollocks. I'm tied in to the rope, ready to go next. Serge shouts down "Send Carberry up"... Why?? Actually, I don't want to know. Now what...do we go up or down?? Down – ok. Not ok, across, down, across, across, across. Look out west to see a beautiful sunset, the most beautiful I've ever seen in Glencoe – lease I'm at the perfect vantage point!

Down, down, across, across, etc. Cliff – Fuck. Tiny tree – phew. Down goes Serge. Newbie 1 turns and says "So how do you do this again?" Pub lights are getting closer...looking promising.

Finally in the Clachaig, with full complement of newbies, digits and limbs clad in stinking wet clothes and sinking wet rock shoes. No-body bats an eyelid. Down much deserved pints.

Sunday AM: Dunno if I'm honoured or insulted – I climbed a Scottish Gulley with Carberry but he didn't piss on me afterwards...



Clachaig Gully

I warned them. The newbies, token and thruster. Its going to be cold, wet and miserable. Thruster had an idea, he had done a Scottish gully before and knew what they were about. The others just didn't listen.

Scottish Gullies are a lesser know discipline of Scottish climbing. As they are not so exposed as a face route and an obvious feature on a mountainside, they were seen as excellent potential routes when climbing began in Glencoe, that they put up a tough struggle before succumbing to a first ascent just made them even more desirable. Climbing has moved on since those days and the idea of climbing a waterfall on slimy rock with little gear has fallen out of popularity and means that classic Scottish gullies are only ventured into by the traditionalist or stupid.

The first few pitches were simple enough, until we came to a big chockstone across the gully. The water was pouring down a crack to the left, hanging about wasn't going to make it easier, so it was straight into the water, blessing little things like the slight peak on my helmet, that was forcing the water out and giving me breathing space, and cursing others; loose cuffs on my buffalo allowing the water to flow straight down my arms and out the bottom. A brief struggle for gear, screw it, some technical bridging and up. Quietly laughing, Alex is going to need a top rope for that and the newbies and token will understand a lot more about Scottish gullies. Disappointment when he doesn't but laughter at the amount of cursing.

A loose pitch with dirty and wet slopers follows after which Callum asks if he can lead the next pitch; I couldn't see why not. He did warn me that he didn't know how to place gear, but I could see that there wasn't any gear on the pitch so it wouldn't be a problem. An impressive first lead followed, the crux of which was a long step across a wall of vertical moss, then digging a sloping foothold out of two inches of moss.

A difficult waterfall wasted time. There appeared to be a big jug on the lip of the waterfall, but tricky climbing up to it with no gear. I think I tried two or three times, but by this time the attraction of a cold shower and a fall onto wet rock had waned slightly and I followed Alex, to where he had managed to reach the roots of a tree hanging down the wall. The photo opportunity was too good and I went my own way to get photos of the token as she seconded him up the roots, trunk and out the top of the branches.

A long, good pitch followed with good gear. I managed to get a two slings around trees! The second was well placed to catch Steve as he came up, if I hadn't been so interested in what Alex was up to....

Alex was on the crux. In the guide book it recommends that the route is done during dry weather and the featureless slab that he was trying to smear his way up was why. After a while watching I had itchy feet, so headed off to the tree above the pitch. I knew that at some point I would tick all the boxes that I had warned them about. The cold and wet were easy, the first waterfall took care of that. I should have been miserable on this pitch and would have been quite happily if I hadn't been so scared. I was quite a way up, on a slippy, sloping slab, debating

on whether to go for a unrecoverable move, refusing to accept that the move I had just made was equally unrecoverable, at the same time trying to convince myself that the gear I had placed was anything other than utter crap, which it was. Alex couldn't help, he was in his own world of fear below and wouldn't share his runner. A desperate move got me to the tree, where I was nearly miserable. I think Callum cheered me up at this point, as he fell off.

A few more pitches followed, getting more fun and better protected, while nagging uncertainty started shouting about getting off the hill before dark. We reached the time to bale, but couldn't, axes and crampons were required to haul ourselves up the chossy mess of the gully wall and onto the path, so we continued up. A long slope of heather, just heather, two foot deep,

where you could kick footholds and plunge hands led out of the gully onto the hillside, spoilt when I ran out of rope with no belay, bar two rocks that I had to sit in front of to stop moving. Then the route down in the dark. Picking a way between buttresses and gullies, still in rock shoes, the unbelievable luck of leaning on the only tree in sight as I look down a cliff thinking "how are we going to get down that?" Then the end of the gully, being able to cross it and get to the path. Its all over, down by half nine, not midnight, no injuries, just the pub.

After a Scottish gully of the calibre of the Clachaig, there was the Clachaig Inn, visible, in fact framed by the gully all the way up and a navigation aid as we came down. Watching our friends in the car park come and have a look at our progress every now and then, gradually getting bigger. A haven of roaring fire, real ale, malt whisky and "do you remember the bit..."

Disappointment; overloud music, lager and crowds, its not how it used to be, but we all knew I was a traditionalist, didn't we.



In Clachaig Gully



Having been a member of the GUM Club for several years, it's only been over the last 12 months that I've plucked up the courage to enter into the climbing aspect of the club. Both climbing and bouldering were firing back with popularity amongst many members of the club so I joined the band-wagon and made regular trips down to Kelvinhall and occasionally an extravagant trip to Ibrox. It took a bit of motivation at first but it soon became less effort and more addictive.

When deciding what to write an article on for this year's journal, it seemed appropriate to choose something of an achievement to myself – to me that was joining the team for the BUSA Bouldering Competition.

Dave, who was trying to pull a team together, approached me at the Dinner Meet to potentially fill the remaining female space. Two teams were required, each with two guys and a girl. Emily was an obvious candidate but there lacked enthusiasm from another female. In a moderately intoxicated and hyperactive state I found myself agreeing to join!

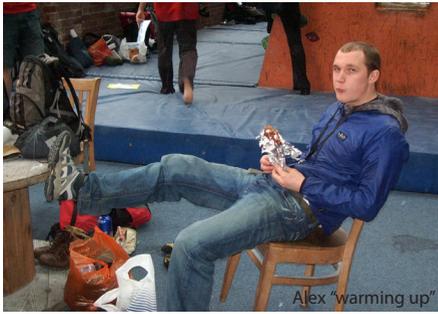
At a trial training session down at Ibrox I began to appreciate that the others were relying on me to embark on some serious training. Hopefully as I engrossed myself I would inevitably develop a love for bouldering. Top roping had always been the preferred option; bouldering was a bit intense and unsatisfying. Once free month passes were acquired from the Glasgow Climbing Centre for sponsorship, Ibrox became our primary training ground.

Over the weeks in the run up to the competition I began to enjoy routing out new problems and trying them time and time again. They were either completed or I got too frustrated and concluded that the moves were just to 'reachy' for someone so vertically challenged like myself! Some sense was made of the names given to different moves. This usually took the form of Dave (the Crux mover) demonstrating them and then being abused by the others for being a technical pansy. The abuse shared by the team was always taken affectionately and seemed to add to the team bonding.

To fuel our evolving bouldering physiques, post-Ibrox-pre-pub dinners became a weekly feature. Sometimes it was the main incentive for climbing on a Tuesday. However any hope of losing some lard for the competition (less weight to haul up the wall) was out of the picture - maybe a limb could be sacrificed instead?

The weeks flew past and the training was soon over. Many cakes had been eaten and the team had bonded well.

The competition was being held at the Climbing Works in Sheffield. Along with the feeling of excitement with the weekend ahead of us, the nerves were setting in. In relief I inflicted abuse on SB and bopped away to Jonnie's music. The excitement seemed to be shared by the others on the minibus with little acknowledgement of the two random Judo guys that were chumming down with us.



On arrival at Stanage Edge campsite we set up out tents for the weekend and bedded down for some quality sleep. There were several other University clubs also camping. Brushing my teeth on the Saturday morning, I found myself wedged between two other female students. I eyed up their club hoodies - there was definite tension between us. I'm not usually a competitive type but now part of an elite team I fired into a competitive spirit!

The competition was split into a morning and afternoon session with the prize giving at the end of the day. Booked into the morning session we had until lunchtime to complete the twenty-five problems that ranged from easy to difficult. For a warm up Emily and I initiated some interpretive dancing type stretching but with disapproving looks from the guys we opted for an erratic run around the car park instead.

Sixteen to seventeen of the problems seemed potentially do-able but as you only had three chances at each one I was feeling far more nervous than I had anticipated - shaking before I'd even started. Concentration was therefore demanded for every move - I couldn't mess up the easy ones. Challenging but enjoyable I was pleased to rack up a good score for my abilities. I spent the time remaining to watch in awe at the elite working at the remaining eight 'difficult problems'. There was quite a jump from easy/medium problems there to be climbed by the majority and these 'difficult' ones there to pick out the elite!

Throughout the whole morning I had been filled with a definite sense of pride, climbing in our team for the GUM Club. We stuck out brightly in our matching 'Hang-On' T-shirts (kindly given to us in sponsorship from the Glasgow Climbing Centre, along with free Ibrox passes - wahey!)

With our session finished the tired arms and heavy head had soon masked up any remaining adrenaline buzz. We had all given it a good shot. The individual scores were probably a good reflection of our own personal achievements but the competition had essentially provided us with an opportunity to motivate and improve our technique and strength for climbing and along with that we had bonded as a team.

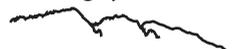
We spent the rest of the weekend sampling some Peak 'grit' - much to Carberry's delight. I didn't really get to grips with the friction and palming or whatever it was but I remember saying that about bouldering not so long ago - something worth pursuing! My first bouldering competition had been quite an adventure and definitely one to be repeated - rock on next year!

Results from the competition:

Dave 'Crux Mover' Brigham

191 points

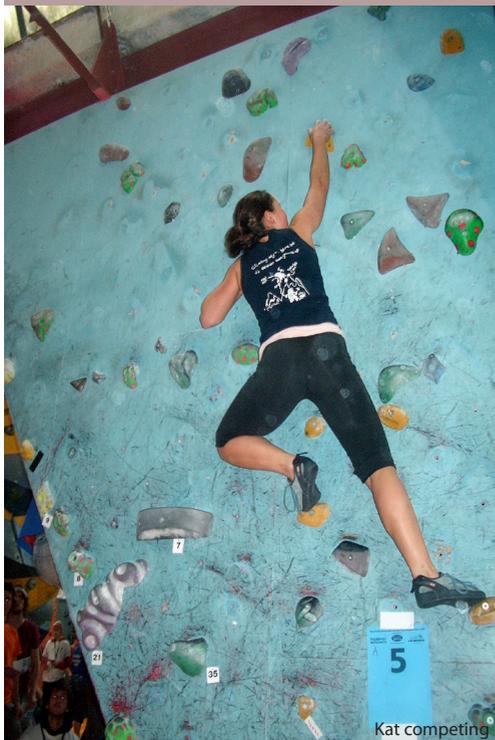
25th (3rd out of the Scottish guys)



Jonnie 'Grunt' Williams	181 points	41st
Alex 'sticky fingers' Carberry	168 points	
Don 'Ballerina' Macrae	161 points	

Kat 'El Torro' Torr	145 points	35th (3rd out of the Scottish girls)
Emily 'Scruff Bag' Ward	143 points	36th (4th)

Bonus 'Smart Arse' award given to Mr Williams for adding in an unnecessary dino to an 'easy' problem – you did the team proud!



Kat competing



Jonnie with his prize



Don spotting Jamie in the mist on a unknown V1



Kat, Emily, Don



Stange

Newtonmore - Handy Guide to Classic Climbs

Following on from Carberry's interim report (see last year's journal) detailing some recent hectic activity at this now well-developed crag, here is a general overview of this unique and thriving venue - enjoy!

1. Central Climb Easy

A long-standing favourite, and in many ways the classic of the crag. Climbs up to the main balcony directly. Vintage.

- Variation (The Campus)

Nigh on impossible (unless you are Pickard).

- Winter III, 4

A good introduction to the harder mixed routes hereabouts. Short but with one tricky move.

2. Left Window IV, 5

Supersedes the old summer route - a good freeze should stabilise the otherwise friable rock. Start up Central Climb, traverse left on good holds before making the committing final move to safety. Knowledge of the 'figure of 4' essential!

3. Left Window Direct HVMod

A (very!) dynamic move gains the normal route at its crux. Future ascensionists should note that this climb was put up by a Peak climber, and as such is typically undergraded.

4. Right Window Easy

A favourite among Newtonmore regulars.

- Winter II

Traverses in from Central Climb to join the summer line without difficulty or danger (unless you are the root).

Girdles

5. The Two-quarters Traverse Scottish VS (F6a)

A right-left hand traverse along the entire main break, before making the hard finish into the left window. Despite the continuous presence of a good foot ledge, the whole traverse must be done without the use of feet. Strenuous and held in high esteem by the few repeat ascensionists.





Ron on the finishing holds of central climb

6. The Technical & Tenuous Traverse Even more Sustained & Even More Serious
A complete high level traverse from right to left window. There is ground fall potential throughout, unless the route is pitched with the second belaying from the right window; rejected as 'aid' though by Dempster. Replaces an earlier R Cox route.

*STOP PRESS!!

The following climb just made it before the journal went to printing:

- The Fingery Feast HVS 5b

Though using parts of other routes, this is a very worthy addition to the crag. After gaining the balcony as for Central Climb, commit to the fingery edge overlooking the main break. Follow this leftwards (dusty crimpers!) to swing feet up and reach for the left window.

Dave
Brigham

On Peak Rock



Dave cutting loose (Lone Boulder, Stanage)



With Glasgow away to compete in the BUSA bouldering competition in Sheffield it was blindingly apparent that it should be combined with a trip to the famous Peak Grit, celebrated the world through for its unparalleled grip and death defying routes.

So with this in mind Jamie and I arrived at the main gate 30 minutes before departure on the Friday to collect the minibus. Immediately we came into some difficulty when we realised that the minibus we were after was an Arnold Clark hire. Cue panic and a taxi ride through rush hour traffic to get to Arnold Clark and back to the GU with the bus (via Garscube to get the tarp we never used and my flat to pack my bag!). Only 45 minutes late – not too bad.

An unspecified period of time later we have arrived in Sheffield, taken part in the competition and are now all standing in the carpark at the popular end of Stanage, in what can only be described as pea soup. Having never climbed at Stanage before I was eager to get on some of the famed rock so me and Jonnie powered away to inspect it. This involved walking through the pea soup hoping that the path we were on would eventually lead to the crag. Finally the crag began to loom up in the distance and we arrived underneath the Flying Buttress Direct. It was soaking. Enthusiasm not dampened by the less than adequate conditions we started up a VS I can't remember the name of next to Hollybush Crack. Needless to say it was a little too bold for Jonnie in the pissing wet so we escaped onto Hollybush Crack. There a fair bit of shaking at the grade from me on the second as I had opted to wear my trainers. A poor idea I can say. Next I went up Right Hand Trinity which was a nice climb despite the conditions. The only real drama was when I took the "full whipper" from 30cm up, TWICE, due to very slimy conditions. Jonnie was unfortunate enough to exactly the same on the second, which provided some amusement. We then headed up Bishop's Route, which was a fantastic climb and was thoroughly enjoyed even in the conditions. To finish the day we headed up Flying Buttress which given the dripping wet definitely justified the 'hard' in its HVD grade.

The Sunday was a much more amenable day regarding the weather. We could actually see the landmarks when we were touring about in the minibus. As it was slightly better weather we decided to head to the Plantation to grab a look at some of the boulders. I had my eyes on the classic Stan-





Don with Stange in the background

age highball "Not to be Taken Away". Arriving we were pleased to find that most of the boulders were dry and the conditions were light year away from the previous day. Perfect friction one might even have been tempted to say!!!! The gang set about warming up on various problems and after a while I went away to tackle my nemesis.

The first move is the crux of route, which is a semi dynamic move from some pretty poor slopers to another pretty poor sloper. Coupled with this there are no real footholds. After messing about on this for a while I managed to latch the move and then began to move up the ramp towards the top. The ramp gets easier as up move upwards but it's a long problem and very high. I was getting pretty pumped as I neared the top and didn't fancy it so jumped off. 10 minutes later I was feeling fresh again and began trying to latch the first move. After many more failed attempts I latched it once more and began on up the ramp. I felt much better this time and continued up until I was finally topping out on top the Grand Hotel Boulder. To my surprise I received a round of applause and quite a crowd had developed underneath who looked on disapproving of my antics. I couldn't care as I was skipping about the top with a huge rush proclaiming to the world that I was "Jerry Moffat".

Back down at the bottom admiring what I had just climbed with everyone another group of climbers came up and we exchanged some pleasantries. I thought nothing of it until Jamie started whispering in rushed words that it was none other that the legendary Chris Sharma. It turned out to be the man himself, which sent everyone into a bit of starstruck spiral of disbelief. What an amusing end to a thoroughly enjoyable weekend.

I'll end with what may be conceived as a controversial statement:

"Fuck Scotland and the mountains, lets go to the Peak"

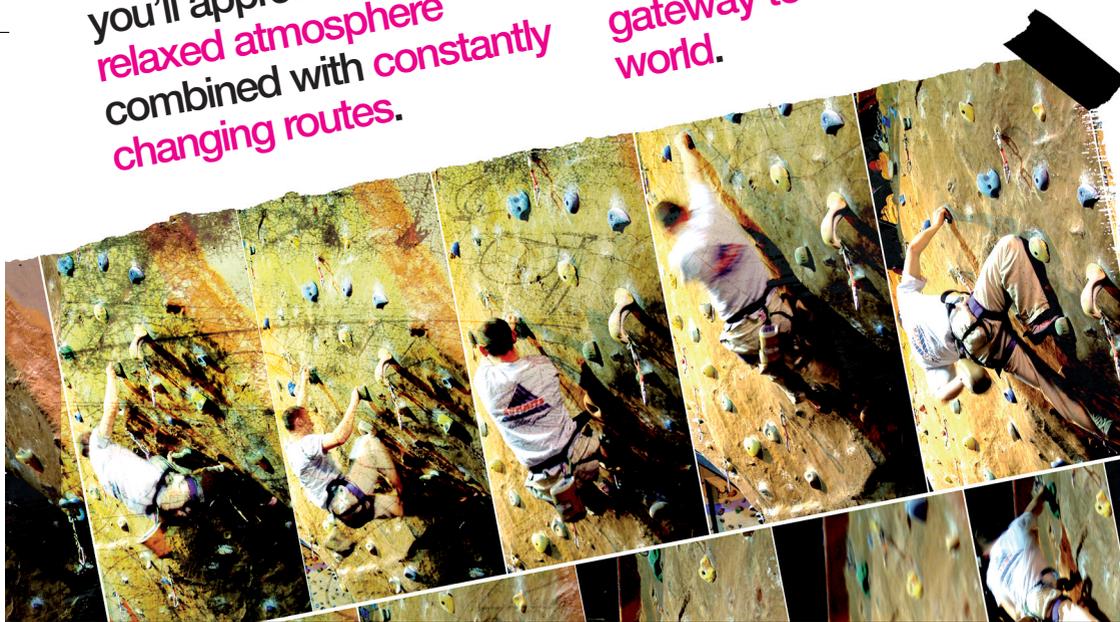


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