

## NEW YEAR, NEW SNOW?? – NEW SKILLS & NEW COMP SEC!!

### PRESIDENT WELCOME:

Hello again. I was hoping this would be a proper winter-y newsletter but winter seems to have forgotten to visit this year. Nevertheless, I think there has been an opportunistic approach by many members to make the most of what conditions there have been, by skipping the country, or by organising spectacular burns night dinners... I even heard that some people were studying for exams or writing dissertations. Fingers crossed and snow dances please!

### GUMC ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **New Competitions Secretary:** Adam Visick

### AWARD WINNERS 2017:

- **Golden Boot:** Robert Giddy  
Runners-up: Alice Butler, Duncan Butler
- **Climber of the Year:** Robert Giddy  
Runners-up: Ted Collins, Adam Visick
- **Mountaineer of the Year:** Liam Anderson  
Runners-up: Alice Butler, Josh Ring

### GUMC ACTIVITIES:

#### CANADA TRIP – Katie Bowen

#### *Moose and Moussaka: Christmas in Canada*



“See you at Christmas in Canada, right?” What with Alice going on a year abroad to UBC and Emily doing a season in Revelstoke, it had become a bit of a joke. But somehow, I negotiated my brother getting lost on the M25, US border control and the Vancouver metro to knock on Alice’s door at 1am. The next day we were joined by Liam, one of Alice’s civil engineering friends, and met Nick DW who had been given a pass of leave from his relatives on the strict agreement he was back for 6pm Christmas eve. Despite snow, avalanche closures and a run-in with the RCMP, we made it to Revelstoke

in time for the pub. There was so much snow, making powder days in the Alps and definitely Scotland look like nothing. Also, there were trees everywhere. There were a lot of crashes.

We had a very civilised post-skiing Christmas dinner with a turkey and all the trimmings, although I think our parents would have found it entertaining watching us fend for ourselves and time the different vegetables and the gravy.

Skiing was rapidly burning through my money and knee ligaments, so I took a couple of days off. There was ice everywhere, but Alice's ski boots had mashed her toes so asking her to kick bullet hard ice wasn't exactly ethical. So, I went swimming at the "aquatic centre", which had a rule of no outdoor shoes in the changing rooms. I emerged to find an identical pair of phantoms parked next to mine with a note inside.

I managed to meet up with Chris the next day, who was camping out in a hammock. By this point it was getting quite late in the afternoon, but we decided to go and look at the nearby "Dump Falls" anyway. Chris won the lead and got up just as the daylight faded out. My torch was low on battery so I seconded in the dark, saving the power so we could ab off.

The next day I was persuaded to go skiing again, but the day after we hitchhiked west to three valley gap. The climb was tantalisingly close to the road, but the approach across the railway tracks and buried first pitch took almost as long as a proper walk-in, by which point the ice had warmed up considerably. The enticing belay cave suddenly became unattractively like a fountain, discarding icicles from the roof, and you could tell just by looking that the ice was rotten. We bailed and decided to head west at dawn the next day. Our plan A had to change upon realising that "Field, BC", had little more than a field so continued to Lake Louise to see in the new year. It emerged that two of Emily's friends Karl and Mike were keen to climb the next day, so we took it easy and went to bed at 12.15.

Guinness Gully (WI4) was merely a short walk from the road. I realised two thirds of the way up the first pitch that all my screws were blunt, so bailed and let Chris take over. Three ice pitches were interspersed with gully rambling and concluded with an interesting tree/mixed climbing pitch. Mike came off quite badly with falling ice but I am assured is back out climbing again.

The next day the temperature dropped to -30c, but was forecast to warm up slightly, so we spent the day travelling to just south of Canmore. A friendly local drove us onto the 1A highway to the start of our route. Bivvying by a cement plant was not the most scenic, but perhaps better than the dump which was the start of the walk-in for Coire Dubh Integrale on Goat Mountain.

It didn't get much warmer, but -30c overnight in the dry was surprisingly more comfortable than damp, above-zero bivvying in Scotland. It only got marginally warmer when the sun came up – perhaps -25c, and the first ice pitch was brittle and slow going. We moved together to the top of the gully, where we concluded that the mixed pitches weren't in ideal condition. The daylight wasn't going to last much longer, plus with a late finish we had no way of getting back to civilisation, so we abseiled off and retreated to Tim Hortons.

My last day climbing was at Johnston Canyon. It was still cold. With tourists watching I took Emily up the WI3 ice in the centre, her first ever Canadian ice climb. Then Chris set up a top rope on Prism Falls, and we took turns. Despite looking steep it had plenty of hookable features and rests. Then Emily drove us back to Revelstoke for a final visit to the aquatic centre hot-tub. Chris was hanging

around for a few days before heading out to Patagonia, but Emily dropped me off for the all-night Greyhound bus going west.

I arrived in Vancouver the next morning, following an interesting 3am bus-change in Kamloops with posters advising the benefits of carrying naloxone. Highlights of my last day: touring with Alice involved a Canadian social security office (naturally), MEC, the UBCVOC headquarters (with more tele skis than the Norwegian army) and moussaka.



### **NEW YEAR'S MEET – Alexandra Ferguson**

On the second last day of 2016 the first load of GUMC members past and present made their way up to the Inbhirfhaolain hut in Glen Etive to celebrate the New Year in style. Following some turbulence on Rannoch Moor, Liam and I arrived to find the hut cold and empty due to arriving mere minutes after the first car. The fire was lit, sleeping spaces reserved and dinner was eaten while we enjoyed the peace and quiet of the empty hut. However, a few hours later we were abruptly interrupted by the arrival of several cars. Within minutes people were running back and forth, and an hour later the hut was bursting with people playing various card and board games including the infamous 1980's trivial pursuit.

Waking up the next day to gale force winds, torrential rain and a painful lack of snow meant that few ventured far from the hut and instead relaxed, continuing with card games or reading books. Throughout the day, yet more GUMC'ers arrived and with early evening came the annual Hogmanay dinner courtesy of James, Emily, Aki and Emma: spaghetti bolognese for the meat eaters and a lentil bolognese for the veggies. Much drinking and hilarities followed and at 11.45pm those who hadn't already passed out made their way outside for the midnight fireworks and drinking of prosecco with the added bonus of Mike running and dancing wildly in circles. The festivities continued until the early hours of the morning and with new year's day came the sun. While some remained in the hut and nursed their hangovers, others did actual mountaineering in the awfully warm weather, and a few brave souls began their new year with a bang, or a jump in this case, into the freezing river along the valley, watched by a surprisingly tame herd of deer. That evening, some left and travelled back to the

real world while those remaining played even more games and drank even more alcohol late into the night. The final day saw the end of our hibernation period and so, with heavy hearts, we returned to a world of signal and running water, wondering if the Scottish winter we were promised would ever arrive.

### **BALLATER MEET – David Southgate**

For the first meet of the second semester the Gum Club headed up to Ballater. Due to the Braemar snow gate being closed we headed past Dundee and up the A90 stopping at a chip shop / sweet shop for dinner. However, this was not any ordinary meet. For this meet we had the one and only Sir Nick with us to teach winter skills.

On the Saturday, some people went climbing, some learning the skills from Sir Nick and we headed south of Braemar for a walk. Getting to the beginning was not as simple as it could have been as we had more people than could be put in a car and we were relying on the snow gate being open so we could actually drive to the correct place. All but one of us took the car, and the other took a ride in the mini bus / hitched to meet us there. The original plan was to bag Beinn Iutharn Mhor / Carn an Rìgh, however, we spent too much time jumping through cornices to quite make it. Due to the concern of darkness, we instead made it to the small loch close-ish to our planned goal and headed back.

Sunday involved trying to ski for some but others went with Sir Nick to Lochnagar to learn some skills. The weather was not quite as good as it was on Saturday: it was warmer so everything was starting to melt. Despite this, I finally managed to get some use with crampons so overall a successful day.



## **GLENCOE MEET – Adam Visick**

The 28th saw the return to the Ballachulish hall, a minibus full of keen winter folk longingly looking out the window for the good old, elusive cold stuff. Stepping into the hall brought flashbacks of the freshers' meet, ratchet screwdriver and a rather nippy midnight dip. Shrugging this off, we decided we might as well have a trek up a nearby Corbet. Because how hard could that be... Three hours and a snow drift later, Emily, James, Ruadhan, Ellie and I are huddled in a group shelter wondering why on earth we thought it was a good idea in the first place. Despite this, we persisted and naturally ended up on the wrong side of the ridge. With some of us feeling a bit sorry for ourselves, we retreated down for the clouds to part and reveal where we should have gone. Ah well, better luck next time.

Back at the hall, we arrive to discover Rob's done a classic and dislocated his shoulder again, in somewhat better circumstances than last time. Nothing a few bottles of wine can't fix. Duncan performed a magnificent rendition of the "Address to a Haggis" and we tucked into our dinner. The safety instructors for Sunday arrived in perfect time for Roxy to pass (just) her breathalyser test. Rona, Thomas and I went up with Andy who did a fantastic job of teaching us how to make snow anchors and snow bucket seats whilst ascending Broad Gulley. We also managed to do the classic Dorsal Arête which produced some decent views, before scurrying back down the gulley roped up alpine style to quickly clean up and head off! Get well soon Rob!



**GLENCOE MEET 2.0. – Roxanna Barry (Because Roxy decided she really wanted to write about Glencoe – Sorry Adam!!)**

### ***Saving Black Mercury***

It was raining. The gusa stereo was locked leaving us helpless and at the mercy of each other's banter on the A82. A foreshadowing of the weekend perhaps, how naive and optimistic we were...

Operation: Buchaille Etive Beag

Now, this operation had been attempted by RGBaz once before, but was abandoned after Munro no. 1 to escort some converse-clad freshers down to Clachaig headquarters for more footwear appropriate activities. But, with the correct equipment (new gumc walkie talkies!), the operation was a-go.

Team Beige Day had the go ahead, dropping Black Mercury down the road and parking up next to commander Sir Nick, who was attempting the operation with some new troops. The plan was for Black Mercury to drop in at Munro no. 2 and join the team on the retreat.

Treacherous snowy conditions were found instead of the miserable rain forecast, and Beige Day contemplated the relevance of their operation name. Beige Day, Black Mercury and team We-Dropped-A-Walkie-Talkie were in constant comms, with the state of the art walkie-talkies enabling information transfer from Buchaille Etive Mor, to Beag, all the way to Stob Coire nan Lochan.

Disaster struck, when after a routine check-in with Black Mercury, Beige Day were informed the entire team (of one) involved in the Black Mercury operation had dislocated their shoulder. Further news came in through comms; team We-Dropped-A-Walkie-Talkie... had dropped their walkie-talkie.

Beige Day was to split into separate missions. RGBaz to return to the gusa-mobile (after nipping up to summit Stob Dubh... again) and transport Black Mercury to a secure location in Fort Bill that could deal with the devastating injury. The remaining team of Beige Day bravely continued the operation onto Munro no. 2, arranging an alternate evacuation.

Back at the gusa-tank, spirits were low (despite a road-side picnic in the wet snow). The crux of the new mission, transporting Black Mercury from the gusa-copter, into the secure a&e department. The terrain was hard and treacherous but the team was awarded with quick and efficient medical attention (and the School of Rock).

A new up-and-coming procedure was practiced on sgt. Black Mercury, who bravely refused all offers of sedative or anesthetic, to keep a clear mind for the road ahead.

After quite a good cup of tea, Black Mercury and RGBaz were able to retreat from the secure location (with a trip to Morrisons) and returned to the Ballachulish base camp.

But the operation was not over yet. David from Beige day had to join the team to help them embark on the bravest part of the day: the Redwine Mountain. Efforts had been attempted before, but not in such astounding dedication as team Redwine, who completed the mission 5 times over.

The next morning, however, operation Redwine had to pass one final test...

TBC (not really)

