



# Newbury Mountain Club

## Newsletters & Trip Reports, 1999

### Newsletter No. 1

OK, how did that happen? One day I'm sitting around at work trying to think of something to do while I wait for the next project to rear its ugly head. The next I've written a couple of trip reports and volunteered myself to do the rest of this little document. I was either insane or that Katie character stitched me up - not sure which yet but I suspect the former. Only myself to blame I suppose.

Anyone would think that a lot of time has passed since the last club newsletter. Anyone would be right. The last one came out before I even joined the club back in February. Those in charge seem to have a lot of other things to do so I volunteered to put it together.

As a newish member of the club I must say I'm much impressed by the whole setup. When I first called Alan around the time of the AGM he told me that everyone was a bunch of old farts who couldn't hack the pace of real outdoor life. After his initial attempts to put me off joining I came along anyway and I must say I'm glad I did. Despite being one of the youngest members of the club I had trouble keeping up (especially in Cornwall where Alan and Mike reduced me to a quivering wreck on 20+ miles of the Coast Path). I can just about do the distances now but it took some training. I think that maybe my one saving grace from those early walks was that I never once called out a taxi half way round. Anyway, onto other things.

Following in the same vein as the only other newsletter I've seen, here are a few trip reports from some of the activities we've had in the recent and not so recent past. We've done a lot of other things this year as well. Some of our trips out have included a stay in Luxembourg courtesy of Anna for some rock climbing, walking and gastronomical delights of the region capped off nicely by some of Pokey's cooking (worth joining the club for regardless of the other activities); Paul's trip to the Forest of Dean for mountain biking; Comfy Sofas and walking in the Brecons; walking in the Yorkshire Dales; climbing and walking in the Lake District; a week in Ireland walking, walking and then walking some more. We also entered a raft in the Newbury Crafty Raft Race earlier in the year. We had a big yellow raft with a mountain in the centre. If you didn't see it you should check out the photos. It has to be seen to be believed...

Martin Higgins

### Malaga

Despite arriving in Malaga after UK pubs would have kicked everyone out for the night we still had no trouble getting a few beers. There's something quite relaxing about sipping a cool beer outside at 2am following a cramped flight. (Mental note - leave knees at home when flying with EasyJet).

The first morning in Spain dawned bright and clear - anything less would have demanded a refund. We had a pleasant drive through the country to get to El Chorro for some climbing. A short stop at a trackside cafe for a Coke was followed by a brief drive up a rough trail to ditch the cars. There was a reasonable walk to the rock we intended to climb. The scenery was fantastic as we trekked along the



railway line. In England we'd have been arrested for such a walk but in Spain walking through the tunnels was fine. The mountains shot up steeply on all sides and the sun beamed down through the gaps in a very promising manner.

Arriving in the climbing area we found an excellent slab with bolted routes of varying grades giving all who climbed something

interesting to do. My first climb of the day was hindered slightly on the way up by a large dollop of somebody's hand cream (can't imagine who might have left that there, Katie) in an already very polished hold.

We ended up spending quite a few hours at this location before heading back along the railway to the cars. On the way there was a path on the other side of the valley called the Kings Way. A few of us (Mike, Helen, Bill and myself) decided to go along it. The path was made of concrete and tiles with steel stiffeners supported on steel girders bolted to the rock face. The concrete and tiles was crumbling away as it had been built in the twenties and never maintained. At various points along the path there was no concrete left so continuing the route was by way of inching along the remaining steel girders above huge drops onto the rocks below. The really dodgy bits usually had some sort of cable attached to the rock which could be clipped into Via Ferrata style. When we'd completed the route a German couple asked us if they could do it themselves. They had no gear with them so we said they could go round the first part to see what it looked like. They returned a couple of minutes later looking very pale.



The evening was spent going round a variety of drinking establishments and eating tapas on the way. The second day dawned bright and clear (slight deja vu there). We headed off to El Torcal for another day of climbing. We got to the town and drove around a little trying to find the right way. After a few twists and turns we stopped for a morning coffee and to ask directions to the crags. It turned out we were on the only road headed

in the right direction anyway - we wouldn't be the NMC any other way. The rock formations were most unusual. It was all cast limestone and the actual shapes across the hillside looked just like a shanty town on the outskirts of Sao Paulo. The walk over to the crag was quite short but interesting as we had to pretty much find our own path through the rocks. There was one particular face that held all of the routes for the day. There was a good mix again so all could take part. The climbing culminated in a siege of a route up the end of the face. The crux move was at the bottom of the route and involved getting around a sizeable nose to make the first proper clip. Actually making the clip was the problem and the move became really simple once Bob cracked getting the quickdraw in place. The rest of the route was quite strenuous but had good holds all the way. Another great day of climbing.

Food for the evening was quite interesting as we ended up in a place that served assorted seafood. There was a selection of fish and calamari which was all very nice. People seemed to balk a bit at the whole baby cuttlefish especially on our Tads' table but that was OK as I liked them and only had to share with Bill and Helen. Later on in the evening we were joined by the last few who'd travelled out late so lots of beer was consumed into the small hours including a visit to a pub



which was playing some pretty good music to dance to. The place was quite crowded but the half dozen of us still partying managed to clear a wide area as we danced. The area was increased when they put on some Nirvana and I went for the first headbang I'd done in ages. My neck ached a bit in the morning so it must have been good.

Climbing again for third day. We ended up in a fairly remote location which I couldn't put a name to. The routes were a bit desperate and my arms were really screaming after a very short time resulting from the strenuous climb the day before. Pokey did a scorcher of a route but got lactate poisoning from the effort. He went a very interesting shade of white when his arms were massaged slightly to relieve the strain in them. We managed to leave Mike at the top without a rope when we were collecting all the gear up at the end of the day so he had to walk round the long way. There was a stop off on the way out to see some flamingos - Linda was not happy as she'd wanted to see them but wasn't with us at the time. We spent the night in Cadiz at a hostel run by John Cleese. He seemed to think that the name Higgins was something to do with a musical and started into song as soon as he saw our passports - odd chap.

The hostel had rules about when we could get in during the night and we were outside the door earlier than we should have been. Helen tried to climb to the first floor but there were electric cables in the way. She made too much noise coming down again (hard to believe I know) and the old guy in the hostel opened the door early for us. He said something disapproving in Spanish but nobody understood it.

The itinerary was to spend the day looking around Cadiz and getting some culture in. Fortunately I wasn't the only one who'd rather wait till they were too old to do anything else before looking at cities so a car full of us went off to the biggest National Park in the area instead. There were thousands more flamingos (sorry Linda) and lots of other birds including storks nesting on the visitor center a mating pair of peacocks and Azur Magpies. Thorny toed lizards popped up every now and then from under the walkways around the areas we could visit. In one of the wetland areas we saw a water vole busy eating his way through a load of reeds. He didn't seem too bothered that we were there watching him and the general consensus was that he was really cute. There was tons of stuff to see for the day. I think Squeak was getting a little bored at times but then wildlife isn't really her thing. She seemed quite happy whenever we stopped for ice creams though. I think she survived the whole trip on ice cream as she doesn't eat fish and there's very little else.

We managed to get on a tour of the sand dunes. The driver was commentating on everything in Spanish but that wasn't a problem as he'd point as well so we could see all the stuff even though we didn't always know what it was. Among other things we saw beetles screwing (or fighting - it amounts to the same thing anyway), red and fallow deer, wild boar, prickly pear, and all sorts of other things. Just about all the animals had young with them. The return journey along the beach was a bit of a problem for Helen and was made worse by getting caught in traffic along the road to the visitor center. She'd decided she needed a pee and we only just made it back before she exploded. Bill and Squeak seemed to be getting on quite well on this day - they disappeared for a while as we were walking around and she discovered he was ticklish behind a sand dune somewhere.



The journey to Sevilla was interesting. We started off in a traffic jam and as we had a time constraint for getting food we decided not to try and go to the hotel first. To save some time Helen decided to get changed in the car. Unfortunately there was a really bad smell that wafted in from outside at just the moment she removed her knickers - most unfortunate. The speed limit was summarily

ignored in order to make it back which we did just in the nick of time. When we joined the others there was a huge quantity of paella waiting for us. It was polished off almost immediately. While the majority of the group headed out on the town for a Big Night Out Bill, Helen and I returned to the hotel. We were getting up very early to get to Tarifa to do some diving. Helen was staying a little longer in Spain and Bill and I weren't flying out till after midnight so we effectively had an extra full day to play with. We left the hotel without hearing a thing from the others so we assumed they'd had a good evening.

The diving was excellent. I'd never done it before and nor had Bill. I felt like a kid in a new playground. There were all sorts of fish to see and some cool rock formations. There was a thing that looked a bit like a sea cucumber which, when

played with, squirted out some sticky white stuff (nothing suspect there then). Bill was feeling a bit off colour - he didn't realise till too late that Sangria contains red wine which doesn't agree with him, especially not in the quantity he'd managed over dinner the night before. Helen was buddy with an American guy and they saw a huge crab and an octopus which she'd wanted to see for quite a long time. We met up with Squeak back in the hotel in Malaga where she'd been dropped off by the others on their mad dash for the airport. Unusually, the flight was spot on time and then to make matters better it took an hour less than it was supposed to. That coupled with completely clear roads on the way home actually meant I got a couple of hours sleep before I had to go to work again.

Fantasticas vacaciones - gracias Tio Bob...

Martin Higgins

## Alps 1999 - Chamonix (France) and Arolla (Switzerland)

This year we wanted a third person after our experiences of last year. A search of the club found Roger Walford to be the ideal person, having no previous experience of either rock climbing, winter mountaineering or any other climbing in large mountain ranges. The trip was to include two weeks "holiday" in Chamonix and Arolla. The first week we planned to acclimatise and introduce Roger to the Alps. In the second, meet up with a British guide called Steve Hartland and a friend of his - Andy Perkins. After convincing Roger that he was up to the task, we set off upon getting ourselves ready for the adventure with many weekends in North Wales and hanging around in trees at Roger's house - much to the amusement of his wife and children.

On arrival we set up base camp near Argentiere and the next morning took the early train to the Mer de Glace, to get Roger moving on ice for the first time and refresh Gerald's and my own technique. The weather proved to be unsettled with thunderstorms most afternoons. On one



day heavy rain made any excursion to the mountains impossible. Instead we drove around to Geneva to take in the sites of this magnificent city, only to find it just as wet and extremely expensive. Evenings were spent in ie Cafe du Glacier trying to tempt Roger off his steak and chips and on to the delightful cuisine of the Savoyard region. We eventually succeeded with a little hello from the proprietor.

Wednesday morning, seven thirtyish and chilled to the bone on the Aiguilles des Grand Montets telepherique station (I had forgotten my Goretex), we set off for the easy, but fine introductory climb of Petite Aiguille Verte. The north-west ridge was a lot icier than the last time I had done the route, but it did not present any major difficulties on the way up. Descent however became a confused tangle of ropes with the multitude of other alpinists coming up the ridge. Back at the station I left Gerald and Roger to play on the snow at the bottom of the steps whilst I descended the telepherique to the middle station and warmth.



A bad weather forecast for the rest of the week and we decided to travel to Arolla a couple of days early. This meant we had to miss out climbing Aiguilles du Tour, something I wanted to do, but didn't want having become rather familiar with the inside of a crevasse below the Col Superior du Tour the previous year. When we were packing away the

tents the rain came back and stayed with us all the way into Switzerland. Arriving in Arolla to find the campsite waterlogged, none of us took much convincing that the best option was a room in the Hotel du Glacier. Morning brought little change in the weather, but we set off anyway, walking up to the Cabane des Aiguilles Rouges d'Arolla. The next morning there was not a cloud in the sky, and we enjoyed the views from the top of Pointe de Vouasson (3489m): a nice easy peak with no real dangers.

Two days later we were discussing the next few days' climbing over a beer with Steve. By the end of that evening we had a distinct feeling that the holiday was over. Our plan was to spend five nights in the mountains without returning to the valley until the fifth day.

Starting at 5am from the Cabane de la Tsa we made our way up the west ridge of Dent de Tsalion (3,585), 640m of rock climbing graded at AD. Feeling completely exhausted we still had the short climb to the summit of Aiguille de la Tsa, but the exposure on this table top sized summit made it worth our while. We spent the night at the Refuge des Bouquetins, having picked Andy Perkins up on the way (just as well because we had forgotten the second rope). After yesterday's rock climbing we now turned our attention to ice climbing on Pointe Kurz, taking the direct approach instead of the glacier swinging gently around the peak. Gerald and Roger roped up with Steve, myself with Andy. A narrow ridge lead to the summit and after a quick photo session we descended to Col Collon and into Italy and the Refugio Col Collon for our third night. Next day we climbed back up to Col Collon and Switzerland again.



This time with Gerald, Roger and myself on one rope, Steve and Andy on the other we headed up l'Eveque. I had to give the summit a miss because I was totally shattered. A long crossing of the glacier d'Ottemma in burning heat of late morning saw us to the Cabane des Vignettes for our last night in the mountains. Our final day was a traverse of the Pigne d'Arolla (3796m), straightforward in itself, however we took a slight detour to make things more interesting. On the

way down Steve thought it would be a good idea if we (the paying customers) jump into a crevasse and practice self rescue, whilst the others arrest the fall. The last bit of climbing was the ladders on the Pas de Chevre, from here it was all the way down to Arolla and a welcome beer.

The team: Martin Butler, Gerald Taylor, Roger Walford, Steve Hartland & Andy Perkins - aspirant guide and of Troll

Martin Butler

## Pony Trekking in the Brecons

Friday night started off an eventful weekend with a trek to the nearest pub via a difficult-to-see path including slippery stepping-stones over a small river. Most of the group turned up later just in time for last orders - not a major problem as they hadn't heard of 'time-at-the-bar' in that small village. On the return walk to camp we found a wooden assault course style playground with monkey bars that had to be done.

The morning saw us at the riding centre where we were introduced to our horses for the day and shown what to do. We began our riding in the training paddock to prove that we could at least steer the animals. The first part of the trek was along the road where we learnt to trot properly. After a mile or two we moved off road and paused for a few minutes beside the track. The horses had a brief dance around when they were startled by a branch snapping in the woods but there was no real problem, they seemed to be very docile. We continued riding for a while till we got to a good spot for lunch beside a stream. The horses were determined to steal the food but obviously hadn't encountered hungry NMC members before. I think one managed to grab a packet of cakes including the wrappings but that was about all. Straight after lunch we had a go at a brief canter - this was easier than I expected. A little further down the track Bill's horse refused to move from the middle of a stream no matter how much he told it to. At the top of the hill on the opposite side of the valley we had another short canter. Sue managed to fall off as the horse went one way and she went another, but I think she only ended up with dented pride. We did a final canter for the last couple of hundred yards across a field to the centre. The horses knew this always happened at the end of the ride and trying to stop them was a futile effort. Bill got left behind by his horse when it sent him 'out the back door'. He had to walk the last bit. In the pub again for the evening - where else?

We had a 'Roger walk' on the Sunday. The route was the Brecon Horseshoe and was a bit of a long one. Alan decided to run large sections and could occasionally be seen most of the way up the next hill going fast. Several people had hangovers and looked a little the worse for wear so a huge walk may not have been the best thing for them to do. The weather was fantastic with views that stretched on for miles. There were a few wild ponies at one point which seem to be quite common to the area and some paragliders playing off the side of one hill. Coming down off the hills left us with a quite long walk to get back to the cars. Water supplies ran low so Mike and Alan ran along to the riding centre as we passed by to get some more. Much appreciated. We all made it back to the cars in various states from just tired to almost crawling. Those who were still alive headed home after an unhealthy food stop with rather good ice cream milkshakes.

Martin Higgins

## Newsletter No. 2

At long last your second newsletter of the year. With updates to the Meets List, tales of derring do, and any other gossip.

It looks like two newsletters a year is all we can manage. But as has been said on many occasions, quality not quantity.

Whilst on the matter of quantity, we as a club have had over 400 activity days this year. Which is pretty good going. This excludes anything that you get up to in your spare time. Like acting in plays, barn dances, barbecues, band practice, crevasse rescue practice, climbing on Welsh sea cliffs, the Avon Gorge, or huddling in plastic bags on top of Welsh mountains in rain storms.

Rather than do a trip-by-trip account of all that we have done, the following articles are here to jog your memory of days out in the hills as well as giving a flavour of what we as a club get up to.

Harold Makant

## Snowdon

Most people arrived quite late on the Friday night. Whilst people arrived food and drink was being consumed and routes were discussed for the following day. Someone reading the visitors' book noticed a comment about a ghost haunting the cottage! Someone else then suggested that it was the ghost turning Doug and Caroline's electric blanket off and closing the Rayburn draught inlet!!

On Saturday most people decided to go up Snowdon so a route was chosen and we set out.

The first part of the ascent was a good warm up, and didn't we warm up, people were stripping off layers quickly as they realised it was not quite as cold as they first thought. We had lunch on a ridge just behind some rocks to get out of the wind, by now it had cooled down somewhat. The next part of the walk was quite steep and at this point there was some snow. As we went up we were following each others kicked in steps in the snow. About half way up this part we were passed by some other walkers, coming down, who came rushing past kicking up the snow and destroying the stamped in steps in the snow - they must have been foreigners, or Welsh!!

We reached the top of the steeper part and came into some cloud but it was easy to see we did not have far to go. We huddled around the marker at the top and some of us took photos. It was decided to take a slightly different route back along an adjacent ridge to the one we came up. The first part was along a narrow ridge and coming in the other direction was a party of school kids making a hell of a racket and generally being a bit of a rabble. After the ridge the route became much wider less steep and the snow had accumulated along the slope, at times it was about a foot deep. Because the snow was so deep we had some fun running down it, which seemed better than slogging through it slowly. As we came out of the snow we lost the path a couple of times and ended up slightly higher than intended, this led to us having to go down the old mining truck ramp, which was very steep and at some points slippery and some of us had to take it slowly. We stopped off in Beddgelert on the way back to the cottage to get some provisions, beer etc.

That evening most of us planned on going back to Beddgelert for a pub meal. As we waited people were reading through the visitors' book and finding more and

more references to the ghost. When we were finally all ready Alex gave some people a lift and comments were made about the fact that we managed to lose Doug before we got there (she's not a girl racer really, honest!). There was some kind of festival going on that weekend so some of the pubs were fully booked and I think we were quite lucky to get a place where we could all sit down around two tables pulled together let alone in the same vicinity as each other. When we got back to the cottage we sat around in the lounge and talked until people started slowly going to bed.

The next morning people were going off to do different walks from the cottage or driving to other places to walk, from there everyone made their way home.

Will Russell

## **A Lightning Ascent of the Hill of White Light**

We were up at a reasonable time for a change - probably because Roger was with us - and decided to climb Pinnacle Ridge Route on Craig Braich Ty Du. The ridge is not a continuous one, but a series of broken ridges rising from the road near the Ogwen Cafe to the summit slopes of Pen yr Ole Wen and graded 2/ 3 scramble or Diff.

We roped-up alpine style as practice for our forthcoming trip, Gerald taking the first lead on a gloriously sunny morning, which started promisingly up the short but exposed introductory ridge. After traversing the pinnacles the ridge soon petered out into a grassy couloir. To avoid the uninteresting plod we ventured onto a buttress to the right of the couloir: climbing this involved grunting and groaning our way up a crevasse sized crack.

There followed a steady plod to the base of the final, but much longer ridge leading to the summit. Stopping to re-apply sun cream and to stop Roger moaning about his hunger, we then set off up the ridge, this time my turn to take the lead. Here the main obstacles were route finding, but this meant you could pick your own line, varying the difficulty as you pleased, much to the consternation of those following. A brief rest from leading was broken when a shout from above declared "I think Mr Butler can lead this one". This one, as it turned out was the best pitch of all - a traverse on to then up a slab that dropped away from you, and an exit through a "window" on to the other side of the ridge.

There was some discussion about which line to follow next, keep to the crest or follow a heather staircase: Ged set off up the staircase. This as it turned out was the wise choice, as whilst Roger and myself waited, I saw what I thought was a flash across on the Glyders, followed shortly by a rumble of thunder. As we shouted up to Ged about possibly needing to find an escape route the storm rolled in from across the valley, soaking us in seconds and pelting us with hail stone.

There's something about being high on a mountain ridge with lightning flashing, thunder crashing, having half a tonne of aluminium around your waist and a wet rope linking you to your climbing partners like Faraday to a kite, that concentrates the mind, as you try to decide whether you're terrified, excited or just both.

Huddled in a shelter like three drowned rats we waited for a break, which when it finally came we had to make our exit on wet and slippery rock. After pulling over the lip of our shelter (with a lift from Roger) I saw that the summit slopes were directly above us. We scrambled off the ridge and onto the slopes whilst the storm held off just long enough for us to start our descent.

Spare a thought for the other members of the club who spent the night on the summit of Pen yr Ole Wen - the Hill of White Light.

Martin Butler

## The Welsh 3000 Footers

Strange how you can become obsessed with finishing off something that you have started. The Welsh 15 3000 foot peaks became one such obsession for some of us. Last year Alan, Kate and myself were part of a group determined to do the walk, but due to bad weather, poor navigation and a sprained ankle we only managed 2 peaks. Alan tried again later on in the year but was beaten back by driving rain after completing 8 of them. This third attempt was not going to fail.

We started off on Friday night by walking up the Pyg track and bivvying out on the platform of the railway station. A beautiful dry night with moonshine. Up at 5am to tick off Snowdon, along with all the other folk who had bivvied on the top. Then on to Crib Goch, dropping down onto the Llanberis pass, walking past the campsite where Martin, Gerald and Roger were staying (they were probably still in their tents). Walked along to Nant Peris then slogged up Elidir Fawr on the other side. Hot and sunny weather made the going tedious. Y Garn, Glyder Fawr and Glyder Fach soon followed before we ticked off Tryfan, peak number 8 before dropping into Ogwen around 4pm for a rest and some food, and to pick up some supplies from one of the cars. Then the thunder storm started. We waited until 6.30 to let the storm die down a bit before heading off up Pen yr Ole Wen to claim peak number 9 and find somewhere flat to bivvy out in the rain. Those with Gore Tex bivvy bags claimed to have slept well, other were not so fortunate.

Next morning we set off at 6am to complete the task in hand. There was little chance of drying out because the weather had reverted to typical Welsh mode, i.e. driving rain and mist. Proceeded to tick off the Carneddws, making the detour to Yr Elen for peak number 13. Had a minor navigation fuff, a GPS unit did not really help. Lunch was had in the shelter at below Foel Grach. We walked along a well worn path across open moor land in the mist and rain to Foel Fras at 1a.m. to finish the peaks off.

Then a long 6 mile walk out, dropping out of the clouds at around 1750 feet, before reaching Aber Falls, and that much needed beer at the Aber Falls Hotel on the coast in glorious sunshine. At least we could dry our gear out.

Harold Makant

## Skye

Back in May of this year five hardy souls ventured north of the border to the Isle of Skye. After many hours driving over two days we arrived to find we had landed a top quality holiday home to serve as our base. It was so luxurious and spacious we had a bedroom each, two bathrooms, a washing machine, tumble drier, and kitchen that had everything. Best of all the pub was only 15 minutes walk away in the village of Uig at the northern end of the island. That evening we discussed various ideas for the week ahead over several pints of the local ale made in Uig's miniature brewery.

Skye certainly lived up to its name of the 'Misty Isle' with the clouds rolling in and out all week eventually being more in than out. But that wouldn't stop the ruffly tufty crew that was assembled, well three of them at least. Bruce and Mike took their lives in their hands or Simon's to be more precise as he led the way on the Cuillin ridge. Simon proved to be a very able tutor as neither of the others had much experience of this type of climbing. Over the course of the next three days the trio were to bag some very scary Munros indeed. So scary in fact that on returning one evening Bruce was to be seen white as a sheet staring into some private terror holding on to the sumptuous armchair as if he were on a white knuckle ride. Stories of epic proportions were told of how the trio had scrambled along razor sharp ridges with precipitous drops on either side where one slip

would have meant instant doom. There's a lot to be said for not being able to see more than a few feet in front of you in these circumstances.

Not everyone was being so energetic and Caroline and myself went off exploring other parts of the island learning much of its history and culture at the museums and castles. That was until the middle of the week when we all went off to visit the weirdness of the Quirang. The Quirang is an odd collection of pinnacles surrounding a grassy table with excellent views to the mainland with the Torridon mountains being particularly prominent. We met some characters on the way and one pretty young German girl caught Simon's eye and the poor chap was quite besotted.

Wednesday evening was spent in the pub in front of the television watching the football from Barcelona. Although Alan claimed he was there I didn't see him.

Thursday it was off to the distillery to sample the fine Talisker malt. This put us in the mood for hitting the town and so we flagged down the bus from the end of the drive to take the short trip to Portree. We were entertained by a collection of musicians that looked vaguely familiar. Bruce said that was because they looked like the wino's that camp on his doorstep. Nevertheless this band was brilliant and played many popular songs in a strange mix of Scottish-Irish-American styles. We even had a Celtic version of 'No Woman no Cry'. The vocalist who doubled as a whistle played did a strange magic act whereby he could drink a pint of Guinness during the song without appearing to lift the glass to his mouth. The next night and in yet another pub Caroline nearly got us evicted by requesting 'Donald Where's yer Troosers'.

Back onto the hills on Friday where I failed to 'solo' Sgurr nan Gilleann. After climbing over three lumps of rock on the ridge that I didn't think I could get back down from and with the rock getting slippier by the minute I decided that prudence was the better part of valour and came back down only metres from the top. Maybe I should have stayed at the top as on my return I discovered that I had been away for longer than expected and Caroline was about to call out the mountain rescue to get my broken body off the 'pointy one'. Needless to say I got a very strict talking-to.

Saturday was hometime for most of us but Mike and Simon managed to hang on in Scotland for another week and were blessed with the fantastic weather we missed.

Thanks to one and all for a great trip.

Doug Sanderson