



Edinburgh
October 2007

Dear members,

Newsletter – Autumn 2007

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

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JMCS Meets Report Summer 2007

by Sue

Looking back over the summer meets, we had some great times on (and off) the rock. When the forecast was good there was lots of interest and the meets well attended with a mixture of trad and sport routes climbed, as well as some bouldering, walking, and even summer ice! The biggest attended meet was the Gullane barbecue. We also had good trips to the Lake District, and Wales. See below for more detail of what we all got up to.

Lake District Meet Salving House Borrowdale 20 to 22 April

Saturday brought dry and bright skies. Salving House is situated minutes from lots of great climbing so everyone headed to nearby Black Crag in Borrowdale. Routes climbed were: Eddie & Thomas, Troutdale Pinnacle Direct (VS), The Shroud (VS); Patrick & Bryan, Mortician (HVS), The Shroud (VS), first pitch of Raindrop (E1); Brian & Sue, Holly Tree Corner/ Troutdale Ridge (VS), Aberration (MVS) at Quayfoot Buttress. Susan Jensen and friends from the FRCC also came along and climbed routes at Black Crag. Sunday brought rain and more rain so members headed off to various other venues including Northumberland, North Berwick Law and Ratho.



Thomas on The Shroud (crux)

Benny Beg 28 April

Weather was very very hot – this really was Costa Blanca comes to Scotland! Climbing started on the bolted crag at Benny Beg followed by lunch in a shady spot above the crag with views out to the Ochills. Some of us then visited a nearby newly developed crag for some trad climbing in a wonderful woodland setting.

Gullane Beach BBQ 26 May

Some 20 members and guests of various shapes and sizes attended this meet, putting the 'J' back into JMCS! The day was warm and sunny. Activities included tai chi, windsurfing, swimming (and that was just the Loves!), bouldering and climbing above the beach, sand dune racing and a barbecue. This meet was billed as a picnic – but there was some pretty strenuous bouldering to be had. After we had all eaten too many marshmallows to get off the ground any more we headed for home. Really fun meet and a great chance to chill out with a burnt sausage and roast marshmallow or three.



Rachel at Gullane boulders



Rachel and Terry at Gullane

Many thanks to Terry for organising this meet and for arranging great weather for us too.

Glen Coe Blackrock Cottage 1 to 3 June

After great plans for the Etive Slabs and the Buachille, weather on Saturday was very very wet! The day was spent at the Ice Factor – firstly a couple of hours or so on the ice – really good fun and great to get the axes out again. Then lunch and gear shopping (see Bryan's new trews and Ruth and Sue's matching tops!) then a couple more hours on the climbing wall, and a quick shower (well it had been a very hard day!) before heading back to the hut. Back for wine, ale, and tea by a roaring fire at cosy Blackrock. Sunday was even wetter – so all headed off to Fort William for (you've guessed....) some more shopping before heading back home.

Ben Nevis CIC Hut 22 to 24 June

This meet was initially over subscribed but as time wore on the forecast deterred all but the hardiest of members.....

Meet report by Eddie :

“Liz and myself made it to the meet.

Friday: we tried out the grand new path to the dam on the way up to the hut.

Saturday: we climbed Tower Ridge. On the way down we helped three separate parties of people wandering about in the mist to relocate themselves (hopefully).

Sunday: We climbed Castle Ridge and then down Ledge Route.

Also, we spotted a Ring Ouzel and a pair of Wheatears around the hut. The rain was reasonably warm, for the Ben, and all in all it was a very enjoyable and worthwhile meet.

Regards Eddie.”

Cairngorms Camping Meet 20 to 23 July

There was much interest in this meet until unfortunately the weather had other plans for the weekend. The meet was finally abandoned due to lack of any dry weather anywhere near the proposed venue.

Glen Clova 19 August

Weather for this meet was dry (ish) but a bit chilly. Most headed up the Glen for some low level walking, geological research, and game of pooh sticks. There are some fair sized boulders beneath the crags and the others spent some time trying out a few bouldering problems.

North Wales Helyg Ogwen Valley 14 to 17 September

Helyg is a cosy hut with a superb view of the east face of Tryfan. The hut has an interesting history connected to the 1953 Everest expedition and comes with its own supply of friendly (peanut-butter-sandwich eating) ponies.

Saturday was a bright dry day and lots of fantastic classic routes were enjoyed. Dave & Terry, Cenotaph Corner (E1), Cobweb Crack (VS) on Dinas Cromlech, The Direct Route (VS) on Dinas Mot; Patrick & Francis, Wen (HVS) Scavenger (HVS) at Gogarth; Brian & Sue, North Buttress, Belle Vue Bastion (VS) Tryfan.

We all had plans for more great climbs on Sunday but sadly the day was rainy with forecasts of more rain. Patrick & Francis enjoyed the elements with an ascent of Tryfan. Others headed back up North. Terry & Dave stopped off at Anglesey to look at A Dream of White Horses. Unfortunately though, the route remains a dream for the time being due to strong winds hampering any climbing on the day.



Dave pre Cenotaph Corner



Dave post Cenotaph Corner (the smile says it all)



Dinas Cromlech looking splendid!

Dunkeld 6 October

Perfect autumnal conditions for this meet helped make this venue a lovely way to round off the season.

....and finally for now, thanks to all those who came along to the weekend & mid-week meets and made them so enjoyable. Look forward to more good times in the winter season.

Meets report by Susan , CIC report by Eddie , photos Terry and Bryan.

JMCS Winter 2007/08 Weekend Meets

When...	Length	Where	Co-ordinator	Notes / Further Info
Sat 24th November	AGM and club dinner – Saturday evening	Kenmore Hotel, Perthshire	Patrick	AGM followed by dinner. http://www.kenmorehotel.com/kenmore/index.html Chance for some hill walking in the Perthshire hills too.
Fri 7th December – Sun 9th December	Weekend	Kinlochleven	Susan	Hill walking in the Mamores and some pre-season ice training at the Ice Factor http://www.ice-factor.co.uk/ or even (!) the real stuff on Aonach Mor.
Fri 18th January – Sun 20th January	Weekend	Muir Cottage, Inverey	Susan	6 places £8ppn. http://www.cairngormclub.org.uk/muir/index.htm Lochnagar and Coire Sputan Dearg are just two of the venues within reach of this hut. Plenty of good hills for walking or ski-touring if conditions permit.
Fri 15th February – Sun 17th February	Weekend	CIC, Ben Nevis	Susan	8 Places £7ppn http://www.smc.org.uk/Huts/CIC.htm The country's only true alpine hut. In past years this meet has proved to be one of the most popular of the season. Lots and lots of classic routes on your doorstep.
Fri 29th February – Sun 2nd March	Weekend	Inver Croft House, Achnasheen	Susan	6 places £6ppn http://www.jacobitesmc.co.uk/ This newly refurbished hut together with the new edition of the SMC Northern Highlands South guide makes this a great venue with lots of potential for Torridon and more.

Fri 14th March – Sun 16th March	Weekend	The Smiddy, Dundonnell	Susan	10 places £6ppn http://www.edinburghjmcs.org.uk/huts/huts.php Our own club hut. Perfect for a winter's traverse of An' Teallach. The new SMC guide for the area provides plenty of scope for winter climbs or even some early season rock climbing (if not both!).
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Other Events...		
Thurs 6th December (provisional)	Club annual slide night	The Buchanans have once again very kindly offered to host this popular event.

The Mountains Of The Moon

by Brian

When people asked me where I was going this year and I said Uganda the reaction varied between 'is there any climbing there' to 'is it safe'. The answers yes and 'ish'

Uganda is in the middle of Africa, about the size of the UK and with half the population. It gained notoriety during the Idi Amin reign (1971-79). During this period, 300,000 Ugandans were killed including 8 out of 20 members of the previous government (with 4 more in exile). The economy was devastated during this period and is still recovering. It is a poor country. Only 4% of the population have electricity. Life expectancy is 39.5 years.

The Ruwenzori range is the largest and most important group of snow covered mountains in Africa consisting of 6 separate mountains, each of which has permanent snow and glaciers. The highest peak is Margherita peak at 5109m, the third highest in Africa. The range is almost 100km. in length and 50km. Wide. All the principal peaks were climbed in 1906 by a huge expedition led by the Duke of Abruzzi.

The range, which is in the west of Uganda, borders the Congo which is quite unsettled. As a result of instability on the Congo side, the range was closed between 1997 and 2002. Uganda, unlike other parts of Africa, is lush. All the country is above 3000 feet. The Ruwenzori get huge amounts of rainfall-with 210m in October alone recorded at the nearest town. As a result, while the vegetation zones are similar to Kili and Mt Kenya, everything is bigger and more lush. It also gives the mountains a reputation for being challenging-is that the word!

On previous trips to high mountains in Ladakh and Ecuador I had gone with Jagged Globe, a commercial company. Why?-well I can afford it, it makes organizational sense and, particularly in wild country, its good to have back-up (medical/satellite phone etc). On this trip there were 10 of us, a UK guide, 5 Ugandan guides, 3 cooks and 25 porters. I felt I was with an employment agency. Its the sort of trip that would really appeal to Bernie. The '10 of us' were my son Fionnlagh and me, an Australian, a Frenchman, a Dutch girl and various Brits. The Dutch girl, the only girl on the trip, was a lovely lady and easily the fittest person on the trip-and not to be underestimated-a bit like another young Dutch girl I know! All the trip members had experience at high altitude-7600m on Everest, Aconcagua, Denali, Kili, Mt Kenya etc.

A circuit goes up one valley and over a few passes before coming back another valley giving access to the highest peaks. It takes about 9/10 days depending upon what you do. You stay in basic huts. Difficult to give full justice to how difficult the terrain is. But references to 'we travel through the upper and lower Bigo bogs' gives some indication. Its like walking on a giant sponge and if you miss your footing you can (and frequently do) go up to your waist in mud-makes Scotland seem tame!

After 2 days walking, 6 of us climbed Mt. Speke (4890m), the second highest peak. It was like a big day out in winter in Scotland (11 hours) at altitude. Felt ok-but no rest-another tough day took us to the highest hut (4540m) to attempt Margherita, the highest peak. Now I had trained hard for this trip-but at my age-yes 60 I realise your body (or at least mine) needs time to recover. I started out for Margherita with the others at 4am but quickly realised my body was not up to it and turned back. 8 continued to the snow line only to find the glacier in bad condition due to high temperatures. All turned back.

Thereafter we had another series of hard days. An attempt on Mt. Baker, the third highest peak, was abandoned due to appalling weather.

You may be thinking-this guy is mad (no confirmations please). Why put yourself through all this at considerable cost when you could be sunning yourself for peanuts in Provence on sun baked rock with a glass of wine to hand-why indeed! I suppose when I read the brochure I thought it sounded fascinating and I skipped over the references to the rain and terrain. And being honest, I will never go back-I could never put my body through that again. But there again, I will always retain very fond memories of the Ruwenzoris, its lost world feel, its people and the satisfaction of summiting one of its main peaks. Its amazing how quickly you forget about bogs! Oh!-and we did go and see a family of 26 gorillas in the wild-it was rather special.

Costa Dorada

By Bryan

March 2007.

After numerous Easter (and New Year) trips to Costa Blanca, Patrick and I felt that something radically different was called for this year, so we decided to go to the Costa Dorada.

We flew to Barcelona, a city with some stunning sights and culture which we managed to entirely bypass on the ring road, and headed off west to a small, walled mediaeval town called Montblanc, on the edge of the Sierra Roquerola (which contains most of the Costa Dorada climbing).

Despite expectations, Montblanc was not entirely geared up for tourists, and we ended up eating every night in a small tapas bar, whose top of the range repast consisted of sausage, beans and chips (being vegetarian, after a certain amount of negotiation, Patrick was allowed to have sausage, beans and chips without the sausage).

However, it did serve an excellent Pinot Noir-ish red, with a tremendous bouquet and red fruit flavour, with even a hint of game, in large jugs.

The weather turned out to be decidedly mixed - some hot days, but some wet and drizzly days, and some when it seemed about 5 degrees (not helped by the fact that most of the crags near to Montblanc are at about 800 metres).

This will certainly not be an alternative New Year venue to the Costa Blanca.

Despite this, we climbed most days and did some very good sports routes. However, the most memorable day was a trip to Terradets, about 90 miles from Montblanc.

This is a long, 400 metre high wall above a narrow gorge, with a large number of bolted and semi-bolted routes, and some routes requiring modern, high-technology protection equipment. Being British, we opted to do one of the latter routes - Supertramp, 6 pitch, F5.

One might think it was good going to do 400 m in 6 pitches, but this face has a bizarre 'walk-off' ledge (feixa) at half height, which many of the routes stop at, including Supertramp.

This was an excellent introduction to the face, and we had hoped to do Smoking, F6b (bolted), but ran out of days that the weather seemed good enough to set off on a long route.

Overall, a good holiday, but next time I will leave the skimpy tops behind and bring that Buffalo shirt.

Morning, Noon and Night on the North East Buttress

by David

In the past few years I have twice climbed the North East Buttress of Ben Nevis on Club trips to the CIC Hut in winter, once with Linda Corlett and once with Ruth Love. The earliest I have got back to the hut after getting up and down is 11pm. I know that other folk can do it faster (even on a day trip from Edinburgh, probably returning home at about the time I would be reaching the summit) but since there is another winter season approaching (forecast to be mild), and in case it helps to reduce the overall average time for ascents by Club members, I offer the following recommendations;

1. If your climbing partner needs a knee cartilage operation (eg Linda) then, before you leave the Hut, make sure the other occupants are not going to alert the Rescue before you get back at 4.00 am next morning. Otherwise you have to attend Fort William Police Station later the same day and explain what on earth you were doing.
2. Old guidebooks say the route is Grade III. Do not believe old guidebooks.
3. Conventional wisdom has it that ridges are suitable when there is a thaw. Do not believe conventional wisdom as it applies to the NEB. (See the next two tips).
4. The first hard bit comes one pitch up from the First Platform. If the snow and the relics of turf are frozen then you will be ok, if not then you may feel insecure as the protection is not there but the loose rock is.
5. The second hard bit comes one pitch up from the Second Platform. This is a steep and exposed pitch above the Orion Face. If the snow and relics of turf are frozen then you will be ok, if not then I recommend you go away down and away round to your left up a gully and then follow a corner system back to the ridge (still steep but easier and it has a couple of pitons *in situ*).
6. The third hard bit is the Mantrap. There are three ways of dealing with this. *Either* take your crampons and axes to Herriot Watt on Wednesday nights and get used to dry tooling. *Or* make sure Ruth is with you to lead it. *Or* avoid it by going down to your right (leading on a top rope - excellent!) and back up to the foot of the fourth hard bit.
7. Have your head torch handy about now. Hope not to realise for the first time that your new light weight helmet lacks torch clips.
8. The fourth hard bit is deciding where to go next. The forty foot corner is obvious but it does not look terribly inviting. The guide book says there is an easier chimney to the left but you cannot see that. In some conditions you can traverse right and then go straight up, but the belays and gear are poor and you may as well be moving together above the biggest drop in the country. I think the least worst thing to do is go up the forty foot corner. If you excavate enough there is a nut runner in the crack near the top to protect the step rightwards on to a good foot ledge.

If you are not obliged to attend the police station (see number 1 above), and feel like doing Tower Ridge the next day, I could make a few recommendations about that too, but you won't need them if you are back in time seriously to contemplate it.

Orpierre

by Bryan

May 2007

Orpierre is a small village with one bar/restaurant and lots of small gites. It is surrounded by a large number of single pitch sports crags, but also has the Quiquillion ridge above the village, on the flanks of which are a reasonable number of 6-8 pitch bolted routes at about F5-6b level, together with a few other crags with similar, slightly shorter, multi pitch routes (see photos).

All in all, a very good destination for a group climbing at this level.

We stayed in a gite (well, three gites in the same large farm building, near Laragne-Monteglin, about 8 miles from Orpierre.), and indulged in fine wine and food, together with some very good climbing. Thanks to Christine (with some additions from Ruth and Patrick) for the usual excellent cooking - I pursued the usual sophisticated wine buying strategy of ransacking the local supermarket for the most expensive stuff I could find.

The weather was on the hot side, but we could still climb - any further into the summer and it would be too hot (Sally and Ruth had been before in August when it was scorching, while Bryan and Patrick had been in September when it was OK during the day, but cold before about 10am and after about 6pm).

Overall, a good time was had by all.

MCofS Mountaineering Development Plans

from Susan

This is a copy of a piece contributed by David Gibson to "Climber Magazine", October 2007

Views of 5000 Members to be Researched

The MCofS is to contact half of its 10000 members to get their views on its activities, with the aim of informing future development. Topics will include how the members view communications, membership benefits, subscription value for money, and the relative priority given to activities. The research will feature a prize draw and be mailed to members during October.

Hunt on for Mountaineering Project Chair

"Pivotal" is how one famous mountaineering personality has described plans to commence a project to define a Mountaineering Development Framework. MCofS is looking for a suitably qualified chairperson to head a project which will include hill walking, climbing, ski-touring and activities such as bouldering, winter and alpine mountaineering.

The project will:

- Investigate, identify, develop and implement a framework or development path for mountaineering.
- Promote access to, and awareness of, different mountaineering experiences, regardless of social origin, age or ability of participants.
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement in individual skills and knowledge acquisition.
- Identify pathways that enable individuals to understand how they may access and acquire knowledge and skills that enable them to experience a personal and progressive approach to the mountain and indoor climbing environment, including relevant awards and competitions.
- Identify how coaching and training may contribute to improved skills, performance and technique, through appropriate programmes.
- Identify how the MCS may facilitate local, regional and national competitions.
- Define how individuals at all levels may improve their knowledge and skills by gaining and reviewing experience, and through participation in organised events.
- Demonstrate how the provision of Mountain Safety advice, information and events may contribute to safer participation in mountaineering.
- Reinforce the fundamental ethos of mountaineering - that mountaineers should be independent, responsible and self reliant.