

Cleveland Mountaineering Club - a potted history.

The pre-history of climbing in the area prior to 1950 must surely include two people. The first, Gertude Bell of Redcar (1868-1926) began climbing in her twenty's, her climbs of Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn in 1904 are predated by several first ascents in the Swiss Bernese Alps. One of these mountains, which she climbed in 1901, is called Gertrudspitze in her honour. But it is her failed 1902 attempt on the fourteen-thousand-foot high Finsteraahorn that is perhaps the most impressive. Here she would spend two day's retreating from an ice storm on the unclimbed Northeast Rib of the remote Swiss mountain.

The second, W. E Bowman (1911-1985) wrote the following brief autobiography.

I was born in Scarborough in 1911. In 1914 the Kaiser shelled the place. In 1918 my father and some others fettled the Kaiser. In 1921 we moved to Middlesbrough. Educated at the High School, I was put to engineering where I suffered in a drawing office and got hooked on mountaineering, the Lake District, writing, especially humorous, and Einstein's Relativity. In 1934 I moved to London to write but lapsed into engineering. In 1940 Hitler bombed the place. A year later I joined the RAF and by 1945 we had fettled Hitler. I later served with the International Voluntary Service in Germany and London and decided to fettle Einstein. From 1950 engineering leap-frogged with writing and in 1971 I retired.

Bill Bowman will be otherwise known to CMC members as the author of the 1956 book 'Rum Doodle' which is perhaps one of the funniest mountaineering books ever written – being a parody of early Himalayan expeditions following the first ascent of Everest. The number 153 which regularly crops up in the book (for example, the expedition leader getting lost for the 153'd time and all of the science officers calculations coming out at 153) is actually a heavily veiled reference to 153 Borough Road Middlesbrough, where Bill grew up in the 1920's.

By the early 1950's Climbers in the Cleveland area were largely operating individually without much knowledge of each other. Some of these people were also travelling widely across the UK and the Alps. Then in 1949 Maurice Wilson, after many years of Alpine climbing, managed to summit the Matterhorn and returned home to become a television personality when he was interviewed for the BBC television programme 'Look North'.

This broadcast precipitated interest amongst the areas small climbing community. Subsequently, the initiating CMC members met at a lecture given by Eric Shipton in 1952. After this event, Arthur Evans canvassed attendees about starting a local climbing club. Shortly after, M.F.Wilson, A.E.Rout and J.W.Fletcher met at the Wainstones and also expressed interest in developing a local club.

Apparently, a contingent of the above called upon Reg Goddard whilst he was working on his potato patch, and Reg was told he should put a letter in the Evening Gazette inviting all interested parties to a meeting of the 'Teesside Climbing Club.' It was only after the meeting that the name was subsequently changed to The Cleveland Mountaineering Club. Reg was never repaid the two shillings he forked out for the advert.

Of the six founder members, all apart from Maurice Wilson were scientists who knew each other, all having worked in the chemical industry on such things as the ICI 'Tube Alloy's Project' which was the codename for the UK's atomic bomb development programme. Recently, someone (who shall remain nameless to protect his identity) informed the author that all the scientists involved in the early days of the club were communists - who arranged early club meets around the phases of the moon. As this person is currently overwintering in the Costa Blanca, it has not been possible to probe this further. The link with ICI would develop into the 1970's and well beyond with many members like Athel Lawton, Ron Barker, and Alan Burton meeting through their workplace.

The inaugural meeting of 'The Cleveland Mountaineering Club' was held in 1953 and at the subsequent 1954 AGM the provisional committee considered making the club 'men only'. Sanity prevailed, and they eventually decided that 'Ladies' would be allowed to join - but should be called 'women.' Of the 136 provisional members, including thirty-nine ladies (sorry - women) around sixty were considered novices and forty had reasonable mountaineering experience. The youngest attendee was Alan Linford who was aged seventeen.

Around this time, the club began searching for a hut. There were a few failed attempts. The first was a water board building in Teesdale, which was closely followed by a barn in Wasdale, a hut near the Bowderstone, and building closer to home, near Hawnby. In the summer of 1957, the Forestry Commission hut at Starling Gill in Ennerdale was made available to the club - with a lease agreed up to 1965. A two-year gap would subsequently ensue, possibly because Maurice Wilson, who was affiliated to the BMC, had secretly arranged that Starling Gill would be taken over by that organisation on expiry of the lease. This left a hiatus until the Agnes Spencer Memorial hut was acquired in 1967.

The acquisition of the Patterdale hut resulted from a series of truly fortunate events. These began 1964, while on honeymoon Ernie and Ruth Shield were looking at a fallen down barn in Patterdale when some passing ladies told them about the nearby 'Friends Meeting House,' that was no longer being used. Following a discussion with the Woman's Institute, Ernie and Ruth were 'told' by 'The Friends' to put in a sealed bid - which was successful. CMC money raising events such as bingo and raffles were quickly initiated, then Ruth's mum told her to make an application to the Agnes Spencer Memorial fund, which she did. Agnes Spencer had set up this charity in 1957 and she was wife of Thomas Spencer, who was the founding partner of Marks and Spencer. Agnes was born in Marton and died in Middlesbrough in 1959 - so she would not live to see the fruits of her labour come good for the club. However, her organisation suggested the CMC also apply for funding from the 'Central Council for Physical Education' (which would later become the

'Sport's Council') and if successful they would subsequently match all the funds that CMC could raise.

The eventual award of a grant from the Sports Council to assist in the purchase of the hut was the first ever made to a climbing club. And the matching sum from the Agnes Spencer Memorial fund was a real tribute to all those involved, particularly Ernie and Ruth. Ernie would eventually come to play a significant part in CMC history and would otherwise become known as 'The Chief Stirrer.'

The various planners controlled the hut renovations very tightly. These organisations included the Sports Council, the Agnes Spencer Trust and the Friends Society. They insisted that there should be a Ladies' room, no change to the external appearance, and that the hut must be run separately to the club as a ring-fenced charity. The hut would subsequently open for business in 1969. Later, there would be some encroachment on the land that was purchased i.e. villagers were growing vegetables in what is now the hut car park. Terry Wharton a CMC member (who was a barber), wrestled with the deeds and various solicitors over a considerable period of time, eventually securing the land for club use.

In the late fifties Terry Sullivan was conscripted into the RAF and was based in Scotland at Kinloss where he found a place in the Mountain Rescue Team. Along with fellow CMC members, including Ian Clough, he was on the 1st ascent of Frostbite on Ben Nevis in 1959. The team later made an epic ascent of the icy hanging glacier on the Aiguille du Plan's North face. The CMC met each Thursday night in a Stockton pub and the young group, although under age, were kindly accepted and helped by the established climbers. Lectures and slide shows were regular features, often showing climbing meets in Switzerland, and these helped to paint a picture of the climbing world beyond the isolated, and thankfully by-passed, Cleveland Hills. It wasn't until some of the lads got jobs, some saving to buy transport, that things really took off. The Cleveland Club was a Mountaineering Club and, whilst there were plenty little rocks on which to play, the objectives and inspiration came from bigger things in far off places. The hard winters of '62

and '63 finally allowed the development of essential snow and ice skills, as for month's crags such as Ravenscar all but disappeared, plastered with ice and sporting massive cornices. The winter went on and on, climbing at Peak Scar or Whitestone seeming similar to the films shown on Thursday pub nights of scaling Dolomitic faces.

In 1967 the CMC 'Pink journal' was produced. This included contributions from Ken Jackson on Central Buttress, Terry Sullivan, who was toddling in the Dauphine, and Bruce Perry who was pegging his way up a very damp Kilnsey Main overhang. Interestingly, Kilnsey main overhang would become a regular outing for CMC members following Chris Woodall and Ernie Shield's initial ascent in 1963! The journal secretary (Ruth) also documents the club first alpine accident, when in 1966 Chris and Malcolm Farrow fell six hundred feet off the North Face of the Grands Charmoz. The route in question had not had a British ascent and Chris was leading in steps cut the previous day by a young Reinhold Messner. The pair fell on the same day that England won the world cup and Wolfgang Stefan was involved in the subsequent rescue. Then 20 CMC members, who were in Chamonix at the time, organised the repatriation of the injured pair from hospital back to Teesside.

Around the end of the sixties, the CMC were joined by Ron Lake who had a wealth of experience and was famed for his first British ascent of Monte Agner. Being 5000ft long this was the longest route in the Dolomites at the time. Teaming up with another incomer, Pete Holden, the pair went to stormy Switzerland, before retreating to Mont Blanc's southern aspect. Both had already been successful on classics such as the 'Pear' (an unreasonably dangerous route that is rarely ascended these days). They would later attempt the Bonatti-Gobbi route. Following the first ascent, Bonatti himself was quoted as saying "*the mixed terrain of the face was without doubt the most sombre, the most savage and the most dangerous of any that I have ever encountered in the Alps.*" At half height Ron and Pete were almost swept away by a huge rockfall and, on shortened ropes, they were very lucky to get back down.

In the Northeast, the club forged forward, developing climbing on The Moors. In terms of local North York Moors guidebooks, during 1956, the first 'Grey Book', by Maurice Wilson was entitled 'Climbs in Cleveland'. This noted that climbing in the area did not really begin until 1928 and that comparatively little was done until the post war era from about 1950 onwards. Maurice would follow this with his 1961 'Climbs on the North York Moors,' which would be considerably augmented by the 1970 'Green Book' i.e. The 'North York Moors climbing guide,' edited by Tony Marr. This included the first description of Terry Sullivan's magnificent 'Nightwatch' at Whitestone and his 1959 ascent of 'Gehenna' at Beacon Scar. It must always be remembered that this generation of climbers were using the moors to train for the higher ranges. Where Terry (for example) would also successfully ascend the difficult North Face of the Aiguille du Plan in the Alps. The 1970 guidebook also highlighted a 'young man with a bright future' in Chris Woodall. Chris, Vic and Terry would eventually help the CMC to develop Peak Scar's Calcareous Grit (it is not actually limestone). And Chris in partnership with Ernie Shield had already girdled Whitestone Cliff during 1963, producing the eight-hundred-foot-long traverse of Chameleon. This is still the longest, and possibly the most intimidating outing in the area. Modern climbers may be shocked at the numbers of pegs, threads, pieces of gas pipe, and vehicle crankshafts that were used - but remember there were no decent ropes, no nuts, no cams, no chalk and no mats at this time. On the first modern free ascent Luke Hunt would cross Ernie's 1963 crux pitch on "horrific overhanging cheese" and pronounce its grade as 6b.

In 1974 the club produced the '1974 Journal,' which was edited by Bruce Perry. This included such literary classics as Ron Lake's ascent of the Eckpfeiler buttress, the North ridge of the Peine by Tony Marr, and an early descent of Gaping Gill by Ernie Shield and Athel Lawton. Elsewhere, George Crawford Smith was struck by lightning in California and Phil Dalton proposed a grading list for tree climbing which varied from fallen trees at grade 1 to telegraph poles at grade 6. The new routes section of this journal also documented twenty new routes on Roulston Scar. Rick Graham

contributed some of these climbs, and this could be the reason he emigrated to the Lake District and became a shopkeeper.

The last 'Pocket sized' guidebook was the 1985 'Yellow Book' edited by Pete Simcock - with the cover photo featuring Paul Ingham climbing Stratagem, (E4 6b) at Ravenscar. This route climbed the old aid route 'Ella' and even to this day the upper crack still sport's probably the most unusual peg in local climbing history. This is an old bicycle crank, which had been filed down to precisely fit the upper crack. Many people who have struggled to get a karabiner into its hole will now understand why.

During this period, George Crawford Smith and his wife Wendy (otherwise known to old CMC members as 'crispy and crackers') bought an old leather goods shop in central Middlesbrough. Some CMC members rewired the premises, but not for cash – they were 'paid' in climbing kit. The new shop 'Cleveland Mountain Sports' went from strength to strength and provided CMC members with discounts, a New Route Book, and a place to hang out. The author bought one of the first 'Friends' that George sold (the ones with engineering nuts securing the bar) and it remains in use to this day. When George opened the shop, Rab was making high-class sleeping bags in his attic, Peter Hutchinson's new Mountain Equipment company was in its infancy, and Javelin were selling fibre pile jackets by using a particularly saucy advert that gentlemen members of a certain age will remember fondly. The retail venture blossomed, George and Wendy eventually extending into the building next door (which was Smart's toy shop) and naming it 'Wilderness Way's.' This would eventually be sold to Nevisport, which still continues trading.

In 1985 Mick and Suzie Wheldon would go on to produce an exceptionally fine series of newsletters with memorable cartoons. Many of them, and much of the writing, being aimed at winding up Russell O' Callaghan or Dave McKinney. In one of these there is an account of an early caving trip, which I led through the incredibly serious 'Dowbergill Traverse.' The participants included Tony Harrison, John Chadwick, Chris Woodall, Roger Baldwin, Pete Creswell, John Herman and Terry Sullivan. I had completely erased this from

my memory, probably out of acute embarrassment - as the comedy duo of Baldwin & Woodall got completely wedged in a constriction, at a point well beyond the limit of no return. Nearly 40 years later I would question Roger whether he remembered this incident, to which his reply was "I still have nightmares about it."

A number of co-authored 'Rucksack Sized' guidebooks would follow, Beginning with Tony Marr's 1994 North York Moors Supplement. These would cumulate in Lee Robinson's own 2014 bouldering guide and Franco Cookson's 2019 Magnum Opus of North York Moors esoterica. The latter being of such a size that it could be used in conjunction with a number three cam to protect large off width cracks.

There are two other notable publications that serve to archive the history of the club. The first is Ken Jackson's 'Climbing in the Dark' first published in 1980, which is now available on Kindle. The second is the 50th Anniversary Commemorative Brochure, produced by Alan Linford, Suzanne Elliott and Clive Wrigley, which is in the CMC archive. The other main sources used to write this potted history are Chris and Dave's brains, which were downloaded before they, like floppy discs, become obsolete.

In terms of club achievements, there are far too many to list here and I apologise for omissions such as Franz Wheldon's ascent of a ten-foot route at Eston Nab called 'Fingertip masochism' and the like.

John (Jacko) Jackson was an early president of the club during the 1950's and has three main claims to fame. Firstly he was a member of the Daily Mail Abominable Snowman expedition in 1954, spending 15 weeks unsuccessfully searching around Everest for the creature. Secondly, he was a member of the British team that first ascended Kanchenjunga in 1955. He reached camp five (out of six) was only prevented from summiting with Jo Brown and George Band by the encroaching monsoon. Lastly (and probably more importantly) he initiated the Tuesday night CMC meets. With all the Tuesday night training on

North York Moors sandstone local climbers would rapidly make an impact on the British climbing scene. For example -

During the 1960's Jancis Richards, formerly Jancis Allison and Jancis Baldock (so Dave Richards better be careful) was forging hard routes on Gogarth with Pete Crew. This would include early ascents of 'Winking Crack' - which is now E3 5c and is the subject of a photograph at the end of this write up. She was also involved in the second female ascent of Cenotaph Corner, where pebbles were used as chock-stones. Later, she achieved the first female ascent of Joe Brown's 'Vector' at Tremadoc. Closer to home, Jancis would become immortalised in 'Cumbrian Rock' in a photo alongside Pete Crew on one of the early (1965) ascents of Les Brown's Borrowdale classic 'Praying Mantis'. Then in 1966 Ken Wilson proposed a certain J.M.Allison as a member of the all male 'Climbers Club'. Unfortunately, the committee was anonymously informed of her gender, and she was blacklisted. Fifteen years later Jancis would become the first female president of the Climbers Club. Eventually, on her transition to the CMC she would fall off Gehenna and fracture her spine, which just goes to show that those hard Welsh climbs might not be all they are cracked up to be.

Les (who also worked for ICI) would come to scour out new crags in the Lake District and produce classics such as Nazgul on Scafell and The Balrog on Dow. The author failed dismally on the latter route and was still aching a week later when he walked up to the bottom of 'The Nose' on El Capitan - only to find Les about to set off up the Salathe Wall with Hugh Banner. When I congratulated him on his strenuous route, Les asked if I had climbed it free, then smiled and told me he had hung off several pegs when he originally put the route up.

It was during the early sixties that Pete Holden was involved in an early ascent of the Troll Wall in Norway. More locally, Ernie Shield helped develop climbing at the Slipstones, which Ernie thought a 'good practice crag.' Which it obviously was, because during 1963 Ernie took part in the 3rd British ascent of Bonatti's artificial route up the overhanging face of the Grand Capucin with

Chris Woodall. Here they carried 40 pegs and 30 steel karabiners before spending two days climbing the route. Following this achievement, Les Brown forged the first British ascent of the Gervasutti Pillar in 1967. A year later, Ted Dance (an ICI scientist who was forever complaining about his knees) put the early foundations into his meniscus problems by winning the first three Karrimor International Mountain Marathons. The CMC would, over many subsequent decades, have numerous members contribute to the KIMM, with very respectable performances. Quite apart from climbing, the club would have many other interests, and on one occasion a party from Teesside completed the High Level Route from Chamonix to Zermatt on skis.

Richie Clarke and Chris Woodall would have an excellent year in 1969 with an ascent of the Phillip Flam on the four thousand foot north wall of the Civetta in the Dolomites. When they reached the summit, the logbook recorded that one 'T Sullivan' had ascended the Soleda Route on the same mountain a couple of days before. The pair would then tackle the extremely exposed Yellow Edge of Tre -Cime, ably followed by Heather Woodall, which proved to be the third female ascent of the route. As time moved on, John Chadwick would throw caution completely to the wind and solo the Innominata Ridge on Mont Blanc.

Closer to home, in 1969 Johnny Adams and Colin Read would string together fourteen pitches and over a thousand feet of climbing to produce The Lord of The Rings on Scafell East Buttress. Practically every move being over VS in standard, and a few pitches would nudge a grade of 5c. Chris Bonnington would later write a glowing narrative of the climb in the 1987 edition of Ken Wilson's "Extreme Rock".

During 1971 Pete Holden, in a magnificent effort, would climb the eight big north faces of the Alps - spending his wedding anniversary in the swallow's nest bivouac on the Eiger North Wall. John Yates (who recently lived in Bilsdale for a considerable time) also climbed the North Wall of the Eiger during August 1972. This ascent was in horrendous conditions, with the face sheathed in ice for much of the way and it would become the 9th British ascent. John was 20 years old at the time and entered the climb in his

Mountain Leadership Assessment logbook in the hope of proving his competence in the mountains of the UK.

In 1973, continuing the success of the CMC, Alan Dewison and Ron Lake would make the first British ascent of the Eckpfeiler Buttress on Mont Blanc. Alan would go on to climb The Nose on El Capitan, before going to the Himalaya where he was sadly lost on Dhaulagiri. Chris Woodall would write Alan's obituary in the Alpine Club journal, which reads -

- Alan, whom I first met in Cortina in 1968, was lost on Dhaulagiri IV during the expedition of 1973. He had been a draughtsman with ICI at Billingham until 1971 when, becoming redundant, he devoted the rest of his short life to climbing of the highest standard. He had done many of the fierce routes associated with the Alpine Climbing Group, of which he was a member, making (with Ron Lake) the first British ascent of the Bonatti-Gobi route on the Eckpfeiler Buttress of Mont Blanc. The following season, with A. Burgess, he added the Central Pillar of Freney, later going out to Yosemite to try and find an answer to his question, after the Central Pillar, "What piece of rock could ever be as good as that to climb?" He returned for a short, wet season in Chamonix before joining Tony Johnson for the Dhaulagiri expedition, where he fell on the way back to Camp 8 at 6000 m after failing, with the leader, to pitch Camp nine.

Subsequently, Joe Tasker would begin his rise to fame with the 3rd ascent (first British ascent) of the Cecchinell route on Mont Blanc - along with his partner Dick Renshaw. After this ascent, Joe would begin to develop his writing skills by putting pen to paper in the 1974 CMC Journal. The pair would go on to achieve the first (true) British winter ascent of the Eiger North Wall in 1975 and in 1979 Joe would summit Kanchenjunga (from the north and without oxygen) with Pete Boardman and Doug Scott. Later, Joe would put pen to paper again - to produce 'Savage Arena' which is perhaps one of the finest mountaineering books ever written. This was published posthumously after he lost his life pushing the unclimbed Northeast Ridge of Everest with Dick, Pete Boardman and Chris Bonnington in 1982.

During 1975 Paul Bean and his wife Dawn would lead an overland expedition to the Kulu valley in the Hindu Kush, where Paul would be the first to summit the nineteen thousand foot 'Tiger Tooth.' Also, in the relatively early days of the club many people would come to know Steve Findlay, an excellent climber who never used chalk, being part of the "clean hand gang." Steve would pass away as recently as 2023, but left a fine legacy in his daughter Hazel, who would eventually secure the first British female (free) ascent of El Capitan and become almost as famous as Vic Tosh.

Back home and on rock, 1977 saw John Redhead and Chris Shorter produce the tough 'Stratagem' at Ravenscar. The following year, Redhead would free climb the horrendous overhangs of 'B.B.C' at Peak Scar - before absconding to Wales. It is amazing the effect that the North York Moors has on Britain's climbing megastars. This left things rather more open to the locals with Ian (Squawk) Dunn and Paul Ingham regularly stealing hard new routes (like 'Terrorist' at the Wainstones) from each other. Meanwhile the club's extra curricular activities would also include fell running, and in 1984 Pete Goodwin and John Cresswell became the first CMC members of the Bob Graham Round club. Also in the eighties, hard climbing on the North York Moors would be dragged into the mainstream with Nick Dixon's groundbreaking 1982 route 'Magic in the Air' (E7 7b) at Highcliffe. Later, when a bold new generation of climbers emerged, Francis (Monty) Montague, a young ICI apprentice, would climb 'Magic in the Air' in 1991 without using the side runner (i.e. with no gear, and in the era before crash mats). Also at Highcliffe, in 1995 a nineteen-year-old Richard Waterton would free climb Terry Sullivan's and Vic Tosh's 1962 aid route Quazimodo. This produced 'Esmerelda' which at E8 6c is a route that has still not been repeated - nearly thirty years on.

Quite apart from the above 'micro-route' navel gazing, the club was still heavily involved in 'proper' mountaineering. 1997 would provide a major highlight in the club's extensive Himalayan climbing history - when Alan Hinks (OBE) had to be rescued from Nanga Parbat after inhaling chapati dust, sneezing, and prolapsing a disc. A more mediocre achievement was

accomplished in 2005, when Alan would become the first British mountaineer to climb all fourteen Himalayan 8000's.

Throughout 1998 Joanna Newton also claimed to have forged sixteen new routes and three first ascents in Bolivia while working 37 hours a week as a process engineer for ICI. About the same time, Adele Pennington produced the first British ladies (sorry 'woman's) ascent of Ama Dablam. And in 2000 Tony and Joyce Harrison would head into the Arctic to escape the crowds, joining an expedition that traversed Ellesmere Island.

In terms of modern rock athletes, at the turn of the 21st century Steve McLure would outshine his father's 1975 ascent of the Papillons arête on the Peigne by producing Rainshadow at Malham and Northern Lights at Kilnsey. Back on the moors in 2013 Richard Waterton would take a break from trying to clip bolts on Northern Lights to produce 'True' E7 6c at Kepwick. This was once the moor's 'Last Great Problem.' Francis (Monty) Montague had previously managed to top rope the route, but his girlfriend refused to belay him on lead because she didn't want him to die in front of her. Richard then left the low rock 6 side runner in 'True' and headed up the blank face to the right. A sketchy skyhook was placed at 18 feet and above this E8 7a face climbing led to a crux move on poor rock. Richard has a habit of putting up routes that do not attract followers and 'Gold' remains unrepeated after a decade of tormenting local hard-men from a distance.

A number of years ago, I found a very glum looking Franco Cookson sat belaying at the bottom of Steve McLure's 'Northern Lights'. Overhanging bolted limestone clearly does not suit this particular club member, but he subsequently forged ahead as the CMC death-route / slab expert with recent ascents of 'The Meltdown' on Welsh slate, as well as crazy micro-routes on the moors - such as Divine Moments of Truth at E9 and Immortal at E11. These and other horror shows were usually achieved in cahoots with a certain teenage sidekick and Dave (a few raisins short of a fruitcake) Warburton.

For more recent local rock climbing history, readers are directed to Franco's 2019 guidebook, which is a true labour of love, and includes the (relatively)

recent development of the coastal outcrops from Loftus to Ravenscar. The termination of the teams' seaside extravaganza at Ravenscar was probably due to Sam Marks asking an internet forum what the climbing was like at Bempton & Flamborough - to which one reply was 'tip a tray of cat litter vertical and observe the effect, it's just like that.'

While Franco seems to have achieved a Hollywood style reputation of being able to survive big ground falls, his personal efforts are fairly insignificant given the feats achieved by other members of the Cleveland Mountaineering Club. These include Tony Harrison - who was sitting at the summit of Helvellyn eating a sandwich when the cornice broke. He ended up at Red Tarn (in a terrible state) and managed to stagger back to the club hut. Vic Tosh's superb addition involved falling off the chockstone in Gardyloo Gully on Ben Nevis, and after 40 seconds of mayhem, he ended up close to the CIC hut with a broken spectacle lens. Perhaps probationary members should be warned of the risks associated with climbing close to mountaineering club huts, which seem to have an unusual magnetic attraction for club members.

But surely the greatest achievement in this highly competitive arena would be attained by the ex-president Jo Newton. In 2005 Miss Newton was swept four thousand feet down the fourteen thousand foot Taschhorn in Switzerland by an avalanche, which was probably initiated by the magnetic attraction of a local hut. She would subsequently use this as a rather pathetic excuse to avoid winter mountaineering altogether, and thus catapult herself into becoming 'a world class para-climbing superstar' at least according to t'internet (which must therefore be true). Jo would go on to win a bronze medal in the para-climbing world cup and follow this up with a 4th place in the 2023 IFSC world championships.

Its not only CMC members that have developed a habit for falling down. Over the years we lost the 'battleship' from 'Pianissimo' at Peak Scar, and the block from the alcove on 'Gehenna' at Beacon. Well, these didn't exactly 'fall down' they were 'encouraged' down, and names are withheld to protect the guilty. Other more 'natural' cambering of entire buttresses also took place. One involving Nick Dixon's seminal extreme 'Shere Khan' at Park Nab. The other,

Derrick Van Meerbeeck's aided 'Wedge Route' at Cringle Crag. The latter rock fall left a monumental scar that would eventually be climbed by Tom Randal to produce 'Infusoria.' Thus producing an outrageous E7, crossing a thoroughly improbable roof, in an incredible position, and such is the pace of progress.

2003 would see the publication of the 50th anniversary commemorative brochure of the Cleveland Mountaineering Club. This includes a fascinating insight into the history of the club and in particular, the Manky Piton award. Previous recipients of this much-cherished trophy include Bruce Perry, who loaned a tatty etrier to Mike Hosted, on whom it snapped - in the middle of Malham main overhang. Pete Goodwin for finding a climbing partner only to eventually discover he was a fee-taking guide, and Vic Tosh for abandoning Sir Chris Bonnington (who he claimed was not a knight at the time). But Paul Tweddle would contribute the most outrageous event over the half-decade, when he sank the lifeboat that came to rescue him from a sea cliff.

During 2010 Malcolm Bass would have a brief respite from Scugdale and head to the Himalayas where he would produce the first alpine style ascent of the West Face of Vasuki Parbat. The route, a cumulation of decades of hard winter climbing in Scotland, would be nominated for a Piolets D' Or (Golden Ice Axe) at climbing's equivalent of The Oscars. Malcolm would go on to suffer a serious stroke in 2020 and the club supported his 'Move Mountains for Malcolm' campaign. The tenacity and drive, which led to an impressive climbing tick list (by any standards), is now being focussed on his rehabilitation and the 2023 Club dinner was held in Malcolm's honour.

Back to the current business of North York Moors rock, in 2021 fifteen-year-old Tom Pearce would repeat Franco's 'Divine moments of Truth' and at E9 this must rank as one of the most outrageous of recent events in the club's history. Tom would then produce his neighbouring E9 'Heart and Soul' before retiring to Whitestone Cliff, where he would fail dismally on Chris Woodall's 1970's E2 'Black Mamba' and subsequently fall into a tree from Ernie Shield's 1963 'Chameleon Girdle'. So from the modern extremes of the 21st Century to

1960's pegging extravaganzas the club's extensive rock-climbing history comes full circle, thanks to Tom.

Tom, the club's youngest member, would also become an unlikely 'extra' in the acclaimed 2021 Britrock film 'Fall Theory'. While Franco himself would provide an exceptional performance during 2023, when he delivered two magnificent failures. The first involving the Mirror Wall in Greenland, and the second the Dawn Wall in Yosemite. This puts a firm line in the sand for other club members as they attempt to move from severe to very severe and raises the question of what exactly constitutes a 'Grand Day Out.' Is it simply success, or is a glorious failure actually more rewarding?

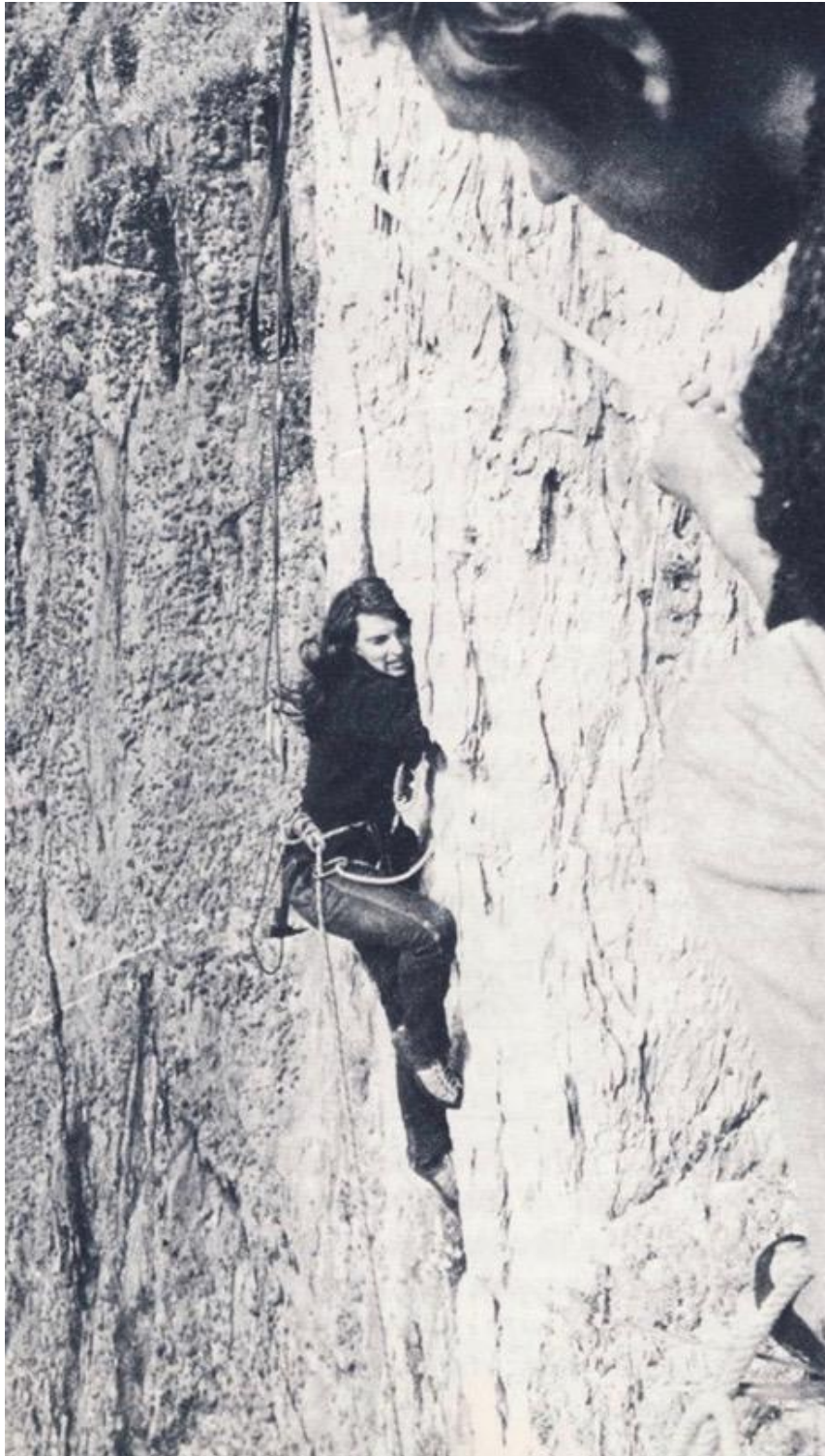
For those who have not yet guessed the identity of the author, my main claim to fame occurred in the same year as Alison Hargreaves solo ascent of Everest without oxygen. My lifetime achievement was immortalised in High Magazine next to Alison's Everest article and involved helping to develop nearly thirty new routes (up to E2) in a vegetated gully. Tony Harrison and myself claimed this was a mini Verdon Gorge, and the climbs were all named after characters in the farcical climbing book 'Rum Doodle.' The main aim of the expedition was to force the editors of the Northern Limestone Guide to include the crag in their new 'Millennium Supplement,' alongside the likes of Malham and Kilnsey - which they did.

Since 1953 many climbers and mountaineers have passed through the Club, some are sadly missed, some are still (barely) alive, and some turn up at the Wainstones looking like Whympers about to have an epic on the Matterhorn. There are also some new young people, with bright futures, who can freely tap into the rich history of the club and the deep experience of its members. Whom you will by now have realised - often hide their bright lights under rather large bushels - amply illustrated by the two photographs of Jancis (by Leo Dickinson), which follow.

While this is a half serious attempt to highlight the club's extensive history the author is sure that some events will have been missed, important club

members might not have been mentioned, and there may be errors in the write up. Complaints and any subsequent litigation should be addressed for the attention of Mr's M. Mouse, hole in the skirting board, The Agnes Spencer Care Home, somewhere in the Lake District, M1N N1E.

Such is the potted, serious, and amusing history of the Cleveland Mountaineering Club and long may it continue.



Jancis at Gogarth (by Leo Dickinson)

Hard climbing before decent rope, harnesses, cam's, chalk and sticky boots.



Climbing equipment in the 1960's (by Leo Dickison) – a fine hawser laid rope, and hand knitted woolly jumper.

Jancis included for scale.