

# THE LONDON MOUNTAINEER

THE JOURNAL OF THE LONDON MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

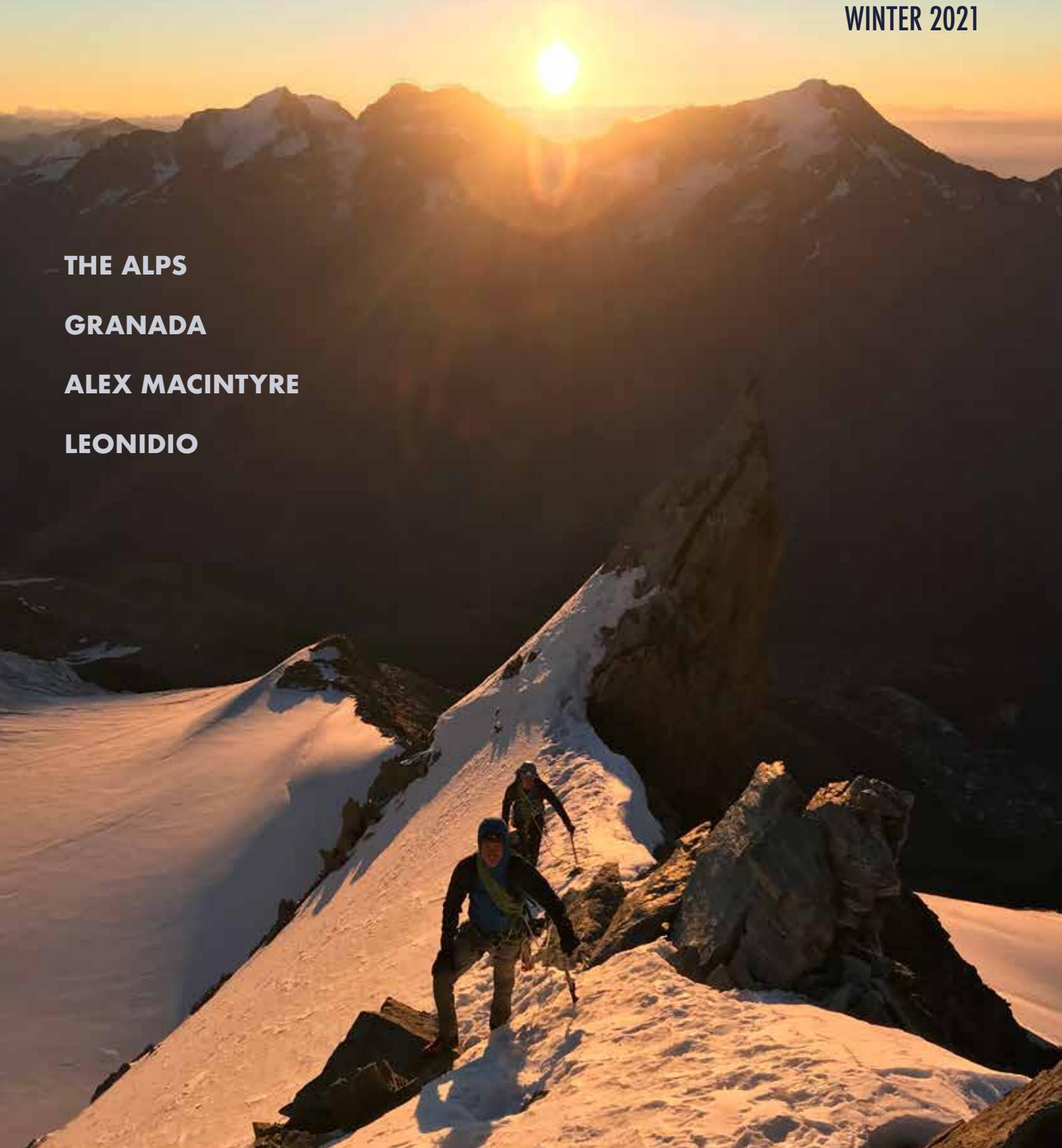
WINTER 2021

THE ALPS

GRANADA

ALEX MACINTYRE

LEONIDIO



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# PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

2020 has left us with mixed feelings. While staying home most of the year, we learned to value family, friends and work colleagues. It was challenging to plan anything, however the club remained active offering a handful of meets, regular virtual socials, three publications of the magazine and the hut opened its doors for as long as it was possible to do so. All this was made possible with the commitment and dedication of committee and club members who volunteered their time to keep the activities going.

We would normally run a working party to spruce up the hut once a year however given that it did not take place in 2020, the list of various items needing attention is growing. A working party is a great way to spend a weekend at the hut with fellow LMCers and help with various DIY jobs. I call upon all those who can spare a weekend sometime in the summer to register their interest with the Hut Warden Chis Watt.

I kept myself fit and sane with a daily run in the local park and exploring Epping Forest and I am sure most of you would have been doing the same. I felt lucky to have access to a private garden and learned to harvest vegetables and enjoyed the fresh produce during the summer months. Looking at the positives, it was probably the sunniest year or perhaps it felt so, as I had the luxury of the time to spend in the garden realising that it doesn't 'always rain in this country'.

Looking ahead there is great hope that after the first quarter of 2021 we may be able to resume the meets, socials and open the hut for the members, however the pandemic has taught us that life will not be the same.

This edition of the magazine shows that with all the uncertainties the members still managed to get out whenever it was possible to do so.

My best wishes for 2021

**Zaheer Durrani**

‘Looking ahead, there is great hope that after the first quarter of 2021 we may be able to resume the meets, socials and open the hut for the members.’



## EDITOR'S NOTES

As I write this, millions of people across the country have been plunged into Tier 4 restrictions. Instead of travelling to see family and friends for New Years celebrations, I will be having a quieter night in with my partner, Louise, who must be fed up of me by now.

You see, I've been watching snow fall in my beloved Cumbria and in the Scottish Highlands, all whilst stuck down south. It has given me cause to grumble

I spent last winter moaning about the how warm and wet it was and how the lottery of randomly selecting

weekends, in the hope of getting out the ice axe and crampons, was just not on my side. Storms Ciara and Dennis both spring to mind.

However, I usually snap out of such doldrums quite quickly. There's far more important things to think about right now and the benefits of getting out in the mountains can be mimicked by getting out for a run or a cycle. So let's keep perspective as we wait for vaccinations and a return to something resembling normality. Most important of all is to stay safe, help yourself and others by following the rules and we will all be through this quicker!

**Alex Langfield**



## RESTRICTIONS CONTINUE

THERE'S HOPE FOR SPRING, BUT FRONWYDYR AND THE DEV STILL A NO-GO

### FRONWYDYR REMAINS CLOSED

Due to the ongoing restrictions in Wales, Fronwydyr remains closed until the end of March at the earliest. Provisional bookings are available from 1st April onwards, however these are subject to ongoing reviews and government guidelines. We hope to return to our home in the Welsh mountains as soon and as safely as we can.

### JANUARY SOCIAL

Our regular slots (every third Thursday of the month) at the Devereux are still on hold. In terms of virtual socials, we have one confirmed and a few lined up but not yet confirmed. Login details and further information about future socials will be shared online.

Thursday 21 January - Tony Hamza presents 'The Mountains of Mgoon' a short expedition from Morocco.

### MEETS NEED YOU

Between now and April, we have one meet tentatively pencilled in to Rjukan in Norway. Hopefully by the spring we will be able to host meets more regularly. If you've been dreaming of getting out there during these restricted times, why not make your planned adventure a meet and help the club get back on its feet. See back page for more info...

## K2 IN THE SPOTLIGHT

IN OTHER NON-CLUB NEWS, NIMS PURJA AND CO SET OUT TO CLAIM K2 IN WINTER

Fresh from his remarkable 189-day completion of the 8000ers (the world's fourteen tallest mountains, all above 8000 metres high), Nims Purja is eyeing up one of the most sought after prizes left in mountaineering: a winter ascent of K2.

Known as the Savage Mountain, K2 is known to be amongst the most dangerous in the world and a successful winter attempt has proven to be beyond the world's finest and bravest mountaineers up until this point. Even in normal conditions, K2 has a success to death ratio of 4:1.

Nims will be far from alone on the mountain this season, with at least 25 others seeking a successful attempt, such as Romanian Alex Gavan and Italian Tamara Lunga.

This number of climbers has attracted criticism from some quarters, with many questioning why so many are putting themselves in danger. Eyebrows have been raised in the direction of 19-year-old Adriana Brownlee, a client of Purja's who has the intention of climbing to some of the lower camps. Some feel that inexperience such as this has no place on such a deadly mountain as K2 in winter.

Fewer than 30 people have stood on top of an 8000 metre mountain in winter. Only one is currently present amongst the teams attempting this feat on K2: Muhammad Ali Sadpara. That the rest of the individuals bidding to summit K2 have jumped straight in at the deep end is another fact that is gathering criticism.

However, many will be wishing those attempting to achieve what has previously proved impossible the best of luck in their attempt. It is clear that the spirit of adventure burns bright in each and every one of them.

At the time of writing, the teams are still preparing for that final push. Whether any succeed you may know by the time this goes to print. We wish everyone on K2 that, in success or failure, they return safely.

Nims Purja - hoping for a successful ascent of K2



K2 - the world's second highest mountain



**President**  
Zaheer Durrani



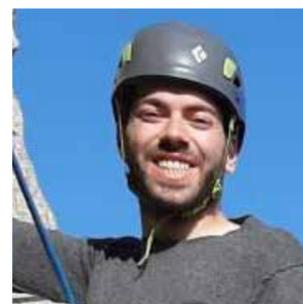
**Secretary**  
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**Membership**  
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**Hut Warden**  
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**Communications**  
Liz Holley



**Ordinary Member**  
Richard Bradford



**Ordinary Member**  
Saskia Scharnowski



**Ordinary Member**  
Xian Stannard



**Ordinary Member**  
Tony Williams



# OUT THERE

LMC MEMBERS DOING WHAT THEY DO BEST



Chris Willocks on Helvellyn's Striding Edge in the Lake District



Team LMC on the Cardinal Walk West

# MOUNTAINS OF THE WORLD

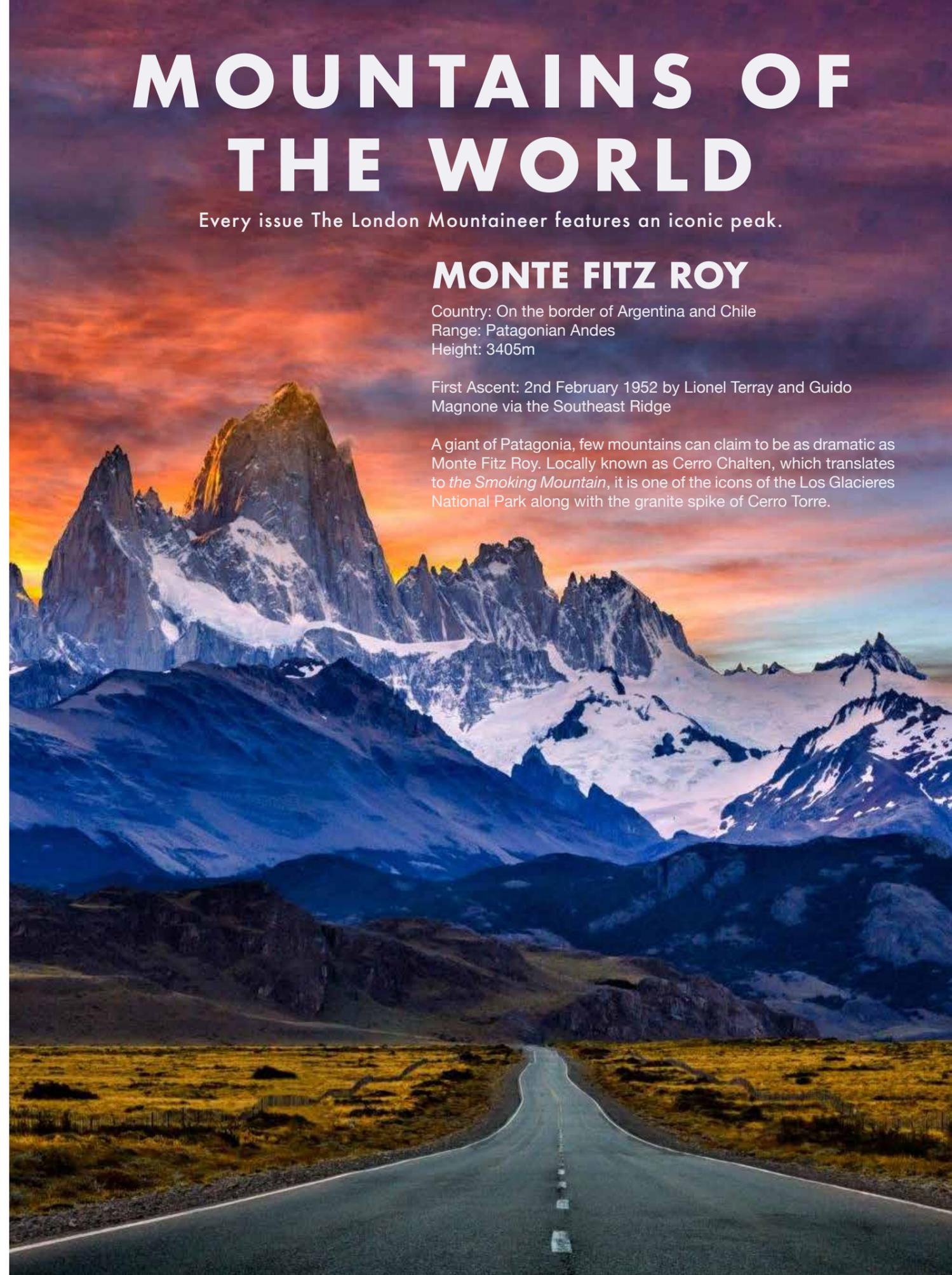
Every issue The London Mountaineer features an iconic peak.

## MONTE FITZ ROY

Country: On the border of Argentina and Chile  
Range: Patagonian Andes  
Height: 3405m

First Ascent: 2nd February 1952 by Lionel Terray and Guido Magnone via the Southeast Ridge

A giant of Patagonia, few mountains can claim to be as dramatic as Monte Fitz Roy. Locally known as Cerro Chaltén, which translates to *the Smoking Mountain*, it is one of the icons of the Los Glaciers National Park along with the granite spike of Cerro Torre.



# ADVENTURES ON THE ROOF OF EUROPE

Daniel Wicksteed (missleadingly not pictured here) reports on his escapades during the 2020 Alps Meet and shares his lessons learnt

In July and August 2020 I tentatively ventured out of my house and attended my first LMC Alpine meet. I very much fall into the beginners category when it comes to serious mountaineering, but I hope perhaps others might find this summary of my trip useful and learn from some of my mistakes. For reasons that will become apparent, the summary is mostly about me and my experiences as opposed to the meet in general (which I understand was excellent!) so please forgive the self-indulgence.

All geared up for my first LMC Alpine meet in Saas Fee, Switzerland, I landed in Milan late on a stormy Thursday night and proceeded to drive, with forked lightning flashing all around, to Gran Paradiso National Park, an Italian national park in the Graian Alps, between the Aosta Valley and Piedmont regions. (Side note: Italian motorway tolls are monstrously expensive.) This had nothing to do with the car hire company trying to charge an additional 80 euros for the pleasure of driving in another country (their offer was politely declined) nor was it the first example of me getting lost. Rather, it was that everyone else on the meet had a friend to climb with and I didn't. After reading this summary you might not be surprised, but surely you would be too polite to say so.

Not to be deterred, I contacted every random name that Dai suggested and eventually found Ian, who had contacted the club looking to climb with us only to discover that everyone was already partnered up. My

first lesson from the meet was that although climbing as a three can be safer for travelling over glaciers, basically everyone is very blasé about glaciers (and the risk of falling into one) and prefers to climb in a pair. I think it's because it's quicker and easier. Given the late finishes of others on the meet it does seem like speed can be important. Where there are more people on a meet there is a bit more flexibility and it is easier to find people who are willing to do stuff with you; given the intimate nature of this meet, it was important to find a climbing partner. Ian was an experienced mountaineer which, given that I was somewhat lacking in that department, was probably a good thing.

After some persuasion and a small amount of embellishment of my technical abilities (mentioning that I had done a course on how to use crampons and an ice axe, but neglecting to mention that there was no snow and the experience was therefore limited to walking up railway sleepers at Plas Y Brenin) Ian agreed to climb Gran Paradiso with me.

By way of mitigation, I had spent a lot of time watching instructional videos online (actually a really good idea) and practicing knots (also recommended) and therefore felt well prepared... Ian, very likely not fooled at all, was understandably keen to test me out on one of the easier 4,000m+ peaks in the Alps, as well as ticking off one of the seemingly few Alpine peaks of that height that he hadn't already climbed.



Dai Richards belaying on Alphubel West Ridge with some familiar peaks forming the backdrop

### An eventful ascent of Gran Paradiso

After many questions about kit, we climbed to the Chabod Hut on the Friday morning and sat around at the hut for a long time on the Friday afternoon. I guess it was good to get up high early in order to acclimatise to the altitude, but it did feel like we could have gone up a little later; there is only so much packing and repacking (also known as “faffing”) one can do. Ian had helpfully emphasised the importance of getting super organised the night before so as to get away swiftly before the mad rush of other climbers. Later experience would teach me that you don’t want to get away too early; it’s good to have someone to follow! Also important was getting things in the right order in your bag so as to be prepared when you’re on the mountain in potentially tricky conditions.

Fortunately, conditions were not tricky the next day and, after an obscenely early start, we set off up the glacier de Lavecciau (I think). No one warned me about the obscenely early starts, but apparently it’s important (certainly strongly preferable) not to be climbing when it gets hotter later in the day so that there is less chance of snow bridges (over crevasses) getting soft and seracs (big blocks or columns of glacial ice) falling. Our route from the Chabod hut was over more crevassed (and slightly more difficult) terrain than the more commonly used route from the Vittorio Emanuele II Refuge.

Ian led the way as the stronger more experienced climber (fine by me!) and we were making relatively speedy progress in the sunshine. Because there were only two of us (and Ian was being cautious) we had a lot of rope between us, which is reckoned to be safer for glacial travel (particularly in a two), but can be somewhat awkward. However, as a two we were relatively quick. Certainly, we were getting caught up with other climbing teams as we were trying to overtake.

I later discovered that Ian and one of the climbing guides had been having a “polite” conversation about mountain etiquette and who had the right of way, but don’t really feel qualified to comment on this. I am not saying that the guide pushing us off the path we were trying to take was the sole cause, but it didn’t help! Approaching the next crevasse Ian reminded me to keep the rope tight (which I thought I did) and attempted to cross it...

Everything happened very fast. One millisecond Ian was standing in front of me, the next he was just gone, plummeting into a crevasse. Without wishing to sound too dramatic, there really was no time to think, only to react. I knew the theory of getting into the self-arrest position, but it’s easier said than done when your partner has fallen and is dragging you forwards. It’s all a bit of a blur, but I think I threw myself to the left to try to get to the ground and stopped us with my crampons before getting my ice axe properly into the ice. In any event, we stopped, with Ian dangling 10m (by his own reckoning)

down a seemingly bottomless (verified when I crossed later) crevasse. Not a great situation and not what was expected (I was reliably informed that falling into a crevasse was very unlikely), but just goes to show what can happen. It was a bit of an eye opener for my first 4,000m Alpine peak.

Maybe a more proficient or experienced climber would have stopped Ian’s fall earlier (how can you practice for someone falling into a crevasse?), but either way it illustrated the importance of taking glacier travel very seriously, having the right equipment and making sure you know what you are doing. By all accounts we were lucky that we were travelling uphill rather than downhill, making it easier to stop the fall and I’ve been told subsequently (but please don’t take this as gospel) that you shouldn’t try to stop a fall using your crampons as you might flip over.

Unfortunately (perhaps fortunately for Ian) there wasn’t an opportunity to utilise my expensively purchased crevasse rescue equipment. As the less strong climber I wasn’t carrying coils in any event, so it is probably just as well. Instead, the guide Ian had been having a “discussion” with, perhaps feeling somewhat guilty for forcing us off our desired route, sought redemption by coming to our rescue.

The rescue system set up by the guide was designed to use his group of four climbers to pull Ian out of the crevasse by backing away. Very

clever in theory, but his group’s enthusiasm almost caused Ian greater injury than he had suffered falling in as he hurtled back up the narrow crevasse! Further instructions given, the rest of the rescue proceeded at a rather gentler pace. I have been asked for a precise technical description of the hauling system employed, but I was still holding weight (or at least acting as backup anchor) so wasn’t in a position to analyse quite how it was all done. Apologies to anyone interested.

Ian emerged from the glacier probably somewhat shaken (although he didn’t show it), but otherwise unscathed. I wrenched my left shoulder and had an ice burn down my left arm (I know, no one cares!), but was also generally fine. After making sure Ian was okay and saying it was completely up to him whether we carried on (while desperately hoping that we would), we continued to the summit and my first ascent of an 4,000m+ Alpine summit was complete. On the whole it was a great experience and, having established Ian was okay, the crevasse incident probably made the ascent more exciting.

That said, it is obviously not something I am keen to repeat and, having enquired of Ian, can confirm that he shares this sentiment. He thought he was a goner. Fortunately we had already agreed (and booked) our next objective so, crevasses notwithstanding, Ian was committed. There is some debate over whose idea it was, but it was a good one and I’m happy to share the credit 51% to me and 49% to Ian.

On the summit ridge of Gran Paradiso



Jon Turner on a ridge section of the Lenzspitz



Dai Richards and Leo Kesner climb one of the pillars en route to Nadelhorn



Jon Turner on the final snow slopes of the Alpehuel West Ridge



“Everything happened very fast. One millisecond Ian was standing in front of me, the next he was just gone, plummeting into a crevasse.”

## The White Giant

Global pandemics are obviously not great, no one is saying they are, but they probably helped with availability in the Gouter hut. That and poor weather in Chamonix.

In any event we got a booking and, after Ian had used his crystal ball to check the weather, even managed to change it (a few days in advance) from the Monday night to the Tuesday night, when it appeared that Wednesday was likely to be our best chance of summiting (we didn't want to hang around until Thursday). As it turned out, this was incredible foresight as there was probably about 50cm of snow on Sunday and Monday and there was very little chance we would have summited on the Tuesday. Another lesson learnt, you need to be flexible in the Alps.

Certainly in the Chamonix valley it tipped it down consistently on Sunday and Monday, particularly in the afternoons and overnight on the Monday. My limited experience was that the weather was generally better in the mornings and deteriorated over the course of the day. The science for this is beyond the scope of this summary, but it is probably another reason why stupidly early starts are advisable. Anyway, we had climbed Gran Paradiso on Friday and Saturday and on Sunday we headed to Chamonix separately.

I managed a short hike up to the beautiful Lago D'Alpy (recommended) en route to Chamonix on the Sunday and climbed the very exposed Via Ferrata De Curalla (made all the scarier by a rainstorm two thirds of the way through) on the Monday. In the process I learnt the importance of checking the weather forecast properly and not dawdling before setting off in the morning.

Other than that, a lot of time over those two days was spent sitting in the car sheltering from the rain (which was falling as snow higher up), hoping that the forecasts were correct and that it would eventually stop, drying clothes and trying to charge my phone. Battery packs long since run out, charging my phone was becoming a constant battle. If camping, bringing a charger which fits into a shaver socket is highly recommended!

Mont Blanc was tough for a number of reasons. One is personal to me. I don't sleep well at the best of times and therefore got very little sleep on the Monday night (due to a rainstorm) and none at all in the Gouter hut on the Tuesday night (although I'm not sure many sleep well in huts). That's not going to help anyone. It was also tough though because it was very cold and windy on Tuesday night

The unmistakable Gouter Hut – launchbase for many assaults on Mont Blanc



# Summary of climbs done by Jon Turner and James Barron, Leo Kesner and Dai Richards, Saskia Scharnowski and Stefan Wink

Compiled by Dai Richards

**Sunday 2nd August: Jegihorn (3206m)**

Easy 200m bolted rock climb (grade III)  
All 6 of us did the route to the summit and then stayed at the Weissmies Hut that night.

**Wednesday 5th: Alphubel (4206m) West South West Ridge (Rotgrat), AD, III+, 1550m**

From Tasch Hut

Took Jon, James, Leo and myself 14 hours hut to hut.

Saskia and Stefan turned around at 4pm when they reached the 'bastion' in the final 3rd of the route (the bastion consisted of approx 8 pitches of VDiff rock climbing followed by 3 pitches of Scottish grade II mixed). They then stoically scrambled back down the first 2/3s of the route all through the night and got back to the hut about 6am after being out for around 25 hours.

**Friday 7th: Lenzspitze (4294m) – Nadelhorn (4327m) ridge traverse AD, III+, 950m**

From Mischabel Hut

Climbed by Jon, James, Leo and myself in around 14 hours

**Sat 8th : Saski and Stefan did the N-E ridge of the Nadelhorn (PD, 1000m)**

**Sunday 9th: Saski and Stefan did the Jegigrat traverse (III+) in 12 hours**

"They then stoically scrambled back down the first 2/3s of the route all through the night."



En route to the summit of Mont Blanc



Daniel on the summit of Mont Blanc

/ Wednesday morning (when we were trying to summit) and there were a number of lessons to be learnt.

The first was that it's good to set off early, but not too early! We were first out of the hut but given the conditions and resulting lack of obvious path, soon decided to pause and let a few other teams go ahead. Second was an idiotic mistake on my part. Having carried extra warm clothes on pretty much every mountain excursion I've been on, for some reason (feel free to ask why) on the one climb that was likely to be the coldest it seemed like a good idea to keep weight down by only bringing the absolute minimum. An extra layer would have been a better one.

The final lesson was to do what works for you and at your own pace. Momentum and not hanging around is obviously important when you're in tough conditions, but for me taking care to stop (even for

a short period) to ensure proper hydration and fuelling is even more important. More speed less haste was required.

We had previously considered the Tres Monts route up Mont Blanc, but it was closed (at least it was when we made our booking at the Gouter hut), so we summited via the normal route. By all accounts (I'm relying on Ian here) conditions were more challenging than usual, but the ascent and getting to the summit was great.

Having reached the summit and enjoyed some spectacular views, we got off it again pretty quickly! Adrenaline got me to the top, but I really struggled on the way down. At the Nid d'Aigle tram station I explained to the guard that I had lost my hat and had to leave the platform area / pen (you needed a ticket to get in) to go and find it. After a careful search, I subsequently realised it was on my head.

"At the Nid d'Aigle tram station I explained to the guard that I had lost my hat... After a careful search, I subsequently realised it was on my head."



Gorgeous colours from Mont Blanc

## Alphubel via the Southeast Ridge

Twelve hours of sleep later and life admin sorted, it was time to say goodbye to Ian, my long-suffering and steadfast companion of the previous two climbs, and finally head to Switzerland to meet up with the LMC! Mont Buet, once I eventually realised it was en route, proved too great a temptation. I had been prevented from climbing it on a previous hiking trip due to a storm. So I arrived in Saas Grund late on the Thursday night, albeit without a campsite booking!

I had learnt a lot from Ian (more than 10 years my senior) and was looking forward to imparting that knowledge onto fellow LMC member Nick (more than 10 years my junior), with whom I planned to climb in Saas. Unfortunately Nick had been doing a course called the Saas 4000s the previous week, so he knew more than I did as well. On Friday, I kept myself occupied doing the Mittaghorn Via Ferrata, while Nick finished his course, before trudging back down to Saas Fee. Note: never believe the internet and double check which lifts are running. We met up on Friday afternoon for a beverage and to make our plans for the following days.

Said plans worked (almost) flawlessly. We caught pretty much the first Alpin Express lift, having learnt the lesson about early starts. Then we caught one of the first Metro Alpin trains (someone failed to get off before it went back down, which was very funny) to Mittelallin, which was the highest point we could reach by mechanised means at 3,500m. From here we set off to climb Alphubel via the Southeast Ridge from Feechopf.

Catching the Metro Alpin was necessitated by our inability to book a suitable hut on the Saturday night, which brings me on to another important lesson learnt. Ian and I got lucky with the Gouter hut, but generally it is vital to book as early as possible. This is easier said than done when you're uncertain of your plans, but they do fill up quickly, and not just at weekends.

Our ascent would have been flawless (pretty much) but someone forgot to do up the pocket in the hood of his pack. On the ice nose of

Alphubel, a section that involved our only front pointing, his mobile phone went first and then his wallet followed down the slope, scattering its contents as it went.

Having already lost a couple of bits of equipment previously, he should really have learnt to be careful by now. Fortunately on this occasion, after dragging his partner back down the slope (there was some complaint about out of control sliding down ice in self arrest position, but I'm not buying it), everything was recovered and a great day was had in excellent conditions.

Talking of excellent, on the Saturday night (ten days into my holiday!) I finally got to meet the rest of the LMC crew. They were a lovely bunch and my meeting them hopefully qualifies this as a proper meet report for publication in the club magazine.

Anyhow, we had a great meal (I obviously hadn't had enough bread, cheese and meat over the course of the holiday, so I thought pizza was an inspired choice) and I heard great tales of the rest of the crew's rather more challenging exploits.

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### Meet Details

Alps Meet 2020, Saas Grund  
1 - 9 August 2020

Attendees: Dai Richards (steward),  
Leo Kesner, Saskia Scharnowski, Dan  
Drake, Jonathan Turner, James Barron  
Daniel Wicksteed, Stefan Wink, Nick  
Steventon-Pell

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## The Weissmies Traverse

The following day, Sunday, Nick and I agreed to do our own things and then to meet at the Hohsaas hut that evening for our second and final climb together. I regretted this as I found myself walking up and down the wrong ridge while trying to get to the start of the Jagihorn Via Ferrata, having failed to check a map; another lesson for the notebook.

Unfortunately, I eventually found it and wished I hadn't. It was just terrifying as the Via Ferrata De Curalla in Chamonix, if not more so. The rope bridge was bad for exposure, the next bit of climbing much worse. My delayed and somewhat cautious ascent meant a dash across to the Hohsaas hut to get there in time for dinner.

Another sleepless night and another early start and Nick and I were off to do the Weissmies traverse, which was highly enjoyable and provided an amazing sunrise and stunning views. No lessons learnt on this one, save perhaps that 2,345m of descent to Saas Almagell is too much for the last day of your holiday.



Daniel on the summit of Weissmies

“I was left alone for my final descent down through spectacular mountain scenery to my car, with sore knees but a great sense of accomplishment.”



Daniel Wicksteed and Nick Steventon-Pell on the summit of Alphubel



A part of the Weissmies Traverse

Whilst not particularly difficult, the ridge down did give Nick and I the perfect opportunity to practice our running belay, hooking our rope around natural features, such as rocks, to give us some protection on the more tricky bits of the descent. I am reliably informed that this is one of the most important skills you can develop as it enables you to move quickly over challenging ground in circumstances where time might be an issue. Nick sensibly ditched me after a while and I was left alone for my final descent down through spectacular mountain scenery to my car, with sore knees but a great sense of accomplishment.

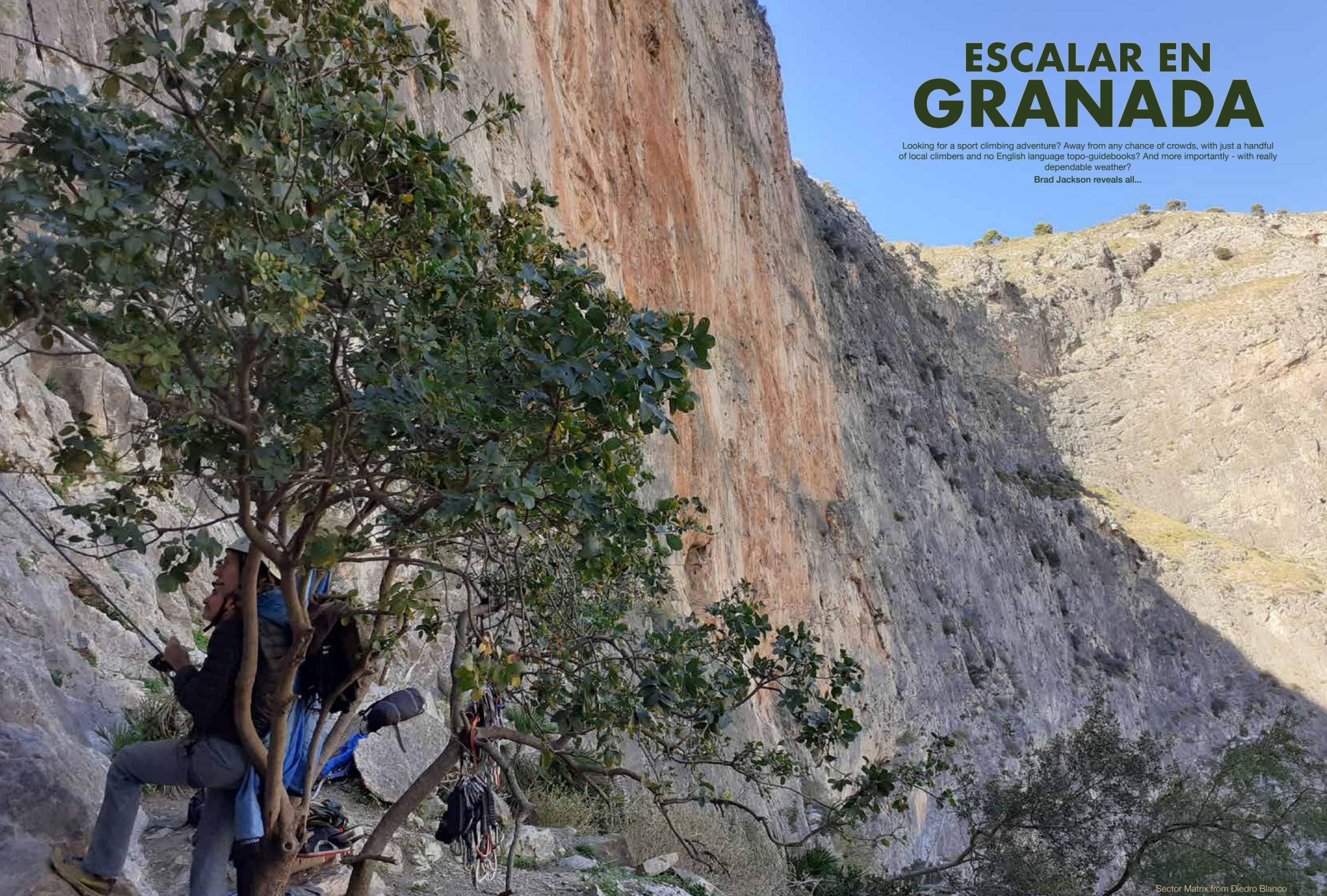
I don't recommend driving three hours to the airport immediately after a long day in the mountains (this was probably the most dangerous part of the trip to be honest), but needs must. The car hire company didn't find out I'd driven over half of Europe (please don't tell them). The flight was just about caught and I returned home a weary but happy man, very much looking forward to my next LMC Alpine meet.

Thanks to Dai for helping me to sort out my plans and thanks to Ian and Nick for being prepared to climb with me. Valuable lessons were learnt from both. Hopefully this summary hasn't put off prospective climbing partners, as apparently they're quite important. Plus it's nice to have the company. If it has, hopefully Ian will still climb with me. He summited Weisshorn after I left him, so he's still got it!

# ESCALAR EN GRANADA

Looking for a sport climbing adventure? Away from any chance of crowds, with just a handful of local climbers and no English language topo-guidebooks? And more importantly - with really dependable weather?

Brad Jackson reveals all...



Sector Matrix from Diedro Blanco

The Costa Tropical is an area of southern Spain centred around the city of Motril, it is equi-distant from Malaga and Almeria airports. The EU (remember them?) have kindly paid for some new and generally very quiet motorways to be built in this part of the world, including one that runs directly from Motril up to and beyond Granada city. Which is, as I am sure you know, the gateway to the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The Sierra Nevada is the second highest mountain range in Western Europe and provides plenty of opportunities for skiing and mountaineering in the season.

Within the general geographical area running from the 'Costa Tropical to up to Granada' there are a number of interesting, mainly limestone crags. The Costa Tropical reputedly receives in the order of 300+ days of sunshine per year, making this a real candidate as a genuine winter sun climbing destination. Another useful aspect is that many crags sit at a whole variety of altitudes, from just above sea level up to 1,500 metres. The crags are also orientated in all directions, so sunshine and shade can be found, as and when you require them.

This area could be the 'next big thing' in European climbing terms. But maybe it is better remaining as merely a quiet backwater for those who like to explore.

The area is extensive, and the climbing is spread out, so you do have to do quite a bit of driving to get around; it's about an hour's drive from Motril to Granada.

The local topo-guidebooks can sometimes be found at either of the two outdoor / climbing / mountaineering shops in Granada city centre: 'Sherpa' and 'Solo Aventura'.

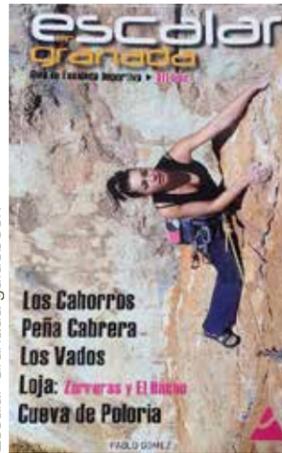
When you're in Granada try to visit the Alhambra Palace. The Alhambra is perfect for a rest day, it is usually very busy, so make sure to go early in the day or book in advance.



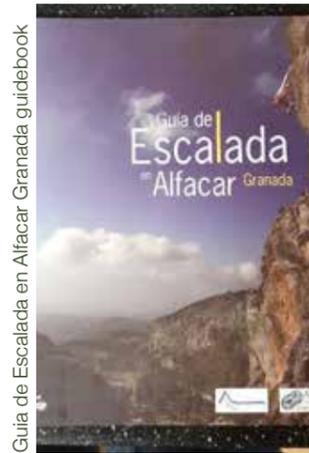
John Evans "chilling" at Alfacar



John Evans on "1994" F6a+



Escalar Granada guidebook



Guia de Escalada en Alfacar Granada guidebook

"This area could be the 'next big thing' in European climbing terms."

## ALFACAR

is most definitely a mountain crag, being situated a 20-minute drive north of Granada. On the plus side though, it is essentially roadside climbing. I hadn't really appreciated the altitude (1100 metres asl.) of the crag on the day we visited in November and we were poorly equipped for the conditions. The temperature was a bracing 7 centigrade, but at least it was dry. There are some long multi pitch slab climbs here and plenty of steeper single pitch challenges.



Los Bolos, Alfacar



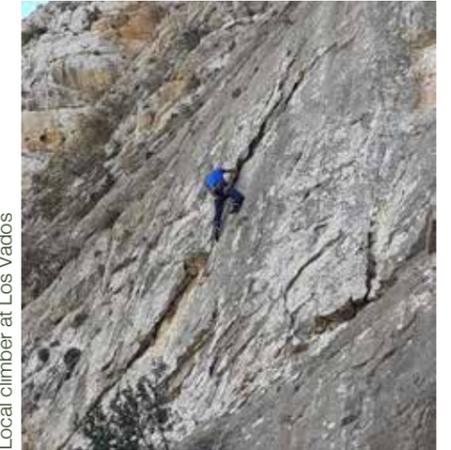
The panorama from Alfacar



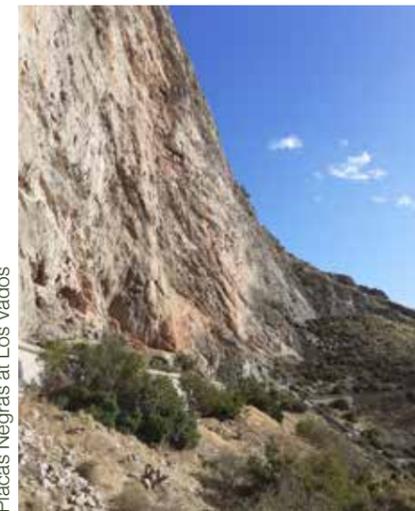
Los Vados, La Guarderia and Pared de La Virgen

## LOS VADOS

is a large and extensive crag situated in a gorge, through which the old Motril to Granada road passes. There are routes from 15 metres in length, up to some multi-pitch expeditions in the vicinity of 300 metres. There is both sun and shade. Also, there are at least two monstrous 'Via Cordata' routes here, on which the equipment looks brand new. These are proper adventures and appear to be at least as popular as the rock climbing at this location. The Via Ferrata grades are VF4D (350 metres). This is the principle crag in the southern part of the area.



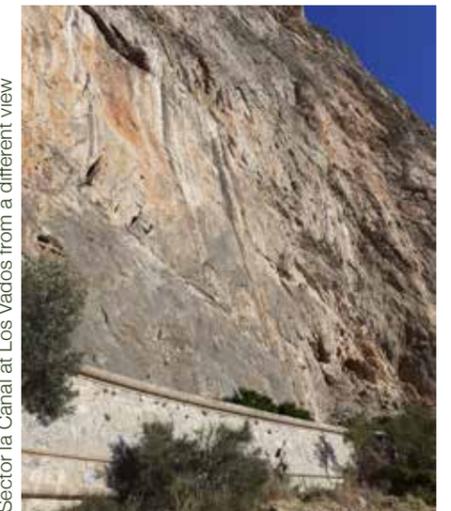
Local climber at Los Vados



Placas Negras at Los Vados



Sector la Canal at Los Vados



Sector la Canal at Los Vados from a different view

Capileira can be found a long way up in the Alpajurras, a mountainous area on the way up to the even higher Sierra Nevada mountains. The altitude here is in the region of 1400 metres. The village is a bit of a tourist stop-off, and is very pleasant, with plenty of restaurants and cafes. The crag is in the shade in the morning. It's very steep in places but with generally large holds. The rock is a strange type of mudstone/slate. Definitely worth the effort it takes to drive up there. The crag is a 10-minute walk beyond the village.

Orgiva is the administrative centre of the Alpajurras and a busy little town that's famed for its nearby hippy community at Beneficio. There is actually a campsite here in the town centre which looks like a nice spot to stay: it could provide a potential base from which to explore.

The crags at Orgiva are found in a small valley a few miles back out of town. On the downside, the dirt road through the gorge carries a lot of lorry traffic, so it's best visited on a weekend. The crags, twelve of them in total, lie on both sides of the gorge and can provide either sun or shade as required. We found the best crags were those furthest up the valley and in the shade.

A central place to base yourself for a visit to the area would be the village of Velez de Benaudalla, or perhaps Orgiva/Lanjaron. Somewhere a little more central to all the climbing areas rather than either Granada or Motril.

Lanjaron is a town famed for its eponymous bottled water company. There are a couple of smaller crags close to the town. We didn't manage to visit these crags, but I would expect them to be a little like the nearby Orgiva crags.

Los Cahorros, Loja, Pena Cabrera-Naranjito, Cueva de Poloria, Lanjaron, Lagos, Niguelas, Dilar, Cogollos – are all crags that I have yet to visit. The more important crags are Los Cahorros and Loja. Los Cahorros has adopted an unusual grading system so be aware. It's close to Granada city and there are several hundred climbs listed. This is the other main crag, along with Los Vados, of the whole area. The 'UKClimbing crag database' also lists many other minor climbing venues.

Whilst visiting one of the city centre climbing shops we also discovered that there was a climbing guidebook to yet another extensive area further north around the city of Jaén. I hadn't even heard of any climbing potential there. Perhaps, we should go and have a look?



# MAC TO THE FUTURE

After the London Mountaineer featured excerpt from John Porter's *One Day as a Tiger* – the story of British mountaineering legend Alex MacIntyre's career – in 2020's spring issue, Tony Williams did a little digging to find out more of Alex's short stint in the LMC.

A member enquired of the activities of Alex with the LMC. With little else to so do one evening I rifled through an old hut log and I have noted some of the routes below. The climbs were with a selection of people who I do not know, although at least one of his partners was a member whose name I recognise. And I know that Richard McElligott, Harry Woodbridge and Roger Everett knew Alex when he was a member.

**Harry Woodbridge** recalls Alex's first meet because the car he was travelling to the Peak District in picked a sixteen-year-old Alex up from his home in Hertfordshire.

The following day Harry climbed with Alex on Curbar Edge. Alex was full of enthusiasm and was already taking a wide selection of climbing magazines, although he had never climbed.

After a couple of routes, Alex wanted to lead so Harry pointed him at PMC, a severe which was bold but well protected. Harry lent him some gear which would have been little more than a MOAC or two and some hexes. Alex set off well and climbed fearlessly but without great skill that first day. He also needed guidance in nut placement, which was willingly given and from there Alex never looked back when it came to climbing.

Harry did not climb with Alex again but met him frequently at Fronwydyr. His abiding memory was of massive enthusiasm and energy in tackling climbs, commenting that while he (Harry) might do four or five climbs on a day and Alex the same number, Alex's routes might all have been on different crags.

**Roger Everett**, a very competent and youngish member of the LMC at the time (if two years older than Alex) recalls...

*I did indeed climb with Alex. I can't remember if we were staying in Fronwydyr or Humphrey's Barn but I remember doing Cobweb Crack with him. It was his first HVS. I know it's deemed VS these days but I did it again last year and thought it still to be HVS! (The guidebook does state that it is hard for its grade. TW).*

*He must have still been at school. He was typically unkempt and irrepressibly enthusiastic. I bumped into him again several times over the years, sometimes in Scotland where he had taken up doing classic Grade Vs on the Ben in very rapid times, and in Yorkshire when he was at Leeds University and showing the same enthusiasm while moving up the grades. Also in the Alps where his career really started blossoming.*

*One notable time was when a friend and I were about halfway up the Bonatti Pillar at a point where the route is within shouting distance of the descent. He was going down after completing the climb the previous day. Somehow we were close enough to recognise each other and we had this shouted conversation catching up on current times. He'd taken up with a group of very talented big mountain climbers at that time, of course, and his progress on to ever bigger and harder things in the mountains had started.*

*I also remember him from an ACG Dinner somewhere in the North of England I think.*

Spring 2020's feature of an excerpt of One Day as a Tiger

## LIGHT AND FAST

An excerpt from John Porter's internationally bestselling and critically acclaimed book *One Day As A Tiger*, which tells the incredible story of sometime LMC member Alex MacIntyre's life in mountaineering.

In the summer of 1962, a 16-year-old boy from the south coast of Hampshire and about 100 miles from the Peak, sitting in a car and reading the climbing magazine *One Day As A Tiger*, was looking for a climbing partner. He had a list of names in the magazine and was looking for a climbing partner. He had a list of names in the magazine and was looking for a climbing partner. He had a list of names in the magazine and was looking for a climbing partner.



*He was enjoying every bit of entertainment on offer. My wife and I left the ensuing party but Alex of course stayed on only to reappear sometime in the morning, as bright eyed and irrepressible as ever.*

Roger went on to become a virologist at Glasgow University and continues to climb extensively in Scotland and elsewhere. I can safely quote the following background quote by Roger, "Retired virologist. No thought of becoming a retired climber."

When looking at the list of routes below, remember Alex was 16 and at school when he started climbing and also consider the standard of gear, no small nuts or cams and ropes were not so good, probably a single hawser laid rope with only a waist belay of some kind. Pretty rapid development.

- 06.12.1970 Flying Buttress
- 16.1.1971 Hope
- 08.4.1971 Shadow Wall
- 12.4.1971 Slape, Brant
- 13.4.1971 Petite Fleur, Anthropology
- 14.4.1971 Erosion Groove, Ivy Sepulchre
- 15.4.1971 Tennis Shoe, Original Route, Groove Above, Zig Zag

Lew Brown on Cobweb Crack, a route mentioned in Roger's recollection. Photo by Geoff Nicholson



A comment by Alex on one of Harry Woodbridge's "loquacious" entries from 12th June 1971: "Is all this detail necessary. Quit writing and start climbing." He was obviously well into the Club personalities even then!

There are many more good routes in between, but I skip to the following entry to show how rapid was Alex's development:

- 7.04.1973 Barbarian, Pin Cushion and The Plum at Tremadog followed by Genotaph Corner in the Pass. A good day!

Remember what gear was like then!

Many of these routes were with M Santa-Olalla – a name unknown to me. After a few years Alex went to Leeds University and the rest, as they say, is history.

This was an interesting exercise for me, especially talking to Harry and Roger. I hope some of the history interests current members and serves as a reminder of how long and deep friendships made in the mountains can become.



Alex MacIntyre  
1954 - 1982

# HANG IN THERE

Alex Langfield on why your membership is as important as ever

With meets cancelled left, right and centre, Brexit meaning we can't even get anywhere near the Alps and Wales in and out of total Lockdown like a crazed cuckoo, it's fair to say there have been better times to be in the London Mountaineering Club.

There's plenty else you could have spent your £37.50 annual subscription on. You could have bought half a year of Netflix; or splashed out on three courses at Langley's Restaurant, Surbiton; you might have treated yourself to the DMM Super Couloir Harness from The Climber's Shop; you could have become the proud owner of a bottle of Talisker; or you could have bought 3,750 penny sweets (imagine the rush!).

However, the fact you are holding this magazine in your hands tells me that you have supported the LMC through this tough year. On behalf of all the members past, present and future, we would like to thank you and say *hang in there*.

The LMC is nothing without its members. We *are* the club. We arrange a huge variety of meets to incredible places; we laugh at the end of a tough day on the crag together; we support local businesses (particularly the Vaynoi Arms and the Dev – two places that will need our support more than ever) through our fantastic socials and meets. With the promise of a brighter 2021, all of what makes the club great will soon be back on the cards. The fact you've stuck around makes all this possible.

As well as your mere presence keeping the club going, your £37.50 continues to be put to good use. Despite being empty, our wonderful home-from-home Fronwydyr has been maintained and paid for and will be ready when our eyes turn back to Snowdonia and its many charms. Our affiliation with the BMC continues, which is actually the club's main expense. This affiliation opens up an entire

network of huts throughout Britain, as well as giving you, the member, automatic third-party insurance.

For the second time in this feature, I will call attention to the thing in your hand (very post-modern, I know). Your membership pays for the pleasure of this very magazine and the inspiration I hope it contains. Anticipating more austere times, we have temporarily cut the magazine back to three issues a year. Let's hope for a boom in 2021 and a return to quarterly status!

If, like me, you've used the money that you'd have probably been spending on sleeper trains and dodgy accommodation instead on climbing kit and mountain literature, you may have made use of the 15% discount your membership gets you at Cotswold. Just buy one pair of winter boots and you'll have already made your money back (or spent £212.50 on a second pair of boots you didn't need).

Of course, the club has still been as active as it possibly could be, adapting to the challenges posed by 2020. There've been

excellent, informative online socials and highly competitive quizzes. In the heady days of August, we even met for a picnic and some beverages in Hyde Park. Members have met for walks in places like Epping Forest. When tiers have permitted, the usual suspects have descended upon Westway (another place we get a discount).

And, in the brief windows where liberties were granted, you only have to read this issue's Alps Meet feature to realise that incredible adventures were still possible this year, for those who were in a position to grab the opportunities.

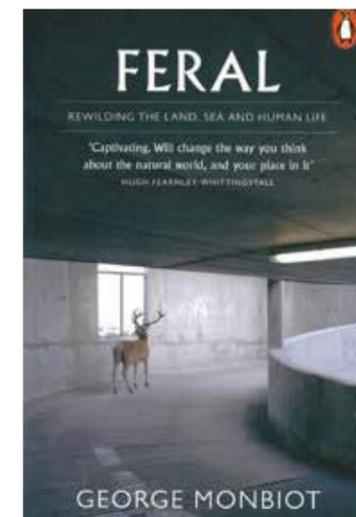
So *hang in there*. Your membership is vital to the club and still represents value even in a fallow year. It takes a year like 2020 to highlight just what great value the club represents when things are in full flow. On a personal note, my ease of access to the mountains has been decimated over the last year, which is why I can't wait to get back to LMC adventures in 2021.

"The LMC is nothing without its members. We are the club."



## INSPIRATION

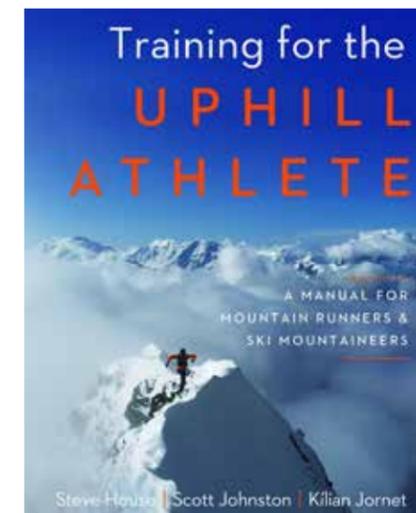
Your essential hit of the finest armchair mountaineering options



Book

**Feral - George Monbiot**

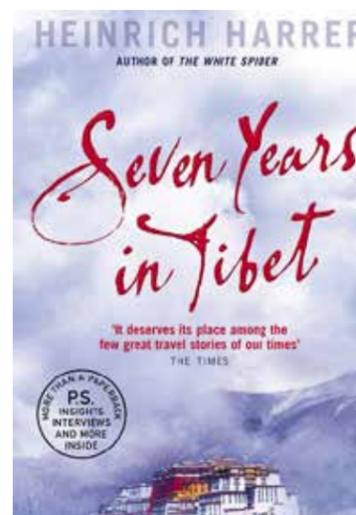
Feral opens your eyes to what we've lost and what we could gain through the process of rewilding. It will change the way you think about the British countryside and the mountainous regions in particular. Monbiot's flair for language and storytelling, coupled with his passion for nature and the ideas he is promoting makes this a captivating read that is hard to dismiss. It exposes current viewpoints on farming, traditional rural communities and ridiculousness of many conservation movements and paints a picture of a much brighter, varied and, dare I say it, utopian future, where nature can thrive and communities prosper. Reintroduce the wolf, anyone?



Book

**Training for the Uphill Athlete - Steve House, Scott Johnston, Kilian Jornet**

If you fancy being less out of breath having ran up a hill, this is the book for you. Following on from the successful *Training for the New Alpinism*, House and Johnston rope Jornet in for a few soundbites and then hurl the science of stamina at you. There's a heady mixture of theory, practice and stories from accomplished athletes to keep the pages turning, meaning that there's enough variety over half an hour's read to keep you interested. One criticism is that there is nothing here about nutrition: such a pivotal part of training and fitness. However, other than this one flaw, it's a pretty decent manual for anyone who is wanting to increase their hill fitness or stamina for those Ultras!



Book

**Seven Years in Tibet - Heinrich Harrer**

You've no doubt heard of Seven Years in Tibet. It is, after all, one of the quintessential travel tales of the 20th century (and a popular film starring Brad Pitt, no less). If you haven't read it, do. It's the simply marvellous tale of Heinrich Harrer's (one of the team of the first ascent of the Eiger's North Face and author of the classic climbing book *The White Spider*) escape from an Allied prisoner of war camp in India, across the Himalayas, into Tibet and finally to the forbidden city of Lhasa. As one of the first westerners to experience this enchanting yet challenging land, his account is a revelation of a different world to the one we live in. If this doesn't have you plotting off-the-beaten-track adventures to Tibet, I don't know what will. (That's a lie actually, speak to Tony Hamza – that'll also do it!)



# THE LEONIDIO SYNCRASIES

OF CLIMBING IN COVID TIMES

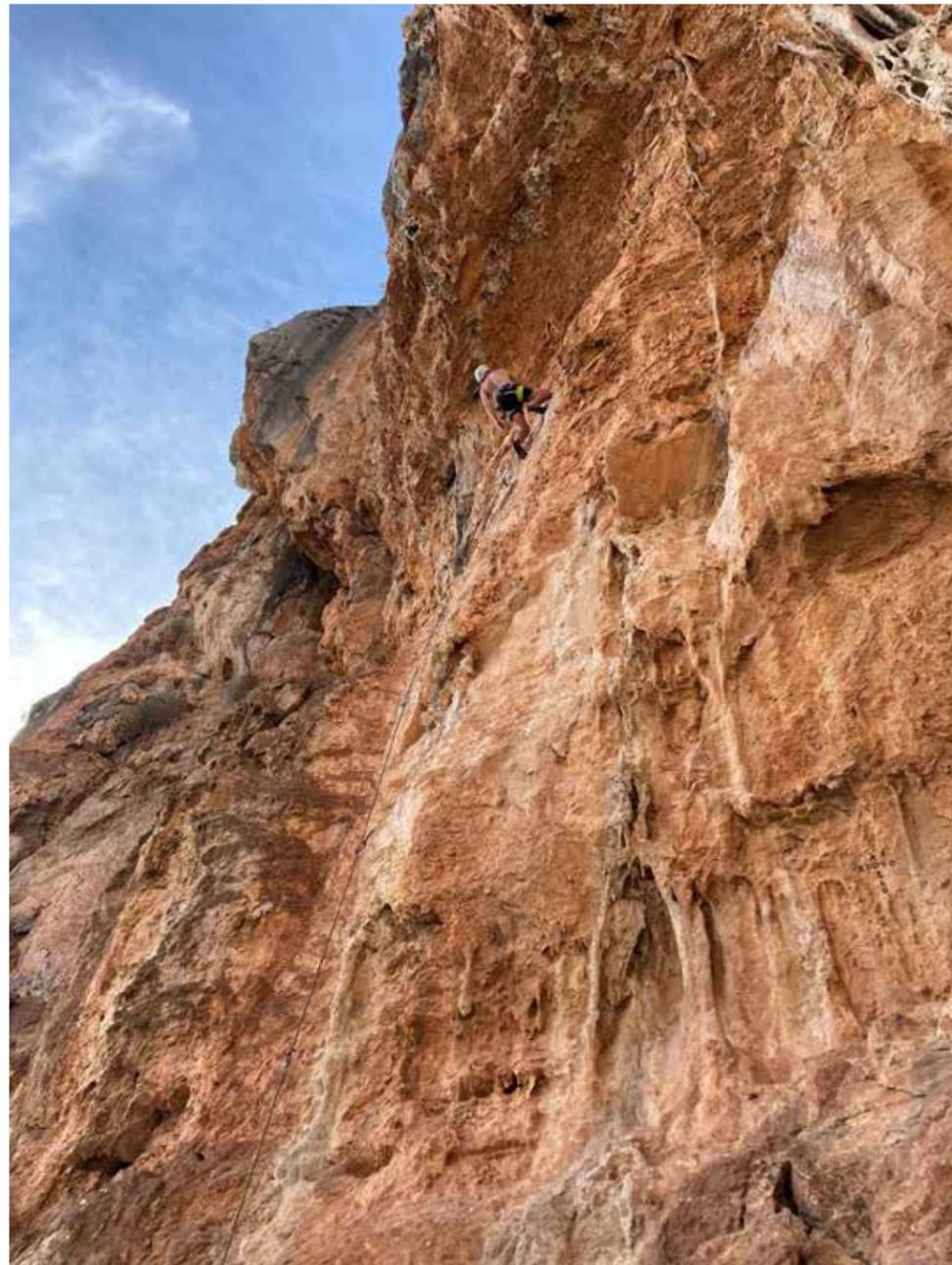
Dai Richards recalls how a plucky few managed a climbing trip to Greece before the second Lockdown.

Lunch stop on the Rabbit Ridge



Dai Richards eyeing up a pitch on the Rabbit Ridge

Ben Kitchen topping out on Pouro (graded 6a+)



Dai Richards leading a pitch on the Rabbit Ridge



It was mid-October 2020 and the Covid-19 restrictions that had decimated the meet calendar over the summer months were now making the Moroccan Anti-Atlas trip scheduled for November look increasingly unlikely. The requirement to pay £200 for a test before travelling and quarantining on return was proving off-putting for even the most ardent sunseekers. So, a few of us that were keen to escape the onset of the wet and cold and do some fair weather climbing began discussing possible alternatives.

After some suggestions including Cost Blanca and the rather more adventurous option of Madeira (mostly undeveloped with existing lines generally in the E grades), we settled on Leonidio. Rumour had it that it was "the new Kalymnos" and "the next big thing in European sport climbing". Since Greece was one of the few remaining countries to have a travel corridor with the UK it seemed like an opportune time for a visit.

Showing solid millennial social media skills, Ben Kitchen set up a Whatsapp group and posted a link to it on the club's Facebook page in case any others were keen to escape the UK for some late autumn sun. The planning had begun and the excitement was building...

We'd agreed to make a final decision five days before departure and in the run up we were frantically trying to decipher the Greek government's Covid guidance website and even called upon some of the Greek club members for some impromptu translation.

Tuesday the 27th October was decision day. By then we'd established that the travel corridor was still in place and that fortunately Arcadia - the area that Leonidio is in - was in the lowest tier of Greek restrictions. This meant that, other than having to wear face masks indoors, the trip would be generally unaffected. A frantic rush of booking saw six of us booked into 2 Air BnBs with Liucija

Liucija at the top of the Petson and Findus route



Jon descending from Rabbit Ridge



and Andrius able to join up as well, as they'd fortuitously arranged to be in the area at the same time. We then waited anxiously for our departure date praying that Grant Schapps and Matt Hancock (or their Greek counterparts) wouldn't announce any new changes that might affect the trip.

Finally, the wait was over and we arrived in Leonidio not quite believing we'd managed to navigate the bureaucracy and Covid restrictions, and general challenges associated with organising a trip at such short notice. We were rewarded with warm sunshine, quiet crags and the out of season tranquillity of a Greek seaside resort.

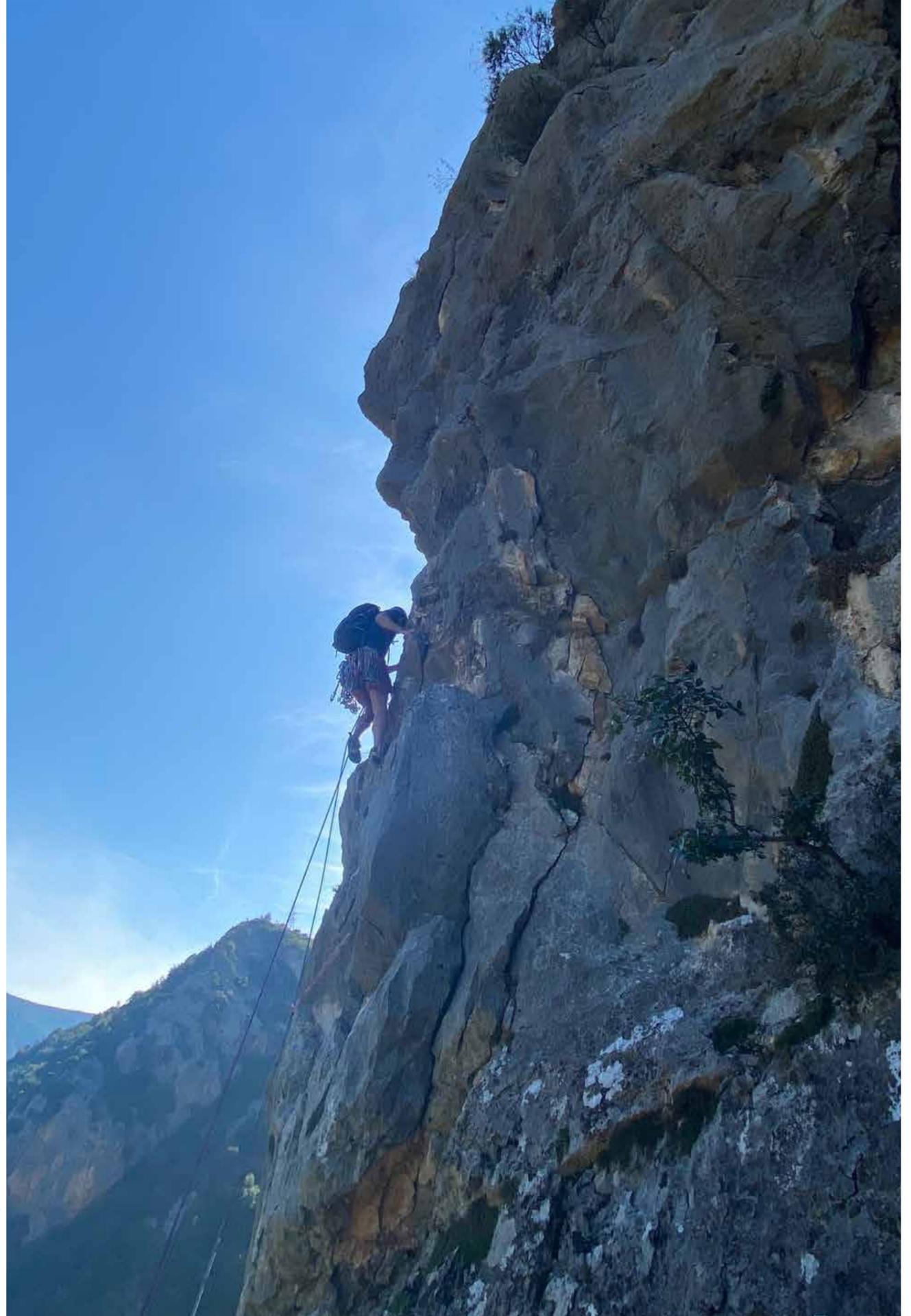
With over 1,000 bolted lines, some up to 40m in length, there was plenty to choose from and Jon and I got busy ticking off as many of the lower grade routes as we could each day; getting a feel for the steep pocketed limestone and otherworldly Tufa formations.

“We arrived in Leonidio not quite believing we'd managed to navigate the bureaucracy of Covid restrictions.”

A MK1 Cortina. The village is something of a graveyard for old interesting cars



Jon Turner leading Rabbit Ridge (graded 6a+)



The view back down the valley from Skiadnianiko



Unfortunately, Richard's guest Ala picked up a nasty infection shortly before the trip and so, for the first few days, he was kept busy ferrying her to and from various doctors surgeries and hospitals. When he did eventually get to climb, he wasted no time, along with Stefan, in sending an intimidatingly steep 6b called Eye of the Tiger!

The weather was pretty much sunny all week, so every day slipped into a familiar pattern of picking a new crag (there are over 50!), climbing until just before dusk, and then hitting the beach for a swim as the sun set. This was followed by a hefty dinner at one of the various tavernas in town that specialised in grilled souvlaki and salads accompanied by huge slabs of Feta.

Dinner was a chance to catch up with other teams who'd not been at the same crag. Not least Liucija and Andrius who, climbing well into the 7s, were visiting crags that the rest of us would struggle even with the warmup routes. Their prowess certainly illustrated the benefits of putting the hours in (including 7-hour round trips to Portland when overnight stays were not permitted earlier in the year!) and focusing on one particular climbing discipline.



POV from Ben Kitchen on the Rabbit Ridge

“Every day slipped into a familiar pattern of picking a new crag... then hitting the beach as the sun set.”

For some variation later in the week (and to justify bringing a full rack of nuts and cams to a sport climbing venue) Ben, Jon and I climbed the only trad route in the guidebook - Rabbit Ridge (6a+). It was a memorable day, not least because our ropes got stuck on the abseil descent meaning Jon had to jumar up on his Tibloc traction device (very handy indeed!) to free it near the anchor. But the next abseil made it all worthwhile as we descended over a huge overhang into empty space for 40m down to the ground.

Sadly, the week went by all too quickly and we were facing a return to the UK and another lockdown. The only consolation being that Greece itself had issued a stay-at-home order from the day we flew back and we pondered the uncertain fate of the fellow sunseekers we'd left behind...

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#### Meet Details

Leonidio Meet, Greece  
31 October - 7 November 2020

Attendees: Ben Kitchen, Jon Turner,  
Stefan Wink, Liucija Latanauskaitė,  
Andrius Silinskas, Richard Applegate,  
Ala (guest) and Dai Richards.

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The Rabbit Ridge in its entirety



# MEETS HIGHLIGHTS

Participating in meets is what the club is all about. Meets are run by members for members.

Whether it's scrambling and rambling from our North Wales Fronwydyr base or galloping over gritstone edges in the Peak, along with annual Alpine excursions, winter missions to Scotland and expeditions to far-flung Himalayan giants, the LMC meet programme has it all. The best thing is, if you can dream up a meet that you think could interest the club's members, you can make it happen.

But it's not all climbing and hardcore mountaineering, there is truly something for everyone here, from the Alfred Wainwrights

amongst us to the Reinhold Messners. Most meets offer a range of activities for all tastes and abilities. Trad climbing, sport climbing, ice climbing, hiking, scrambling, winter walking, winter mountaineering and trail running are all disciplines covered by the meet schedule.

The social element of our meets are just as important as the mountains themselves, be it tales of epics gone by whilst perched in an Alpine hut or just sharing the day's escapades in the local pub. You will meet people from all walks of life, share countless stories, learn

new skills and forge friendships to last a lifetime. Meets are all about getting out there, out of your comfort zone, meeting incredible people and just doing it!

For more information or to sign up for a meet or three, head on over to the LMC website. The club thrives by having members take an active interest in the meets that are run. To volunteer to steward a meet, or to suggest a new meet, please contact our meets secretary through the website.

## RJUKAN ICE CLIMBING



**27th February to 7th March 2021**

For the newly traditional winter ice climbing meet, the LMC are heading to Rjukan in Norway.

Reckoned by the Norwegian Alpine Club as the finest ice climbing in Northern Europe, coupled with the fact the place doesn't see the sun for six months of the year – leading to some sensational ice, it's likely they're right.

We'll be staying in the nearby town of Tinn, where we have 12 spaces.

Obviously we will be keeping a close eye on Covid restrictions and any monies paid to the club will be refunded if the meet is cancelled. For more information, check the club website.

**Steward: Dai Richards**  
t: 07951 207654  
e: ecvme@yahoo.com

## LAKE DISTRICT MEET



**16th July to 18th July 2021**

Staying at the Agnes Spencer Hut in Patterdale.

There are 12 places in the hut and the cost will be £22 for accommodation for two nights.

There are further places at the nearby Patterdale YHA.

Plenty of classic walks, scrambles and climbs in close proximity.

**Steward: Robert Beattie**  
t: 07780678437  
e: robertbeattie63@gmail.com

## WE NEED YOU

You'll notice, undoubtedly, that the meets calendar is understandably somewhat more fallow than usual. Given the current restrictions we are living with, it is unsurprising that members are reluctant to organise a meet just to see it cancelled and to have to go through the rigmarole associated with this.

However, meets are the lifeblood of the club. As vaccines and treatments advance and warmer weather returns in Spring, it is likely that a range of meets will once again be possible. If there's somewhere you've been hankering to get to or something you've been desperate to climb, contact the meets secretary and bring the club along. Let's make 2021 a year to remember!

