

## SECTION 13

# “Tomorrow The World”: The Greater Ranges



“Nearly there” she said brightly. ‘Watch out for the shit, the bogs aren’t working’. Ah the refreshing directness of the woman”.

And ah, the romance of the greater ranges! That was John Huxley in “The Gwydyr 16” magazine celebrating both June Ewing and the delights of Trail Camp on Mount Whitney. A great opening to our selective continent by continent tour of members’ activities over twenty years. So starting with this 1999 expedition and then the New World more generally...

### The Americas

June and Maurice Ewing and Gill and John Beamer all successfully summited Mount Whitney, at 14,505’ the highest point in the contiguous USA. Sadly John Huxley was unwell so missed the top.

A few days later though the whole party enjoyed success on the tough descent/reascent of the Grand Canyon, John writing:

“We set off down the South Kaibab trail...The Grand Canyon does not disappoint: it is as spectacular and colourful as you would expect. We camped that night at Bright Angel campsite at the bottom. It rained!

The walk out...took us on the Bright Angel Trail along the



Mount Whitney



Richard on “Bishop’s Terrace” (5.8)

river for a while and then gently up to Indian Gardens, a beautifully vegetated route alongside a stream. Seven hours after leaving camp Gill and I, nearing the canyon rim at last, were accosted by the leader of a coachload of tourists: “Tell me folks, how far have you come?” Modestly we explained...The leader turned to his charges and said in reverential tones “These two are really serious hikers! Where are you from folks?...The UK! Let’s give them a big hand folks!” ...When we said we were looking for a cold beer, they clapped again.”

Our 1997 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary trip had visited both Whitney and Yosemite National Park. We also returned to Yosemite courtesy of Melinda and Richard Kinsman, in 2011. Melinda writes:

“Richard and I headed off to the States at the end of September, in order to tackle some Yosemite granite! We are both now well-practised at jamming our hands

and toes painfully into narrow cracks, and I also seem to have re-found my lay-backing muscles!! The views were amazing. We had 7 days of climbing in the sun on warm rock, despite a torrential 2 day storm in the middle (which filled the dry creeks and falls, and gave Half Dome an unusually early covering of snow)!” (October 2011 Newsletter)

A strong candidate for the toughest of these trips took place in 2010, when Katie Harris joined a group going to Baffin Island in the Canadian arctic. The last stages of the journey were by DC3 Dakota and Inuit boat, to begin a 300km wilderness trek through the Auyuittuq Pass in the National Park of the same name. This involved things like: the need to relay loads, large scale river crossings, glacier travel, for some of the group an ascent of Mount Battle (4,360’) - and views of Mount Thor (5,495’), which features the world’s largest vertical cliff, 4,101’ high.



A 1,000m plus face above Katie’s tent, June Valley

Here are some of Katie’s reflections on the expedition experience...

“3 weeks of hauling 25-30kg packs through bog, tundra, moraines and over glaciers. My ankles, knees and hips didn’t appreciate any of this but the scenery was incredible and I gained a much deeper understanding of the Inuit culture.

The Inuit people are fantastic, we lived with them for 5 days. We ate seal meat and raw, dried and boiled char (very like salmon)...We watched Bowhead whales swimming amongst the remainder of the sea ice in the bay and the small community of Qikiqtarjuaq (500 people) buzzed with excitement/fear as a polar bear was spotted on the outskirts of the hamlet...

Once in the pass the peaks stretched a vertical kilometre from the valley floor and almost every day we saw chunks of rock the size of family cars...the size of houses, plunge down the frost shattered peaks and explode into pieces.

We saw tundra alive with colour, arctic poppies, blueberries, lemming scurrying down burrows, wolf spiders, arctic hare (glaringly obvious in their white coats against the summer rock and tundra), geese honking as they launched into flight, ravens shrilly crying as they swooped through the sky, snowy owls and polar bears (luckily from a distance).”



Katie in the Artic...the video...



And the fish eye - ...ugh!

For many of us, the most memorable image of Katie’s trip is her appearance on video (at [link](#)) eating a raw fish eye supplied by the friendly locals. It’s big, fishy, and the process took nearly two and a half minutes!

2012 again takes us north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel and a very varied trip undertaken by Doug Florence and Gail Smith as recorded in Jun/Jul 2012 Newsletter

“We made a loop from Vancouver round Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton and Lytton in Canada, then crossed the



border into USA and spent a couple of days just south of Seattle, then three days in the North Cascades mountains not far from the Canadian border.”

Their hikes in Canada included the rock peak of Stawamus Chief (2,297’), a snowy trip to Garibaldi Lake below the 8,786’ Mount Garibaldi, and in Washington State they ascended Mount Si (4,167’) giving a splendid view of Mount Rainer.



Gail at Garibaldi Lake

They also got on the water:

“In Pemberton and Lytton it was surprisingly hot but that was not a disadvantage for a day’s white water rafting on the Thompson river, which has some huge, high volume rapids. We initially rather scorned the concept of “power rafting”, but by the end of a day in such big water we could see the advantages.

In the middle weekend we went sea kayaking with an overnight camp in the San Juan islands which lie between the US and Vancouver island. Sadly, we had no Orca sightings but several Bald Eagles and Ospreys were seen. A great two days kayaking in pretty much flat calm water with lovely scenery”

A busy time this for North America: in September 2012 Reg Cromer and I had a three week camping trip to the National Parks on the Alberta/British Columbia border. Scenic highlights were the Iceline Trail (Yoho NP), the Sulphur Skyline Trail (Jasper NP), and the Burstall Pass (Peter Lougheed PP). Our height record was 8,000’+ in Ptarmigan Cirque also in the Provincial Park. And the wildlife was amazing, this is from my article in the Oct/Nov 2012 Newsletter:

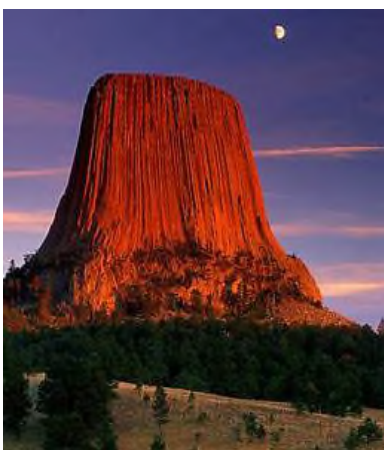
“At about 400m [distance] (Reg says 200!) we saw 3 grizzly bears, a mother and two yearling cubs, rippling with muscle and peacefully getting through their 35,000 calories of berries per day.

Bighorn... (a sheep the size of a red deer) came to within 10 yards just grazing as if we weren’t there. In Jasper campsite, bull elk (a male deer the size of a large cow) undertook their rut, also as if we weren’t there, shrieking all night and settling fights, yards from the tent on one occasion. Other sightings were marmots, bald eagles, a beaver, and plenty of squirrels...clever enough to steal food from the boot of your car even when you’re around the site.



Reg summits Burstall Pass. Mt Sir Douglas in background

Yelling out things like ‘Paging Mr. Roughass Badbear, telephone sir!’ regularly kept us free from close bear encounters... We bought bear spray which gave a bit more of a sense of security as well as the thrill of carrying dangerous things round in dangly holsters normally denied to us Brits.”



Devils Tower Wyoming

And in July 2013 Melinda and Richard Kinsman climbed the Devil’s Tower butte (5,112’) in Wyoming. The normal ‘Durrance route’ on the Tower is graded at 5.7 (UK ‘Severe’).

Before we head over the Pacific, a quick glance south: Andy Chapman and one of the clients he was guiding climbed Aconcagua, highest peak in the Americas, in December 1999. This was of course the summit climbed by the Club’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary party in 1997.

## Asia

In Melinda's article on her 2001 ascent of Lobuje East (6,119m) in "The Gwydyr 18" magazine, squalor raises its head again...

"The day begins at Base Camp (about 4,800m) at 1.30am...I awake from a bizarre dream involving a group of homeless misfits eating rats. 'Oh, sounds quite like reality' comments Fran over breakfast...

We had opted to summit from Base Camp due to lack of space higher up... So we are setting off uphill...Wang Chu and our two climbing Sherpas Ongchhu and Dorje start Nepalese Chants...Looking upwards I see my first ever shooting star in the bright night sky, then watch as the first glimmer of dawn touches the mountain ridge opposite. Reaching the edge of the glacier (c 5,600m)...we head up over the steep rim of the glacier into bright, warmer sunshine. With a clear blue sky for a backdrop, the views are incredible.

At the bottom of the fixed ropes... my progress is already slowing considerably in the thin air. Reaching a flattish snow ledge...I wait with John (our chief guide) as the Sherpas finish fixing the end of the last rope to the summit. Even attaching the jumar to this last rope now seems like hard work...I try to concentrate on the task in hand, taking in a few more gasps of air before moving upwards... After what seems like an infinity, I'm finally there...I shake hands and hug our three Nepalese friends. It slowly dawns on me that the crystal clear summit looking before us from across the valley really is Everest!"



Melinda (right) at summit of Lobuje East

Everest. In the course of his career as a professional mountaineer, Andy Chapman has guided and summited Everest (2011) and another 8,000m peak, Cho Oyo (2009). The Everest expedition, where he was assistant leader, was to date the most successful from Britain for guided clients: all the clients summited. Andy also led a very successful guided expedition to the shapely Ama Dablam (6,812m) in 2009, which got all the clients up to the summit bar one.

Guiding work and also personal expeditions have taken him to Central Asia. Here are remote, unpredictable and dangerous summits around 7,000m high. In 2000 he reached the summit of Khan Tengri (7,010m) in Kyrgyzstan. He and a friend Tim Ralph tried this summit again in 2013 but had to retreat in the face of heavy snow and high avalanche risk. They went on to attempt the even harder Pik Pobeda (7,439m). Again, atrocious snow and avalanche conditions demanded retreat.



Jengish Chokusu (Pik Pobeda) – helicopter landing

In 2017 Andy had another personal expedition to the Pamir range. He successfully summited Pik Korzhenevskaya (7,105m) the third highest in the range, But poor weather conditions and dangerous seracs foiled an attempt on Communism Peak (7,495m).

2018 saw Andy take part as lead guide on Pik Lenin (7,134m); the expedition was successful although not everyone, Andy included, made the summit itself.

Returning south to the Himalayas, David Lane-Joynt and Lee Robinson went to Nepal in 2018. It was a Lobuje East return match, part of which at least lacked the squalor evidently experienced by Melinda! David tells the story:

"We started off with two days in Kathmandu, an experience in itself. Lee was much more experienced than me and knew the local expedition organiser, so on our second day we were invited to the wedding of his nephew. This turned out to be the second of three days of a high caste Hindu wedding with the President of Nepal putting in an appearance. There were 600 guests in all their finery with the women in spectacular red sarees, plus us - in our



trekking gear.

The next day we flew up to Lukla to start our trek. Led by our trekking guide Dorjee, we started up the Everest Base Camp trail to the Sherpa 'capital' at Namche Bazar. From there we diverted out to the North West to the sacred lakes at Gokyo, where we climbed the Gokyo Ri peak (5,357m) for the spectacular views to Everest, Ama Dablam and all the famous peaks, before crossing the high (5,360m) Cho La pass to arrive at Lobuche village. It was 360 degrees of fabulous scenery, and the cameras were very busy.

At Lobuche we joined up with an American client, plus two climbing Sherpas for our attempt on Lobuche East. The next day we climbed up to our high camp at about 5,300m ready



The view from Gokyo Ri with the sacred Gokyo Lake in the foreground



Lee with Ama Dablam in the background

for our 0200 start on the summit day. Sadly, neither of us managed to summit. Lee had been unwell for several days and felt unable to get much above the high camp. I managed to get a little further before feeling so grim that I had to come down. Despite this it was a great trip and a truly memorable experience.”

### **Australasia**

In January 2019 David Lane-Joynt visited his sister living in New Zealand, and decided that if he was going so far, he should also get to see the New Zealand Alps. David wrote to me about this trip thus:

“I did not know anybody local to climb with, so did a Google search of New Zealand companies offering Alpine climbing courses, and contacted them. So it was, that after I had done the tourist tour of the South Island with my sister, I made my way south again to Lake Tekapo, the home of ‘Alpine Recreation’, having signed up for their 5 day ‘Specialized Alpine Climbing Course’.

I did not know quite what I was letting myself in for, and nor I suspect did Alpine Recreation as they told me afterwards that they did not get many 74 year olds wanting to go on their course. However it was a wonderful experience and the company could not have been better. There were two of us on the course together with our guide. My fellow client was English as well, but 50 years younger than me. Fortunately we got on well.



David in the crevasse

The New Zealand Alps are much less developed than the European Alps, so we had to helicopter in to our base at the Tasman Saddle Hut. Expensive, but great views of Mount Cook. Over the next



The view from the helicopter of Mount Cook with the Tasman Saddle Hut in the foreground

four days we covered all the basic Alpine Skills. I enjoyed the ice climbing, having got a taste for this the previous winter in Italy and at Rjukan in Norway. The crevasse rescue training involved actually being lowered into a crevasse, and then having to 'prusik' up the rope to escape. The guide must have thought we had learned what to do, as he then proceeded to actually jump into a crevasse –

we held him!. He did warn us in advance.

If any other members get the opportunity I would really recommend the New Zealand Alps experience. There are relatively few climbers, so it feels much more of a wilderness.”

## Antarctica

Andy Chapman has done much of his professional work in Antarctica, initially with the British Antarctic Survey and latterly other operations both commercial and scientific.

In the Dec/Jan 2014 Newsletter Allan McDonald summarised a great (Austral) summer:

“Andy Chapman is now back from the Antarctic after summiting Mt Vinson three times and reaching the South Pole – well done mate and I’m sure I speak for everyone in congratulating you on a magnificent achievement.”

At 4,892m Vinson is the highest peak in Antarctica. Andy has returned to the peak for five more ascents, and has been back to the Pole four times more twice overland via the last degree and twice by being a flight attendant on a tourist flight (the role includes being there to take on survival issues in the event of a forced landing or similar difficulties).



Andy Chapman on Mt Vinson Summit

Overall Andy has done seven seasons in Antarctica. In the course of these he has done a number of first ascents in Graham Land and the Ellsworth Mountains, he commented to me...

“Six or seven I guess. One of them we flew the plane to 150m off the summit and just walked up to the top! The more demanding ones? I guess they’d be grade two or three climbs in Scottish terms...”

The only one actually named is named after him, the 2,000m+ “Chapman Peak”, the others are identified just by height numbers as “Point Whatever”. But hey, K2 itself is still just a surveyor’s mark!

In terms of guiding, Andy has also guided Mount Sidley (4,285m) in the Executive Committee range, which Andy describes as:

“The remotest commercially guided peak in the world, the most of expensive per day to climb. The cost? About \$60k from Punta Arenas!”

Sidley is a dormant volcano, and is the highest volcano on the continent.

## Africa

A fair number of Club people have been up Kilimanjaro (5,895m), the highest peak in Africa. It’s accessible but the climb is tough and not all have made it to the top. In the October 2018 newsletter Paul Sinclair described how he made it all the way there in the company of Kev and Tom McEvoy in October 2017. They were on a guided trek supported by a team of Tanzanian guides, porters and cooks.

“At last the trek could begin as the trail headed steadily up through the pristine rainforest of the Lemosho Glades towards Mt Mkubwa Camp where after a large dinner we attempted to sleep, surrounded by the screeches of rival troops of Colobus monkeys.

Rising at first light the trail took us through more rainforest before we ascended a long ridge known as The Ele-



DC3 - on ice!



phant's Spine that ultimately emerged from the dense forest onto an alpine moorland of tree heathers that forms



Paul and the Barranco Wall

the vast Shira Plateau. By the end of the day we had crossed the entire plateau and ascended to 3,868 metres.

The following day saw us take a slow trek through a beautiful but barren moon like landscape until we reached an altitude of 4,631 metres where we stopped for lunch at the impressive and imposing Lava Tower. From here we descended through steep ravines, lined with Giant Senecio trees and cacti until we reached our camp for the night nestled beneath the mighty Barranco Wall.

In the morning we enjoyed a fun scramble up the volcanic rock of the Barranco Wall at 4,059 metres before dropping down into the Karanga Valley to camp at 3,865 metres. Next day saw another steady climb. This time towards Barafu

Camp perched on a narrow ridge. Barafu Camp turned out to be cramped, filthy and smelly. We were only too glad that our guides had secured permission...for us to bypass Barafu and camp at the unofficial Kosovo Camp which our group had to ourselves. After a hot meal it was early to bed to attempt to sleep before we were woken at midnight to make the overnight trek to the summit.

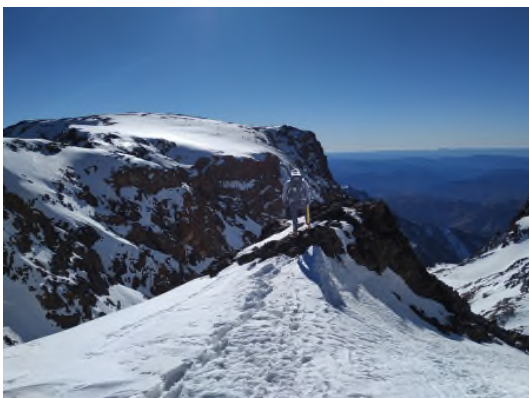
By torchlight we zig-zagged our way up an unrelenting scree slope in pitch black and bitter cold. The pink glow of sunrise emerging over the crater rim as we appeared on Stella Point was a very welcome sight. Seeing the awesome glaciers that surround the crater rim bathed in orange light was jaw droppingly stunning. From Stella Point we then traversed the crater to the summit of Uhuru Peak, the 5,895 metre 'roof of Africa' where Kev produced a GMC 50th Anniversary mug that was hastily put into use with a nip of Bushmills Whiskey.

With summit conquered we made a rapid descent down the scree to rest at Kosovo Camp before pushing on...to sleep at Millennium Camp on the edge of the rainforest. The last leg of the trek took us...down through the verdant forest to Mweka Gate for a celebration meal and our first cold beer in almost a week. The traditional tipping ceremony for our porters and guides provided our hosts with one last chance to regale us with singing and dancing as we all looked forward to a hot shower and (of course) more cold beer."



Paul, Kev and Tom summit Kili

Paul and Tom were out in Africa again in the December of 2018, when together with Jon Foulkes they had a trip to the High Atlas with Djebel Toubkal (4,167m), highest summit in Morocco and North Africa, the main objective. They had a guide, and the company they used sorted the travel and logistics out efficiently.



On Toubkal, looking to Ras Ouanoukrim

After an interesting couple of days trekking at a lower level and sampling the local food, they ascended to the Refuge du Toubkal which is the base for the highest summits. Talking me through Toubkal, Tom dashed my expectations of further squalor...

"The summit hut was quite good really, a big place. The summit day was challenging but enjoyable, getting the axes out, and I was able to help the guide break trail for a bit. We used crampons but didn't need to rope up, it was more of a hard trek than a climb. Amazingly on top we were greeted by a party of Scousers!"

For the whole trip they enjoyed clear sunny days and amazing starry

nights. That said, Tom found the most challenging aspect of the ascent to be the cold, despite B2 boots and Summit Socks. The latter conjured up wild visions in my mind – like Wallace and Gromit’s “Techno Trousers”? Would the ascent be disallowed by the Ethics Committee? No, said Tom, just extra thick new socks for the summit day!



On the summit of Ras Ouanoukrim - Paul, Jon, Tom

Because of stomach cramps Paul didn’t make the actual top. On the next day though all three members of the team were successful in the ascent of Ras Ouanoukrim which at 4,083m is the third highest Atlas peak. Tom commented...

“At one point there’s a scramble, in the style of the east ridge of Siabod, but with a much more demanding feel at that height and in snow and ice. It also doesn’t help that the rock is red, crumbly and unstable. On the descent we avoided all this by using a snow gully.”

The trip also included a stay in historic Marrakesh.

It wasn’t the Club’s first winter ascent of Toubkal, Lindsey Fooks also summited in winter back in 2012, in sunshine and deep snow.

So the Club’s been active on all the continents, and has added impressively to its score of summits over these last decades.

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