

# CEUNANT NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2013

I hope you've all been enjoying this excellent summer, it might go down as being one of the better ones of recent years for mountaineers. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and perhaps find inspiration within it's pages for future adventures of your own. It's nice to see an article about Ceunant children in this issue written by Paul Jepson. And whilst some of you have been out on the mountains in recent months, others have been tending to their newborns. I'd like to extend my congratulations to those Ceunant couples who've had babies recently. Welcome to baby Matilda (Luke and Natalie), Giacomo (Serena and Guilio), and Dylan (Gemma and Chris), we hope you take after your parents in embracing life in the mountains.



**Kevin  
Devine**  
Chairman

## The next outdoor meet is The Peak District

From Friday 11<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September the Ceunant will be heading to the Peak District for your annual dose of grit stone climbing. There's some great walking to be had too, and plenty of roads for those of you keen to get out on your bicycles. Keep an eye out on Facebook for the event to book your place in the hut.

So pencil it in your diary, we're looking forward to seeing you there.



Sophie John leading on Richard's Sister (HS) , Stanage.

Visit our web page at...

[WWW.CEUNANT.ORG](http://WWW.CEUNANT.ORG)

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# Torridon by Stewart Moody

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, myself, John Beddard, Mike Peerless and Emma Bastock boarded the beast to form the vanguard (and technically speaking the rearguard too) for the Torridon meet.

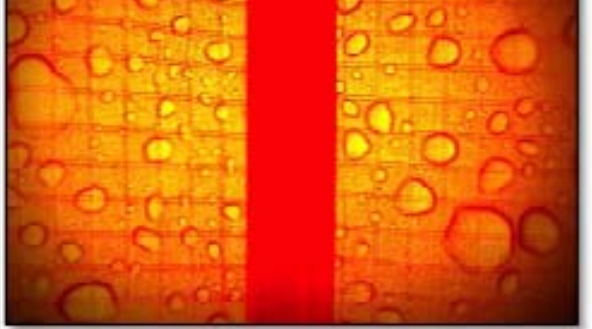
[Thursday]

**18:35** We check the weather and almost abandon the whole trip in favour of the Lakes, wall to wall rain is forecast. **18:45** We man-up. **18:58** We get in the car, the boot is pretty full, the TomTom say 510 miles to Torridon as we set off. **19:10** First pit stop, we need a replacement rear-view mirror for the beast. 507 miles to go. It's going to be a long night. We drive in shifts.

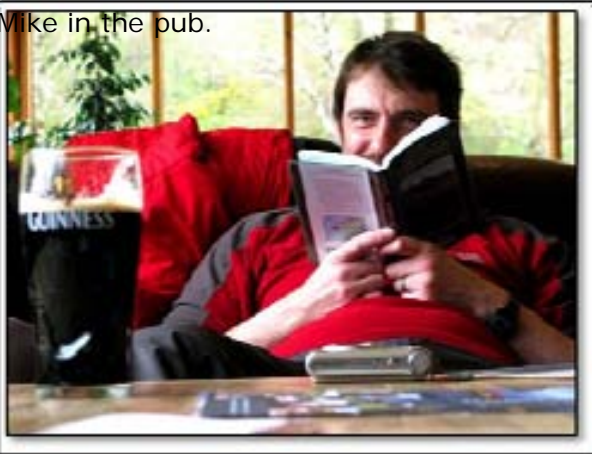
[Friday]

**03:30** We arrive at a waterlogged camp site, only one other tent is there. **03:32** We claim a dry piece of high ground and pitch up. Mercifully, it stops raining. **03:50** Everyone is tucked up in their sleeping bags. **10:15** I hear the patter of rain on the tent. **10:17** I poke my head out of door of my tent, low cloud conceals the mountains. My heart sinks. Today isn't going to be a climbing day. **10:35** Mike and I make a brew and porridge from the comfort of our sleeping bags. **12:16** We're in the small café in Torridon village eating bacon rolls and drinking tea. **13:44** We're in the Torridon Inn drinking beer and looking at the MWIS forecast. **14:28** We're still in the pub. Mike is beating John at pool. I'm reading gear reviews in back issues of Trail magazine. **15:22** We're still in the pub, drinking slowly. I'm trying not to get too pissed. **17:05** We retreat to the campsite and heat up the Beef Stew that Em made in advance. **19:37** We discuss tomorrows options. Plan-A, a traverse of Liathac if the weather is good enough. Plan-B is an ascent of Beinnh Ailigin. **21:26** I'm asleep in my tent.

Typical Torridon view. The rain on my tent. They should put that on a postcard, "Wish you were here...".



Emma checks the forecast



Mike in the pub.



One of the great things about digital photography is that pictures have a time and date stamp on which they were taken. Most of the times listed in this article are spot on to the nearest minute. The big caveat is that I tended to only take photos when we were doing something exciting or photogenic. Therefore some of the timings, such as the when we hit traffic just outside Inverness, or the time we ordered dinner in the pub, are best guesses often clouded by the effects of alcohol.

## [Saturday]

**06:47** I hear the patter of rain on the tent. I go back to sleep. **07:31** I can still hear the patter of rain on the tent. **08:30** It's still raining. We make tea and porridge from our sleeping bags again. **09:22** We are in Em and John's tent. It sounds pretty windy, there is fresh snow on the hills, and the cloud base is very low. We settle on Plan-B. **10:08** We set off from the car up Ben Alligin. It is raining, but not too hard. **11:00** The clag comes in, we're half way to the summit, and Emma heads back to the car. **11:22** We cross in to patchy snow, visibility is very poor, things look decidedly more serious. **11:37** Mike gets excited as he unleashes his ice axe for the first time. He could only be happier if John or I had told him to put his crampons on too. **12:22** We reach the summit, there is no view, John and Mike pose for a quick photo, we turn around and start to descend back the way we came. **12:24** I'm baffled. Things aren't looking familiar, something isn't right. But we are sure we went the right way off the col after coming down from the summit. **12:25** The compass says we are going the wrong way. We don't believe it, and get another compass out. The treacherous thing agrees with it's mate; it's a conspiracy! We concede, do a 180, and head the right way, quickly finding our footprints in the snow. **14:36** Emma picks us up from the car park. We are soaked. We go to the pub, the only warm place we can think of (that also serves alcohol). **17:25** We are still in the pub, so we order dinner, huge portions of fish and chips, and onion rings on the side. **21:46** I'm asleep in my tent. Again.



John on the ascent of Ben Alligin.



Summit photo on Ben Alligin.



Mike after the descent from Ben Alligin.



Mike hops over a style.

## [Sunday]

**08:02** Deja vu of Saturday. Once again the weather is too poor for Liathac. We settle for Slioch. It is raining, but there is a small patch of blue sky. **09:23** We park the car and start the walk in. We walk for over an hour on the flat, just getting to the base of the mountain is trek. **13:01** Praise the Lord, it's stopped raining and blue sky approaches. I almost weep for joy. We are making good progress up Slioch. **13:28** We spot a dodgy gully full of snow, the last snow of the year, and decide to go "off piste". **14:03** Hmm maybe we made a mistake, the snow is slushy and moving between slush and wet grass on steep slopes is not good. But Mike is loving it; this is the best Scottish winter mountaineering he's done. **14:45** We are stood on the summit of Slioch, the weather is fantastic, visibility is great. We have a view! **15:52** We are making good progress on the descent. Mike is knackered. My legs ache too. The weather is deteriorating. **17:51** We reach the car and crack open a tin of beer. **18:28** We get back to camp, and go to the pub. **22:01** We are drinking in the tent. The wind is howling, it is raining hard. We agree to cut our losses and leave in the morning.

## [Monday]

**07:02** Mike and I are drinking tea in our sleeping bags again. It is raining. I unzip the tent for a look outside. The cloud base is very low. It's a very miserable day. **08:00** The tents are almost down. It hasn't stopped raining. We are quite wet. **08:12** There is no time to pack the tents nicely, we just shove them into bags, we've decided to aim for The Happy Haggis in Aviemore for brunch. **09:43** We hit traffic just outside Inverness. How can such a poxy little town have a traffic jam? **10:56** We are sat in The Happy Haggis trying to work out which is better value for money, the Battered Haggis Tea, or Battered Haggis with Chips. One comes with a hot drink and bread and butter, the other costs less and has peas. We finish our meals and head south again, only 8 hours to go to home.



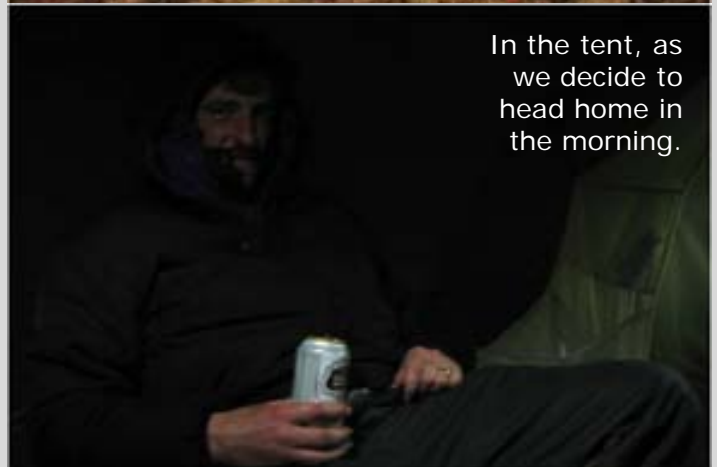
John with Slioch in the background.



John near the Slioch summit.



Mike descending Slioch. Still smiling; that's the spirit.



In the tent, as we decide to head home in the morning.

# The future's bright, the future's Oren

Cnicht Easter 2013 by Paul Jepson

This Easter club held an impromptu family meet in Tyn-Lon. Although some members found pesky kids cramping their style, sometimes we should sit back and contemplate the future direction of the club. I include myself in this sentiment as a few grey hairs are already showing; but you may have noticed nobody is getting any younger! Indeed, on this summer's Alpine excursion to Chamonix, people were often heard to say "next time we come to the Alps we have to remember we are closer to 50 than 20" (except Stewart Moody of course who is the reincarnation of action man).

So, after Richard Greaves expertly managed to persuade Manu and Tilly to join us for a 'fantastic day out in the Welsh mountains' (aka off-loading family on to others so he could go climbing), Ian and myself took Manu, Oren and Tilly (pictured bottom right) on their first Welsh winter mountain adventure. As usual, the Welsh weather performed for us and not everybody managed to top out. However, young Oren Jepson was a chip off the old block and diligently pressed ahead when it may have been wiser to turn back.



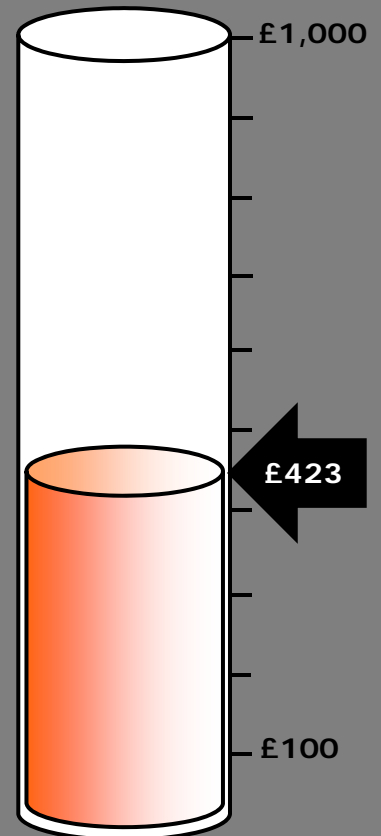
So here he is on the summit of Cnicht (689m), the Matterhorn of Wales, at the grand age of 6 with his dad's ice axe in hand and already adopting the pose of an experienced mountaineer. Indeed the future of the Ceunant mountaineering club does look good! (Your comments on this point are very welcome.)



# A update on the Ty'n Lon garden gate fund

As you know, the committee are going to commission a new gate for the back garden of Ty'n Lon and employ the services of Luke Perry, a well established iron sculptor and Ceunant member.

The most recent fund raising, the summer BBQ at the spotted dog on Wednesday the 7<sup>th</sup> of August has kept the totalizer spiralling upwards from the £165 we'd banked the last time the news letter went to print. We have now raised the splendid sum of £423. If you have any fund raising ideas the committee would love to hear from you.



See more examples of Luke's work in the Black Country at his web site:  
[www.industrialheritagestronghold.com](http://www.industrialheritagestronghold.com)



## "Ceunant member, your newsletter needs you!"

You there! Yes you. It's all well and good posting brief and cryptic comments and the occasional photo about your mountaineering on that new fangled social media thing called Facebook. But Facebook 'aint forever. What you need is a permanent record of your greatness. Something that'll last forever, and be read by future generations of good Ceunant folk who'll coo like doves over your heroic deeds.

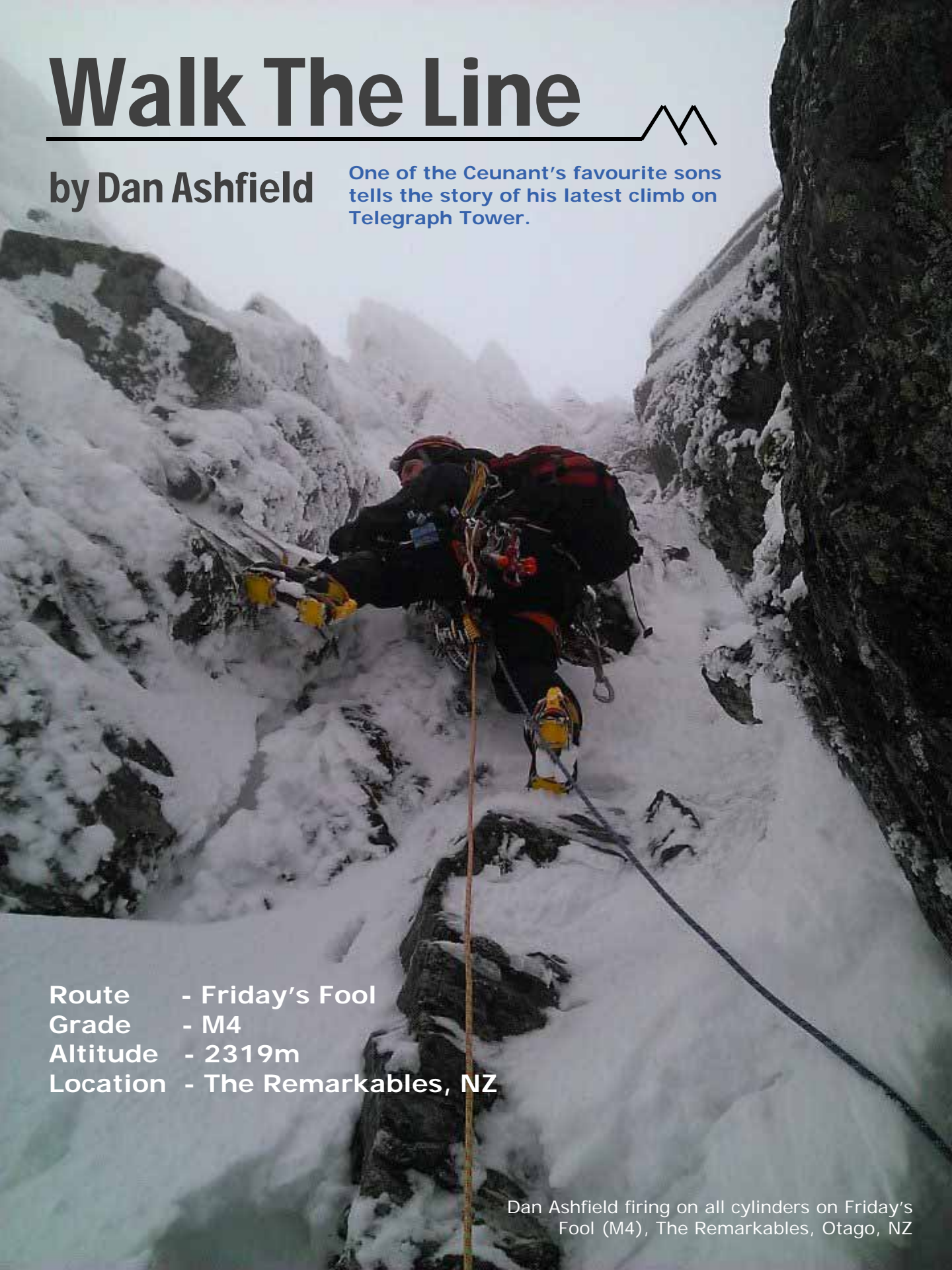
My friends; that something is what you are reading right now. The Ceunant newsletter. Thanks to Kevin Devine, all the Ceunant newsletters from years gone by are being archived. And if you want to add your name to the Ceunant veterans of years gone by you need to put pen to paper and email it to [vicechair@ceunant.org](mailto:vicechair@ceunant.org). No excuses, your newsletter needs you! Hurry along now.

# Walk The Line




by Dan Ashfield

One of the Ceunant's favourite sons tells the story of his latest climb on Telegraph Tower.



**Route** - Friday's Fool  
**Grade** - M4  
**Altitude** - 2319m  
**Location** - The Remarkables, NZ

Dan Ashfield firing on all cylinders on Friday's Fool (M4), The Remarkables, Otago, NZ



“It’s my lead and the crux pitch is right where it shouldn’t be – at the start of the technical ground”.

The view over Queenstown from Friday’s Fool.

I keep a close watch on this heart of mine. I keep my eyes wide open all the time hmm hmm something because your mine, I walk the Line. “Damn it Sarah that’s going to be in my head all day now” I yell. The lyrics are deadened by thick white cloud hanging low over the mountain as I pant out the new earworm. I need to keep my mind busy and just get on with traversing this ledge system which forms the access to the heart of the face. Sarah laughs and takes up the Johnny Cash classic. A thousand meters of jagged rock and thin air are hidden beneath our feet, dark shadows occasionally hinting in the dirty grey of first light. Alan is breaking trail across the 60 degree snow shelf known as the Queens Drive, a banked out ledge system which runs along the West Face of The Remarkables. I wait my turn to climb across this section – only one climber on a section of the slope at once in case we trigger a slide. We watch another party trying to climb together along the ledge, the leader digging in vain for anchors hidden by voluminous soft snow, slowing their progress and exposing all to a harsh consequence of one slip. Nerves have been rattled by Jamie’s death in a fall from here five days earlier and it shows in this team of three. Jamie was a friendly acquaintance from the Christchurch scene, great for a yarn at crags and one of NZ’s leading alpinists. He had been swept down the face in a small avalanche, shocking NZ’s close knit climbing fraternity. I have to move now so push the thought from my mind and resume the rhythm. Kick, Plunge, Kick, Kick, Plunge. I find it very very easy to be true...

Arriving at the base of the route, we belay in a wind scoop against the cliff. Alan finds good gear in the wall and anchors us in. Sarah is entangled in a writhing mass of ropes and Fridays Fool towers above us all. “Good job its Saturday” I say but no one laughs. I turn my back to them and eye up the pitch as a whisper of cold air parts the clouds for a moment. It’s my lead and the crux pitch is right where it shouldn’t be – at the start of the technical ground. A thinly iced slab and rock corner head for an unlikely hanging traverse, and at the end a couple of body lengths of vertical ice leads to a second mixed slab and finally easier ground. I rack up whilst psyching myself up, humming “because your mine, I walk the line”.



The rack weighs a ton. I select wires, hexes, stubby screws, pitons and cams. Screamers, 'clip', extendable draws, 'clip', revolvers, 'clip'. Al wriggles into his belay jacket. "When your ready man" he says nodding at the pitch. Sarah reaches for the camera.

I traverse out to the route, flick in the first runner and eye up the first 10 meters. The slab/corner has about half an inch of ice. I tap first one, then the other pick gingerly into the veneer and test them. They hold well. I step up. Two three four times repeat the process. A crack appears level with my head so I take the right hand axe, slot the head in and jam it by leaning back from the iced slab, an action entirely out of keeping with the voice of reason. Crampon points screech against the rock but hold firm. I have a moment to breathe and suddenly this feels hard. The crack accepts a cam blindly as I cannot lean in without taking the pressure off the barred axe. I regain the ice with some kind of octopus out of water move and my friends shout continuing encouragement, their voices sounding distant from below in the mist.

Reaching the rock corner a cold dread begins. The corner is almost blank. I can just get two optimistic wires tapped sideways into a shallow groove. My heartbeat shifts up a notch. I am getting pumped too so no time to falter now. The traverse rock is black with moss and broad leafed green plants fill the cracks. Insecure pick hooks on the rock do little to inspire confidence as I struggle for a solid footing on the verglassed rock beneath covered in 8 inches of powdery snow. I wind a stubby screw into the base of a pillar which looks poorly bonded and complete the awkward manoeuvres to reach the vertical ice. "Now we are talking" I shout back and smile for the first time while gently swinging at the fragile hanging ice.



Friday's Fool is Route 54, topo by climbingnz.org.nz



Alan leading on Friday's Fool amidst showers of spin drift.



Alan and Sarah gearing up at the base of the route.

The short section is over all too soon. Finally the mixed slab above is gained. Unprotected, I totter with picks scratching through snow trying to find anything to pull on. I struggle up the gearless groove above and belay beneath a rock lip at the next steep icy wall. Whilst building the anchor the clouds part fully and the green lands, glittering lakes and alpine vista are revealed.

Unfortunately this exposes the mountain to sunlight and almost immediately a barrage of hoar ice is released accompanied by spindrift avalanches. Tied into the wall of the groove I cannot move, Sarah is climbing slowly and Alan has yet to start as the ice bounces off my body. Suddenly I hear "take Dash" before Sarah's rope goes tight. My shouts bring no response. Alan is still climbing so I pull his rope through the magic plate but the old half he has brought to the party is not dry treated and has frozen into a rigid cable. I have to place my feet high and lever it through the device, breaking ice off of the stiffened rope. Alan eventually appears and tells me Sarah has fallen below the traverse, injuring her foot. I jam my body against the wall as another ice cascade clatters around us. A large piece of ice hits me in the cheek and momentarily my head swims. We act quickly, lowering Sarah out and into the helping hands of others. The groove doesn't have a suitable abseil anchor so I realise Al and I are now committed. I hum the Cash riff again nervously.

Turning our attention to the Icy groove and wall, Al makes good use of a lull in the icefall to race skilfully up the pitch, tapping his axes into the thin snow-ice plastered to the wall. After a long pause I feel the rope go tight and set off to second. Spindrift falls down the wall and I blink painfully to clear my eyes. The right axe will not stay put on its own so I sling it over my shoulder and fight to get my hood up as the snow rains down my neck. The right hand side of the wall is smooth apart from small ice ripples and it's a delicate pitch of tapping picks into the holes left by Alan's tools.

Walk the line



The next 150 meters of climbing is on snow and ice with occasional steps that any Scottish winter veteran could be forgiven for mistaking for the Ben. My knees are only just clear of the snow in places and ice crusts over soft snow make the steep steps treacherous. I finally reach an overhang high up the side wall and crawl into the windscoop underneath. The crack at the back of the roof takes a peg and I listen joyfully to the noise it makes as I drive it home. Donk, Donk, Donk, Plink. "Bomber". Alan swims up to meet me and we take a moment to enjoy the view. I can see Queenstown from my white winter perch, legs hanging in space down the ice.

The exit pitch beckons and Alans keen to get off the face. A 15 meter mixed wall stands between us and the narrow ridge of the Telecom Tower. As Alan tackles the wall the mist rolls suddenly over the mountain top enveloping us. New Zealand's famous rapidly changeable weather strikes again. He tries hooks, cams, sidepulls and steinpulls but the final moves are tough and the sudden wind is whipping the ice about us making it hard to see. Al pauses for a moment then launches up into the mist and is lost to view. The waiting begins. Eyes closed and no sound but the raw of that cold wind. No feeling except the sharp pricking of the ice as it hits skin. Mind at peace. Enjoying the rawness of the moment. No songs, no fear.

The rope comes tight and with it the world returns. I race up to the final headwall to find a vertical crack and an overhanging bulge to the left. It takes a few moments to work this one out but with tools hooked on unseen edges and a crampon cammed into the crack I gain enough height to bridge onto the bulge and from there comes the howling white of the Remarkables summit. We smile and joke. There's laughter this time. I can feel beard and nostril hair begins to freeze in the exposed harshness of the narrow summit ridge...

...it's time to walk the line.



# Notice Board

Keep an eye out on our Facebook pages for updates, impromptu gatherings, banter and invitations to meets.

**facebook**

## Membership News

Since our last newsletter we welcome two new prospective members, Luke Perry and Natalie Perry. We also have one new prospective member, Liam D'Authreau. Nikki Ward Turner and Chris Whetton did not renew their memberships.

Month	Date	Venue
Oct	12 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>The Peak District</b> – Carlswark Cottage
Nov	2 <sup>nd</sup> -3 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Workmeet</b> – Tyn-Lon, with fireworks
Dec	7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Family Meet</b> – Tyn-Lon
Dec	<b>New Year</b>	<b>Scotland</b> – Glen Coe, Lagangarbh Hut

## Changed Address?

Don't forget to tell us... ..if you've moved house or changed any of your contact details or you're not sure if we have your most up to date contact details. Please send your update to the Club Secretary – Fiona Devine – email [secretary@ceunant.org](mailto:secretary@ceunant.org).

## BMC Training Courses and Skills

There are a few places left on workshops taking place this autumn across the country. These subsidised workshops are available at just £75 per person for the weekend which includes accommodation and instruction. Workshops available are

Outdoor First Aid – Brecon on 7-8 September,  
Patterdale 2-3 November

Self-rescue for climbers – Ogwen Valley on 14-15 September

Navigation – Peak District on 7-8 September

Places can be booked on the BMC website  
[thebmc.co.uk/club-training-courses-2013](http://thebmc.co.uk/club-training-courses-2013)

## FOR SALE

Joe Brennan is selling a selection of skiing and climbing gear. Interested? Call him on 0121 449 5434. If you are new to lead climbing and looking to acquire a rack, this is a good opportunity.

# Cote d'Azure

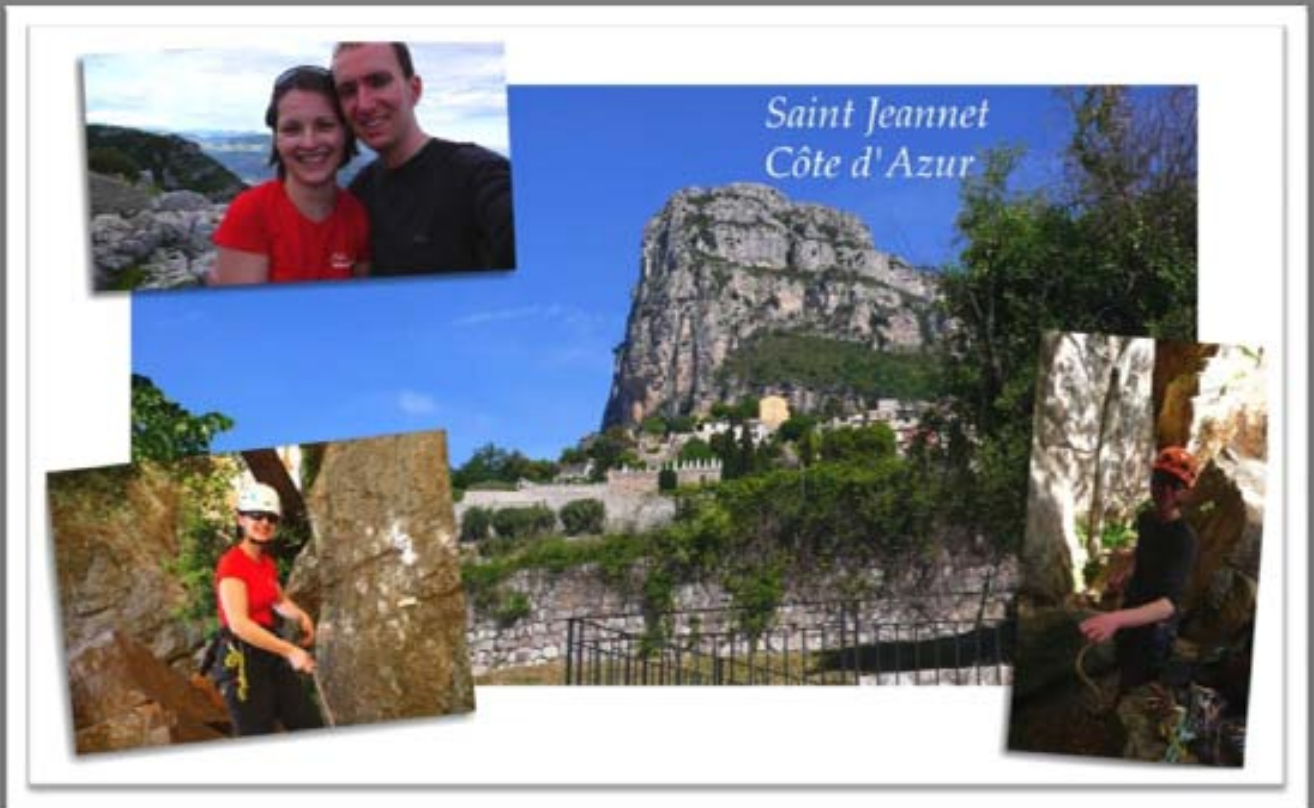
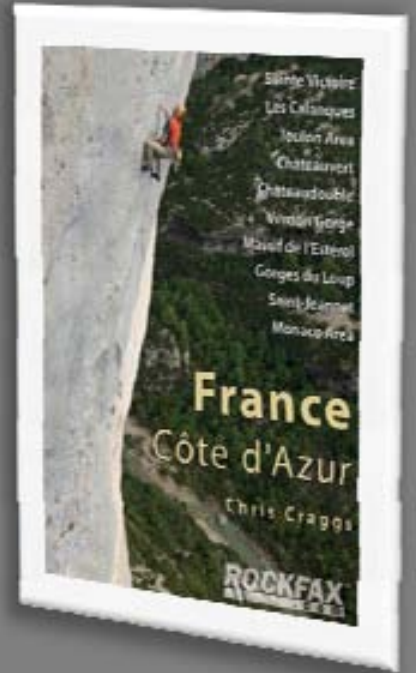
By Phil Blaen

Two of the club's newest members recently jetted off to the south of France with their climbing guide book in hand for a weekend of sport climbing.

After the long winter and lacking spring, we needed some sun and warmth. The Côte d'Azur offered both of these plus some excellent sport climbing. The Beau, a large cliff towering over the little and romantic village of St. Jeannet greeted us from the plane window before landing in Nice and promised a good weekend break. After picking up the hire car, we drove to the camp site and pitched our tent quickly so that we could enjoy the rest of the afternoon with some warm-up climbing. The evening was spent with baguette, cheese, and other tasty French food.

On the second day we had to fight our way through the Mediterranean shrub to reach the base of the cliffs, but got there in the end and again had a very enjoyable day on warm and well-bolted limestone. In the evening, we climbed up the Beau to really enjoy the view over the Côte d'Azur. It was here where the most exciting event of our little trip happened: Phil popped the big question and Kerstin said 'YES'! Some more tasty French cuisine and wine helped to celebrate the occasion in the evening.

We spent the final day of our trip relaxing by walking up the river in the lovely Gorge du Loups and cooling down after the previous rather hot two days. In summary, it was a great short-trip that we would recommend to everyone. We have a guidebook available to borrow if anyone is interested!



# 100% Climbing

## The Ceunant Yorkshire Meet

In attendance – Ian Smith, James Walker, Catherine Walker, Naomi Walker, David Simmonite, Stewart Moody (...and Stewart's friends Vicki Cox and Ben Thompson).

Most people met in the Chevin Arms pub on Friday night, and had an impromptu session after looking at Saturday's forecast. Things were not looking good in Yorkshire! But the Sun Bear ale behind the bar was great. Saturday saw a morning of drizzle, and a hang-over curing fry up was found in Ilkley, so too was a small gear shop. As the sky cleared the group absconded to Almscliff for the afternoon and bagged a few routes under ominous clouds before being rained off. Everyone ate in the pub.

Sunday was much clearer, and everyone headed to Brimham Rocks. Being nearest to the car park, The Cube was the first crag visited, and so began the flood of great routes bagged by the Ceunant this bank holiday. Almost everyone had a go at Cubic Corner (MVS 4b) either on lead or top rope (or solo). Naomi Walker lead Great Slab (HVD 4a) with Vicki Cox, James Walker lead Rough Stuff (HVS 5b) seconded by Ian Smith. Stewart Moody lead Heather Wall (S 4a).

Next up was Cyclops area, where Catherine Walker bagged her second route of the day (looked after by Stewart on the top rope) whilst David Simmonite climbed Gordon's Proffer Direct Finish (HVS 5a) which everyone else had a go at following.

Stewart then climbed Long John's Rib (HS 4b), and David had a bash at Acme Error (HVS 5a). The group then headed to the sun drenched Cracked Buttress, home to three eye catching crack lines, each a starred route. Ian and Stewart lead Right-Hand Crack (VS 4b) and Parallel Cracks (VS 4c) respectively. James lead the third of the lines; Central Crack (VS 5a). All were splendid routes that provided great climbing, if you like jamming.

Most people ate in the pub that evening, others chose to cook on the camp site, but inevitably everyone ended up in the pub by 9pm where plans were hatched for the bank holiday Monday. However, much to the displeasure of the group, Crookrise was off limits due to grouse shooting season. A return to Almscliff was decided upon, and the weather was superb. James stormed up Z Climb (VS 4c) with Ian. David lead Z Climb Eliminate (E1 5b) and Overhanging Groove (HVS 5a) with Stewart. Naomi lead Birds Nest Crack (HS 4b) with Ian whilst Ben lead the Zig Zag (HS 4c) with Vicki.

To finish the day off both James and David lead Great Western (HVS 5a) in the late afternoon sun seconded by Ian and Stewart. The guide book says this is the classic of the crag, but everyone agreed that Overhanging Groove was better. Most of the group then headed to the pub in Pool for a well-earned drink and dinner, and were on the road home at 8pm.

Check out the photos on the next pages...



# Photos from the Yorkshire meet...



Main picture – Ian Smith at the top of Right Hand Crack (VS 4b).  
Top left– Vicki Cox on the Cube. Middle left – David Simmonite on Gordon's Proffer Direct Finish (HVS 5a). Bottom left – Catherine Walker hiding amongst the Brimham rocks.

...more photos from Yorkshire.



Main picture – James Walker leading on Great Western (HVS 5a).  
Top left– Naomi Walker on Gordon’s Proffer Direct Finish (HVS 5a).  
Bottom left – Stewart Moody on Z Climb Eliminate (E1 5b).

“Good news for those of you who climb at **Creation** on Wednesdays”

**Kevin Devine**  
Chairman



We received this email from Creation a few days ago that outlines some great new benefits for Ceunant members who climb there on club night. I hope that many of you can benefit from these offers. I'm sure that with winter approaching you'll all enjoy the free cups of tea.

**From : Creation Climbing Wall**

31 Aug 2013

11:46

To : [chair@ceunant.org](mailto:chair@ceunant.org)

Dear Kevin,

We greatly value your club's involvement with us, so as part "thank you" for choosing Creation to climb at, and (of course) an incentive for your members to use us more, we are introducing a variety of initiatives which I'm sure you will find attractive.

As of Monday 2 September 2013, on production of a current club membership card, your members will receive:

- Concessionary rate of entry to the climbing centre (at any time),
- Free hot drinks on Wednesday evenings, being your club's regular "meet" at Creation,
- Free use of our Function Room for your meetings or events (subject to availability of course),
- 20% discount on club purchases (made using your club's account) from our climbing shop,
- 15% discount on personal purchases from our climbing shop.

Other initiatives are being introduced from the same date, which I'm sure will also benefit and interest your members. Briefly, they are:

- One, Two, Free – a scheme whereby the third entry within a calendar week (Mon to Sun) will be free,
- A revised and improved loyalty scheme.

We look forward to seeing you at Creation soon.

Regards,

Adrian Allsopp, on behalf of The Creation Team.

## Summer Work Meet – 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2013

Thanks to everyone who took part in the summer work meet on the 3rd of August. Doors were varnished, the kitchen got a deep clean, the grills were scrubbed to within an inch of their lives, the windows were cleaned, and dozens of smaller jobs accomplished. Hope to see more of you at the next work meet in November.

In attendance - John Beddard, Kevin Devine, Fiona Devine, Stewart Moody, Andy Ring, Julie Ring, Lucy Ring, Emma Bastock, Ellie Bastock, Bob Ellis, Holly Becket, Jim Brady, Maggie McAndrew, and John's friend Sam. If we've missed anyone off the list we can't apologise enough.



# Point Isabelle (3761m)

By Stewart Moody

A comedy of errors and some splendid mountaineering whilst on a two week Alpine trip. Chamonix, August 2013.

It was an unforgivable mistake to have made. Were it not for the fact that it was a harmless one I'd have been angry. "Your joking!" said Olly. He'd just topped out on the ferrata and stood at the entrance to the hut and we'd given him the news. I couldn't help but laugh, and after the news sunk in neither could he. I felt ashamed of our mistake in front of the two seasoned climbers who were sat near us. We'd walked in to the wrong hut! Can you believe it? How many other people in the world can say that they have walked into the wrong hut? We were aiming for the Couvercle, and we ended up at the Leshaux. Go on, laugh, and get it out of your system. But be honest with me for a moment, I'm sure you've all been in the mountains at some point; everyone thinks everyone else is navigating, but no one person is 100% focused, it's nearing the end of the day and everyone is tired, and people aren't communicating. What happened to us was the same sort of thing, just on a slightly bigger scale.



Top left – Richard Greaves arrives at the Leshaux Hut looking a little worse for wear. Top right – Paul Jespon on the ladders down from the Leshaux Hut after our navigational error. Bottom left – Stewart Moody with the Grande Jorasses in the background whilst walking to the Couvercle Hut. Bottom right – Paul and Olly kick back at the Couvercle.



Two hours earlier I had seen a silver speck in the far distance, it was glinting in the sun. I knew it was a hut and said "that's a bloody long way". Rich said "We'd better get moving then", and Olly nodded in agreement. None of us recognised the magnitude of our error. The others were a good few minutes behind us and in visible contact; we pressed on knowing they'd follow. This was our first walk in of the trip. We weren't yet acclimatized and we all later admitted that we felt overburdened by our heavy packs (too much food, too much water, too much cooking equipment, too many clothes; the usual story). We'd chosen not to use the uplift from Chamonix to the Mer Du Glace, making the walk in even more arduous. In hindsight that was the root cause of our mistake, we were all tired, and when you get tired you make mistakes. Had we checked the map, we'd have seen the Couvercle was high up to our left in a smaller valley, hidden from sight. We didn't, we plodded on.

But what a place to be. I felt blessed. Of the 7 or 8 Alpine huts I've stayed in the Leshaux is by far the best. It is very small (it only sleeps 12 or so) and perched right high above the steep sided valley. I was mesmerized by the immediacy of the north face of the Grande Jorasses, I could almost reach out and touch it. We were all delighted to be there and shrugged our mistake off for the rewards it had bestowed. "In fact, it gives us longer to acclimatize before trying for Pointe Isabelle" Paul said, revealing even more facets to the positive side.

Main image – our route up Pointe Isabelle, picking it's way between crevasses, snow aretes and rock scrambles. Inset – Stewart and Olly take a breather on the summit.



The helpful hut guardian, Crystal, rang the staff at the Couvercle to let them know we were safe and that they should not expect us until tomorrow. And so the legend of team Russell was born (Russell was the surname we booked the huts under, the French pronounced it Roo-sell). Within hours the tale of our navigational blunder was spreading like wild fire.

The following day our group of 6 split into two equal halves. Paul, Olly and I walked the three hours to the Couvercle ("ahhh, so you are Roo-sell, ha-ha, welcome") whilst the others headed back to the valley for the creature comforts of the tent and the bar in Argentiere, they confessed to feeling knackered and were just happy to have experienced the walk and the Leschaux. In a way I envied them their decision.

True to our plan, we did reach the summit of Pointe Isabelle, and it proved to be one of the highlights of the trip. At the back of my mind were the deaths of two climbers in separate incidents the day before. A young lad on our table, he can't have been more than 14 years old, was stood right next one of them who, whilst on the Courtes, untied from his rope, tripped, and fell from the mountain. I don't profess to know any more of the facts than that, the hut was rife with rumour. The other death happened on Les Droites. These two unrelated incidents of people brought home the seriousness of Alpine climbing.



Paul and Olly on the descent.

Guidebook time for the route was 8-9 hours hut-to-hut; we did it in 11. Apart from a pair of young Spanish girls we were the only people on the mountain that day. The route saw us descend steep rocks to reach the glacier, which we'd reced the afternoon before. Higher up the valley we moved quietly between crevasses, keeping the rope nice and tight, and followed the line up a steepening snow arête. The summit was reached by a short scramble up large flakes of granite to small hollow into which we squeezed.

And there we basked on the summit for a few precious minutes, smiling at each other and taking photographs, and drinking water. The moment couldn't last though, and before long I broke the silence saying that we needed to get back down the snow arête before it got too slushy. Olly and Paul had similar thoughts, it was time to go.

We back tracked quickly. We reached the arête, and we agreed that I'd lower Paul and Olly from a spike. I then followed nervously, unclipping a few runners they'd placed for me on the way.

Exhausted, we decided to stay the extra night in the Couvercle. We ate, we slept, and then we walked back down to the valley feeling pretty pleased with ourselves. First port of call on arrival in the Chamonix valley was an extortionately priced, but desperately needed pint of beer in the first bar we could find.



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