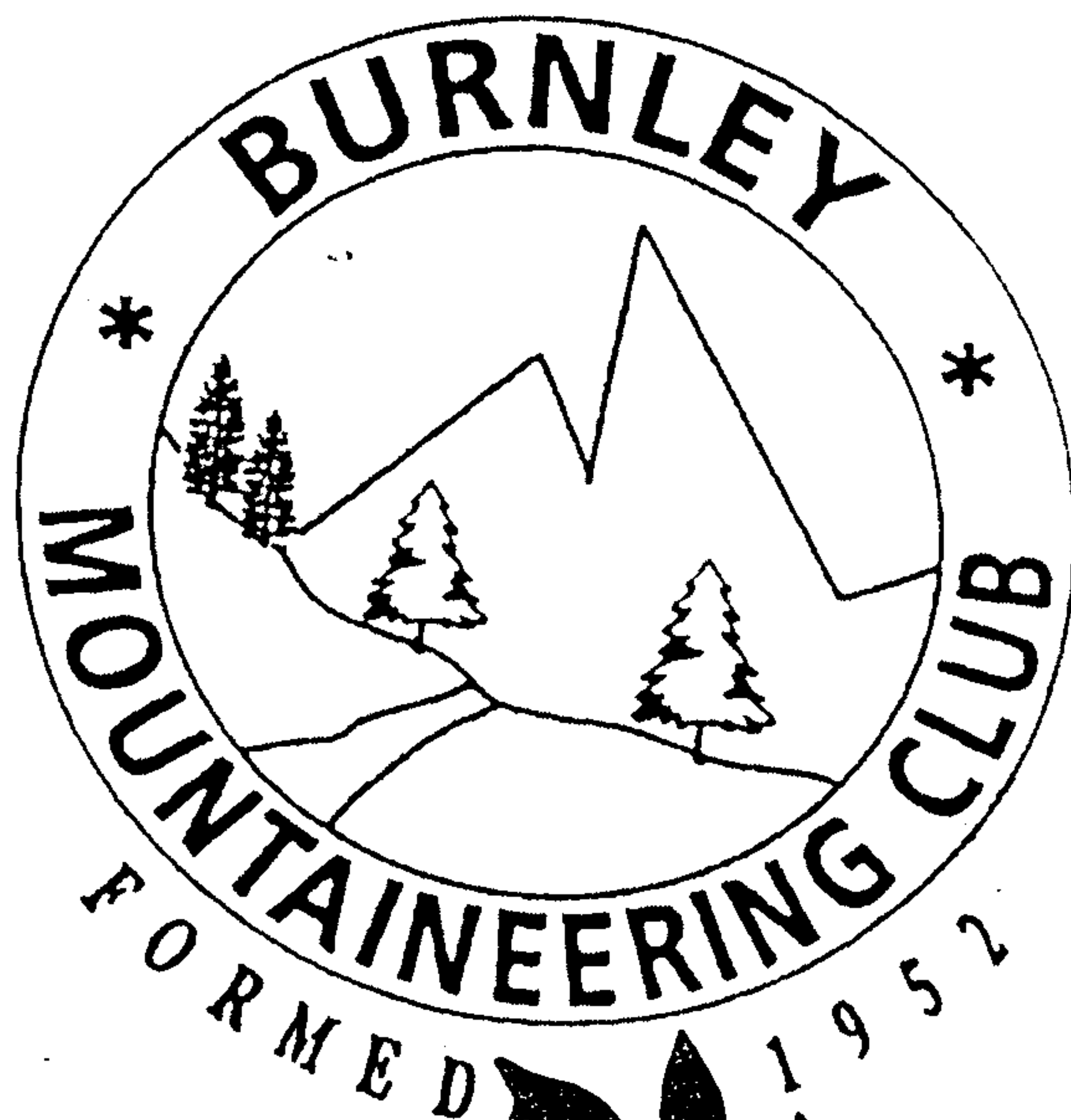


Newsletter

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SUNDAY, 11th DECEMBER 2011 - AMBLESIDE via GRASMERE

It's the end of another successful year of Newsletters. I do hope that they have kept you up to date with what is on offer, what events have occurred and offered a window for your own articles.

There is a busy time ahead for members. The hutters' Christmas dinner is on next weekend at Carlton-in-Cleveland followed by the extra December meet to the Forest of Bowland (Slaidburn) on Tuesday, 27th December. Please take note of the new date! Steve Young has provided information about pick-up points and times and also details of some walks in the area - one being led by Roy Haythornthwaite. Into the new year and we start with the dinner dance, our premier social event, at Nelson House on Saturday, 7th January and our next coach meet is to Langdale via Ambleside on the 15th January.

My thanks this month to Joan Miller for her article about her 18 days in the Alps, to Mick Hirst recalling his experience on the November coach meet and his joy at completing topping all the Wainwrights over a 10 month period, also to Peter Walker for his informative articles on such diverse subjects as key cards, railways and the youth hostel at Alnwick.

Some reminders of future events. Newtonmore weekend is in March and Marie does need your payments today if you haven't already paid and she also needs your money for the dinner dance plus your choice of meal. The '60 Tops' hut weekend is in June but Roy does need to know what you have to offer in the way of a route to add to the 'top total'. Marie also needs your monies for the Glasgow/Edinburgh weekend

Articles for the Newsletter are always welcome. So, why not drop one in on me. I would like to thank all the contributors to our Newsletter over the year. It has made my job, as editor, so much easier.

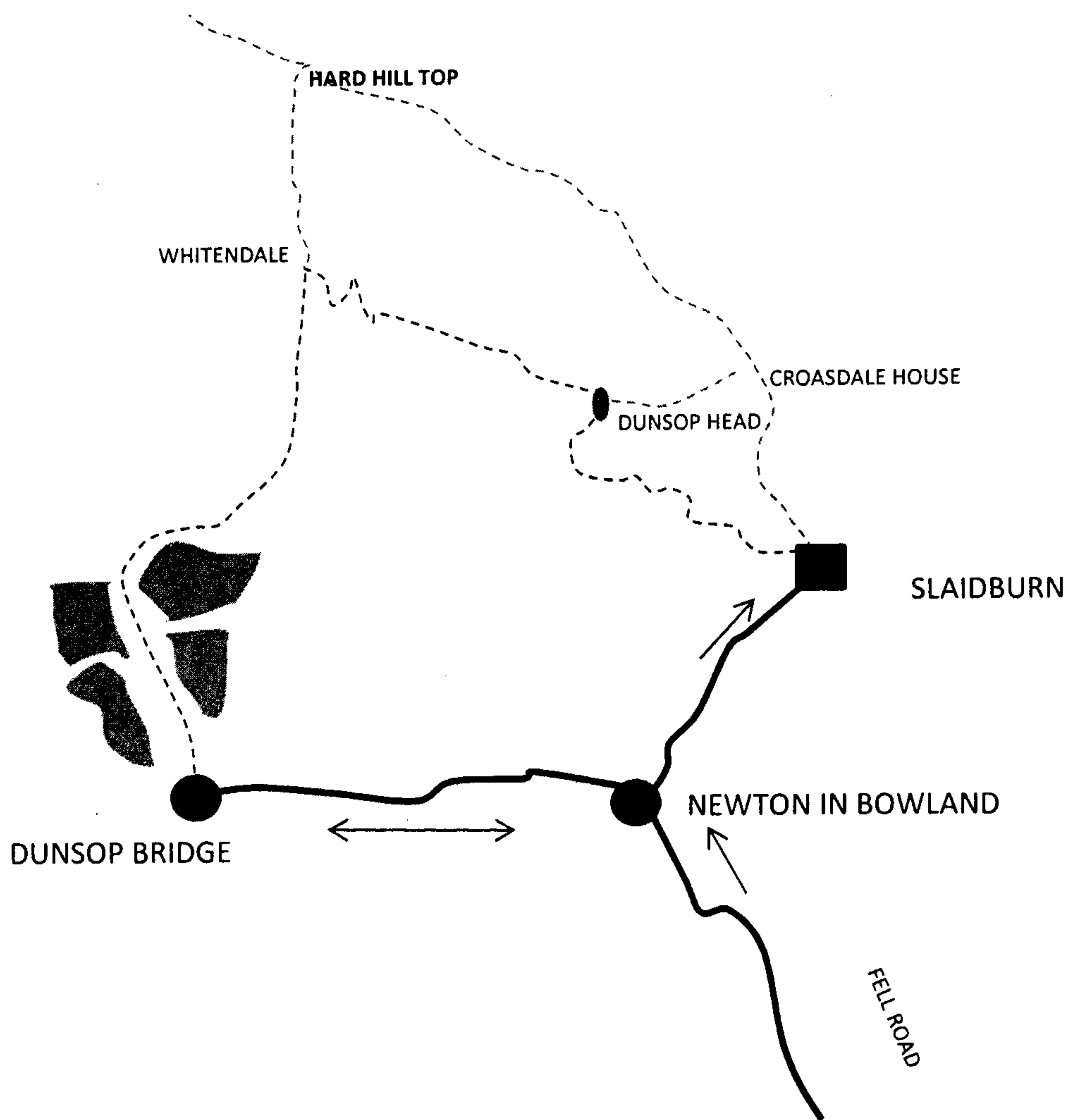
It is unlikely that I'll be with you on today's meet so have a merry Christmas and I wish you all the best for 2012.

STEVE MADEN



SLAIDBURN VIA DUNSOP BRIDGE

27th December 2011



The coach will pick up in Clitheroe, near Booths, and then proceed to Dunsop Bridge before heading to Slaidburn, the coach will then return to the garage and return at about 3.30p.m.

Roy Haythornthwaite will lead a walk of 8.5 miles from Dunsop Bridge. The route, shown by dotted lines above, will follow the River Dunsop to Whitendale and then turn East to follow the bridle path VIA Dunsop Head to Slaidburn.

This walk may be extended by continuing along the river from Whitendale until you reach the Roman road at Hard Hill Top, turn right here and follow past Croasdale House to reach Woodhouse Lane. (see details overleaf) approximately 12 miles

I have details of a 4.5 mile walk or 2 x 6.5mile walks both starting from Slaidburn

Coach pick up times

TIM BOBBIN	8.15	CROWN HOTEL, COLNE	8.40
ST PETER'S	8.20	FOULRIDGE	8.45
BLACK BULL	8.25	SALTERFORTH	8.50
HILL PLACE	8.30	BARNOLDSWICK	8.55
NELSON BUS STATION	8.35	CLITHEROE	9.05

RETURN WILL BE 17.00HRS

Steve Young



2011 and all that!

Doesn't the Christmas trip to Ambleside come around quickly? Gill and I missed last year's trip (first ever Xmas trip in memory) but it is still upon us in what seems record time! The last 2/3 years have seen us walking in snow on this trip and, although it makes it more difficult underfoot, it is well worth it for the excitement and the scenery. With a little luck there should be snow on the tops today.

We have taken everything the weather threw at us this year. A wet Keswick trip in January saw the Portinscale path flooded and the kitchens and café at Nichol End becoming part of Derwentwater!

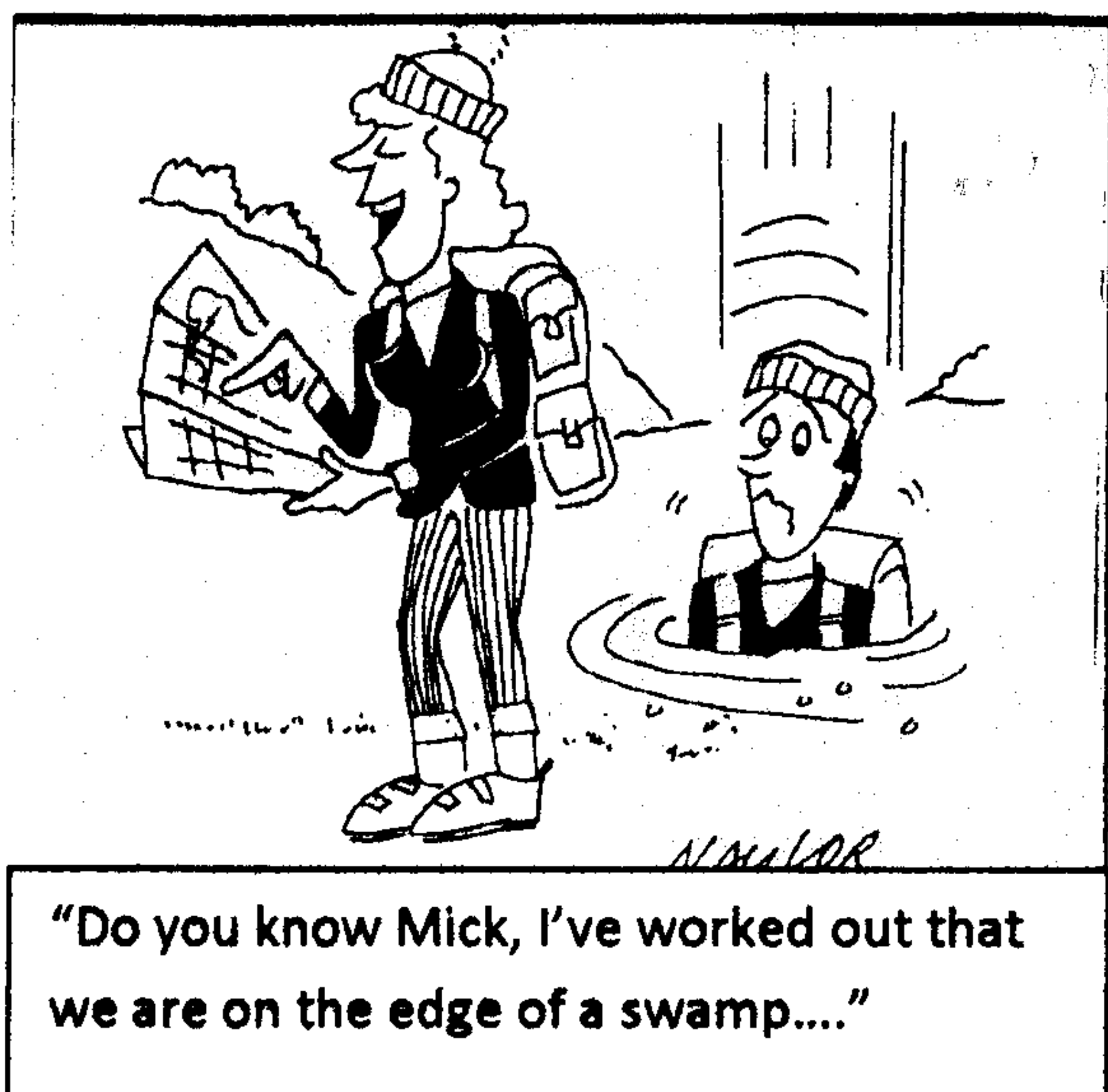
We were in snow for the Langdale and Glenridding trips and these were followed by one of the best trips of the year, a nice sunny day for the walk along the Pennine Way from Horton in Ribblesdale to Hawes. The jewel in the crown was the trip to Newtonmore when we were treated to crisp snow and blue skies up on the Cairngorms, not forgetting the annual skiing in kilts day!

The Buttermere trip was remembered, not for the normal good weather but for the coach break-down. Luckily Red Rose coaches helped by taking members to Forton services where a relief coach from Hodsons ferried everyone home safely.

The Long Distance Walk attracted the largest turn-out for a number of years with 30 members completing the 20 mile Pendle & Ribble Round on a bright afternoon.

Llangollen, Langdale, Grasmere and Coniston were all visited and then last month the destination was Keswick.

Mick Hirst, who has now bagged all the 214 Wainwright tops this year, had 5 left to climb on the morning of the trip. Gill, Roger Noon and I joined him and got off the coach at Thirlmere to claim Armboth, High Tove, High Seat



and Bleaberry Fell. This would leave him Castle Crag in Borrowdale to complete, with his brother, the following Thursday. What a wet and boggy mess! Mick has written an account of this, elsewhere in the newsletter, of how he ended up to his neck in a wet and slimy bog, and Gill up to her chest in a green glutinous mud!

What a mess they both looked, and we had to walk through Keswick with them! Roger and I did let them walk one step behind!

This did bring home to us, how dangerous the fells can be, especially if you are out on your own, as in the unfortunate case of the Clayton fell runner Bill Smith. So, please be careful on the fells especially if you are walking by yourself.

Steve Young

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

If you have paid your membership then I have your 2012 membership card with me. I will try to pass them all out today, if you haven't received your card please see me in the Club.

Gill Young

May we take this opportunity to wish all members and guests a Merry Christmas and Best Wishes for 2012, we hope you all enjoy and support the 60th Anniversary Year.

Gill and Steve

Last hut of 2011

Wow doesn't time fly, Carlton Xmas hut already next week, and still looking for artistic talent for the Cabaret, anything goes, also don't forget to see me for your 2012 hut sheets with results of the draw, most people do get on at least 3 each year and probably more this time as at 52 applicants for the hut weekends we are down 5 from last year, so being on the reserve is not as bad as it sounds.

I shall be collecting hut fees for the splendid Lowstern cottage Clapham hut January 27th-29th, the cost is £21 per person for the weekend, and because it's Burns night there will be the usual Scottish Haggis, Neaps and Tatties, if you require the meal please let me know, we have this year a prize and trophy for that special Tartan outfit, but it's not compulsory to wear one of course.



Lowstern Cottage, Clapham

Extra trip 27th December:

I shall be walking over from Dunsop Bridge to Slaidburn by way of dunsop forest past the eagle owls nest site to Whitendale farm and then up past dunsop head to the fell top, the views from up here on a clear day are magnificent and then it's all downhill to Slaidburn and the cafe or Hark to Bounty pub.

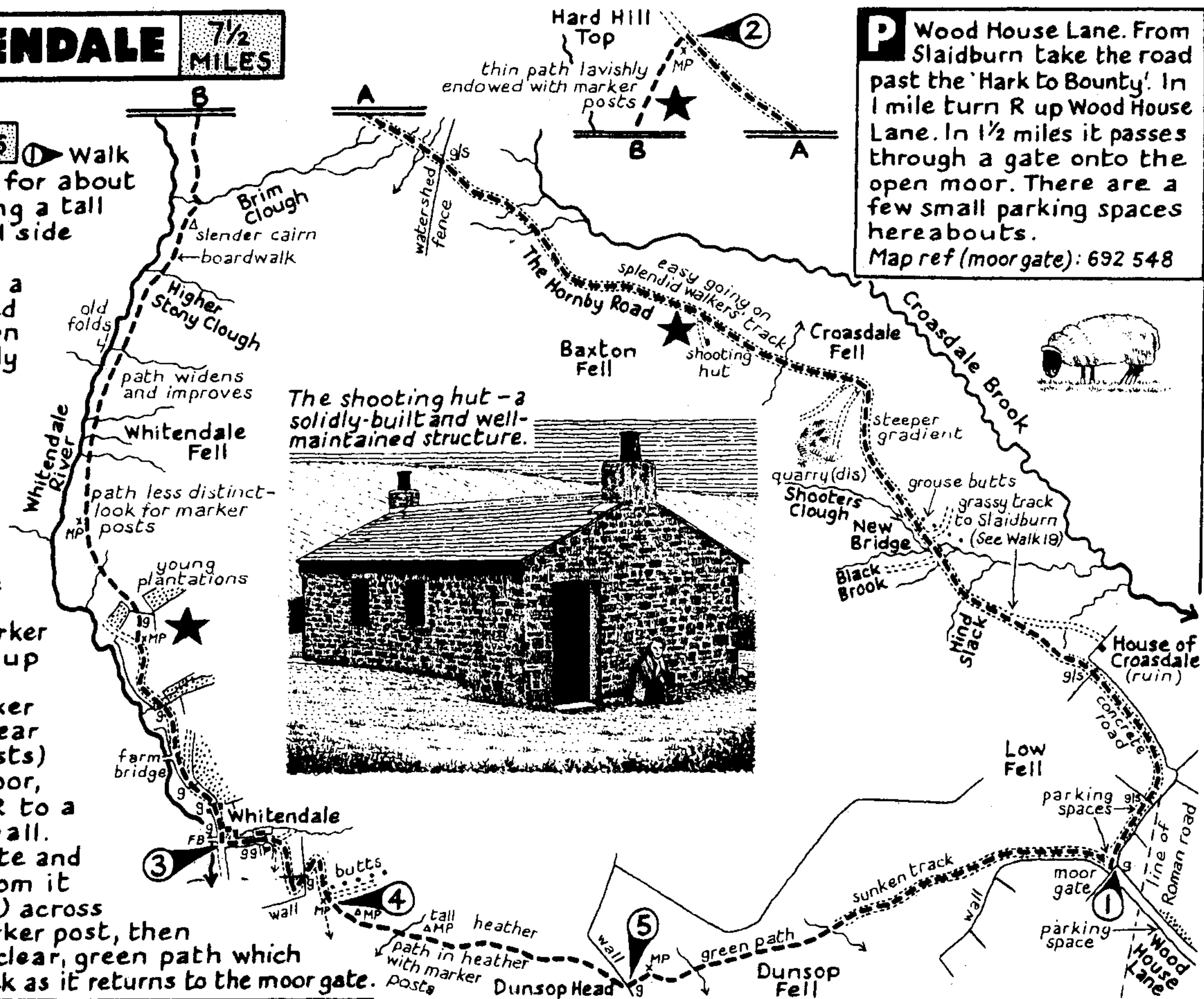
And finally I'd like to thank everyone who as attended the huts this year and contributed to the camaraderie that makes hut weekends the success they are, also thanks for all the help with the hut chores before we leave,
Happy Christmas everyone,

Roy Haythornthwaite,

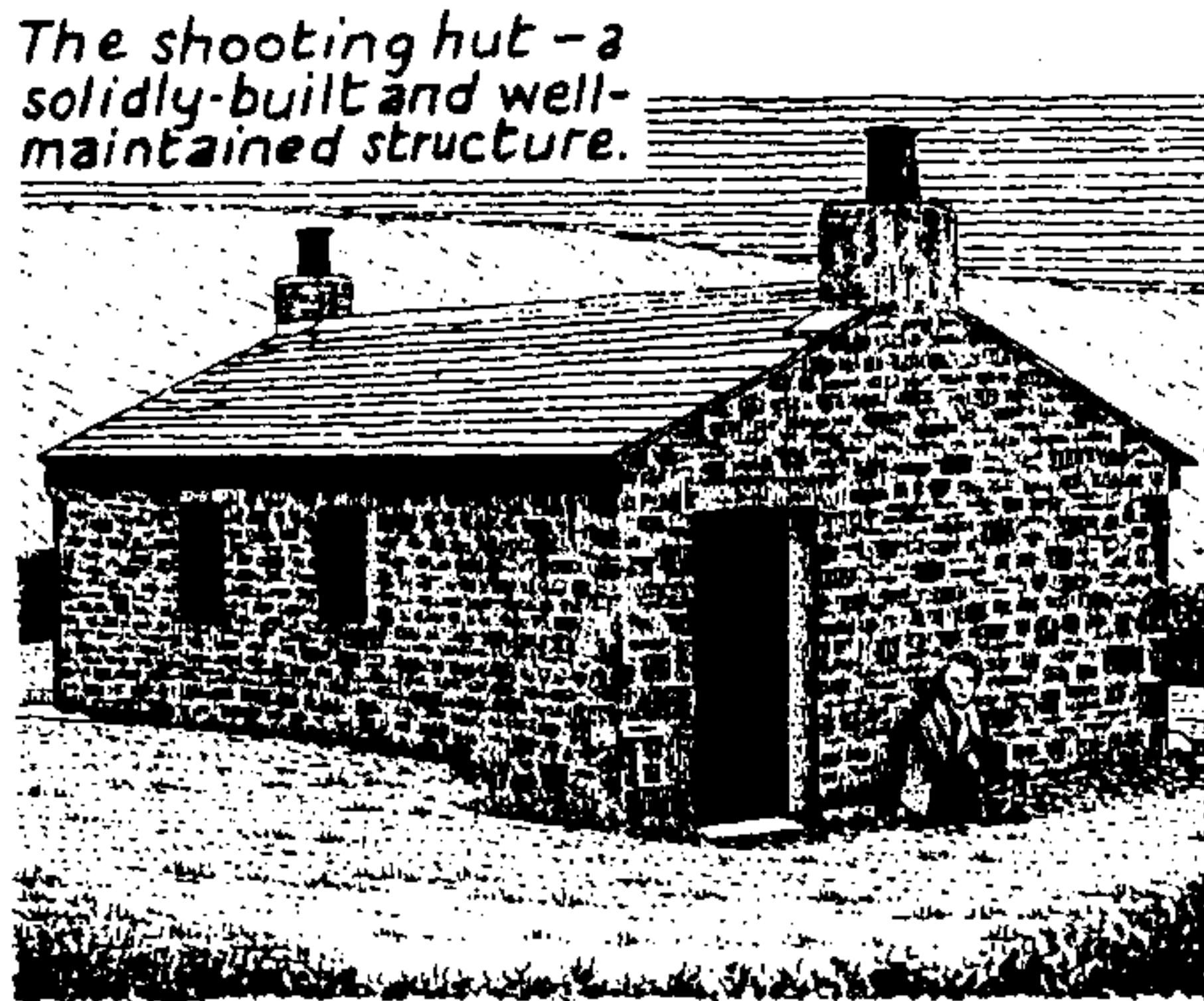
Hut secretary

ROUTE DIRECTIONS

① Walk up the moorland road for about 3 miles. ② On reaching a tall marker post on the LH side of the track, turn L (Whitendale) to follow a thin path (well-supplied with marker posts) down the valley. It eventually joins a cart-track leading down to Whitendale Farm. ③ Turn L up to farm buildings. Go straight through farmyard and up rough track, soon forking R to zig-zag steeply up the fellside. ④ When the track divides, at a marker post, keep straight on up a narrow, stony path towards another marker post on the skyline. Clear path (with marker posts) continues over the moor, eventually dropping R to a small gate in a crosswall. ⑤ Go through the gate and head directly away from it (compass bearing 60°) across boggy ground to a marker post, then veer 1/2 R to pick up a clear, green path which develops into a sunken track as it returns to the moor gate.



P Wood House Lane. From Slaidburn take the road past the 'Hark to Bounty'. In 1 mile turn R up Wood House Lane. In 1 1/2 miles it passes through a gate onto the open moor. There are a few small parking spaces hereabouts. Map ref (moorgate): 692 548



The shooting hut - a solidly-built and well-maintained structure.

Exposed moorland walking on good tracks and well-marked paths. 1190' of ascent, mostly on gentle gradients but with one steep climb of some 430' from Whitendale Farm. Some wet ground in upper Whitendale and around Dunsop Head. No motor-roads. 1 ladder-stile (with adjacent gate).

WHITENDALE



Whitendale - farmhouse and Keepers Cottage

THE LIVELY WHITENDALE RIVER FLOWS THROUGH A DEEP VALLEY BEFORE JOINING FORCES WITH THE BRENNAND RIVER TO FORM THE RIVER DUNSOP (See Walk 8).

UPPER WHITENDALE IS BLEAK INDEED, BUT THE TINY HAMLET OF WHITENDALE NESTLES IN AN ARBOREAL SETTING OF SUPREME BEAUTY, AND THE FARM, DESPITE ITS REMOTENESS, LOOKS WELL-TENDED AND PROSPEROUS. THE MAIN FARMHOUSE WAS BUILT BY THE UBIQUITOUS TOWNELEYS IN 1854. THE PICTURESQUE KEEPERS COTTAGE STILL RETAINS A MULLION SILL AND TOPSTONE.

THE HORNBY ROAD

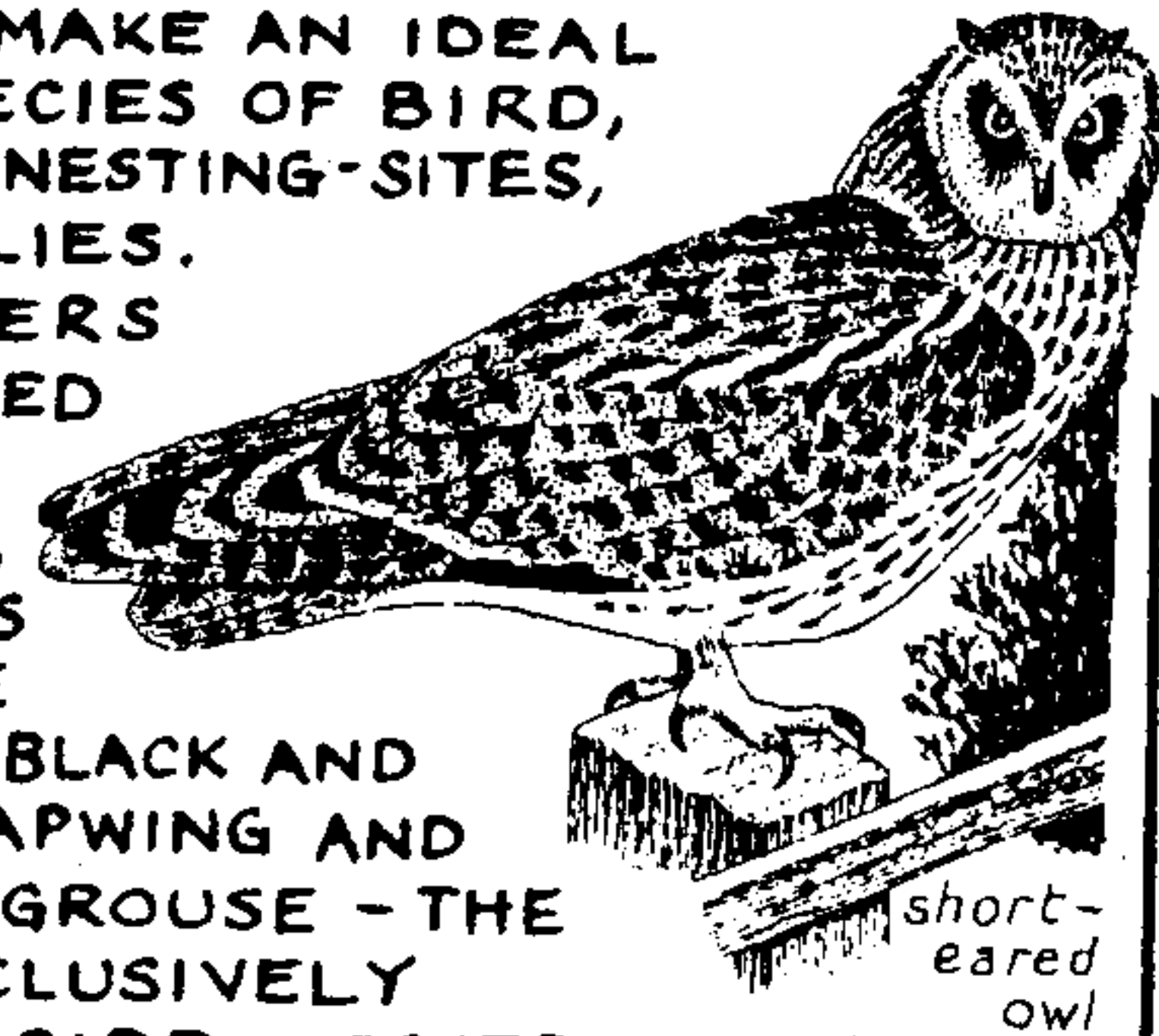
Overlaying a Roman road in places, and alternatively known as 'The Salter's Way', this is one of the country's finest moorland tracks. A packhorse route of great antiquity, it was used for the transport of salt from Morecambe Bay to the farms of Bowland and the Ribble Valley.



'slender cairn', near Brim Clough

BIRDS OF THE MOOR

THESE WILD UPLANDS MAKE AN IDEAL HABITAT FOR MANY SPECIES OF BIRD, PROVIDING THEM WITH NESTING-SITES, COVER AND FOOD SUPPLIES. FAMILIAR TO ALL WALKERS WILL BE THE LONG-BILLED CURLEW, WITH ITS LONELY,



short-eared owl

HAUNTING, QUERULOUS CRY; THE CRESTED, BLACK AND WHITE LAPWING AND THE RED GROUSE - THE ONLY EXCLUSIVELY BRITISH BIRD. LESSER-KNOWN SPECIES WHICH MAY SOMETIMES BE SEEN INCLUDE THE RING OUZEL (LIKE A BLACKBIRD WITH A WHITE CRESCENT ON ITS THROAT), THE SHORT-EARED OWL (WHOSE 'EARS' ARE NOT EARS AT ALL), THE HEN HARRIER (CHOSEN AS THE EMBLEM OF THE FOREST OF BOWLAND), THE GOLDEN PLOVER AND THE WHEATEAR. TWO RARE FALCONS, THE HUGE PEREGRINE AND THE TINY MERLIN (BRITAIN'S SMALLEST BIRD OF PREY) ALSO OCCUR. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT DURING THE BREEDING SEASON (APRIL TO JUNE) DISTURBANCE CAN CAUSE NESTS TO BE ABANDONED AND CHICKS TO DIE.

CHANGE OF DATE

The extra coach meet to the Forest of Bowland (destination Slaidburn) is now on Tuesday, 27th December. Pick up times and suggested walks are in this Newsletter.

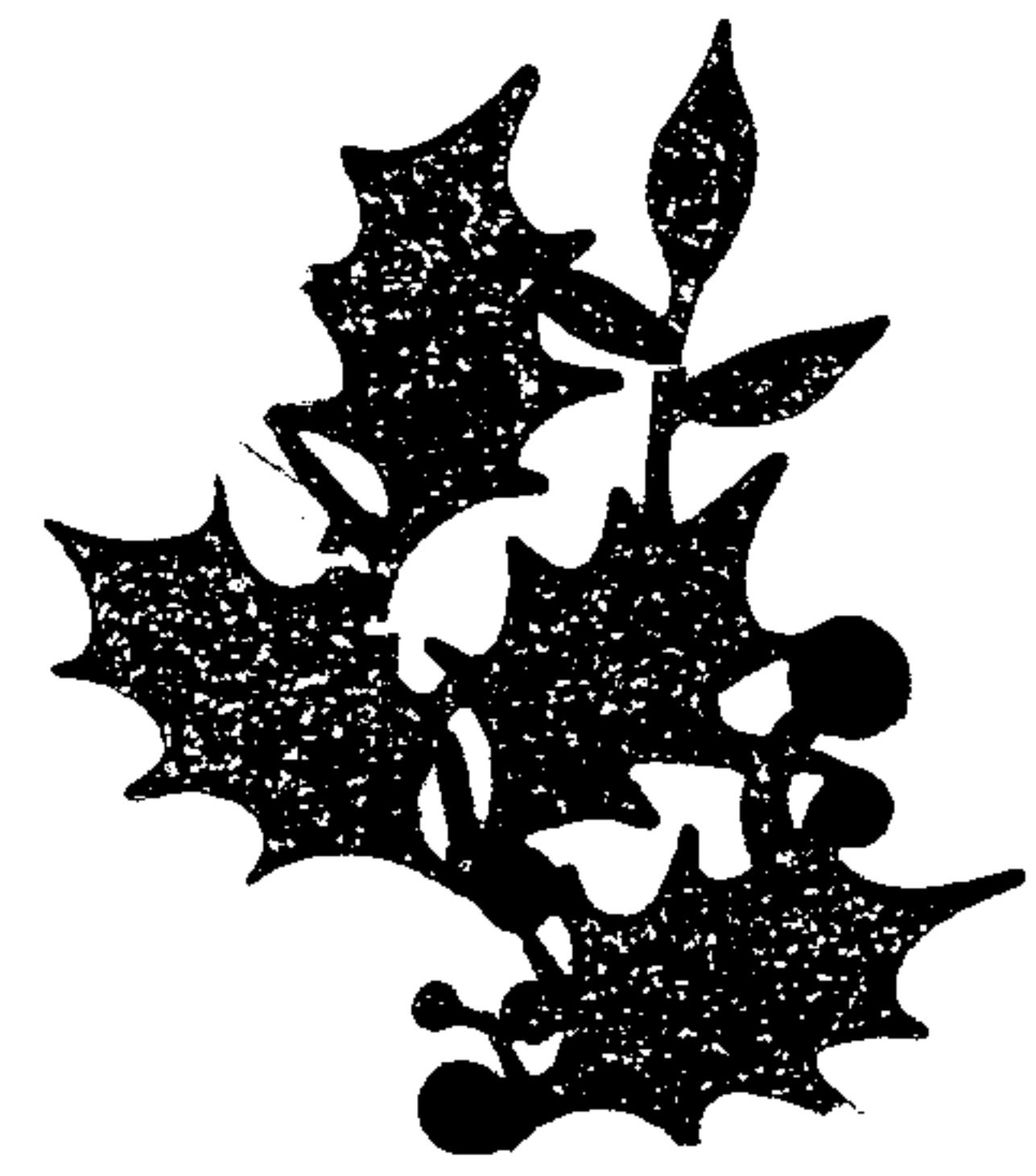
ATTENTION PHOTOGRAPHERS

We do need a cover photograph for the cover of the 60th anniversary booklet. You must have at least one that you think is a winner - why not submit a copy of it to any committee member.

STEVE MADEN



ANNUAL DINNER DANCE
SATURDAY, 7th JANUARY 2012
NELSON HOUSE, BURNLEY



The venue and the price of £25 per person remain the same as last year. Once again, there is a choice of menu and table seating. Although this is more time consuming for me to arrange, I believe it is more popular than a set menu and a free for all for tables on the night. So, I would appreciate it if I could have your choices as soon as possible please with a cheque made payable to Burnley Mountaineering Club.

Menu

Broccoli and Stilton soup with roll and butter or

fan of honeydew melon with orange and kiwi segments
_____ / _____

Roast chicken wrapped in smoked bacon with red wine sauce or

roast topside of beef and Yorkshire pudding with beef and red wine sauce
_____ / _____

Rich chocolate filled tart topped with fresh cream and raspberries or

a selection of cheese and savoury biscuits
_____ / _____

Coffee and mints followed by the Chairman's speech

RAILS ACROSS THE LAKE DISTRICT

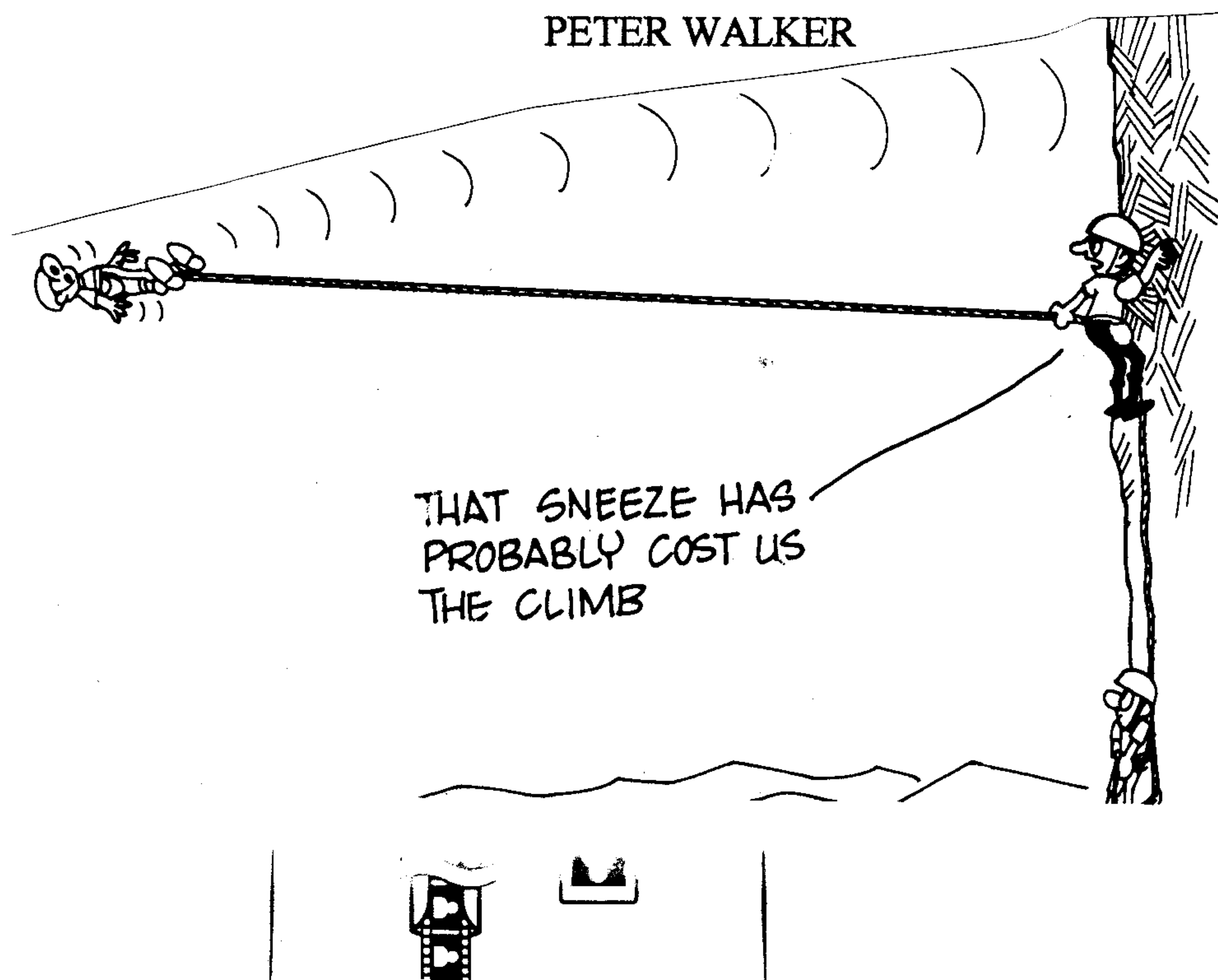
I am sure you are all aware of the present railway routes in the Lake District. The Windermere branch from Oxenholme, the Cumbrian coastal line from Carnforth to Carlisle, the west coast main line from Lancaster to Penrith and the two tourist railways - the 'Ratty' in Eskdale and the Haverthwaite to Lakeside (Windermere). But, there have been many more, sadly now closed, including the Workington to Penrith (via Cockermouth and Keswick) closed in 1972, the Foxfield to Coniston branch closed in 1962 and the Ulverston to Lakeside closed in 1965. However, the section between Haverthwaite and Lakeside was reopened in 1973.

Proposed Railways. The original plans for the Windermere branch (mentioned above) showed the line terminating at Ambleside but strong opposition from Wordsworth and others ensured its defeat. In the late 19th century many schemes were mooted including a railway from Braithwaite through Borrowdale to Buttermere. Also, a line up Ennerdale (which actually received a Parliamentary Bill) and a line from Grange-over-Sands to Bowness up the Lythe Valley.

The Light Railways Acts of 1896 and 1912 included electric tramway schemes such as the one over Hardknott Pass and another alongside Windermere from Bowness to Ambleside. All provoked intense opposition both locally and nationally. Various 'protest' groups were formed - forerunners of today's 'Friends of the Lake District'.

Other schemes followed well into the 20th century by which time road transport was firmly established. In 1921, there was a proposal for a railway from Haverthwaite to Hawkshead and Ambleside, tunnelling under Loughrigg Fell on the way, passing Grasmere, ascending Dunmail Raise then dropping down to Thirlmere before running into Keswick. In 1923 the scheme was revised as an electric railway, power being supplied by a generating station at either Keswick or Cockermouth. In 1934, the London, Midland, Scottish Railway (LMS) considered the possibility of cable cars to the top of Wansfell and to the top of Coniston Old Man whilst yet another scheme was for a rack railway, or an aerial ropeway, up Scafell from the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway at Dalegarth.

Thankfully, none of these schemes became a reality but it's always of interest to know what might have been.



A true tale of the Burnley MC swamp monsters.

Sunday 20th November 2011 and it's the monthly trip destined for Keswick, a normal trip except that having been doing the Wainwrights all this year along with my brother Andy I was finally down to my last five tops. I intended to do four today and save my last top Castle Crag until the following Thursday when I would travel up to Borrowdale with Andy and my daughter Lindsay and finish them together. The four tops I intended to do were on the ridge between Thirlmere and Borrowdale renowned for being a little damp underfoot, starting with Armboth Fell, then High Tove, High Seat and finally Bleaberry Fell. As the route book came around the coach I asked Steve and Gill Young if they would care to join me warning that we would probably get our feet wet and so there we were at the Wythburn road junction along with Roger Noone who was to join us for the day.

We walked along the road for half a mile before turning onto the path to Harrop Tarn a stony and very slippery path emerging on to a broad track by the tarn then climbing steadily to the ridge near Bell Crag. Up to now the weather had been misty and damp but suddenly the clouds thinned and we were above the clouds looking at the tops towards Dale Head sitting in a sea of mist, this was turning out to be a lovely end to my year after many days trudging around in the mist, just four tops today, a stroll in the park, everything in the gardens rosy.

We walked on chatting cheerfully deciding to stop for a bit of lunch on the top of Shivery Knott but as we settled down Gill decided to nip off for a ladies excuse me, promptly slipped on the greasy rocks and fell heavily on to her backside badly winding herself. As she lay prostrate on the rocks Roger promptly dropped his flask which bounced off the rocks below and as Steve went to help Gill his sit mat and half his lunch flew off in the opposite direction. I sat there amazed at the scenes of chaos unfolding around me and decided not to move to avoid some untold disaster that awaited me if I did. After a few minutes Gill recovered and although looking a bit dishevelled and limping slightly she was fit to continue so we set off again heading towards the infamous Armboth Fell a knob of rock in the middle of a bog the only way I can describe it. By the time we reached the summit we all had wet feet as we were constantly crossing boggy patches some of them as high as the tops of our boots and the conversation turned to the poor fell runner who had met his demise in a peat bog on the Bowland Fells a few weeks before. From Armboth Fell we then headed back through countless bogs to High Tove and at the summit joined up with Frank Pollard and Lisa, two tops down two to go, a walk in the park.

Off we set for High Seat a continuous bog trot trying to follow the fence but constantly having to leave it to try to keep as dry as possible and I must admit I was getting a little fed up of the terrain. Half way across we met a guy with a dog who was all doom and gloom warning us of the bogs ahead but took no notice of him commenting about him being a bit of a wimp, it couldn't be any worse than the three miles of bog that we had just crossed could it. After a couple of hundred yards the ground seemed to deteriorate and our party spread out over quite a distance, I chose a line near the fence having spotted three old fence posts spread across an eight foot expanse of peat. I commented to Gill that the posts looked a little greasy and there was a slight risk of slipping off them so she headed a few yards to the right while I composed myself. A short run up, one foot on the fence post and a quick stride to the grassy bank on the other side. That was the plan but what happened next didn't quite go as I intended, the short run up was ok as was the foot on the post, but then the post sank and I followed it, first to the knee, then to the waist, the chest and finally my neck. I remember shouting a string of expletives, a cry for help, well a whimper really, followed by a horrible wet feeling that was engulfing me. Gill turned to see what all the

fuss was about, saw a head sticking out of the bog like a white stepping stone and turning to try to help me lost concentration and fell into a bog herself right up to her ladies buoyancy aids. By this time I had somehow pulled myself onto the bank dripping stinking mud from head to foot, but by now Gill was starting to panic as she couldn't get out so Roger and Steve dashed over and grabbing an arm apiece struggled to get her out. As all this was happening Frank and Lisa just seemed to stroll past not even getting their feet wet.

So there we stood like two bog monsters, but then reality kicked in and the realisation that we were stood at almost two thousand feet in mid November with almost six miles to walk, on the plus side it was sunny with little wind. I took off my fleece and replaced it with my cag to keep out any wind and got moving as quickly as possible towards High Seat. By the time we reached the summit I had started to warm up and my Helly base layer appeared to be drying slightly, so after a quick photo we got moving again towards Bleaberry Fell still having to avoid numerous bogs, however the wind started to get up a bit and it began to feel a little uncomfortable. As we approached Bleaberry Fell the conditions underfoot improved and when we arrived at the summit we were fortunate to see a Brocken Spectre although I didn't appreciate it very much at the time. So there I was on my penultimate Wainwright ten months to the day after starting them on Latrigg on the January Trip, but there was little elation, all I wanted to do was get off and down to Keswick. We started to descend the very rough, slippery path when the day took a turn for the worse once again, Roger slipped and badly cut his hand, so there we were, Roger leaving a trail of blood, Gill and myself walking like we had s#*t ourselves, Gill was also walking with a slight limp from her earlier fall and Frank and Lisa like two models in Fishers window, immaculate, complete with dry feet. Eventually we arrived on Keswick Main Street, Gill and myself trying to look inconspicuous which is difficult when you are covered from head to toe in brown stinking mud and me with a wet patch in the front of my trousers. So there you have it just another day with Burnley Mountaineering Club and one which will cause some amusement to those involved in years to come.

On the following Thursday I was back in the Lakes with my brother Andy and my daughter Lindsay to climb our last Wainwright which was Castle Crag. Everything passed without incident and we toasted the achievement with a glass of Highland Park on the summit. In total 214 Wainwright summits (4 of them twice) plus 92 Birkett Fells climbed on the way, it had taken me 312 days, done 414 miles with 142,000ft of climb and 38 trips to the Lakes.

Mick Hirst.



'WHO IS THIS WAINWRIGHT ANYWAY?'

Across the Alps in 18 Days. by Joan Miller

On a station platform deep underneath Munich Airport, we puzzled over a digital display. Did it say "Only the last carriage of the S-bahn train goes to Pasing"? Important because we had to make the first of several changes there en route to Oberstdorf, our starting point for a north to south trek over the Alps. Once on the train and duly seated in the last carriage, we heard two guards in confrontation with another passenger, also a foreigner, who had committed the heinous crime of not stamping his ticket before boarding. Seemingly he could choose between being put up against a wall and shot or pay a 40euro on the spot fine. After much protesting he understandably settled for the fine. A cautionary tale for those intending to travel on German rail (or Italian for that matter). Although a later train split into three, one part going off to Lake Constance, we did finally arrive, mentally exhausted in Oberstdorf. By now a two hour walk in baking heat, up the Trettachtal to our Spielmannsau Alpen Gasthof did not seem such a good idea but it had to be done and once installed there, after our travesty of a summer, it was a treat to relax and eat al fresco, on a balmy evening, surrounded by soaring limestone peaks.

Next morning it was a joy to make our way under clearing skies through the Trettach Gorge, our footpath drying after overnight rain, up onto the grassy alm where the imposing Kemptner Hutte guards approaches to the Madelejoch and the Austrian frontier. Our descent to the Lechtal took us past the waterfall created by Simm and into Holzgau, where the BMC advance party had made tentative arrangements for us at Hotel Baren and mention of the club got us a room nearby, with meals in the hotel. A phone call to Kaiserjochhaus was met by the aptly named huttenfuhrer barking down the phone "We're full, full, full it doesn't matter what Alpine club you're members of!" At Leutkircherhutte they were much nicer, "It's Saturday, of course we're full but we'll squeeze you in somewhere". Change of route then.

Hungry bugs tried to breakfast on us as we walked by the Lech, so I slipped into a Spar in Steeg and invested 8euros in a repellent which was so effective that after only one application we did not receive another bite for the rest of the trip. A very steep tarmac road climbs out of the village, but no sooner had we made a reluctant start than a 4x4 pulled up with offer of a lift and we were soon zooming effortlessly to the spot where our routes diverged. The climb up to the Leutkircherhutte was hot and hard but worth it once we arrived. Because of the lift we had plenty of time to sit in the sun and enjoy its wonderful situation astride the ridge above St. Anton with panoramic views over the whole valley and of the Verfall mountains to which we were heading. Next morning, my birthday, we made a nervous descent down a steep and exposed footpath to St. Anton only for Pete to go sprawling on the tarmac of the main Arlberg highway, narrowly missing being hit by passing cars but sustaining bruises to ribs and cuts to arms and face. First aid completed in a nearby stream, we rounded the town and made our way up a gorge to the Konstantzer Hutte where half board included an excellent four course meal and buffet breakfast.

Above the hut, herds of beautiful Haflinger horses were grazing, building up the strength they would need to pull sleds in the winter snow. When planning the walk I had sent out several fishing emails, one of which must have been forwarded to the Mountain Guides' bureau in Galtur, so our route over these first days was at their suggestion. It took us on good paths over high passes, the Schonbichljoch, with fantastic views of the snow capped Silvretta range, across Paznuttal below Galtur and up the lovely Lareintal to enter Switzerland at a col at the head of the valley. Then it



was down to the Heidelberger Hutte, an anomaly in that its only motorable access is up the valley from Ischgl in Austria. It was one of a group of refuges which had hired international chefs for the season. Theirs was Italian so we ate lasagne for dinner. The Futschol Pass took us over into Switzerland proper and the Inn valley. Apparently it is an old coffin route, along which the dead were carried from Ischgl. When it was impassable in winter, bodies were buried in snow near the site of the refuge until the snows melted. We crossed the River Inn below Ramosch, before climbing through an amazing gorge called Uina Schlucht. A path has been hacked out of the cliff side for about a mile, sometimes passing through tunnels and always with a vertiginous drop to the river. It climbs several hundred feet before emerging in a grassy valley leading to the Italian frontier and nearby Sesvenna Hutte far below which is the fertile valley of the Alto Adige with its apple orchards and vineyards and in the distance the snow covered Ortler in the Stelvio National Park, our next destination. It was an area hotly contested in WW1 and German is still the language of choice.

Fortuitously we had taken a bus up the valley to Suldén, a ski resort right under the Ortler and avoided a soaking when the weather broke in spectacular fashion. As it was, we were able to jump off the bus and straight into a B&B, where our tiny room was a masterpiece of planning with everything you could need in a minimum of space. Unbelievably, next morning as we walked the mile to the cable car which would whisk us up towards the pass, we were greeted by clear blue skies, frosted fences and new snow on the surrounding peaks. As the Madritschjoch is 3,150 metres high we were concerned about fresh snow but it had mostly melted in hot sun by the time we reached the col. It was Sunday and there were lots of day walkers but we seemed to be the only people actually crossing the pass. Views were breathtaking, behind us the Ortler Group at nearly 4000m, and ahead the upper reaches of Martelltal and the glaciers of the Venezia. The Martelltal high level path looked easy on paper but proved to be one of the hardest days walking of the trip, constantly dipping and diving whilst providing airy views into the valley. Our next test was to slither over the steep, loose slopes of the Soyscharte, not as high as Madritschjoch but much trickier, to St Gertrude in the Ultental. These valleys radiate like the spokes of a wheel so that it would take almost as long to connect the villages by road as it does on foot. We were expecting the Ultenhof to be the very basic hotel described in Lonely Planet but were delighted to find it had had a makeover. Everything, especially the food was first rate, but we were still made very welcome.

Following a route out of "Lonely Planet", we made our way up to Rifugio Canziani, built by the side of the dammed Grunsee and surrounded by jagged peaks. Its unusual décor includes illuminated planets suspended from the ceiling, together with telephone wires on which are perched dozens of swallows. Outside our room sat a stuffed marmot which I photographed, having decided by then it was the only one I was going to see. At dinner, Venison Casserole was followed by a Rum Baba like sweet with fruits of the forest. We really were eating well. Next morning, we crossed the dam onto a path constructed from huge boulders, the wilderness setting emphasised by looming rain clouds. Could we beat the rain and get over the next pass to reach the sanctuary of Rifugio Stella Alpina, of course not. About half an hour short of our goal, the deluge began and we were engulfed in cloud. It was so thick that it was only when I spotted the clothesline joining some poles that I realised we must be within yards of the mist shrouded refuge. Not having seen a soul since leaving Canziani we were astounded to find the place filled with soggy walkers and mountain bikers, all making a more direct crossing between St. Gertrude and Val di Rabbi, our destination. By the time we had consumed bowls of substantial Minestrone and a



couple of teas, the rain had eased and cloud lifted sufficiently for us to continue. We were now joining the Sentiero Italia , a long distance footpath which covers literally the length and breadth of Italy and which we would follow on the long descent to the spa of Fonti di Rabbi and for the rest of the trek.

The amazing Grand Hotel Rabbi was the lap of luxury, with baths of orange mineral water, towels in which you could lose yourself, a five course dinner and substantial buffet breakfast for the princely sum of £37. It was full of Italian pensioners and we could only assume that it was subsidised by the government. Perhaps we should have stayed another day and visited the adjacent spa, along with all the other guests. Instead SI took us up the lovely Val Cencen where we tried unsuccessfully to buy drinks. In Austria and Switzerland every farm seems to have a sideline selling refreshments but not here. Perhaps the farming subsidies are too high. We did however gain a dog which was determined to accompany us. Although we had previously heard lots of marmots whistling, today we saw the first one of the trip. It was so tame it wasn't even scared by the dog, which was by now firmly attached to us. From the col, which we shared with another couple there were superb views north, to the south faces of Cevedale and the Ortler group and south to the snows and glaciers of the Adamellos and Presenellas. A couple of miles across the deep chasm of Val de Sole lay Peio our destination. Alas, to reach it we had to walk right round the head of the valley. When the other couple set out along the ridge and the dog had begun to follow them, we sneaked off smartly down the slope. After making a massive detour around the valley head we were dismayed to find the entry to a track which contours to Peio blocked by a huge notice announcing its closure for forestry work. No way were we going to plunge down into the abyss only to have to climb hundreds of metres back out again, so we ignored it and for a mile or so we scrambled over and under hundreds of felled conifers, some still very precariously balanced. My scratched and bleeding legs still bear the scars. Peio a pretty village sprawling high on the slopes of Val de Sole, boasts bizarrely three rival minimarkets all within a hundred metres of each other, each selling the same items

. We spent the next morning climbing to the picturesque, turquoise Lac de Plan Palu, where we met several families trudging around the lake towing pushchairs, carrying children or both and generally looking as if they wished they hadn't bothered. Above the lake the onward route looked impossible but the path wound its way cleverly up to the hanging valley, leading to our last col. This turned out to have been part of the front line in WW1. The trenches have been preserved and Rifugio Bozzi a hundred metres over the other side was actually part of a barracks. There must have been some improvements but they were difficult to spot. What a shock after all the comfortable modern refuges to find a communal squatting toilet and just a cold water tap, but people were friendly, food was basic but plentiful and there was a roaring fire, also a resident sherpa. We spent an interesting hour in a museum housing WW1 artefacts found in the vicinity, which has been created in a nearby building.

It just remained to make our way under threatening skies down the long descent to Ponte di Legno and its two bus stations. By the time we sorted out which bus station served Edolo, it was bucketing rain and as the bus sloshed its way down the valley we were mightily relieved to be undercover. The deluge continued all night but by next morning skies were clearing and we carefully stamped our tickets before boarding the train which would take us to lovely Lago d'Iseo for three days of rest and relaxation in the sun.



60 TOPS WEEKEND - 22nd to 24th JUNE 2012

As part of the 60th anniversary events, we intend, as we did on the 40th and 50th, to match our age with 'topping out' Wainwright peaks. The event will be based at the Fellfarers hut, High House, in Borrowdale.

It is intended that we, the committee, will suggest certain routes and offer them to members as their 'contribution' on the day. Not everyone, obviously, can be accommodated in the hut but three alternatives spring to mind. First, there is camping at Seathwaite Farm (literally 400 yards from the hut), secondly, there is a surfeit of bed and breakfast establishments both in the Borrowdale valley and in Keswick and, finally, members may like to just come up for the day, do a route and end up at the hut for the evening.

The Club will be providing food and drink at the High House hut at the end of members' day out collecting tops. If the 40 Tops and the 50 Tops weekends are anything to go by then it will be one big party on the Saturday night.

There will be some transport out to the start of walks, eg Threlkeld, Coniston, Catbells, etc. Also, if members have left their car at the start of a linear walk then transport will be available to take them back to it.

If you fancy joining in this event then let me, or any committee member, know as soon as possible. We want to encourage as many groups as we can to do their bit on this special day.

STEVE MADEN

A HISTORY OF THE BMC

It is inevitable when one hears that the Club is going to produce a history of its 60 years to personally regress to the start of it all for yourself. Nostalgia is such a wonderful way to relive one's own history, especially with the BMC.

It amazes me to recall how fit some members of the Club were in their early days. Nothing seemed to phase them - GRs all over Europe, Pennine Ways, Coast to Coasts, TMBs, 40+ mile LDWs, mountain marathons etc, etc - they seem to take them all in their stride and no doubt they hold the memories dear.

Now is their chance. Jot down some of a memory, an incident, an experience from your history with the Club (I am certainly going to). It could be related to a monthly meet, a hut, camping or hostel weekend, a Club holiday or on any of the Club's various social events.

I'm sure that a paragraph or two from you will do. It could be a colour in the tapestry of the BMC history. Maybe just a photograph that says it all!!

I know that the committee would welcome any or all contributions however long or short. Hand them in to Steve Young or Steve Maden - don't let them down.

TOP ROW MAN



HOTEL KEY CARDS

As many of you will have experienced being issued with room key cards, when checking in at a hotel, I thought that the following information maybe of use.

The magnetic strip could contain the following information:

- a. Customer's name
- b. Customer's home address
- c. Hotel room number
- d. Check in/out dates
- e. Customer's credit card number and expiry date

When you hand them in at the reception your personal information is there for any employee to access by scanning the card with any scanning device. Your information is retained on the card until it is electronically 'overwritten' with another customer's information.

So, at the end of your stay either keep the card or destroy it.

PETER WALKER

ALNWICK YOUTH HOSTEL

This YHA franchised youth hostel was opened by the Queen in June this year and is highly recommended. A few weeks ago Dot, Anton, Marie and I had a most enjoyable three night stay at the hostel which was once the local courthouse and jail.

It is located in the town centre making it ideal for visiting the historic Alnwick Castle and the endless beaches of the beautiful Northumberland coast with its glorious views of Dunstanburgh, Warkworth and Bamburgh castles (you will need plenty of money for these visits unless you are a National Trust member). A short trip inland and you can walk in solitude over the Cheviot fells.

Recommended in Alnwick - Carlo's fish and chip shop (in the top hundred in England) and the Tanners pub.

All the bedrooms are en suite, meals can be obtained at the hostel and there is an excellent self catering kitchen.

All four of us took turns at sitting on the chair on which the Queen rested when she was checking in at reception. It isn't exactly the royal throne but the next best thing to it. Highly recommended.

PETER WALKER

