



Royal Air Force Mountaineering Association



NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2008

Nov 2008

RAFMA Newsletter

RAFMA CELEBRATES 60 YEARS IN STYLE

The RAFMA 60th Anniversary weekend was a great success. RAFMA members old and new beat a path to the Lindeth Howe Hotel in the Lake District to review the events of the previous year and reflect on the events of the past 60 years. The Friday night saw RAFMA members settling down with the odd pint or two and listening to the exploits of just some of the expeditions that members have been involved in over the past 12 months. New RAFMA Chairman, Dave Tait and members of his team gave a fantastic account of the recent exploits on Makalu in 2008, Percy put his own words to an amazing summit day story and Rupert struck awe into the hearts of even the most experienced mountaineers with tails of the team's endeavours on the SE Ridge. After a fairly cold and windy day in the Lakes on the Saturday the membership was pleased to be welcomed at the Hotel for a superb dinner. The after dinner speech was given by Mr Mike Westmacott, who was able to corral his considerable mountaineering experience, most notably as a member of the 1953 Everest Expedition and President of the Alpine Club, to give a fitting review of our sport in the last 60 years as well as some good old fashioned yarns. A very good social was had by all.

RAFMA WEBSITE

www.raf.mod.uk/rafmountaineering

This is now the RAFMA website and includes all the information you could need about weekend meets, expeds and competitions. It also has an ever growing list of forums discussing everything from lifts for the weekend to your top crag.

AGM HIGHLIGHTS - The Newsletter Goes Elec- tronic

The RAFMA formal AGM was held on the Friday afternoon 21 Nov. A full set of AGM minutes is attached for the information of the membership. Full details of the changes in committee posts and committee members, as well as a full financial report can be found in the minutes. However the most significant decision from the point of view of the Newsletter is that there will no-longer be a paper newsletter printed. This proposal was made at the AGM in response to mounting stationary and postage costs and the continuing success of the website. The proposal was approved at the AGM with the caveat that any member can still opt to have a paper copy of the newsletter if they do not have access to e-mail. For this reason **it is essential that all members ensure the membership secretary has an up to date e-mail address for you, or you will not receive the next Newsletter.**



Some of the photos emerging from the New Year meet look spectacular. Above is one taken by Rhys Jenkins on Carn Mor Dearg. Along with Rich Isbister and Hannah Shorthouse, Rhys spent New Years Eve in this cloud inversion. More to follow next issue

GOWER MEET SEP 08

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Well, after the pitiful summer we have had, the weather was definitely the star of the show at the Gower meet in September – we had wall to wall sunshine, and even the evenings were dry and balmy, ensuring the Saturday night barbecues were a real success. The Meets Sec negotiated us all backpacker rates of £4.50 a night (pretty brill as it could have been at least double that) though I rather doubt the owners were expecting Emily's majestic temporary home. It took 12 of us to put it up in the pitch darkness (lack of daylight is a small problem with a camping meet in September) and came complete with a bar and a real barrel of beer. Maybe Quinny got the RAFMA meet mixed up with a beer festival, who knows, it's an easy mistake to make on some meets. Some kind of refreshment was definitely in order though for people after struggling through the desperate traffic in Swansea - the journey to the Gower is quite definitely the weak spot of a visit. Using a sat nav provided Jules with some entertainment though – a 1 in 4 single track road at the end of a long journey from London was probably quite challenging. (Yes, the campsite website did advise against using a sat nav.) And the prize for determination and loyalty to RAFMA must go to the Coles family who drove down from the Lake District, arrived at 2 in the morning to find the gates locked, and then hand carried all their camping gear the ¾ mile from the gate to the farthest outreaches of the campsite used to contain noisy groups like ourselves. Kept the kids quiet next day though.

The meet delivered on its promise of a family friendly, sun-soaked beachside outing with something for climber and non-climber alike. Saturday had groups racing off to Three Cliffs, to Fall Bay (near the fantastically scenic Rhosilli beach), and to Boiler Slab at Overton, just a mile or so (depending on the route you took Bob) from the campsite. The Gower was new to most people on the meet but the rock (sound limestone) and the routes were enjoyed by all with Osiris getting a couple of challengers. You realise you have been around a while when the pathetic little guide book you inherited many years ago meets its modern day match. They say size doesn't matter but Andy W's was definitely bigger than Andy Lockwood's.

The cruellest thing to happen on Saturday was Percy sweeping his hand across the map and saying casually to his trusting wife that she could just walk along the coast path from Port Eynon to Rhosilli and find them climbing at Fall Bay later on. A simple glance at a road atlas would expose the falsehood of "it's just 3 miles" but spreading a large hand across the detail of the ordnance survey kept his wife Emma in the dark a little longer. She was one of the last back into the site that day after an epic trip involving 2 buses, 3 blind alleys and a 6 mile run back to the site – well done Emma! I took her back out to Fall Bay in the car just in time to meet the climbers packing up for the day and to have a very nice swim in the sea on one of the Gower's most beautiful beaches. The Gower really does have everything - Andy even tracked down one of his 60 major trig points that he is collecting for RAFMA's 60th anniversary.

On Sunday everyone mostly reversed the venues they had been to on Saturday and completed dozens more routes. The laid back campsite let us leave our tents up till the end of the day when the golden sun had baked them dry – lovely. Well, the fourteen of us that made it certainly had a good time and were smiled upon by the weather gods so the Gower was definitely worth an airing – thank you for booking it Meets Sec.

Elaine Smithson, DE&S Ensleigh

PEAK DISTRICT MEET REPORT

11-12 OCT 2008

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And so; it's back to the Peak District we go. Weather forecast not looking too bad - improving Saturday and good on Sunday. What more could you ask for - a chance to get to grips some warm gritstone at the end of another crap summer.

Jules/Rich & Andy/Stu couldn't wait for everybody else and got stuck into Horseshoe Quarry on the way to the meet! Slowly, but surely assorted bodies appeared from all points of the compass until the hut was full. A pleasant evening, imbibing and planning for the next day ensued - oh, by the way I forgot to tell you all that alcohol is banned in the hut (oops!).

Saturday dawned cloudy but fair and as breakfast was taken, the weather seemed to be slowly improving. With eager anticipation, bodies fled the hut clutching all manner of ropes & tackle. Andy/Stu went off to Cheadale & Water-cum-Jolly, Jules/Rich/Joe & Jon to Froggatt and everybody else except Colin and Dave T departed for the Roaches. Dave T refused to get out of bed and Colin set off on a 'jog' to the Roaches (training for mountain marathon - end Oct). By the time Colin arrived for lunch at the Roaches, teams were in full swing all over the crag. A look at the table below shows how much fun was had by all. Clearly, there was a large input from Classic Climbs (mentioning no names!). Further afield, Andy & Stu were doing their thing on a couple of limestone classics and over at Froggatt a mixed team of youth, Joe (new member) and age (Jon) were throwing themselves at some of those tricky little routes. As the afternoon wore on, the weather deteriorated to persistent drizzle and reluctantly everybody returned back to base to be joined by those late arrivals Nick & Andy who had been having fun on Windgather along with a million other people. With everybody gathered including the committee meeting visitors, the evening passed in a blur of eating, drinking & meetings (official & ad-hoc).

Sunday morning saw an initially slow start turn into a frenzy as people began to notice that the sun was shining in an almost cloudless sky. Before long, bodies were scattered to the four winds heading for (hopefully) dry rock and in some cases, home. Feedback for Sunday has been limited but reported routes are included in the table below. The Loughborough faction had another great day - this time on Froggatt once they'd found it after being geographically challenged in Curbar (those woods can be tricky, can't they?). Jules, Rich & Joe had a look at Yarncliff, but that was all they did and then swiftly moved on to Lawrencefield and enjoyed themselves in the sun.

So, in summary, it looks like everybody had a great weekend getting 'out there'. The prize for the greatest number of crags visited clearly goes to Andy & Stu and the prize for the greatest number of stars goes to Mike/Alex. For the record, Colin's 'jog' turned out to be 18.2 miles. Congratulations to Jack & Gaz who made their first outdoor leads - welcome to a whole new ball game, guys and a big welcome to Joe - we hope to see you again if you haven't been put off by some of the more dubious characters you met!

Colin H

Meet Leaders

Leading a meet really is not that hard. To help out the committee have now produced a full 'How To' guide that should keep any first time leaders on the straight and narrow. If you feel the urge to help out please contact the Meets Sec, Flt Lt Percival, there are still meets in 2009 that need leaders and a list of willing volunteers will help if the original leader of a meet drops out at short notice.

Material for the Newsletter

As we have already said on the front cover the newsletter will be going electronic from now onwards. This means that there is much more opportunity to capture a greater variety of material and information without having to worry about the 'page count' and who is going to pay for the printing. With this in mind please send the editor any articles, advertisements, photos or stories that will help to launch the electronic version in an appropriate manner. Contact details for the editor are as follows:

Mark Catt
12 Hunter Crescent
Leuchars
St Andrews
Fife
KY16 0JP

Or

markcatt@hotmail.com

I look forward to receiving your articles and making sure that they get published.

Meets List

Get the new 2009 calendar down off the wall and put the RAFMA meets list on it NOW! You will find a full listing in the Journal that accompanies this newsletter or to get the most up to date information go to www.raf.mod.uk/rafmountaineering.

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NEWSLETTER TIMING

The Newsletter editor apologises for the fact that you are receiving the November Newsletter in January. The delay has been caused by the Committee's desire to bring the outcome of the AGM (in the form of the minutes) to the membership and the posting of the editor mid-publication. Hopefully the addition of the new journal in this bumper RAFMA New Years package will appease you.



More recent action from the New Year meet. Percy in the top of Gardyloo Gully, Ben Nevis. Grade debatable!

And Finally.....



Pop quiz from the Makalu team. This photo was taken in Rum Doodle's next to signatures of Bonnington and the like. Does anyone have any ideas which RAFMA members may have been responsible? And when?