

THE YORKSHIRE MOUNTAINEER

Issue: 381

Summer 2020



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The Yorkshire Mountaineering Club - Founded 1941



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Cover photos:

Front: Scafell and Scafell Crag.

Back: Coniston and Coppermines Valley from the air.

Both by Tony Raithby



From the Editor.

Welcome to the first Newsletter of my third tenure as Editor, as Andy said last issue, at least I should know what I've let myself in for!

For those of you who don't know me, I've been a Member since the late 1980's and involved in many Club activities, rock climbing, hill walking and winter mountaineering.

Without setting anything in stone, here is a provisional timetable for future issues.

Issue	Title	Publication date	Deadline for copy
382	Autumn 2020	End December 2020	14 th December 2020
383	Winter 2021	End March 2021	14 th March 2021
384	Spring 2021	End June 2021	14 th June 2021
385	Summer 2021	End September 2021	14 th September 2021
386	Autumn 2021	End December 2021	14 th December 2021

You'll notice that the format hasn't changed, I think Andy's template is fine and see no reason to fix what ain't broke.

I am indebted to Tony Raithby for again providing the cover photo's, Many more of Tony's shots can be viewed at <https://arfotolog.smugmug.com/>. They are not currently available to purchase via the website, but will be in the future when he gets time to sort this out. However, his e-mail is available to Members so if there was a photo you really wanted I'm sure you could work something out with him. I'd welcome any photo's from other Members that you feel would be suitable for inclusion in future issues.

With content obviously on the sparse side, given the lack of activity in recent months and the suspension of Club Meets, I thought it would be interesting to include an article from a previous edition of TYM. Given the sad loss of Colin White, our last surviving founder member, the choice was fairly simple.

Cheers

Steve Bostock

Committee Matters

This current newsletter has been produced “in house” as a result of the increasing time scale in the time taken for external printing, now around 2 weeks as a result of reduced staffing levels at the printers. The reduced content also made it feasible to produce it in this way.

Members may prefer the A5 booklet format which has been in operation for some time and consideration will be made in returning to this until printing is done professionally again.

Covid-19 has not only affected personal lives but also in the way that organisations operate. For the YMC, committee meetings cannot yet take place so business has to be conducted on-line, which meant that required progress, where needed, has taken longer than normal. The main issues discussed appear below.

The Committee has recently been reviewing the rate of subscriptions which will come into effect on January 1st 2021. Members may remember that in 2020 the British Mountaineering Council increased their tariffs for 2020 by £5 per person following a significant insurance claim. The YMC chose not to pass on this increase since it was in a healthy financial position.

The Committee has recognised that Covid-19 has had a considerable impact on club activities, particularly with regard to the meets programme, which was cancelled from March onwards. It was agreed therefore that an increase in rates for 2021 would not be appropriate, particularly since government restrictions may well affect activities for some time to come.

The rates to be applied reflect the aim of the Committee to encourage existing members to remain with the club under the current circumstances and as such there has been a reduction in rates as outlined below.

Family Membership	£41
Single Membership	£20.50
Single Parent Membership	£20.50
Student Membership	£8
Junior Membership	£8

Benefits and services available from the BMC will not be affected.

It would be appropriate at this stage to inform the membership that our Membership Co-ordinators Dave and Audrey Girt are standing down from their roles and so the Club will need to replace them at the next Annual General Meeting. This is an important role in the management of the Club so it is to be hoped that a replacement can be found by then. The bulk of the work takes place in December and January at renewal time whilst for the rest of the year activities are much less demanding.

A full Job Description is available from the Club Secretary.

Mention is made at the end of this issue regarding the situation with the Club Meets Calendar and the continued closure of the Coniston hut.

The Club Meets Secretary has suggested that the meets scheduled from March 2020 onwards be ‘rolled over’ into 2021, which would make the compilation of the list much easier. Some adjustments may have to be made if Meet Co-ordinators are reluctant to continue with their commitments. Certain reservations have been made this year by Co-ordinators about the optimum numbers on meets being exceeded.

A full list of meets will be distributed when finalised.

The Coniston Hut could be re-opened in the near future once all the safety checks have taken place. And after 6 months with no occupants, a thorough clean will also be necessary, particularly to alleviate the damp which will undoubtedly have built up.

Strict regulations will be imposed, for example a minimum of 72 hours between visits and a limit on the number of occupants allowed.

Full details will be distributed to members when all aspects have been finalised.

Colin White: 1927 - 2020

I didn't know Colin, but he was clearly a man who thought ahead; the information in this obituary was provided by him.

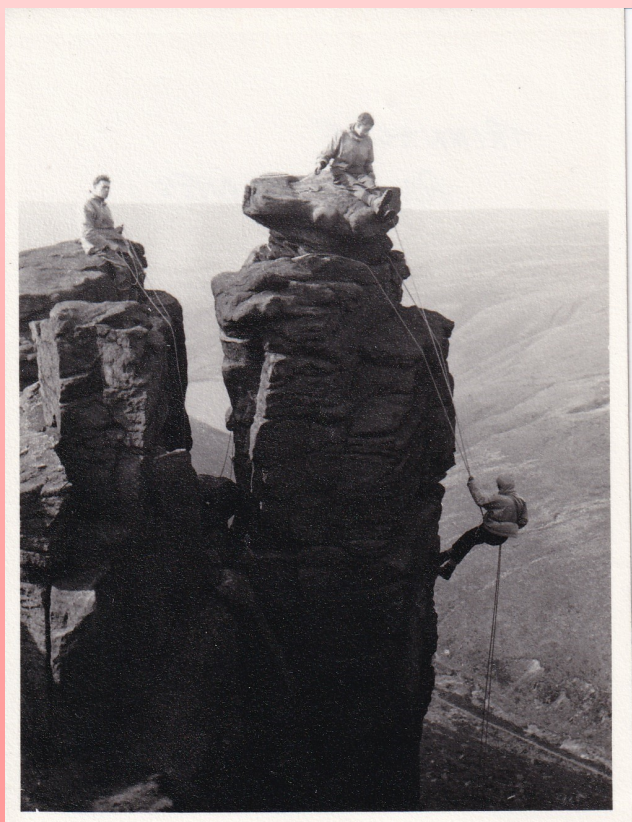
News of Colin's passing came as the last Newsletter went to press and Andy was only able to report that he had died and that he was the last surviving founder member of the YMC, which makes his death especially sad.

He was born in Newmillerdam in 1927 and went to the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Wakefield in 1939. He formed the Junior Mountaineering Club of Yorkshire (the forerunner of the YMC) in 1941 with Stan Craven, his cousin Bill Craven and Stuart Marsden. I'm guessing they met at school and found a common love of the hills and mountains, but obviously this is just supposition. His hopes of going to University were thwarted by being called up to the RAF in 1945. After demobilisation he was a coal miner for 3 years and then went to Teacher Training College for two years between 1951 and 1953. 1953 was an important year for him, for as well as graduating he married Thelma. He taught in a variety of schools in his career culminating with becoming Headmaster of Willow Park School in Pontefract. He retired in 1987.

Colin claims his climbing history was unremarkable, but he climbed in England and Wales and mostly in Scotland with many trips to Skye. He also visited Rhum on several occasions between 1945 and 1948 and contributed to the JMCY's pioneering Guide to the Isle of Rhum, including several first ascents.

His other interests included motoring (he was a past Chairman of the Castleford Motor Club), photography (but not as good as Earnest Shepherd, he says) and golf, mainly for the walk.

He spent his later years keeping up with three married daughters and seven lively grandchildren, hoping to impress and inspire them to enjoy a similar life to that he had enjoyed.



The Trinnacle at Ravenstones

Climbers - Colin White, Club Secretary and Doug McKelvie, Club Treasurer.

Observer - Unknown

Photographer - Unknown

If anyone else has memories of Colin that they'd like to share I'd be happy to include them in a future issue of TYM.

Steve

New Year in Rhum - by SA Craven

From the Journal of the Junior Mountaineering Club of Yorkshire, January 1949

If you have ever been to Glen Brittle in Skye, you are sure to have looked across the Sea of the Hebrides to the attractive hills of Rhum. Sailors and inhabitants of neighbouring islands call it the Haunted Isle and on a day when the clouds hang low over its sombre hills and the Atlantic waves beat incessantly against the huge black cliffs it is not difficult to imagine how this name originated. But from this mountainous island the outside world is barred by its own-er. A landing from the mail steamer is made impossible since no would-be visitor is allowed to board the motorboat which plies between the steamer and the shore. Furthermore, the Island of Rhum is particularly barren of places where an unobserved and safe landing may be made.

One fine December day, as the small boat carrying five of us rolled in the swell towards a headland of seaweed-draped rock, this fact was borne out with great force. However, we were able to approach close enough to jump ashore with our equipment. We waved goodbye to the boatman and stood watching our last link with the mainland until it became a mere speck on the ocean. A march along the coastal track led us to a deserted shooting lodge on the southern coast of the island; this we made our headquarters during the week we spent on Rhum.

The final day of 1945 was one of glorious weather. The sun hung low over the calm sea and the air was clear and still as three of us climbed slowly up the east ridge of Askival. In due time we reached the highest point of the island, after scrambling over rocks covered with a slight sprinkling of snow. The prospect, save where a sullen cloud heavy over Sgurr nan Gillean, was surely one of the finest to be seen in the Western Highlands. On all sides the dark shapes of islands and mountains rose from the shimmering seas. A surprising amount of Skye was visible, from Macleod's Tables to the Point of Sleat, with the Cuillin rising like a blue wall above the hollow Glen Brittle and topped by steep, snow-flecked summits. Beyond Sleat, its lighthouse a white speck on the very top of the point, the main-land peaks between Glenelg and Mallaig stood out sharply under their winter snows. Mallaig itself could not be distinguished, but a tiny moving wisp of white showed us the afternoon train leaving the town. To the right the land sank in a wide-mouthed valley rimmed by white sand - Morar, beyond which the curving bulk of Ben Nevis could be seen, fifty miles away. And the dim, heaving masses on the horizon, surely, they were the Cairngorms?

To the south the Peninsula of Ardnamurchan jutted out from the mainland with the hills of Mull beyond. As far as the eye could see islands reared their heads above the ocean, some near at hand, like Eigg and Muck, others far distant like Barra and Uist.

For such a scene it was worth all the toil and difficulties of landing on Rhum. We felt privileged to be the only ones to view it from the island's highest peak that winter day.

We scanned Trallval and Ainshval for signs of our friends but could not see them. Turning to where the green hollow of Glen Dibidil beckoned, we began to descend to the bogs and heather. Once down in the Glen we were hailed by our two companions who were descending Trallval after a traverse of the western ridge. We then returned to the lodge to prepare a New Year's Eve dinner.

After elaborate preparations, the five of us, bearded and unwashed, sat down to enjoy our meal, the only distinctive feature of which, apart from some excellent Christmas pudding, was its size. We ate, smoked and played cards until the long, dark hours of the winter night slowly approached the New Year.

At midnight we solemnly opened the whiskey and champagne bottles and drank to the New Year until, overcome by merriment we inevitably burst into song. We also drank to absent friends imagining how they would be welcoming the New Year, but had no wish to change places with any of them.

In contrast to the previous day, New Year's Day dawned grey and windy. After a hearty breakfast three of us set out on a two-day expedition to the western hills, hoping to spend the night at Guirdil on the western coast of the island.

As we descended Ard Nev from Glen Harris the ground became frozen and the wind increased to gale force, whilst grey clouds occasionally hid the tops of the hills. Rhum was showing us her wilder moods that day. We forced our way against the wind over the rolling hills, from Ard Nev over the Orval and Sron an t-Saighdeir until we finally reached the topmost point of Bloodstone Hill. Below us huge seas beat upon the rocky coast as they did against the island of Canna, now only three miles away. At the mouth of Glen Guirdil, by a pebbly stretch of shore, lay the partly ruined house of Guirdil. A steep descent soon led us to this building, one room of which we found to be inhabitable.

It was indeed a stormy night that ensued. The keen wind howled mournfully through the broken windowpanes and the Atlantic waves roared unceasingly outside as they crashed against the rocky coastline. Through the windows we could see the lighthouse on Canna sending its warning flashes over the restless sea. But, in contrast to the elements outside, our room was very cosy, for a huge driftwood fire burned in the grate, giving us a feeling of security and contentment after a hard day on the hills. Then to bed, curled up on the hard wooden floor having remembered to block up the rat holes.

I have described but two days of the eight spent on the island climbing and exploring. They are the two days I remember best, but each day yielded something new and exciting on that strange island in the New Year of 1946.

It was two years later, in January 1948, that I returned to the island with four other companions. As our boat rounded the coast of Eigg we had a wonderful view of the Rhum mountains, snowbound and free from cloud.

Now we landed in a small, rock-girt cove in which two stags had been trapped by the tide. Upon seeing humans, they immediately took fright and tried to scramble up the rocks. Finding this impossible the poor beasts dashed past us at very close range and plunged into the sea. The boatman who had rowed us ashore attempted to maim the beasts by hurling large stones at their heads, unfortunately for him he was unsuccessful. Once again, we made our headquarters of the deserted lodge on the southern coast.

Arising early next morning we discussed the days projects over breakfast. It was decided that two should remain at the lodge, two attempt the traverse of Askival / Hallival ridge, whilst I should make a lone traverse of the easier western ridge. At dawn we left the lodge. The sky was overcast but clearing rapidly. A new snowfall in the night had brought the snowline down to as low as 500ft. It was not long before I bade goodbye to my companions to climb through the newly fallen snow for the summit of Sgurr nan Gillean. Overhead the sky had cleared and as I reached the summit cairn there was suddenly revealed a most thrilling sight, for there before me lay the hills of Rhum, magnificent in their covering of virgin snow. Across the steep, snowy glen of Dibidil rose the fine, towering form of Askival, her buttresses plastered by driven snow.

Northwards from Askival could be seen the cone shaped Hallival whilst close at hand I could see the ridge I was about to traverse leading invitingly away over the unnamed peak to Askival. As I stood by the cairn the sun tinged the clouds over the mainland peaks and gradually found its way through the cloud-banks until the whole of that beautiful picture was tinted a delicate orange by its early morning rays.

But by the time I reached Ainshval the sun had disappeared again and a snowstorm was imminent. The snowstorm broke as I ascended Trallval from the Bealach an Fhuarain and so, having reached the summit, I hastily retired in the direction of the lodge.

My friends had hot pemmican soup waiting for me when I arrived and this I devoured eagerly whilst awaiting the return of two who had set out for the climb up Askival. They returned about half an hour later. Apparently, they had been beset by adverse conditions, only one of them being able to force a route to the summit. But from the nearby Beinn nan Stac they had been rewarded by marvellous views when the morning sun broke through.

It would take a long time to describe our attempt to evacuate the island both in 1946 and 1948. In each case we were fortunate enough to secure the good services of a mainland boat-owner who came to our rescue when all else had failed and starvation faced us.

During those winter days spent on the island we had enjoyed many and varied experiences, comfort and discomfort, the cold snows of the hills and warmth of the log fire, and best of all the comradeship between us. I am sure that none of us will forget those days on the Haunted Isle.

The report above is only one of several fascinating tales from the archives of the Junior Mountaineering Club of Yorkshire, later to become the Yorkshire Mountaineering Club. The Journal - No.7 - was loaned to me by Malcolm Lomas who followed this with a copy of a newspaper account of this expedition. The paper in question appears to be called 'Albatross' and reports that this is 'a full account of the adventures of two Handforth airmen, Cpl. John K Ward and Ac. Colin White who were members of the party (of five). Stanley Craven, who is mentioned in the narrative, is serving in the Fleet Air Arm'. A search of Google drew a blank on 'Albatross' (except for the Ancient Mariner) but Handforth was RAF Handforth 61 MU (Maintenance Unit[?]) near Wilmslow in Cheshire. The paper is dated Thursday, February 12, 1948. Was Albatross a Services newspaper?

Further research, in the YMC's 50th Anniversary Journal, shows that this was the fourth expedition to Rhum. In his article on the history of the YMC Colin White notes that three 'holidays' prior to this one resulted in the publication in 1946 of the JMCY 'Guide to the Isle of Rhum', copies of which are in the YMC library.

Neville Hawkin

This report was first reproduced by the then Editor, Neville, back in 2011, so some of you may remember it. However given the sad loss of our last surviving founder-member, Colin White, I thought some form of tribute, other than an obituary, would be appropriate. Hence this article describing the activities of our founders. I've reproduced the whole report from Stan Craven with no amendments together with Neville's comments. If anyone has any further information regarding their activities or Neville's comments I'd be happy to pass them on to the membership.

Steve

Photo shows - 2020.

The October show has had to be postponed due to lack of a venue. A meeting at Thornfield House is due as we go to press, to discuss future events but with the current Rule of 6 it would seem that Photo Shows cannot currently take place. Photo Shows will be reinstated as soon as possible.

All members are welcome.

If you've any rock-climbing or mountaineering photographs that you want show then please contact the Photo Show Co-ordinator - Natasha Cook ctasha@live.co.uk.

Month	Date	Location
October	15	Postponed due to COVID
November	12	Postponed due to COVID
December	10	Postponed due to COVID

Club News

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the club has suspended the meets calendar and the Coniston hut is closed, hence no Meets List in this issue. The committee is continually monitoring the situation and will announce the opening of the hut and the resumption of the meets list when it is safe to do so.

And finally.....

If there's anything more that you think the club should be doing please let the committee know: by speaking to a committee member or email the club Secretary - ymcsec2016@gmail.com



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