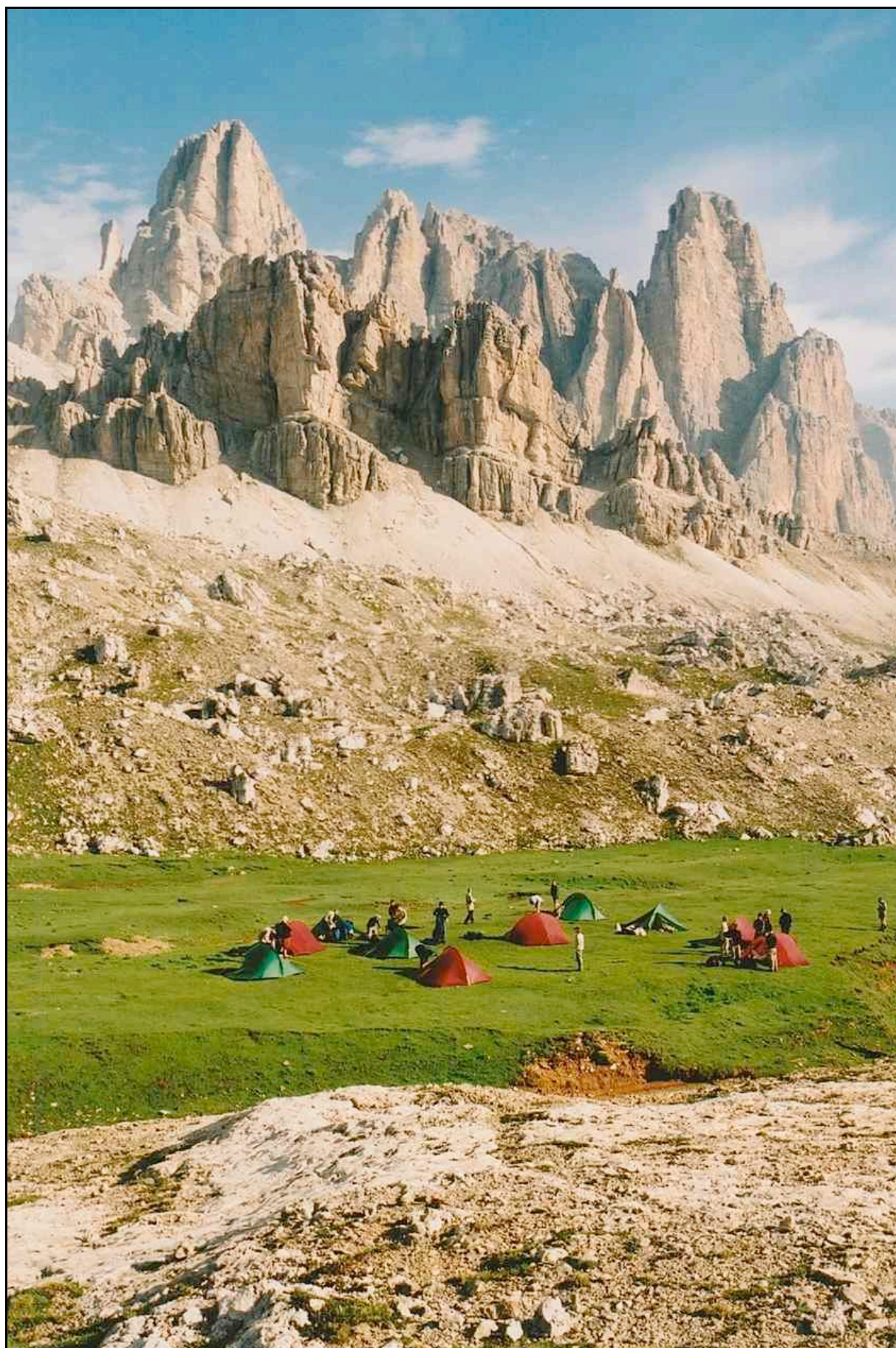


THE MANCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL TREKKING CENTENARY



INTRODUCTION FROM THE HIGH MASTER

J L Paton, High Master from 1903 to 1924, told the boys on his appointment that he aimed to develop, with their 'hearty co-operation', noble spirits which would endure the test of time. Co-operation and support he enjoyed in full measure, not least in the development of open air pursuits, including camping, walking and climbing. Trekking at MGS was born. From the initial ventures first in Britain and then throughout Europe, boys and staff have scanned the horizons for new and exciting ventures.

In 1974 I stood on the edge of the Sahara, at Zagora in Morocco. Behind me were the High Atlas Mountains and ahead the seemingly limitless wastes of the desert. In such situations one can feel very small but full of wonder. Twenty-five years later, a group of boys and staff from MGS stood in the same place, at the end of a trek across the mountains. They looked out into the desert and saw future possibilities of adventure and challenge, and determined to 'boldly go' where no MGS man had gone before. Such is the spirit of trekking at MGS.

The history of one hundred years of trekking at MGS reveals much about the human spirit, about initiative and teamwork, about friendship and self-reliance. It also reveals much about the commitment and dedication of generations of teachers, giving their time, energy and enthusiasm - realising each year Paton's vision.

As we cherish the memories of the last one hundred years, we now look forward to another hundred years of endeavour, of adventure, and, perhaps above all, of enduring friendships.

Christopher Ray

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Front Cover: 2001	Trekkers camped at the head of Val Travenanzes beneath the spires of Grand Lagazuoi in the Dolomites. The site was used in 1980 under the leadership of Chris Little and Gerry Leversha, in 1989 under the leadership of Allan Witton and on the 2001 Trek led by Eric Cittanova.
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Printed copies of this brochure were produced for those who attended the Centenary Trekking Reunion in September 2004. Acknowledgements to those who have made this electronic version possible can be found on the final page.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF TREKKING AT MGS

When in 1904 High Master Paton cycled to the first of the Alderley 'Cricket Camps' to assist with the erection of tents and organisation of fag-teams, he could hardly have known that a tradition was beginning which would take root and flourish vigorously throughout the twentieth century and beyond. It was still three years until Baden-Powell was to run the famous Brownsea Island camp, which led in 1908 to the foundation of the Boy Scout movement. By this time the fame of MGS school camps had already spread to Germany where Dr Bernd Neuendorff was recommending in the March edition of the 'Monatschrift für das Turnwesen' that German schools should copy the MGS Whitsuntide Camp. In this article he lists three benefits to be gained from such an experience: learning how to look after oneself, appreciation of the menial side of life, as well as the close contact in camp of teacher and pupil. Dr Neuendorff had spent a year as a master at MGS and had visited the 1906 Alderley Camp. He is remembered in the Memorial Hall at the bottom of the list of those who fell in the Great War.

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Although the 1904 edition of Ulula makes no explicit mention of hiking from the Alderley Camp, the record of that year's summer camp at Grasmere speaks of excursions which involved spending a night away from the site taking advantage of whatever shelter might be found. And thus it was that what was subsequently to become known as trekking, namely walking from one overnight stopping place to another, was born.

*'On three occasions parties went off, with provisions, for two days' climbing, and slept out under trees or on a haystack – living the wild life of man.'* (Ulula 1904)

Evidently such outings where nights were spent bivouacking away from base-camp quickly became part of the routine at both the Grasmere and Alderley Camps. In 1908 Ulula records fifteen boys from the Alderley Camp undertaking a 'route march' via Macclesfield, Buxton and Leek involving overnight camping, while in the following week there was a second march through Derbyshire with forty boys taking part. In the same year a four day march over the high fells takes a party through Borrowdale to Buttermere where:

*'We pitch tents about three p.m., and after tea and "wood-fag" go to church in full-dress camping uniform.'* (Ulula 1908)

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The word 'trekking' was still not being used when in 1910 the 'MGS Wanderbirds' set off on their German walking tour, yet this was a trek in all but name. Tents were carried and pitched, fires were lit for the preparation of food, and the 'wanderbirds' were thoroughly soaked.

'We cooked our mid-day meal at a little hamlet called Rupbrach. Here we were overtaken by a thunderstorm, accompanied by a terrific deluge of rain. In a few moments our fires were out, and our tents, waterproof against ordinary rain, were leaking freely. Two of us, looking like drowned rats, made our way to a little goods station close by, knocked at the door, and asked very humbly if we might boil some water. The stove was not lit, but it was immediately lighted for us, and the good lady of the house made us as comfortable as possible in her sitting-room till the water boiled. Meanwhile the deluge continued, and it became quite evident that we could not possibly camp out that night. We therefore asked if there was any inn close by where we could put up. Our kind benefactress explained that there was nothing of the sort for some miles around, and so things looked very black indeed. The lady, however, immediately set to work and emptied for us the biggest room in her house and insisted that we should pass the night there – an offer which we gratefully accepted. ... We shall long cherish kindly recollections of Frau Römer and the little station at Rupbrach an der Lahn.' (Ulula 1910)

Life in the outdoors at the mercy of the elements is a challenge to be faced, as well as an adventure to be cherished and remembered. Again and again accounts of MGS treks have told of lost battles with rain, flooded tents and snowfall at unseasonally low levels, yet MGS boys and staff have constantly risen to these challenges and frequently distinguished themselves by their responses to adversity, as during the 1981 East Tyrol Trek:

'After descending in torrential rain to the municipal campsite at Obervellach, we camped beside the Möllbach, a pleasant little stream, or so it seemed at the time. By the early hours it was in spate, breaking its banks and flooding much of the campsite. Most tents were moved, and we took shelter in the campsite building, until dawn broke over a sad mess of abandoned tents and floating debris, none of it ours. Several boys distinguished themselves by cheerfully serving porridge and hot tea to homeless campers who admittedly approached their first English breakfast very warily.' (Ulula 1981)

The word 'trek' was first used in 1912 to describe a long journey on foot through Northern France. It took six weeks and covered all of 500 miles, and all for the sum of 4½ guineas. The previous year had seen MGS boys 'tramping' through Brittany and returning to Germany to be 'Wanderbirds' in the Black Forest. Never short on initiative, these early trekkers seem to have found quite a variety of ways to brew up whilst travelling. In 1910 Ulula describes a railway journey through Germany:

'Next morning, 8am, we left for Wertheim and the Spessart. As our breakfast had been somewhat hurried, we made cocoa in the train, using water from the engine, which unfortunately was not quite boiling.' (Ulula 1910)

The following year during the crossing from Grimsby to Rotterdam trekkers were to prove equally inventive:

'We found the sailors in the fo'castle much more subdued, but very friendly. They let us use their fire, and we foraged for ourselves quite successfully.' (Ulula 1911)

On at least two occasions campfires were also to create difficulties during trekking in Germany in this period, as foresters were understandably wary of fires being lit in wooded areas in a climate a good deal warmer and drier than our own.

'While most busy, we were interrupted by a magnificent official, clad in green, who looked as if he had just stepped out of the Freischütz. Advancing with two lovely hounds, he inquired sternly about our "Erlaubnis" for making a fire. We explained that we were only foolish foreigners and could not be expected to know anything about an "Erlaubnis". However, after we had promised to extinguish the fire carefully before leaving, we made our peace, and our friend departed quite amicably.' (Ulula 1910)

Trekkers throughout the century and across many countries have almost invariably received a warm, friendly and helpful reception, never more so than during the 1913 Scout Trek in SW Ireland when:

'A postcard previously dispatched to the unknown resulted in our being met by Irish scouts, delightfully "tea'd" by them, escorted to a fairy dell beyond the town wherein to camp, and through the kindness of their Commissioner provided, not only with an itinerary which surpassed all expectations, but with a list of aristocratic hosts along the route who welcomed us with delightful courtesy to the freedom of their demesnes, and made us feel glad that land legislation had left their parks, at any rate, in the possession of such lords as these.' (Ulula 1913)

There have from time to time also been conflicts with the authorities in foreign parts, possibly due to a failure on their part to understand what it can be that drives large parties of Englishmen in outlandish clothing to traverse mountain-ranges bearing exceedingly bulky packs. It is also possible that generations of trekkers have on occasion adopted an anarchic stance in the face of incomprehensible bureaucratic rules and regulations, preferring instead to negotiate their own special relationship in the face of authority. It is perhaps unsurprising that in 1947 trekkers were mistaken in France for Displaced Persons who had entered the country illegally. Borders have until recently represented a legitimate challenge for trekkers, as during the 1959 Mont Blanc Trek:

'The customs post was reached and ignored, and an officious frontier guard chased trek several hundred feet down the mountainside, brandishing his revolver, before it was brought to a halt. All passports were duly stamped, and trek continued on its way down to the official campsite at Purtud.' (Ulula 1959)

By 1913 trekking seems to have become thoroughly rooted at MGS, and the word 'trek' itself finally established, being used for all four walking tours that year: an Easter Scouting Trek in Belgium, the Donegal Trek and two other Scouting Treks in Ireland. 1914 started well with treks in Normandy and the Peak District. However, the First World War was soon to intervene and put a halt to trekking for a good few years.

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Understandably Ulula articles tell us little of the everyday practicalities of the early treks, concentrating instead on the landscapes traversed and the incidents deemed worthy of immortality. Photographs of the earliest treks are very rare, and eye-witnesses have long since passed away. However, it seems likely that the style of trekking operating in the 1920s remained largely unchanged until the mid-1960s. Heavy canvas ridge tents were tied to tent-poles, then carried between two sturdy boys. Cumbersome dixies were likewise slung from tent-poles and carried on stout shoulders. Latrine-screens and digging-tools all needed transporting, as well as The Bomb:

*'The affectionate name for the weighty pressure-cooker which ceased to function properly early on.'* (Ulula 1964)

From time to time, as befits its name, The Bomb exploded, distributing its contents, usually stew, over all those unwise enough to be lingering nearby. Certainly on one occasion The Bomb was responsible for inducing suicidal tendencies amongst fellow campers:

*'We learned that a very irritated German camper had come into the galley during the afternoon while the fags were cooking our evening meal. Gesticulating violently to the effect that he could not sleep because of the shrill shrieking of the bomb, he had to be restrained from taking out the whistle while she was boiling in four.'* (Ulula 1959)

On arrival at a village trekkers would first negotiate a place to camp which sometimes led to interesting encounters with local farming practices.

*'The following day we set off on a very pleasant easy trek down the valley to Evolène, where we camped on a strip of grassland lent to us as a great favour by the grocer. We were given strict instructions not to walk across the strips adjoining ours, since this would flatten the grass on which the villagers depend to feed their animals during the winter.'* (Ulula 1957)

Clearly trekkers expected to find camping spots with relative ease wherever they stopped, but occasionally negotiations proved more awkward.

*'It was after a tired party had half pitched their shading tents in the hot Italian sun, that Mr Robinson announced gently that there was a notice in front of the camp saying "No Camping" in four languages. Mr Lingard went off to see the Mayor of Courmayeur and after a time came back to announce that they could stay two nights out of the scheduled four. Later Mr Lingard went again to the Mayor. An agreement something like this was reached: "Yes, you may stay, provided that it is clearly understood that I have given you no permission whatsoever to stay." They stayed, moving their tents from directly behind the notice, as Authority wished, to make the disobedience less visibly flagrant.'* (Ulula 1954)

Latrines were then dug appropriate in depth to the planned length of stay, as well as a 'tophat', a pit where refuse of all kinds was buried. A wood-fag set about collecting firewood, and a shopping-fag foraged for food. Porridge featured frequently for breakfast:

*'Porridge, a curious delicacy, varying enormously in density, with which trekkers cheerily greet a new day.'* (Ulula 1964)

Lunches often consisted of bread, cheese, tomatoes, fruit and jam, whilst evening meals might involve a meat and potato stew, frankfurters and mash, or spaghetti with a meat sauce.

Fag teams needed to rise early, often as early as 4 am, to coax life into a sulky fire and make scrambled eggs for fifty. It seems that the earlier treks believed in early starts to make best use of the light available, and also so that a good portion of the uphill walking could be completed before it became really hot.

Sleeping arrangements meant that a member of staff slept at one end of each tent of boys, presumably to ensure some semblance of nocturnal discipline, decorum and silence once it was deemed time to sleep. Certainly this arrangement persisted into the early 1970s on Scottish Trek.

Trek was organised into trekking days, bivvies, excursions and free days. Trekking days involved uprooting the whole camp and moving from one fixed site in a village to another, often over a high col. Sometimes this would not be feasible during a single day, so a mountain camp or bivvy would be inserted en route. Often this would mean a late start, possibly after lunch, a bivouac under canvas at dusk, then a trekking day through to the next campsite. Excursions meant hiking up to peaks or other high spots from a valley campsite. Early photos suggest that boys travelled light when undertaking such excursions, possibly carrying only what would fit in the pockets of their shorts. Free days were for boys to wash themselves, their clothes and to find out how expensive the local tourist traps could be.

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Prior to the Second World War, and indeed for some time afterwards, there was effectively no special clothing prescribed for trekking. Certainly parents would not have been expected to visit a mountaineering-shop to purchase expensively fashionable and lightweight items of equipment and clothing. Hyman Lob published the following kit list for trekkers in preparation for the 1938 Dauphiné Trek.

'Bring as little as possible; remember that you will have to carry dixies, tents and all sorts of Camp junk as well as your personal things. A Rucksack, or Army pack, which can be carried on the back and leave one's arms free, is needed. Come wearing strong, well-trying boots (not new), shirt, dark sweater, shorts and stockings. Bring in Rucksack a complete change of clothing, stockings, handkerchiefs, towel, bathing suit, soap, comb, tooth-brush, deep plate, enamel mug (not aluminium), knife, fork, spoon, light shoes (or gym shoes), soft socks. The School ground sheet may be used as a cape, but bring a light mackintosh if you wish. Bring a length of flannel, about four or five inches to go round the waist if the nights prove unduly cold. Canvas Buckets will be needed, at least two per Tent.'

There is no mention made here of a sleeping-bag or blankets, and clearly no trekker could expect to have dry clothing after stormy weather, especially as rucksacks would not be waterproof. Capes were still standard wet-weather gear on the 1966 trek, cagoules not yet being invented. Boots would generally be the sort worn by workmen, probably rather stiff and liable to cause blisters. The masters and some of the boys might well have worn an old jacket, but as yet fleeces and anoraks were unknown.

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Foreign Treks generally lasted longer than in more recent years (six weeks in 1912, four weeks in 1938), as indeed did camps which took up the best part of two weeks. Accounts of early treks and camps suggest that life was mostly taken at a more leisurely pace with more time available for bathing, sightseeing and pottering about. Of course fag-teams worked hard often under adverse conditions, but for the rest there was plenty of time for games and conversation. Though numbers have fluctuated from year to year, up until the mid-1990s the party has generally comprised of around thirty to fifty staff and boys, indicating both considerable popularity and general affordability. £5 10s 0d per person was charged for the 1911 Black Forest Trek. By the 1938 Dauphiné Trek this figure had risen to £8 10s 0d for boys under 18 years, and £9 10s 0d for those over 18 years. After the War in 1947 the Savoy Trek cost £23 for a month in the French Alps, and by 1974 the cost of the Mont Blanc – Matterhorn Trek was quoted as £80. By the time of the 1983 Mont Blanc Trek the cost had again risen to £180. £400 was quoted as the cost for the 1997 Vanoise Trek, still a very reasonable figure in view of what was then being charged by commercial organisations offering a similar experience. Flying to increasingly exotic destinations, such as Iceland in 1984, as well as Morocco and Mauritania in more recent years, has led to these treks being rather more expensive than those to the Alps or Pyrenees. They have, nevertheless, enjoyed considerable popularity.

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For many traditionalists the rot must have set in on Foreign Treks from 1966 onwards. Wood fires were the first to go, especially as valley campsites were becoming increasingly reluctant to accept the lighting of fires.

‘If this trek is to be known for anything, it is for the considerable breach made in the more inhibiting and unjust trek traditions. The reforms were numerous. Junior officers started doing lunch fags, non-volunteers cleared up after volunteers had made lunch, semolina was discarded entirely from the menu, mincemeat was used instead of stewing steak in Bomb stew. Above all, for the first time we took a primus. It proved invaluable, and we hardly ever needed to augment it with a wood fire. A primus and sacking alone are quite capable of providing trek with a good hot meal. The days of damp matches and dripping wood at 4 a.m. are over at last. Again, the description of regular legs on the Bonhomme and the Rifugio Torino taught us the principle of flexible trekking – in half legs uphill (25 minutes trekking and 5 minutes rest), and in full legs (50 minutes trekking and 10 minutes rest) over easy ground. Loads were always changed after 25 minutes and the moving load change in the middle of a full leg became the rule. There was even talk of nylon tents with fly sheets and sewn in ground sheets. But Mr Simpkin put us right here. “Oh no,” he said, “we wouldn’t bring those; they’d be too light – besides, they’d be waterproof.’ (Ulula 1966)

The following year another break with tradition occurred with the end of centralised cooking. Light camping gaz stoves had been purchased for Foreign Trek, as well as small billies for each tent group of four. The result was that each tent group now cooked for itself, carrying all its own food and equipment.

‘Cooking by tents replaced the fag system, eliminated large awkward dixies and reduced trek loads in general. Gone were the five o’clock starts, for no movement was ever noticed outside or inside the zipped entrance to Mr Phythian’s new tent before 7a.m.’ (Ulula 1967)

Primus stoves were, however, to remain in use on Scottish Trek for another twenty years or so, fuelled by paraffin carried in jerry-cans. And by the 1971 Matterhorn Trek even Mr Simpkin’s prediction had been shown to be wrong: new lighter Vango tents had been purchased, each sleeping four boys. Whether they were ever effectively waterproof remains a matter of opinion. Certainly many boys experienced wet nights to differing degrees of severity, depending on strength of wind, depth of flooding and the proficiency with which the tent was pitched. Few trekkers, if any, can boast of remaining bone-dry throughout a fortnight’s trekking, but then damp sleeping-bags are all part of the stuff that enduring memories are made of.

It would be wrong to assume that the changes in trekking procedure were merely the whim of younger, less hardy trekkers who were reluctant to shoulder the loads which previous generations had lugged uncomplainingly from one valley to the next. For one thing nights spent camping in the wilds at altitude had always been popular, and lightweight equipment would now allow trek to spend longer periods in the mountains without descending to the valleys to pick up fresh supplies. At the same time it was becoming considerably more difficult to find valley campsites. No longer could local farmers reliably be prevailed upon to allow trek to set up camp in one of their

fields. Trek was going to have to spend longer in the mountains, carrying food for several days and camping in remote spots where conflicts with local herdsmen were few and far between, but by no means unknown. 1976 Dolomites trekkers will recall an encounter with 'Mad Mario' who was not at all happy about trek camping on 'his' mountain grazing. And few Osttirol trekkers from 1990 will have forgotten:

'... the cowherd with his iron-tipped staff and Malboro cigarettes. He was a man of few words, and most of them were "nein"; he was not going to let us camp on his particular patch of mountain pasture, the only remotely flat land for miles around, so forcing us into a compulsory bivvy on a muddy track (or for the really adventurous, on the wooden bridge across a raging torrent).' (Ulula 1990)

During the late 1970s, with high-level camping now a well-established routine, the word 'bivvy' had come to mean an overnight camp without the erection of tents, something only to be risked on clear nights, but popular as a test for the latest three and four season sleeping-bags. On some treks in the 1980s and 1990s bivvyng out throughout most of trek became a rite of passage for young men eager to prove their manhood. Snow and ice were no deterrent as was demonstrated on many treks. Tony James even bivouacked on snow at Trek's highest ever Alpine campsite at 9500ft, sleeping out by the Rifugio Boe in the Sella group during the 1989 Dolomite Trek. Bivvyng out at altitude is a wonderful way of observing shooting stars, and does ensure being woken by the first rays of sunlight. In the more southerly latitudes of Morocco and Mauritania, bivouacking has become the preferred way to spend the night, and during the 1992 High Atlas Trek a good number of trekkers even slept out on the summit of Toubkal, at 4167 metres (13,700 feet) the highest peak in North Africa.

Curiously the weight of packs is never mentioned in Ulula until the 1970s when boys are reported struggling under 40lb, 45lb and even 50lb loads. Vango tents could suddenly become much heavier when wet. However, much of the weight could be accounted for by the quantities of food which were carried out from England, often dried, with some in large catering tins. Ropes and crampons added to the load. It was becoming increasingly difficult to purchase supplies in the few small villages that trek actually visited, and on one notable occasion during the 1974 Mont Blanc – Matterhorn Trek the village where supplies were to be obtained had actually disappeared under the waters of a recently constructed reservoir. Innovative measures were called for, such as in preparation for the 1976 Dolomites Trek.

'It should be pointed out that at this stage the food rations were beginning to run low, without the immediate prospect of replenishing them. This did not seem to concern any of the members of trek (utmost confidence in their leaders?) though several of them did look rather concerned when they were asked to crawl into a low, dark cave beneath a rock behind the chosen camp site at the foot of the Marmolada. Eventually, Gemmill volunteered to do so and retrieved a substantial hoard of food hidden by CTL (Chris Little) and SHB (Steve Buckley) on their recce at Whit – needless to say, the camp ate well that evening.' (Ulula 1976)

Since the very first foreign treks to Germany, travel had always been by train and boat. Generations of trekkers had departed from London Road or Central Station.

'It was a weird crew which footed it two by two, Newgate fashion, through Albert Square to the Central Station on the afternoon of August 6th. What meant these tents, macintosh sheets, jangling billies, and antediluvian lanterns? "Boy Scouts," said some; others whispered "Prestwich," and passed by on the far side.' (Ulula 1910)

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The railway continued to transport trekkers to their distant Alpine destinations until 1976, even if a coach was used on occasion to ferry the party down to London. In 1977, however, two school minibuses were used to take trek all the way to Austria along with a great quantity of dried food and other supplies. The minibuses could be driven round like a travelling larder from one valley to the next, and of course shopping in local towns suddenly became easier than ever before.

It was no doubt an appreciation of the value of having ones own back-up transport that led in 1978 to a major innovation: the use of a coach owned by Dennis Hughes of Castleford, Yorkshire, for the journey to the Pyrenees. The formula was clearly successful for the coach became the preferred mode of transport during fifteen subsequent treks. The financial and logistical advantages were evident, since almost all the food could be bought in advance at a Cash and Carry in Manchester. Dried food for mountain meals could be pre-packed into tent-group portions, whilst tins and heavier food-items could be carried for use in the valleys. Bread, milk and fresh fruit would be bought locally as before whenever available. This limited dependence on local sources allowed trek to spend longer in the mountains, since food distribution could take place anywhere accessible by coach, at remote road-heads or even on high mountain passes, without the necessity of first finding a shop with sufficient foodstuffs for such large numbers of trekkers.



The remarkable and enduring partnership between Dennis Hughes and MGS had already begun in 1978 when he was persuaded to drive a coachload of MGS Russianists from Manchester across the Iron Curtain via Budapest to Odessa on the Black Sea, then back to England again via Kiev, Krakow and Prague. Clearly, after a trip of such epic proportions, taking forty trekkers to the Alps was going to be a mere pleasant stroll. Yet Dennis was no ordinary coach-driver as the accounts of countless treks testify. We remember him as a small, bearded, wiry Yorkshireman with his irrepressible cheerful nature and endless store of anecdotes. He would steer us to our destination, often repairing and servicing the coach en route, and then trek with us for a couple of days, until it was time to return to 't' bus'. A tireless walker, he would then cover vast distances on his own to collect the coach and drive our supplies and clean clothes round to the next rendezvous point. Dennis amazed us all by sleeping out in the mountains in a large plastic bag anchored to a boulder and held open by his ice axe. One night during a monumental hail storm in the high Pyrenees, Derek Stubbs was moved to leave his own sodden, windblown tent in order to 'rescue' Dennis. Predictably Dennis was not at death's door, nor even downhearted, but sleeping soundly and most unwilling to leave the snug security of his familiar plastic-bag. Dennis trekked with MGS some thirteen times over nearly twenty years, during which time he tolerated our muddy boots, rucksacks and ice axes, becoming accepted as a reliable mountaineer and great friend by staff and boys alike.

In more recent years Foreign Trek has availed itself of cheaper air-travel, flying to Iceland, Morocco, Switzerland, France and Mauritania. Rail travel was revived briefly in 1991 for the Vanoise Trek, and more recently Eurolines coaches have transported parties to the Pyrenees, French Alps and Dolomites. Flights and swift coaches have reduced journey-times very considerably, yet many trekkers found the three days spent travelling outwards on a Dennis Hughes coach a tremendous opportunity for rest, reading and psychological preparation.

On current Alpine treks, apart from provisions for the first few days carried out from Manchester, all supplies are purchased locally en route. Traditionalists will welcome this return to the ways of the early treks, with the exception that responsibility for planning, seeking, purchasing and cooking is now devolved to individual tent-groups. In catering terms the tent-group has become an autonomous unit within the framework of trek, thus encouraging boys to consider how they might provision an expedition of their own.

Another recent innovation has seen the move to small, extremely lightweight three-man tents. Previous trekkers looked at these flimsy shelters and assumed they would never last, and initially they were proved right. During the 1998 Trek practice outing below Snowdon several of the new tents had become more or less unusable within an hour of severe weather. They were subsequently returned to the manufacturers for modification to our specification, and by 2001 it was clear that they had withstood harsh weather, fared well and were still going strong.

In recent years the dreaded weight of rucksacks has also been drastically reduced. A glance at the kit-list and photos of the 1938 Dauphiné Trek, however, remind us that travelling light is nothing new. The motto then as now was: "Take as little as possible, and you won't regret it." Boys in the Dauphiné were pictured carrying a rucksack roughly the size of a day sack. A typical rucksack today without food or drink weighs little more than four kilos, and many trekkers manage with 30 litre sacks. Despite developments in equipment, much of it has simply been left behind, placing the emphasis of trekking on ones ability to live for three weeks off the contents of one small rucksack and food purchased en route. This has very much been the 'single item', light-weight era, characterised by the single set of clothes and the single pan meal.

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Trekking destinations too have changed a great deal over the century. The Rhineland, Black Forest, Normandy and even Ireland must have felt very exotic before the Great War to boys who might otherwise never have travelled abroad. In the inter-war period Foreign Treks led by Lob explored firstly the less mountainous parts of France, Spain, Germany and Italy before finally settling on the Alps as a preferred destination. However, these did not take place every year. Foreign Treks became interspersed with treks to the wilder parts of Britain such as Scotland, Snowdonia, Devon and the Yorkshire Dales. Trekking in this period was evidently such a novelty that reports appeared not only in Ulula but also in The Manchester Guardian. An account entitled 'Trekking in the Pennines' describes the 1937 Yorkshire Trek and records:

'Of other holiday-makers we saw little. Except one. He, a youth difficult of classification and of enigmatic morals, "won" one of our tents somehow at Keld and was found sleeping in it two days later near a beckside. We exacted a promise that the tent should be restored, but the period of grace elapsed and no tent returned. So the trek flying squad put in an evening's sleuthing in the best style of Inspector French and ran the quarry to earth – five minutes walk from camp! Subsequent swapping of notes showed that the quarry had left a trail of lies all round the district, but we got our tent back.'
(Manchester Guardian: August 17th 1937)

When trekking resumed after the Second World War, John Lingard, a veteran of five pre-war treks, organised the first trek to Perthshire. He then led a series of eight Foreign Treks to the French Alps and the Tirol. The French, Italian and Swiss Alps quickly became the preferred destination. Under the leadership of Lingard, Williams and Cooke among others, trek visited many of the most dramatic Alpine landscapes in Savoy, the Dauphiné, the Tirol, Bernese Oberland, Engadine as well as the areas around Mont Blanc, the Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn. A remarkable series of Scottish Treks was begun in 1956 by Ian Bailey, already a seasoned veteran of seven Foreign Treks. The Pyrenees were visited for the first time in 1978, and this has proved such a successful trekking area that Trek has been there regularly ever since at roughly five year intervals.

In 1984 Allan Witton organised a tremendously ambitious trekking expedition to the extraordinary volcanic landscapes of Iceland which involved five staff and eighteen boys flying with their pre-packed provisions to Reykjavik. It was arranged that some of the food should be delivered in advance by local contacts to a hut at the half-way point, where it would be collected by the trekkers as they passed by. This arrangement worked well, and insulated the party from Icelandic prices that were virtually unaffordable. For the 'simple but substantial' meal requested in Reykjavik at the end of the trip trek was charged £12 a head, which represented 60% of the cost of all the rest of the food consumed over the previous 15 days. Although Allan Witton had inspired, planned, organised and provisioned the Iceland Trek, he was sadly not to take part, having injured his back during the preparation period. It says a great deal for the quality and thoroughness of Allan's preparations that John Willson was able to step in at the last moment and 'lead' trek through what is arguably the most remote and inhospitable wilderness in Europe.

1992 saw Foreign Trek leave Europe for the first time to discover the delights of trekking in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco. The Atlas Mountains are indeed high, but not as spectacular as the Alps with their glaciers and towering snow-capped peaks. What made this trek so memorable was our experience of life among the Berbers in their remote mountain villages as well as in the colourful souks of Marrakech. A trek in Morocco would have been out of the question had we not had excellent and reliable local contacts. Mike Wynne of 'Walks Worldwide' helped us plan and organise the details of the route and provisioning, and without doubt his experience, expertise and local knowledge contributed enormously to this extraordinary trek running like clockwork. A chain of mules and muleteers accompanied the party through the rugged terrain, and lavish meals were prepared by Brahim, our cook, who somehow worked miracles on just two large Gaz stoves. Lunches included fish, cheese and bread served with wonderful salads laid out on large platters served in the shade of some gnarled walnut-tree. Flat bread was baked every evening in frying pans over an open fire, and evening meals included deliciously spicy stews and couscous. So much on this trek challenged our view of life, and so many questions remained unanswered. Such was the success of this first Moroccan Trek that the route was repeated in 1996, while in 1999 and 2003 different areas of the High Atlas were explored. It is difficult to forget the chaos of jumbled images, as well as the sense of warmth lingering from our contact with the kindly Berbers.

At the end of the 1999 High Atlas Trek two days were spent at Zagora on the edge of the Sahara. Camels were hired for a short trip into the desert with a night spent in a Bedouin tent, and thus it was that the idea of desert-trekking was born. More recently Foreign Trek has begun to penetrate deep into the deserts of Mauritania under the capable leadership of Eric Cittanova, a Frenchman fluent in Arabic. Camels accompany such treks, and boys and staff alike 'go native' in their flowing blue robes and coiled headscarves.

Of course, without dedicated staff there would have been no treks. MGS is extremely fortunate to have found a series of men prepared to take the responsibility for accompanying adolescents to distant parts, and then return with them safely. Of course, masters have spent their holidays sitting on a beach or at home decorating, but others have chosen to shepherd parties of boys on mountains, while making light of discomfort. Somehow they have found inspiration in the belief that trekking could enrich their own experience as well as the experience of all the boys who took part. So many Old Boys refer to Foreign Trek as the highpoint of their school life, and many even retain memories of trekking when their other memories of daily life at MGS have long slipped away.

It seems that Highmaster Paton was the main driving force behind the first treks to Germany. His own schooling which included a year at a grammar school in Halle, Germany, may have led him in this direction. Reports imply that he was sufficiently interested in the 'Wandervögel' movement in Germany to want to construct the Owls Nest as a base for our own 'Wanderbirds'. Hyman Lob and Harold Green between them led all the inter-war treks, and doubtless would have continued to trek, had war not broken out in 1939 and Lob met an untimely end during an air-raid on Manchester in 1941. Photos of Lob show a short, bespectacled man sucking thoughtfully on a pipe with an air of quiet authority.

Since then a great number of staff have led treks or been inspired to take part, but only Allan Witton has come close to Lob's record of leading 19 treks (8 in Britain and 11 abroad), and participating in 20. Allan has led 15 treks, if one omits his leadership of the 1984 Iceland Trek from his hospital-bed, and he has so far participated in 21 Foreign Treks and 3 Scottish Treks. Rumour suggests the existence of a bunker below the Witton house, packed with Alpine guide-books, exotic maps and detailed records and photos, where the meticulous planning for each trek took place throughout the long winter months. The all-time record for participation, however, must surely go to John Willson who, between 1973 and 2004, has been on 17 Scottish Treks, leading five of them, and 12 Foreign Treks, including leadership of the 1984 Iceland Trek, making a grand total of 29 treks completed. In those three years when he missed trekking he was accompanying parties of MGS boys to India.

It would be easy to underestimate the amount of preparation that goes into a trek. There was doubtless a time when it was possible to turn up at London Road Station, having stuffed a few clothes into a rucksack on the previous evening, and then enjoy a month of good trekking. All kinds of guidelines, regulations and expectations make such an approach totally impractical nowadays.

Would-be trekkers have usually been subjected to training walks, often in atrocious conditions, on Kinder Scout, Bleaklow or Snowdon, on the principle that if one can survive a blizzard in the Pennines, one can probably cope with the intense Alpine sun. Nowadays, in preparation for the Sahara, desert-trekkers practise walking in sandals through the sand-dunes of Formby and learn the art of baking Berber bread on brushwood fires.

Many trekkers have spent days in the Physics Labs, weighing out various pale powders into plastic bags and sealing them with colour-coded tape: red for soup, yellow for Angel Whirl and white for instant mashed potato. Plastic bags were placed inside other plastic bags as meals were constructed, until each tent group could be given a single bag containing all its various powders for a single trekking-day.

Not that energetic young men have ever been forced to survive on flavoured dust alone. That classic, 'The Good Trek Guide', produced for the 1988 Tour du Mont Blanc Trek lists a variety of mouth-watering options for lunch: paté on digestive biscuits, pilchards with savoury crackers and Cheddars topped with squidges of cheese spread, together with dried fruit, an invariably melted chocolate bar and a handful of multi-coloured sweets.

'Trek food provides a welcome change from all those Austrian delicacies: muesli, the true British breakfast, best eaten standing when there's nowhere comfortable to sit, Krackawheats reduced to crumbs again, but easily glued back together with cheese from a tube, chocolate bars on draught, squeezed warm from the wrapper, and corned-beef in a tin with the key mercifully lost.' (Ulula 1990)

Who will ever forget the delicate flavours of Chicken Supreme or Beef Stroganoff cooked on a gaz stove while camped at 2500 metres? Who were the unrecorded champions at whisking Angel Whirl until it was transformed from a pallid powder to a rich, thick blancmange? Who turned Ryvitas into croûtons, or transformed tomato soup with oregano and a soupçon of Tabasco sauce? Seasoned trekkers developed a highly original cuisine from what were often the most unpromising materials.

It should be added that for many years during Allan Witton's leadership and for some years before, the different tent-groups entertained staff to dinner when camped in the mountains, and points were awarded according to the quality of the food as well as the general ambience. Whilst some staff experienced the camping equivalent of Fawlty Towers, others can seldom have eaten better in the finest restaurants. Prizes for the highest 'haute cuisine', wooden spoons for gastronomic incompetence, as well as awards for other notable and notorious achievements were presented at Trek Dinner, an annual feast which celebrated the completion of trek in an atmosphere of good humour and camaraderie born from a sense of shared adventure. Many of Trek's more enduring myths were first recounted over such a meal, and many former trekkers are still dining out on these stories.

Alpine huts have ever functioned as a beacon to thirsty trekkers, and many were the nights spent camped in close proximity to the welcoming door of some cosy refuge. Many too have been the evenings spent sheltering beside tiled stoves over a warming glass or two, while outside tents have been virtually swamped by torrential rain.

'The facilities at the huts may be simple, our camping-spots beside them stony and hard – especially when we are asked to leave the green patches for the horse – but the welcome is nearly always genuinely friendly. As we sheltered from cold wet weather, fires were lit for us, and washing lines hung up for our damp socks.' (Ulula 1981)

Some have even tired of trek food and sought fresh culinary delights on hut menus. One member of the 1990 Osttirol Trek discovered that a large bowl of Knoblauchsuppe turned out to contain little else but minced garlic. There was, however, never enough Apfelstrudel to quench healthy appetites, a sad state of affairs which even

copious supplies of Ryvita failed to alleviate. Huts frequently harboured pleasant surprises, none more than the Glorerhütte during the 1990 Osttirol Trek:

'Mountain huts are the trekker's beach, fine stone buildings perched on cols with names recalling a different Europe, when the Sudetendeutschen and the mountaineers of Prague set up their own huts. Why was there no Strudel at the Studl Hut? At the Glorer Hut, though, there was more than Strudel; glasses were being smashed freely in the kitchen. Could we stay a little longer? The hut-warden was forty today, and due to be flown up by helicopter for tea. Could we provide an instant crowd of waving hands and smiling faces? We sniffed the Schnaps already, as the lads lay down to form a giant number "40" on the hillside. At six on the dot, in flew the helicopter, out stepped a rugged man in a white jacket, thirty Englishmen sang "Happy Birthday", and a tray of thirty Schnaps glasses came our way in thanks. I wonder if the woman who videoed us there ever asked herself how it was that these thirty gate-crashers had arrived in the right place at the right time. But then Trek is always like that, isn't it?' (Ulula 1990)

In some areas of the Alps camping is now severely limited for reasons of conservation, as in the Vanoise National Park, the first National Park in France. However, an excellent network of huts has been established, enabling groups to stay in the very heart of the National Park with minimal impact on a very fragile and precious environment. The huts themselves are unobtrusive and designed to run off sustainable energy sources, mainly solar panels. All refuse is to be returned to the valleys whence it came.

Over the years trek has occasionally spent a night in a hut as an alternative to camping. In 1991 it was decided that the Vanoise Trek should use nothing but these mountain-refuges as overnight accommodation. The advantages of sleeping and occasionally eating in huts were very attractive: it would be possible to trek continuously in the mountains carrying relatively light rucksacks, and higher peaks would be readily attainable. In the event a record six separate 3000 metre peaks were ascended that year. More recently trekkers have regularly spent the odd night in mountain-huts, but not all have warmed to the experience of closely packed communal sleeping arrangements:

'The Sciora Hut had a bit of everything, like a good college building: a bit of stone, a bit of timber and infill, a bit of slate, and a bit of metal. We cooked outside on the solid granite benches and tables. For some it was the first night in an Alpine mountain-hut. Some did not like it, sleeping seventeen to a bed, and there were women too! Others decided that they might as well get used to both.' (Ulula 1994)

The 1995 Trek to the Stubai Alps of Austria was also a hutting trek, but still with a great deal of self-catering. Evidently there remained considerable nostalgia for a life spent in the open under canvas.

'Seasoned trekkers who used to enjoy lugging heavy tents and bulky sleeping bags over steep cols will doubtless shake their heads at the news that the 1995 Foreign Trek spent every mountain night in an Alpine hut (except for a few hardy souls who bivvied by the Sulzenau Hütte, a night of nostalgia for those who could remember sleeping out beneath the stars). The rationale behind this switch was in part an increasing intolerance of 'wild' camping in the mountains. Rules and regulations now apply even to the remotest spots, where once common-sense and respect for the environment were sufficient to ensure that Foreign Trek always left a site exactly as it had found it. So we slept in the huts, on mattresses in cramped communal dormitories, usually under the roof with few or no windows. Generally we slept badly in too much warmth and too little air, under blankets neatly labelled at one end, "Fußende" (foot end). One consolation for the lack of sleep was to lie listening to the thunderstorm outside and reflect that this way at least it was possible to remain dry through the heaviest downpour.' (Ulula 1995)

It is almost impossible to do justice to the landscapes traversed by trek in mere words. But trekkers have tried again and again to explain the special magical, almost spiritual quality of their experience:

'And now a stunning full moon hung in the crystal clear night sky. The ice field seemed phosphorescent and the surrounding peaks were silhouetted against a velvet backcloth studded with stars and two brilliant planets. Leaving soon after dawn while the valleys 4000 feet below lay blanketed in cloud, we crossed the terminal moraines and climbed the striated bedrock. In spite of the warm sunshine, the streams which would be flooded with meltwater on our return were still crusted with ice. The sugary glacier surface had not yet turned to porridge, and although crampons were unnecessary, dark glasses were essential. (Ulula 1982)

'The valley with its incessant traffic and noise was now far below us. Gradually we became aware of the exhilarating stillness that comes only when you are high in the mountains and surrounded by scenery of such magnificence that you have a strange sensation of becoming part of it.' (Ulula 1988)

'In growing darkness we would crawl into our sleeping-bags and watch the moon slowly rise to throw her eerie light onto the distant glaciers so that they glow in the dark.' (Ulula 1988)

'We disappeared into the mist, kicked steps up the snowfield, crossed a steep, hard-packed snow gulley with the aid of Mr Duffy's armpit double rope rail, and then scrambled up the notch on the serrated ridge where we burst into sunshine.' (Ulula 1994)

Other commentaries have, however, been rather more down to earth:

'The campsite lay in full view of the spectacular Cirque de Gavarnie, described by our coach driver in his Yorkshire accent as "a ruddy great Malham Cove." Above the towering rock wall loom the peaks which form the border with Spain. A grand cascade pours in a slim silver stream from the heights. Perhaps all this is to divert attention from the steady stream of donkeys and their droppings which provide the town with its own particular charm and smell.' (Dobson 1982)

'Most Alpine paths are delightful, some memorable, and some are meant only for chamois and ibex, though it escapes me why such agile creatures should require iron cables and wooden ladders. I was not encouraged by seeing the remains of the previous ladder lying smashed on the rocks below me. At moments such as these it occurs to me that lying on flat beaches is not such a bad way to spend a holiday after all.' (Ulula 1990)

'Mountains there were many, snowy ones, spiky ones, crumbly ones and curvaceous ones, mostly just to look at, but occasionally to ascend and there enjoy the airy views. There are those who contend that a mountain is best admired from below. The converse view, namely that below is best admired from above, is also worth considering. Whatever the merit of either argument, few of us will quickly forget the Grosser Trögler (2902m) where there was plenty of below on both sides and nothing at all between us and the huge glaciers of the Zuckerhütl.' (Ulula 1995)

Many trekkers cherish snapshots of the amazing views and their youthful companions, but most also harbour the secret dream that they will one day return to the mountains to experience it all over again.

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The impending demise of trek has been predicted at regular intervals. The two World Wars and the death of Lob must have seemed catastrophic at the time, yet there were ever new leaders ready to take over. No treks took place in 1969 and 1970, and by 1972 Nick Hytner (MS VI ii s) was prophesying an imminent end to trekking:

*'But now it only remains to thank the three gallant Trek leaders, and recall that Trek has been with MGS for over 60 years, yet it seems as though its days are numbered, so few are the applicants to join it.'* (Ulula 1972)

The following year there were 44 trekkers, and clearly Foreign Trek was as popular as ever. Trekking has remained a favourite ever since among young men with a need for challenge and adventure. For many it has become a real rite of passage and a chance to assert their independence from parental constraints. Others have relished the camaraderie and learned to appreciate the true quality of friendships forged in adversity.

*'It nearly killed me, ...but I'm going again next year.'* (Jason Price 1984)

*'He went away a boy, and came back a man.'* (Father of Stephen Edmondson, who came on Foreign Trek as a fourth former, at the 1983 Trek Reunion.)

*'Why did nobody tell me that Trek was this good? I'd have come on it years ago.'* (Ian Bancroft, who trekked for the first time in his repeat A-level year, and again as an Old Mancunian.)

The clouds currently on the horizon have less to do with MGS than the world beyond. Legislation designed to protect children tends to discourage staff from taking extra responsibility. The possibility of litigation positively frightens staff away from activities which need to contain an element of risk in order to seem sufficiently adventurous to young men. The need for certification may well disqualify many whose experience and expertise would make them ideal leaders, whilst the current vogue for documentation of every piece of organisation creates an often unbearable burden for those who have to spend hours typing up lists, plans and assessments of risk. Let us hope that trek can survive this combined onslaught of lawyers, politicians and bureaucrats.



Trekkers seldom stop to think about how others perceive them, yet again and again we have heard dewy-eyed rambles express their admiration and appreciation. For many passers-by, the passage of a crocodile of fifty or so trekkers has reconfirmed their faith in young people. Here are young men who are prepared to make the effort. Here are young people who aren't dependent on the evils of the technological society. Here are young people like we used to be, when we were young.

In 1958 Herr Schon met Trek on the Kals-Matrei Tör'l, and intrigued by what he saw and heard, sent the following article to MGS.

*'We met them at 2207m at the Kals-Matrei Tör'l Refuge in the East Tyrol. The hut, normally so silent, seemed like an army camp. The heavy wooden benches and tables hardly provided sufficient room for the many lanky young people who were thirstily drinking their lemon-juice. Later they played cards. We got into conversation with them. Their German was perfect. We learned that they came from Manchester and that the whole group was walking from Kitzbühel to Heiligenblut. Over ice-capped peaks, through green valleys and bright forests of larch and pine. A splendid experience.*

*The large communal tents lie rolled-up in long green sausages in front of the hut. In their midst are huge cooking-pots. Someone is counting the heavily-laden rucksacks. A plump boy in a yellow polo-neck and glasses stares to the west across the glacier-fields on the 3674m Großvenediger, which seems close enough to touch. A boy comes up with a water container on his back; the water-supplies at the hut cannot cope with a visit from such a large group.*

*At my table two pupils are eagerly studying the map. Most boys have precise maps. They know every metre of their route like seasoned scouts. At a neighbouring table an accurate drawing of the Großglockner is emerging in a sketchbook. At 3797 metres it is the highest mountain in Austria. The pencil captures every fold of the glacier and every rocky ridge. The leader of the group is sitting in front of me by the cross, and he too is looking across through a powerful telescope. There, beyond the Adlersruhe, the highest hut on the Großglockner, leads the path to Heiligenblut, the goal of their great journey.*

*We have climbed up the Kalser Höhe. Three or four boys come towards us, burnt brown by the intensity of the sun. Red beards suit some of them excellently. Mountain herdsmen with their leather faces don't care for them. And crags and glaciers want nothing to do with unshaven milky faces. These boys look like experienced mountaineers. Isn't that what they are? Two long blasts on a whistle pierce the midday silence. The boys pick up their rucksacks, tents and cooking-pots. Towards new destinations and new peaks!*

*When these lines arrive in Manchester you will almost certainly be on your way home to Old England. Your parents and your headmaster, however, should be proud of such boys.'* (Heinz Schon: Ulula 1958)

The last word should go to another German gentleman who came across trekkers carrying exceptionally heavy loads during the 1995 Stubai Trek:

*'I will never forget the words of an elderly German who encountered a small group of us one sweltering afternoon, labouring under enormously heavy loads. We had descended to the valley-bottom to collect provisions and equipment from the coach for the rest of the party. He stared at us in admiration as we trudged through the crowds of tourists. "Hitler would have given up much earlier," he told us, "if only he had known what you English do for fun." '* (Ulula 1995)

Adrian Dobson 2004

## SCOTTISH TREKS 1956 - 2004

A comprehensive review of Out of School Activities appears in the book 'The Manchester Grammar School 1515 – 1965' edited by J.A.Graham and B.A. Phythian, and published on the 450th anniversary of the school. The section concerning Scottish Trek from 1956 until 1965 is included here

*In 1956 occurred the last major event in this history of trekking when G. I. S. Bailey, who had trekked as a boy and as a master (from 1949 to 1955) reintroduced the domestic treks which had lapsed since Lingard's Scottish trek of 1946. One main problem was whether permission could be obtained to walk over and camp on highly preserved deer country. In the event, Scottish trek has now pitched its tents on 124 different camp sites from Glen Kinglas to Lochinver, including the Cairngorms in the east, and Mull, Iona and Skye in the west. fact, one of its pleasantest features has been the kindness and understanding shown by land owners. A word too should be said about the grocers, who have always been most helpful and many of whom have travelled fifty miles to bring supplies.*

*Each year Scottish trek walks between 150 and 200 miles in three weeks, the favourite areas being the Cairngorms, Argyllshire, Inverness-shire and Easter and Wester Ross. All these districts are rich in old drove roads, old military roads and ancient rights of way, and good use is made of them. The aim is not to cover vast distances in a day; the longest march has been short of twenty miles, but some of the party are fourteen year olds, all are heavily laden with rucksacks, tents and cooking utensils, and this is after all a holiday. There may be something in the recipe for a successful trek quoted in the Ulula account of the 1930 Bavarian expedition: 'There shall have been at least one occasion on which every member of the party devoutly wished he had never been born', but no one goes out of his way to seek such an occasion.*

*Peculiarities in the route sometimes arise. For example, the map shows a path all the way from Glen Hurich, on the east side of Loch Shiel, over the hills to Glen Finnan, thirteen miles away to the north; but it took from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. to do it. The maps were out of date, for the Forestry Commission had obliterated the path by planting trees, and trek was advised to 'follow a deer fence' that bounded up the hillside at a heartbreakingly acute angle for 2,000 feet to a wilderness of mist and rain. It was at this point one of the masters in charge announced with such certainty that 'Cona Glen is down there' - pointing to an opaque space - that the party was delighted to believe him, and dropped down the steep, pathless slope out of the mist into the peat-hag wastes of Cona Glen. From there, the weather clearing, it was comparatively plain sailing to Glen Finnan.*

*That classic walk in the Cairngorms from Derry Lodge through the Lairig Ghru Pass to Loch Morlich has been followed twice, in 1956 and 1962. The walk is not difficult at all but it is long (eighteen miles of rough going) and there is no possibility of camping en route. Given a good day it is a memorable experience: in bad weather it is a nightmare. Lob did it in 1931 in magnificent weather, and in 1962 there was dead calm; but in 1956 a young party met violent headwinds that turned into parallel sleet in the jaws of the pass.*

*Glen Affric has been visited three times, most recently in 1964. In 1957 continuous heavy rain made walking a misery, and in the evening the camp site began to be flooded. The timely intervention of Murdo MacRae, the crofter, will long be remembered by the campers: never was an invitation to spend a night in a barn more gratefully accepted, and he took the six smallest into his home for the night. Four years later the rain blew horizontally, but it is an ill wind.... The boys were treated to a sample of Highland hospitality on a truly grand scale when Professor MacLennan, the minister of Kintail, took the whole party of sixty into his Manse for the night.*

*So each year between fifty-five and sixty boys set off, about half being old hands who are on their second, third or fourth trek. They make all the difference, for although a new boy matures very quickly as a trekker, it is in his second year that he becomes a Tent Sergeant, and in his third year a Junior Officer, when he carries an increasing amount of responsibility for the day-to-day organisation. However, one always comes back to the ineluctable fact it is all made possible by masters, and especially, of course, by the guiding genius and burning enthusiasm of Bailey.*

Before Scottish Trek could happen Bailey had to convince the Outdoor Activities Committee that this new trek was going to be more than a one-off event so that they would provide him with tents and cooking implements. They were sufficiently impressed by his intentions that they bought him ten new tents at a cost of £14-10s each, a considerable increase on the pre-war price of £2-14s. (The 2004 price is £380! for a tent that takes two rather than eight). Bailey's trek used the same approach as in earlier days. Staff carried the canvas around their necks, cooking pots were suspended from tent poles carried between two trekkers and wood for cooking was collected during the afternoon.

After Bailey retired in 1965 there was a lapse of eight years until John Bentham arrived from Edinburgh having already done eighty Munros and with an ambition to do more. He recruited Roger Handley and John Willson and between them they managed to scrape together enough tents to accommodate the staff, seven boys and a visitor from Norway who became known as Noggin the Nog. Noggin did trek a large favour when with the aid of his large knife he carved a podex bat from a piece of silver birch. This Knoydart trek marked the start of an era where trek deliberately sought out the high places, carrying full packs over the Munros in addition to climbing them as day walks from valley camps. As a consequence the treks would be shorter in length but no less arduous. The method of communal cooking over an open fire was abandoned for the more modern primus stove, communal cooking and large dixies remained but not 'the bomb'. For the next eighteen years primus stoves were responsible for many frustrations as they misbehaved as only primus stoves can! This inaugural trek finished at the Kyle of Lochalsh railway station where in the nearby café the staff sat down to a celebratory meal of fish, chips, peas, tea, bread and butter. Having eaten every morsel it was agreed that they could eat it all again. So they did!

Bentham's departure four years later saw Willson take over but the ethos remained the same. Trek visited many of the places used by Bailey in the early days but concentrated on small areas rather than moving between locations by coach or boat. These treks still had something of the primitive about them with ex-ministry equipment being the order of the day. Breathable materials were still some years away and the warm clothing and waterproofs were wollen sweaters and ventile anoraks, a far cry from the purple fleece and green Gore-Tex worn by McDonald in the 1990's. Willson was joined on his first trek as leader in 1977 by Allan Witton, a man who would lead Foreign Trek for many years. A new trekker with an old name joined trek in 1979 when W.K. (Keith) Hamflett, the son of a Bailey trekker, G.K. (Gordon) Hamflett joined the staff. Young, lean and keen he took large strides in his large boots, consuming chocolate bars at regular intervals. The 1979 trek to Sutherland was memorable for being even wetter than the 1978 trek and for the debate about which noise was the louder, the foghorn at Cape Wrath or Ian Orrell's snoring! It is illustrative of the changing objectives of trek to note that in 1980 the number of Munros climbed was twenty. That year in the Cairngorms was also memorable for the fact that through his factor, Prince Philip gave us permission to camp within the grounds of Balmoral. Witton moved over to Foreign Trek in 1980 and when he led his first trek in 1982 Willson kept an earlier promise and accompanied him.

This meant promotion for Hamflett whose first trek in charge coincided with one of the hottest highland summers on record. That, and an accident to the back-up minibus meant a memorable first day for the thirty-one boys and two of the four staff as they had an unplanned twenty mile excursion along Loch Mullardoch. With no back-up vehicle a lot of reorganisation had to be undertaken but the students, helped no doubt by the good weather, took it all in their stride. The kindness of the Scots was illustrated once more as the residents of Iron Lodge, Bertie and Margaret Pearl, helped the trek by ferrying the spare bags from Glen Elchaig to the Cluanie Inn. This was Paul Shufflebottom's first MGS trek and the wonderful weather continued into the 1983 Torridon trek which introduced Roger Hand to trekking. Being Physicists these latter two were always very methodical in their campsite organisation so it was with some consternation that they managed to lose so many tent pegs that by the second week they had barely enough pegs to pitch their tent. It was the inability of Joe Peake and Hamflett to maintain their concerned demeanour as they burst into laughter that gave the game away, and the missing pegs were produced.

Following trips to Torridon in 1984 and Knoydart in 1985 Trek went to the Grampians in 1986 intending to finish with the Carn Mor Dearg arete and the summit of Ben Nevis. This Trek is significant in that for the first time there was a female member of staff, Dr Mary Bridges who accompanied the trip for the first week before leaving to join the Geography Department field trip. In addition one trekker managed to leave his boots on the train during the final section of the outward journey but luckily he was reunited with them the following day. Needless to say there was no view visible from the summit of 'the Ben' this year either.

It was during the Hamflett era that the longest spell of adverse weather occurred with thirty-one consecutive days with some precipitation on the tents - even if this varied from just the merest dampening to a full blown drenching. The latter occurred on several occasions during the 1986 trek to Sutherland which was memorable for a particularly wet fag at a camp under Arkle. Here Shufflebottom and his fag endured three hours cooking in the most miserable of conditions to produce pasta that bore a greater resemblance to wallpaper paste than anything culinary. The one saving grace for all the bad weather was that the Eas a' Chual Aulin waterfall was in full spate, the sheer enormity of it looking out of context in Great Britain. The weather was so bad at this camp that the Trek remained in place which necessitated a memorable round trip for Willson to fetch in the extra provisions of food and fuel. Not many days later Scotland again demonstrated why so many students came back several times. The weather transformed into perfect trekking conditions and everyone who walked from Oldshoremore to Cape Wrath via the coast will remember the views, the campsite at Sandwood Bay and the podex pitch on the beach at Kervaig as some of the best ever.

Hamflett's final trek in charge was in 1988 and this one finished with a bang, or more correctly a blow. The worst storm in the highlands for fifty years occurred when the tents were pitched on the edge of Rannoch Moor. Several of the tents did not last the night and the whole camp was dismantled in the early hours of the morning and the party set off to walk into Glencoe, avoiding the caravans overturned, and overturning right next to them. There was no warm manse to cosset the group this time and they sought refuge in the Red Squirrel bunkhouse for several days whilst the sopping kit was sorted out. Three days later and undeterred by the experience the trekkers were again camped at Alltnafeadh and climbing the famous Buchaille Etive Mhor. Alan McDonald had joined the Trek shortly before the big storm and must have wondered what he had let himself in for.

Shufflebottom's first trek as leader in 1989 saw the party return to the Cairngorms for the first time since 1980. A spell of glorious weather gave them some memorable days, particularly the circuit of Braeriach, Cairn Toul and Devil's Point. Camped by the sandy shore of Loch Loch, surely the oddest name for any stretch of water, one seventeen year old trekker, now a G.P., made sandcastles with the aid of his mug. This year Hand climbed his one hundredth Munro, a testament to the way in which seeking the high mountains had become one of the focusses of trekking, indeed many of the staff have gone on to climb a large number of the 284 Munros but with only Geoff Chandler and W.K. Hamflett have completed the whole round as yet.

1989 was the last time that trek was organised into fags with communal cooking and load sharing. Culinary disasters associated with collapsing primus stoves or big feet are now part of Trek folklore, as is the carrying of the large paraffin container by hand. In 1990 the MGS Society bought Trek 'Trangia' cookers and a modern, green dome tent, the first tent not to have been from the orange Vango range. Each tent group now carried its own cooker, fuel and food and this allowed cooking in comparative comfort during wet weather and the possibility of hot drinks at lunch time. The aim of Trek 1990 was to walk from the west coast to the east and in the process to return to Kintail to visit all those areas that had to be omitted from the '82 trek. The intervening years had seen a dramatic change in the landscape with trees now covering the hillsides in Glen Elchaig, the previous owner's lodge and the houses in the village of Killiln all now empty. Even the bridge to the Falls of Glomach was in ruins and the party waded the river Elchaig rather than risk the stepping stones which were under a foot of water. The day's journey to Loch Cluanie included virtually the only wet afternoon of the trek and is memorable mainly for the sight of Shimera Perera standing up to his waist, fully clothed, in what he took to be a puddle! French Cricket was the game of choice during this particular trek and takes its place with Podex, continuous cricket, kite flying and frisbee throwing as an evening activity that has the magical property of banishing tiredness from weary limbs and enabling trekkers to run around far into the evening.

It is rare that a trek follows its intended route exactly from beginning to end. All manner of problems have arisen over the years, often associated with inclement weather. Trek 91 was one such occasion and what was the smallest trek to date, with only seven students accompanying the three staff, suffered during a wet summer. Despite this the weather relented at the end for trek to complete one of the longer mountain day rounds, that of the Ben Lawers circuit and its 5 Munros. An unusual statistic associated with this trek was that the average age of the staff was over three times that of the students!

The following year had as great a proportion of fine weather as Trek '91 had foul and many high mountains were walked in fine weather. Unfortunately for Shufflebottom a rare bad day coincided with a scheduled walk over virtually the only summit on this trek that he hadn't yet climbed. Still, as Willson was heard to remark, "They will still be there when we come back next time".

Latterly the food for trek had been brought from Manchester but in Bailey's day the provisions for trek had been purchased locally and shopkeepers had provided the kind of service that today would be considered uneconomic. Grocers had brought food to the camp by car, van, tractor, boat and even a second world war landing craft. 1991 saw the remaining shop in Dalwhinnie close down and trekkers bought virtually all the remaining sweets in stock as they made up a large proportion of the final day's customers.

After a four year break McDonald restarted Scottish Trek in 1998, with Damon Powell, and they chose the familiar area of the Grampian and Cairngorm mountains for their first outing. As in earlier days the change of trek leader led to an evolution in the guiding philosophy of Trek and so it was again. McDonald had purchased some small, green, lightweight mountain tents and limited the trek size so that the visual impact of Trek in the mountains, both walking and camping, would be reduced and provide, if it were possible, an even better mountain experience for those involved. Additionally the boys have a far greater role in the planning of the event, deciding routes, mountain objectives, food requirements, leading the walking and even purchasing the food from local shops. Developments in the outdoor world have happened in more than just the areas of clothing and tents, modern technology has given us the Global Positioning System (GPS) to make navigation a fool-proof exercise. It is somehow heartening to see that during Trek 2003 it was McDonald's trusty compass that predicted the correct direction for the party to return to the tents, just like compasses had been doing for all the earlier treks into the highlands.

Any history of Scottish Trek would be incomplete without mention of the midges. These barely visible flying creatures are responsible for making the life of trekkers very miserable indeed as the bites of the female cause everything from irritation to boil sized lumps. It is difficult to say where the worst midges are to be found but Glen Affric and Cluanie areas must rank high on any scale established. To escape them trekkers have resorted to everything; chemicals, bee keepers hoods, a complete cover up and even walking up and down the road while eating a meal. Both the DMP used in the earlier years and the DEET in the later ones did have some beneficial effect but the best remedy of all was always pitching the tents above the thousand foot contour.

The final words must be devoted to the Scots themselves. The assistance and kindness of a variety of people has provided invaluable help and saved many a situation, thoroughly decrying the music hall caricature of a Scotsman. Treks could not have taken their first step, particularly in the early years, without the consent and help of the multitude of landowners who have allowed Trek to use their ground. It is sometimes easy to forget that the highlands are in reality someone's workplace and generate the income needed to maintain the estates and provide a livelihood for the estate workers. That Trek has been allowed access to the estates at the most important time of their year is something for which generations of MGS trekkers are extremely grateful. That Trek has never been refused access to the estates or had any complaints made by the landowners is testimony to the way in which trekkers have responded to the trust placed in them.

Paul Shufflebottom 2004



## **DESERT TREK 2000-2004**

The first three Desert Treks went to different parts of the Adrar region of Mauritania in N.W. Africa, to the desert around Ouadane, Chinguetti, Terjit and Atar. Most recently the 2004 Trek went to the Draa valley in the far east of Morocco, close to the border with Algeria, starting and finishing in Zagora.

Desert Trek typically involves about 10 boys, accompanied by 2 staff, and starts with a couple of preliminary practice walks in the dunes and on the beach around Formby Point. The trek itself has always taken place at Easter, when temperatures in the Sahara are still tolerable and the time needed for acclimatisation is not so great. Equipment is reduced to the bare minimum, although a GPS and a satellite phone are carried for emergency use. The walking is mainly done in plastic beach sandals of the flip-flop type supplemented with trainers. Boys bring a sleeping bag, sunglasses, sun cream, and a water bottle, and are provided with an iodine dropper for sterilising water for drinking. All the other equipment and desert clothing is bought on arrival. A guide, cook and camel hands are recruited locally in advance.

Trekking is done on foot with food and water being carried by the camels, which double up as emergency transport. In Mauritania everyone bivvied out under the stars but in Morocco a local, single pole, square cotton tent was found to be a useful shelter against sandstorms, wind and cold. Occasional use was also made of it as an awning against the midday sun. The transfer between the airport and the desert is by four-wheel drive transport or minibuses depending on the terrain. So far the areas visited have not required a preliminary reconnoitre, as they were already known to the staff.

During the course of the four treks to date we have experienced sandstorms, had a close encounter with a viper and coped with a scorpion sting suffered by a member of staff who used the satellite phone to ring his wife, a doctor, for advice on treatment. In the heart of the desert we came across prehistoric paintings of men and animals and unearthed ancient arrowheads, and even an axe head, dating from the days before desertification. At Chinguetti, regarded as the seventh holy city of Islam, we handled ancient, illuminated manuscripts and were given an insight into the fascinating history of the region. We learnt also of the efforts that are being made to preserve a whole library from the ravages of the climate and the encroaching sand. The variety of the scenery – gravel plains, plateaux, mountains and dunes – and the sight of families with a few goats eking out an existence in this harshest of environments never fail to surprise and impress the boys.

### **The birth of Desert Trek**

The route of the 1999 Foreign Trek to the Moroccan High Atlas finished on the south side of the mountain range. Before crossing back to fly home from Marrakech it felt natural to look at what lay to the south and to make the short journey to the fringes of the Sahara. Local transport was used to Zagora from where a quick overnight trip was made into the desert riding camels. This was the embryo of Desert Trek and remains, so far, the longest planned camel ride on Desert Trek! This was very well received by boys and their plea 'Can we do a Desert Trek next?' did not fall on deaf ears.

### **Why a Desert Trek?**

The aim of any MGS trip is to enable boys to extend their horizons. High Master Paton took Trek abroad in the first place to foster a sense of adventure, discovery and exploration. Visiting the Alps no longer provides boys with the same sense of excitement, exploration and discovery that it did in the 1910s and 1930s. Families now regularly holiday in Europe and the novelty of such trips and sense of adventure have diminished as steadily as the glaciers visited by Trek. The mountains no longer remain the little known, wild, remote locations they once were and such trips have become commonplace. We wanted to provide a unique experience that the boys cannot get in this country, or with their parents, and that is not available commercially. Our boys now have more opportunities than ever to travel after they have left school and Trek can teach them how to prepare for and manage adventure. We have the opportunity to encourage a more educated and responsible approach to independent travel and other cultures. We aim to arouse their curiosity and, through contact with our hosts in Mauritania and Morocco, foster greater understanding and, in particular, provide an insight into an ancient way of life that is fast disappearing.



**South Manchester School circa 1915**

Early records show that SMS, part of the MGS Foundation, took parties of boys into the hills in winter as well as summer. They camped and walked in the Peak District, Yorkshire and Wales in the days when charabancs were limited to 12 m.p.h!



**Lakes Trek 1929**

|             |                                       |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| Back row:   | Oldham, Field, Kemp, Doughty, unknown |
| Middle row: | Cunliffe, Lund, unknown               |
| Front row:  | Green, Hyslop, Lob, unknown, Smith    |





**Hyman Lob**

A legend in his own lifetime who firmly established the trekking tradition after the Great War. Lob went on 20 consecutive treks, leading 19 of them, 8 in Britain and 11 on the continent. He was killed in an air raid in 1941.



**Ian Bailey**

Another legend who, as a boy, went on his first Trek to the Cairngorms in 1931. After returning to MGS as a master he went on 7 consecutive Treks on the continent, starting in 1949, In 1956 he established a separate, dedicated Scottish Trek which he led for 10 years and which continues to flourish.





**Galley Group, Cairngorms Trek 1931**

In the days before the advent of modern lightweight camping gear cooking was done on open wood fires using heavy iron pans, including a pressure cooker known as 'The Bomb'. The evening meal was usually stew, and 'Spud Fag' was a feature of daily life. The canvas was rolled into a sausage shape and carried between campsites draped round the neck. The cooking gear was slung on poles, each carried by two boys



**Mont Blanc Trek 1954**

Back row: Stalker, unknown, Robinson, Bailey Lingard, Williams, unknown, Young

*All monochrome images were processed from the originals by Roger Hand*





### **Foreign Trek 1989 Dolomites**

Dinner is served at Trek's highest Alpine 'campsite' by the Piz Boè hut (2889 m, 9500 ft).

It illustrates a tent group entertaining a member of staff to a typical 'mountain' dinner, as on most Alpine Treks from the 1970s until 1997.

On the menu was  
asparagus soup,  
savoury mince,  
(vegetarian alternative)  
Smash, Surprise peas  
peach Angel Whirl  
tea or coffee

Adrian Dobson  
Chris Jones  
Dominic Hewitt  
Robert Culledge  
Mike Nield



### **Foreign Trek 2001 - Pyrenees**

Camp at Trek's second highest Alpine 'campsite' on the Spanish side of the Brèche de Roland. The site was 'discovered' on the pioneering Pyrenean Trek in 1978 and was also used in 1982 and 1987. It is one of dozens of high altitude Alpine campsites used over the last 30 years.





#### Foreign Trek 1991 - Vanoise

On Pointe de la Sana (3436 m, 11,270 ft), the highest of six 3000 m summits climbed that year, and just one of about 50 different mountains over 3000 m climbed in the last 30 years.

Standing: Nick Gartside, Steve Waite, Grant Mitchell, William Manning, David Gilpin, Andrew Hesp, Graham Seel  
 Front: Marek Petecki, Nicholas Taylor, Christopher Willson, Adrian Dobson, Matthew Higginson, James Marks



#### Foreign Trek 1990 - East Tyrol

Mark Breganza and Alex Marcuson spurn the comfort of a tent pitched on pastures to bivouac (here on snow), a popular challenge in the Alps, and *de rigeur* on Treks in Africa.





#### Foreign Trek 1995 - Stubai Alps

Many Treks have taken advantage of the 'comforts' of Alpine huts for a night, or occasionally for a whole Trek, as here in the *matratzenlager* at the Dresdner Hütte.

Left to right: Alitsair Hunter, Chris Cairns, Charles Taylor, Tim Heaton, Allen Martin, Andrew Limond, Peter Laws, Jonathan Jesky



#### Foreign Trek 1995 - Stubai Alps

Trek Dinner with speeches and prizes is a great highlight in the *bonhomie* of Foreign Trek as here at the Nürnberger Hütte.

Left to right: Jacob Taylor, Mike Yates, David Krell, John Witton, Tom Illingworth, Matt Aubrey, David Simpson, Charles Dean, David Laws





### Foreign Trek 1992 - Morocco

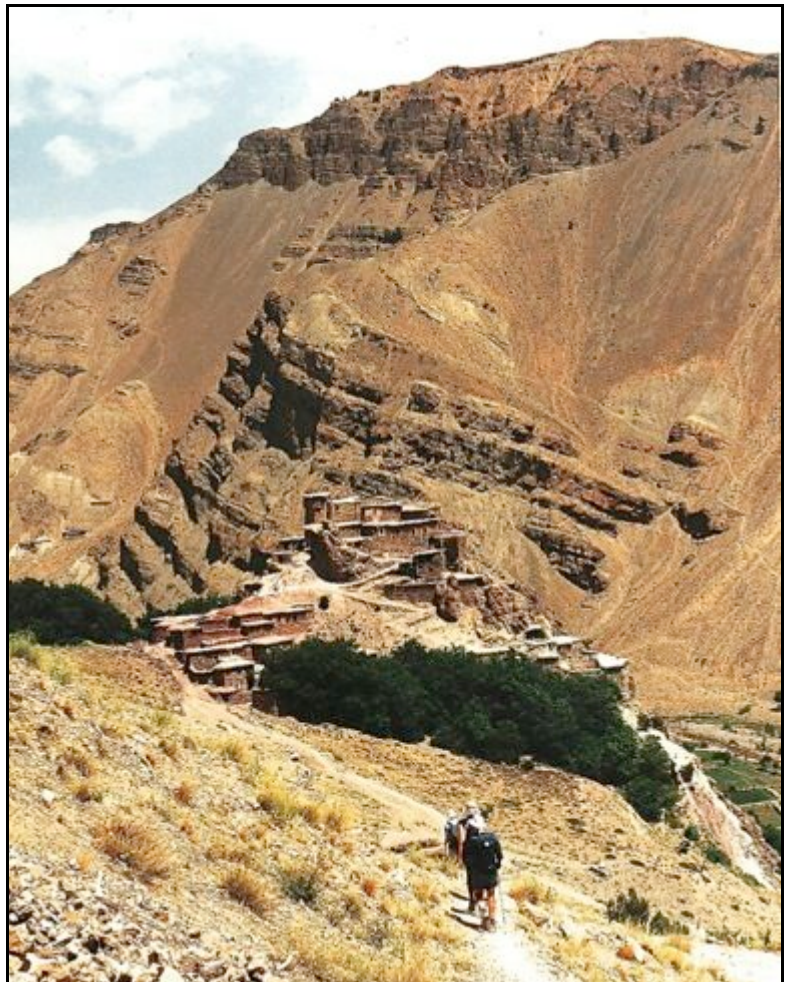
Cooking on a wood fire for the first time in about 30 years at the bivouac at Tamsoult at the end of the first Atlas Trek.

The chefs are William Ashley, Steven Billington and Stuart Kistruck.

Wood fires have been used subsequently on Atlas and Desert Treks.

### Foreign Trek 1999 - Morocco

Trekking through the village of Ichbbakene in the Atlas mountains where experiencing the simple Berber lifestyle has been a fascinating experience on several recent Treks



*Foreign Trek images were scanned from prints taken by Allan Witton*





**Scottish Trek 1989: Ascending**

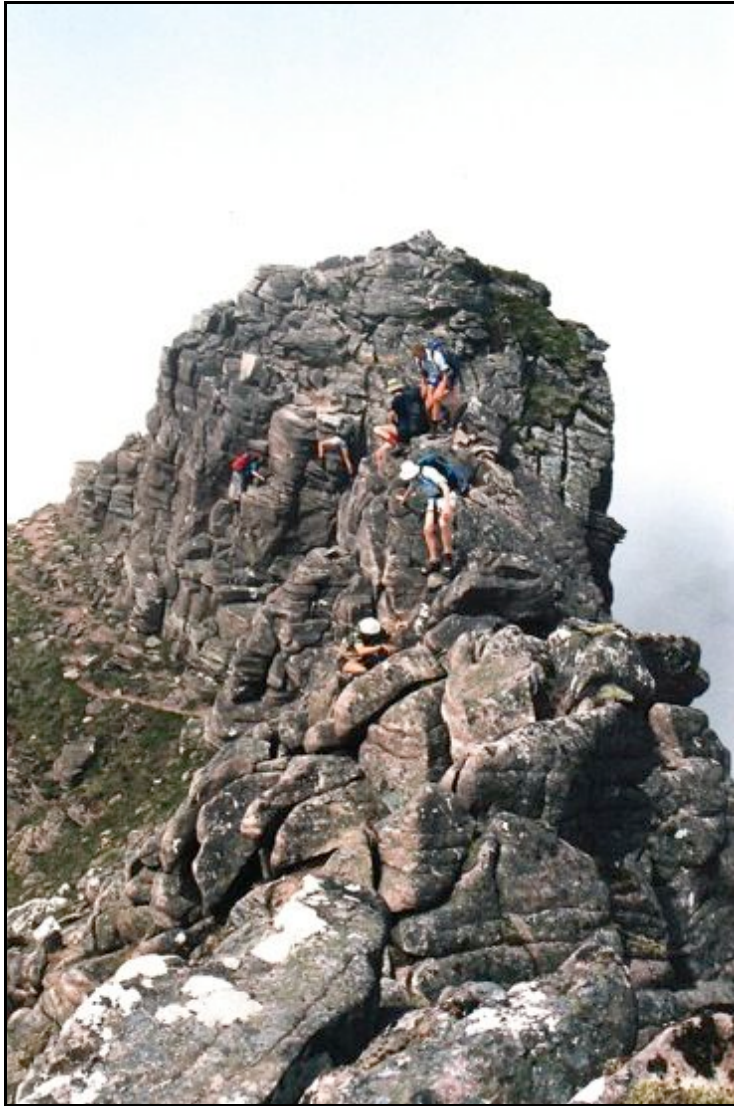
Time for a rest on the climb of Carn Liath on Beinn a'Ghlo in the Cairngorms.



**Scottish Trek 1989: Admiring the view**

Keith Hamflett looking out over the Lairig Ghru from the cliffs of Braeriach.





**Scottish Trek 1987:  
Scrambling**

Trekkers traversing the  
summit ridge of  
An Teallach.



**Scottish Trek 1990: Crossing the water**

The bridge over the River Elchaig has collapsed so trekkers have to wade.





**Scottish Trek 1991: Keeping dry**  
Stuart and Ben show how to use the new camp stoves.



**Scottish Trek 1992: Drying off**  
Walking up Strath Ossian with waterproofs hanging from rucksacks.





**Scottish Trek 1990: Ridge walking**

Day walk over the Five Sisters of Kintail from a camp in Glen Lichd.



**Scottish Trek 1992: Camping**

A typical campsite, this one is in the Lairig Leacach.

*Scottish Trek images were scanned from prints provided by Paul Shufflebottom.*





#### **In the dunes**

Following an ancient way of life to cover an average 20 km on foot each day. Camels are used to carry firewood, or gas cylinders, food a few personal possessions and thin mattresses. The greatest weight by far is that of the 50 litre drums of water.



#### **Approaching the plateau**

Following an ancient riverbed, past a number of simple graves of people whose lives were spent eking out a precarious existence tending a small number of goats.





#### **Sleeping out under the stars**

A simple mattress is provided, more usually positioned on more level ground!



#### **Lunchtime siesta**

In the heat of the day shade is sought. As the sun moves round so do those resting. Great care has to be taken to avoid stepping on thorns, especially under acacia trees.





**The guide and cameleers, Morocco 2004**

Taking a brief rest at the end of a 'leg'. If stopping for longer the cameleers will invariably find shade, even if it is only that provided by their camels.



**A well**

The camels are kept away from the well so as to avoid contaminating the supply. The buckets lowered down are often improvised out of old lorry inner tubes. By the end of trek boys really appreciate how precious water is. Throughout trek they dream off Coca-Cola but when they get home they go straight to the tap rather than the fridge.





#### **Ouadane**

Ouadane, hugging the cliffs overlooking the desert, was once an important ‘port’ on the cross-Sahara caravan routes. Despite being a UNESCO site of special cultural interest the stones are being raided to construct a new town on top of the cliffs.



#### **A stop outside an oasis**

The people are extremely friendly and welcoming, and do not lack an eye for a business opportunity. Here local women are displaying a range of goods – necklaces and other simple jewellery together with a few ancient flint arrowheads.

*Digital Desert Trek images provided by Roger Hand*

## THE 1965 REVIEW OF TREKKING

*A comprehensive review of Out of School Activities appears in the book 'The Manchester Grammar School 1515 – 1965' edited by J.A.Graham and B.A. Phythian, and published on the 450th anniversary of the school. The section concerning the start of camping and trekking and the development up until 1965 is included here*

### Out of School Activities

THE outdoor life is a sphere of interest which the School has made particularly its own for well over half a century, during which time hundreds of masters and thousands of boys have together explored large areas of the British Isles and Europe. At present there are three camps a year, at Knutsford, Grasmere and Borrowdale, which accommodate about two hundred and fifty boys, and two treks, one in the Alps and one in Scotland, which take just over a hundred. The difference between a camp and a trek is that the former is stationary and therefore suitable for boys of all ages while on trek the need to carry tents and equipment from site to site limits the participants to older boys.

Trekking went hand in hand with camping from the first: the golden year 1904 which saw the founding of Alderley and Grasmere was also the year of the first short 'Route Marches' (two-day excursions with one night out) from both these camps, and trekking was born. There are records of similar marches led by T. H. Wells from both camps in 1908: the Alderley march took in Macclesfield, Buxton and Leek, and the Grasmere one, now twice as long, included Buttermere and was to continue thus for many years. Predictably enough, it was Paton who encouraged these small beginnings; and in 1910 he and Nicholson led two parties to Germany for the first full-scale trek, though the word 'trek' does not appear in Ulula until 1912, when the scouts, in the year of their foundation, went to France for six weeks. The 1910 boys, and presumably the 1911 Black Forest party, called themselves 'Wanderbirds' after a German youth and camping organisation.

The idea was obviously appealing, for in 1913 no fewer than four treks took place. The scouts spent twelve days in Belgium at Easter at a cost of three guineas ('we had one substantial hotel meal each day' and five weeks in Ireland during July and August, covering two hundred and nine miles for three pounds twelve. A further party of twenty-seven was in Donegal in August (this party is responsible for the first recorded use of the word 'fag') and Troop 2 was also in Ireland for a fortnight at the same time. Forty-three boys trekked in March 1914, forty-seven spent ten days in Normandy the following month, and no fewer than seventy-five scouts and Alderley campers started from Alderley in June for a trek through three counties. In the same year, the war killed off all this vigorous and growing activity.

It resumed in 1919 when H. Green took a party of thirty on a circuit of the Snowdon group. The following year, gathering to himself Lob, the Alderley man, and Heathcote, who had already established the first Borrowdale camp earlier that year, he restarted continental trekking by taking twenty-six boys for two hundred miles along the Brittany coast. This was the last trek that Green led, but far from the last he went on.

1921 saw a six-weeks visit to Normandy, and 1922 marked the real beginning of what hundreds of Old Mancunians remember as 'Lob's Treks'. Lob ran them without a break until the next war, ten abroad and eight at home; around a fairly constant nucleus of five or six 'regulars' he built up a team which included at different times nearly thirty members of the staff, Old Boys and others. At the centre of this team, in addition to Lob himself, were Green (1922-39), R. W. Cunliffe (1923-39), J. H. Doughty (1926-35) and H. A. Field (1926-39). Others were Hill, F. Hyslop, Lingard, McEachran and T. Smith. Old trekkers, according to their years, also remember Hodge, Hulme, Lund and Maugham (all previously mentioned in connection with Alderley), Owen, Kemp, Somerford, Richardson, Kenyon, King, Toft, Summersgill, Coates, Moore and Oldham.

Pages could be written about Lob himself. Small, unathletic, but incredibly wiry, he had little eye for scenery, no flair for organisation, and small taste for the hard slogs inseparable from trek. But he loved his fellow men (except those who in any way let down trek or himself) and delighted in company. He would puff at his pipe and chat until all hours, daily putting off as long as possible the transit from common-room society to digs and solitude. He was a mathematical and chess genius, slaved interminably for School music, and was king of the whole under fourteen games realm.

J. H. Doughty, in his *Hill Writings*, calls him 'A paradox of a man. Capriciously methodical; indulgently severe; swinging with disconcerting suddenness from black despair to extravagant optimism; now distributing largesse to railway porters with the opulent gesture of a Monte Cristo and anon holding up the traffic of a European capital while he disputes a tram fare; he steers the ship through devious currents with a success that never shakes his own recurrent conviction on each voyage that it is at last to founder, and that wins him the affectionate admiration of his sometimes exasperated but ever devoted followers'. Louis Golding, writing of the 1920 Brittany trek, said, 'For Lob it is a bagatelle simultaneously to play blindfold chess, to peel potatoes, keep the bank and sing "Tit-Willow".'

Green, in his very different way, was as great a character. *Hill Writings* describes him as 'the Man of Guile, a veteran of camps who is up to every move in the game. Never ruffled, and never at a loss, if someone spills paraffin over the eggs he is about to scramble, he will make the mixture into some new concoction, call it chutney, and persuade the camp it likes it'. The same book calls Cunliffe 'The Pioneer, who looks at scenery with the eye of an artist, but reads a map in terms of human comfort; a great extemporiser who could coax a sleeping bag to boil water if the need arose'. The author himself was a power in rock-climbing, an expert on maths and chess, a profound music student and a great conversationalist. A heavily-built man, he perspired and panted almost distressfully on plain mountain climbs, but if a genuine rock encounter drew near he sang a little tune, snuffed like a war-horse and became a changed man.

Treks from 1923 to 1926 were all foreign. Northern Italy was tackled first (Little St Bernard, Aosta, Florence, Pisa, Milan, Lake Maggiore, Interlaken and Berne) and then Spain, whose remoteness, fierce sunshine and poverty, and the contrast with the rain and greenness north of the Pyrenees are still remembered when other treks have become but faint impressions. The Black Forest Trek of 1925 was altogether milder, overshadowed by the 1926 Dolomites expedition. After halts at Paris and Innsbruck, this trek traversed the Dolomites roughly from north to south. Venice, Florence, Pisa and Turin came as an appendix, but, after the Dolomite scenery, an anticlimax. The 1927 Trossachs trek, very wet, was followed by a Savoy expedition which, in almost continuous heat, ranged from Moutiers, by Val d'Isère, round the west end of Mont Blanc to Chamonix, Lac Champex and Martigny. Doughty enlivened the 1929 Lakes trek with rock climbing sorties and, although the weather was a good Lakes mixture, little of the Lake District remained unvisited. Similar weather pursued trek to Bavaria in 1930 and dampened it at Garmisch, Innsbruck, St Johann and the Königsee, relenting for Salzburg and a flying rail trip to Vienna.

1931 saw the depression and the next two treks were home ones, to the Cairngorms, dry, and to Argyllshire, Scotch-misty. The Dolomites, repeated with improvements in 1933, provided one of the best of treks, and Wales provided a wet but enjoyable one in 1934 (Plynlimon, Cader, Snowdon, Aber), but the Mont Blanc circuit of 1935 eclipsed even the experience of 1933. The 1936 trip to the Lechtal, Ötztal and Stubaital (Arlberg and Tirol) pioneered a theme for some very good post-war variations, and was followed in 1937 by an apparently humble but very enjoyable Pennine trek from Swaledale to Dentdale. 1938 saw new ground broken in an adventurous trek in the Dauphiné, another route which has been amplified since. A Zermatt trek was planned for 1939, but the war caused the substitution of a Trossachs trek that nearly repeated the 1927 route, this time in decent weather. Within a fortnight of this entirely pleasant trek, the School was in the toils of evacuation.

Lob's treks were not, however, the only ones, either abroad or at home. In 1922 and 1923 Hulme led treks in Devon and in Normandy, while John Kennelly joined him in taking a party through Alsace in 1927. Two years later a small party trekked in the Jura, and in 1930 a very arduous Alpine trek (Grimsel, Furka in blizzards) ended in a Rhine boat trip from Mannheim to Rotterdam. T. W. H. Holland led a Thuringian trek in 1937 and W. H. Madden, an inveterate leader of parties, tackled new territory in Norway in 1923 and 1929, and in Newfoundland in 1926, in expeditions which were a blend of trek, camp and tour. One of the major objectives in Newfoundland was, of course, to visit J. L. Paton.

In 1933 W. E. Lund and E. D. Hodge started a series of Devon and Cornwall treks which soon won their own secure place in the annual trek programme and which have their counterpart today in G. I. S. Bailey's tremendously successful Scottish series. Between 1933 and 1936, the coast from Somerset to Newquay, and from Falmouth to Dawlish, together with chunks of the Quantocks, Exmoor and Dartmoor, was systematically explored, trekking being plentifully and rightly intermixed with bathing. In 1937 and 1939 the first and second quarters of this four-stage circuit were repeated for a new generation of boys, and in 1938 Cornwall was forsaken for its French counterpart, Brittany. Of this trek Ulula said, 'It had at least one great virtue. It conducted forty-eight youths to a section of the earth's surface where there was a respite from war preparations.'



This war was to kill Lob and scatter or age his team. But his treks, centred on a constant nucleus of leaders, youthful in spirit but middle-aged in limb, had produced their own traditions and standards of routine, of performance, of relaxations and even of menus. From them derives the fine sequence of post-war treks which have broken new ground, tackled tougher mountains and gradually modified the old routine and tradition to mark their stiffer ventures. They were begun in 1946 by John Lingard, veteran of Lob's last five treks and exceptionally qualified to take up the reins. With A. W. Robinson, an old North boy, and S. D. Murphy, a new member of staff with some experience of trek as a boy, he set out to repeat Lob's Scottish trek of 1939 with a party of thirty-five boys to whom even the language of trek, with its 'legs', 'rest-fags' and 'tophets', was new and strange. They paid £7 10 s. for nineteen days. Unsweetened rhubarb, topped by unsweetened custard, and enormous bread (and little else) puddings typified the early post-war diet.

This first venture supplied a leavening of experience for the party of forty who set out the following year for the French Alps. The trek lasted a month, cost £23, and the route was basically that covered in Savoy in 1928. The weather was glorious, the food, in a still ravaged France, was not: the standard breakfast was dried bananas and vermicelli soup, and the loss of up to two stones in weight a commonplace. Trekkers, never noted for sartorial elegance, signalled their return to the tourist scene by being mistaken in France for Displaced Persons and charged with jumping the Italian frontier, and accused in London of being international cyclists. Troop 4 Scouts, meanwhile, were trekking in Skye.

Rucksacks bulging with sugar, coffee, butter and tea, trek returned to France in 1948 to repeat the Dauphiné trek of ten years before. For Lingard this visit was an administrative nightmare, bedevilled throughout by injury and sickness, by thunderstorm and early snow, and by the attempt of the communist secretary of the mairie in La Grave to misappropriate the supplementary food coupons. A vain attempt, moreover, since he had unluckily picked an Englishman who was always a move ahead of him in manipulating the French bureaucratic system. M. P. Smith, an Old Mancunian on the staff, returned to trekking this year; F. R. Hill, of prewar vintage, had returned to trek the previous year, and was to remain until 1950.

1949 saw a precise repetition of the 1947 route in the same weather, but this time with ample food. The effect on performance was remarkable: by the end of the month, walking times were down to almost half those of 1947. Moreover, after failures in 1928, 1935 and 1947, MGS at last ascended Mont Joly from Les Contamines. In 1950 the easing of currency regulations at last made it possible to attempt a route in more than one country, and trek repeated the classic Mont Blanc circuit that had provided one of the best of prewar treks. In the same year there was an echo of those complementary inter-war treks mentioned earlier. Lund, eschewing Devon and Cornwall, went to Germany with a party which occupied twenty camp sites and covered 345 miles, 206 on foot, 89 by train, 22 by steamer, 25 by lifts and 3 by tram car. They were rewarded by a letter in Ulula sharply critical of this fraternisation with our recent enemies.

In 1951 and 1952 there were returns to the 1936 Tirol and the 1948 Dauphiné routes respectively. Food and currency problems were now things of the past, and the way was open for the extremely successful series of treks that have stretched through the 50s and into the 60s, with larger parties pioneering new routes. One of these was the 1952 march from the Meije to Mont Blanc, forming a neat link with the Mont Blanc circuit which was done again the following year. This was Lingard's last trek and he trod his favourite route for the third time. Nothing can be said here of his achievements as trek leader, or as a schoolmaster, that was not said better in Ulula's tribute after his untimely death in 1958. A complex and lovable personality, a superb linguist a formidable walker and talker, a staunch friend and endlessly diverting companion, possessed of enormous mental and physical energy, a lover of scenery, an instinctive route-finder, able to take immediately complicated decisions which the longest consideration could only endorse - he was the completely equipped leader. Equally complete was his success in resurrecting trek after the war, thus resuscitating traditions which might have been lost for ever. Past, present and future members of the School owe more to him than many of them can know.

So it was a thriving institution that D.J. W. Williams took over in 1955. He had trekked since 1951, and for his first trek as leader he returned to the Tirol route that he knew from that year. It had been dubbed 'the wet trek' by virtue of eight wet days and twenty-one fine: 1955 exactly reversed this ratio. There was exceptional snow high up, but a guide was hired for the Winnebachjoch, fifty-two people roped down its eastern flank, and the whole programme was pushed through with determination and vigour. In 1956, the Dolomites were visited for the first time in over twenty years with a repetition of the 1933 Dobbiaco to Bolzano route. Since then, with the one exception of 1959 when the Mont Blanc circuit received its periodic tribute, not one route has been done which was not entirely or substantially new. At least four have been in areas of the Alps hitherto unvisited in the long history of trek.

The 1957 Valais trek, ending at Zermatt, provided some particularly strenuous work over snow and ice, and in 1958 it was the turn of the East Tirol. 1960 saw the Monte Rosa trek, which started on the Italian side of the Matterhorn, crossed into Switzerland by the Monte Moro pass and also ended at Zermatt. This was Williams' last trek, though nobody knew it at the time; he stepped down 'for a rest and a change', but became headmaster of Carlisle Grammar School before the rest was over.

He was followed as leader by R. Cooke, who has trekked as a boy, as an undergraduate, as an ex-serviceman at a loose end and on three treks from Woking Grammar School, where MGS habits had been introduced by the new headmaster, M. P. Smith, mentioned above. He first tried a new route in the Dolomites where McEachran, of prewar fame, joined trek for a week, enriching the evening conversation and declaring that trek was now more strenuous and ambitious, more sternly dedicated than ever to the business of covering ground and gaining height. Indeed the average route of the last decade has involved a net climb of about 60,000 feet, that is to say almost twenty four miles of up and down, and the total distance walked must generally exceed 250 miles.

A particularly good route in the Bernese Oberland (1962) followed a series of fine passes close to the giant peaks of the Blümlisalp and Jungfrau groups, though perhaps the highlight was a trek up the Loetschen glacier in cloud, with lunch in sunshine at the top. Another itinerary, avoiding the previous bus and train travel, was evolved for the 1963 Tirol trek, though the new crossing from the Pitztal to the Ötztal involved some heroics. Vent, visited for the first time, afforded magnificent excursions, including the Kreuzspitze, at 11,500 feet the highest peak so far climbed by trek. Tirol treks have all ended at Innsbruck, and it was with the headwaters of the Inn that the most recent trek was concerned. The lakes, snow-peaks and sunshine of the Engadine were the background for a very happy time in 1964. The days were not as arduous as usual, but after the first site the tents were never pitched below 5,900 feet.

Trek since the war has not been able to count on the long-term services of men as Lob could, though the three leaders mentioned above scored a tally of thirty-three post-war treks between them; but it has had a compensating variety of officers. There have also been evolutionary changes in routine, equipment and food. (In 1964, the once unvarying meal of stew and potatoes was cheered when it reappeared after eight days of Frankfurters, ham salads, spaghetti Bolognese, beef curry and other delicacies.) Nor are the Alps themselves quite the same. Camping and tourism in general have expanded so much that it has been necessary to come to terms with the organised camp-site, and the traditional open-fire cooking is often tolerated only after prolonged negotiation, while the sparse trek-equipment and rudimentary canvas provoke much headshaking among the continental camping fraternity. But the boys of trek remain the same - responsive, resourceful, resilient, patient alike with discomfort, the staff and each other - and in them lies its true continuity.

## ULULA AS AN HISTORICAL RECORD

In summarising Trekking at MGS over the last century it has been necessary to rely almost entirely on accounts in Ulula until the mid 1970s, which brings us within the memory of current staff trekkers. 1976 also saw the institution of 'Trek Log' by Chris Little which records the routes of Foreign Treks from 1974 to 1997 in rather more detail than Ulula accounts.

As noted by the editor of Ulula in the 1948 review of the early decades of trekking: 'The only authoritative source easily available for a study of trek is Ulula, and Ulula, as will be shown, is not always satisfactory. The 1920 trek in Brittany is excellently reported by—we presume—Mr. Louis Golding. But by 1922 we are down to "A Scotch trek was conducted by Messrs. Green, Lob, Heathcote, Smith and Radford."' In 1923 under the umbrella heading 'MGS Abroad' Ulula reports a camping expedition to Norway and treks in France and Italy as: 'There have been camps and treks to Norway, France, and Italy, and all have passed off in the best manner possible.' There then follows just one paragraph about each of these major expeditions, with little in the way of detail.

Throughout the century Ulula articles varied from fairly short accounts concentrating on the trekking experience, from which we learn little of the route taken, to detailed and lengthy accounts of the trekking route and principal excursions. On three occasions in recent times (1986, 1987 and 1993) the Ulula account of Foreign Trek has consisted entirely of photographs. This was done in the knowledge that comprehensive details of those Treks are recorded in the Trek Log for each of those years.

Apart from omission of detail, there are undoubtedly errors of fact to be found in Ulula accounts. The 1973 report states the height of Gran Paradiso as 12,700 feet when the map gives it as 4061 m (13,320 ft). The 1978 Pyrenees report: 'This year we climbed three ten thousand *metre* peaks, and got to within an ace of the summit of Monte Perdido, the third highest in the Pyrenees.' contains a simple typographical error which is easy to spot, and Trek Log informs us which 10,000 *foot* peaks were climbed. Other mistakes in Ululas over the years may never be uncovered unless they are pointed out by those who were present at the time.

From 1976 until 1996 the account of each Trek appeared in the Ulula published in early September of the following year, which gave almost a year for the article to be written and checked before the submission date for copy near the end of the summer term. Since 1997, all activities for the previous academic year, including summer activities, are reported in Ulula published towards the end of the Michaelmas term, and the very short period between the start of term and the deadline for submission of copy in mid September has contributed to a number of inaccuracies appearing in accounts.

The 2002 Ulula account of the Pyrenees Trek reports: 'Most nights we camped in a wild location at around 10,000 feet.', when in fact there was only one camp just over 9000 feet and only 3 others above 7000 feet. The same report goes on to say: 'The highest summit we touched was the second highest in the range, Posets. Standing at the top of the mountain we felt on top of the world and considered our insignificance in the galactic scheme of things.' when in fact the highest point reached was Collado da la Paúl, which at 3057 m (10,030 ft) is 311 m (1020 ft) below the summit of Posets.

The 2003 Ulula account of the Morocco Trek reports: 'We walked further than any previous trek, approaching the 360 kilometre mark and for the first time achieved two ascents over the 4000 m mark, climbing the two highest peaks in North Africa - Mgun (Mgoo) and Toubkal.' Though it is probably true that it was the longest trekking route in over half a century, it seems likely that some of the inter-war treks lasting a month or more would have covered greater distances, and it is reported that in 1912 the scouts walked 500 miles (800 km) during their six week Trek through France. On each of the 1992 and 1996 Morocco Treks there were ascents of the two highest peaks in North Africa, Toubkal (4167 m) and Ouanoukrim (4088 m). At 4068 m, Mgoun is the third highest Atlas peak.

The intention here is certainly not to criticise authors of Ulula accounts, but simply to point out the limitations of relying on Ulula to provide authoritative and accurate records. The authors apologise for any errors caused by the above circumstances, and would be most grateful to be informed of corrections to any factual matters.

Allan Witton September 2004

## ON THE ASCENT OF SUMMITS AND OTHER HIGH POINTS

From the earliest years of camping, and the overnight ‘marches’ from those camps which were the embryonic treks, mountain peaks have offered an irresistible challenge.

*‘And what did we do there, everyone will ask. We climbed anything from the height of a threepenny bit to 3,000 feet—shew us an absolutely unclimbable mountain, and we climbed it.’ (Ulula 1904 The Camp at Grasmere)*

*‘On three occasions parties went off, with provisions, for two days’ climbing, and slept out under trees or on a haystack – living the wild life of man.’ (Ulula 1904)*

It is a challenge that successive generations have risen to, and as Treks moved further afield to include Scotland, the Alps and more recently the Atlas mountains, so the challenges have become bigger. In terms of ascending peaks, clearly the campers and ‘marchers’ at Grasmere had the advantage over those at Alderley, though both included climbs as part of their programmes.

*‘Saturday saw the departure of the marchers. What a delightful walk! Up over Yew Crag, and along Blea Rigg to Stickle Tarn, where we lunched. Then up the ghyll, by Pavey Ark, to a height of 2,500 feet. . . . In the morning some of our number had gone out to climb the Pillar, and a good day they had. (Ulula 1908 Grasmere Camp)*

*‘After tea Mr. Nicholson read more of the “Mikado,” and we all climbed to the top of Cloud.’ (Ulula 1911 Three Shires Route March from Alderley Camp)*

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The early Treks further afield, though far from ‘mountaineering’ Treks, recorded their climbing achievements.

‘We pitched our tents south of the town, close beside the Rhine, and immediately below the Drachenfels. Next morning we climbed this famous crag, and enjoyed a glorious view of the Rhine valley; afterwards we climbed two more of the Siebengebirge, and then descended once more to our camp.’ (Ulula 1910 Germany)

‘By Sunday of the second week we were climbing the Feldberg, the highest point of the Forest, some 4,900 feet high. We cooked dinner right on top, and as we left in the afternoon for Freiburg, we had a wonderful view of the Alps.’ (Ulula 1911 Germany)

‘. . . we remember with especial joy our many refreshing baths, our conquest of Errigal . . . (Ulula 1913 Donegal)

‘Here we made what will be to us a very memorable ascent of the lofty Weissenstein, leaving camp at 2–15 a.m., and finding our way up the mountain by the uncertain beams of Bradbury’s electric torch. The ascent was negotiated under the leadership of Doctor Buchmann, who came over specially from Zurich to meet us at Solothurn, and, as a result of his most capable guidance, when day dawned, we found ourselves on the summit of a mighty mountain—some miles away from the Weissenstein! The object of the climb had been to see the Alps at dawn, but a heavy sea of mist robbed us of our view.’ (Ulula 1929 Jura)

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The first Treks to the Alps gave access to mountains of a higher order, though the Ulula reports of the first two Alpine Treks omit details of exactly which excursions were made.

*‘Sometimes we would chance, even on the mountain-tops, upon the old entrenchments of the Austrian and Italian armies, reminding us of the terrible struggle which must have taken place among these very mountains.’ (Ulula 1926 Dolomites)*

*‘We climbed to a height of 9,000 feet and there gathered edelweiss.’ (Ulula 1928 Savoy)*

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When Treks to the Alps became well established in the 1930s, excursions to peaks became an integral part of the trekking experience, and Ulula records that many summits in the Dolomites, Tyrol, Savoy and Dauphiné were reached. 1933 was a vintage year when it is recorded that two separate Treks for the first time climbed mountains higher than the 'metric Munro' line of 3000 m (9843 ft), and two years later that height was achieved in the Mont Blanc range.

'That programme carried us up a few of the easier peaks, the culminating point being the Piz di Boè (10,350 ft).' (Ulula 1933 Dolomites)

'We shivered on passes 10,000 ft. high; armed with crampons, ropes and ice-axes we spent days on glaciers and snowfields; we slept in huts and camped in villages; . . and finally a party got up at 3-30, and after seeing an Alpine sunrise, climbed the Gross-Glockner (12,460 ft.) by the Hofmanns Weg.' (Ulula 1933 Austria)

'The highest climb was up to the Pointe d'Orny (10,800 feet). This was performed from Lac Champex, and included some enjoyable scrambles both at the beginning and end of the climb, as well as beautiful snow scenes.' (Ulula 1935 Tour du Mont Blanc)

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The 1933 Austrian account raises the interesting question as to who was in the party which climbed the Gross-Glockner. It has occasionally been the case that experienced staff climbers have left the rest of Trek in the valley to go and climb a peak which is beyond the scope of trekkers.

*'Congratulations are here due to Messrs. Young, Roberts and Williams on making a successful ascent of Mt. Blanc while the rest of the party gorged itself, or slept.'* (Ulula 1954 Tour du Mont Blanc)

*'In fact, the Matterhorn was the main reason for visiting this particular region of the Alps this year, it being the centenary year of the first successful climb of the mountain by Edward Whymper and his companions. To represent MGS in the celebrations Mr. Harris and Mr. Barlow climbed the Hornli ridge to the top. They set out from Zermatt at midnight on the 5th of August and returned triumphant at 8 p.m. on the 6th.'* (Ulula 1965 Monte Rosa - Matterhorn)

In 1973, after Trek was driven back by poor weather and just failed to make the summit of Gran Paradiso, a member of staff made a solo ascent the following day in fine conditions. Whether the party which climbed the Gross-Glockner included students as well as staff, thus making it a 'Trek' summit, we may never know. A similar problem exists with the account of the ascent of the Aiguille du Goléon in 1938.

*'The second excursion, to Aiguille du Goléon (11,242 feet), was frustrated by the weather when the party had only another five hundred feet to climb. Clouds and snow made further progress inadvisable and the party returned, only two of them having completed the ascent.'* (Ulula 1938 Dauphiné)

It seems most unlikely that the staff turned back with the main party leaving two boys to complete the ascent in difficult conditions. A more credible explanation is that two staff pushed on to the summit, to then rejoin the main party in descent. As noted elsewhere, there are many occasions when Ulula reports omit the details necessary to make an accurate summary of events. The 1957 report leaves several un-answered questions.

*'Two potentially fine excursions from Zermatt, one to the Gornergrat, the views from which are famous on a fine day, and the other to a peak called the Mettelhorn, were spoilt by low cloud and rain.'*

(Ulula 1957 Matterhorn)

Was the excursion up the Gornergrat a walking excursion or by rack railway (which would exclude it from the list of 'Trek' peaks)? Was the summit of the Mettelhorn reached or did they turn back because of the weather? Were the excursions cancelled altogether due to the low cloud and rain?

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Though not a major peak by alpine standards, Mont Joly (2525 m, 8280 ft) will evoke memories for more Foreign Trekkers than any other mountain. It is situated above the village of les Contamines just west of the Mont Blanc Massif, in the area of the Alps most visited by Treks, whether as part of the Tour du Mont Blanc or other Savoy Treks which ended in the area. Its ascent from les Contamines involves a substantial climb of 1360 m (4460 ft), and it wasn't until the fourth attempt that the summit was reached.

'Next day a temporary halt for a cup of coffee, two-thirds of the way up Mont Joly, turned into a permanent halt, and the party returned to camp.' (Ulula 1947 Savoy)

'It will be of particular interest for former trekkers to hear that, at the fourth attempt, an MGS Trek has finally conquered Mont Joly. This 8,000 feet mountain was a difficult proposition: a long, strenuous climb up grass slopes and seldom-used paths brought us to a shoulder and a Chalet, where we had lunch, but above and beyond us towered the 1,600 remaining feet of black rock, a height which seemed to increase as we watched. We climbed it. The view from the top, was superb, but it was hardly upon this that we were congratulating ourselves. We had climbed Mont Joly! Photographs of groups and individuals, all in triumphant attitudes, were taken, to furnish proof of the deed. What we would have given for a Union Jack!' (Ulula 1949 Savoy)

'From there we climbed Mont Joly for the second successive year, finding none of the difficulties which had defeated previous MGS trekkers.' (Ulula 1950 Tour du Mont Blanc)

'From Les Contamines a small party again climbed Mount Joly; a large proportion of the camp, sad to say, were suffering miserably from too much condensed milk and fruit.' (Ulula 1953 Meije- Mont Blanc)

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Until the 1960s it seems that excursions were always made from valley campsites, which meant that climbs to anything but the most modest peaks involved a huge gain in height, as in the case of Mont Joly. The 1935 ascent of Pointe d'Orny (3270 m, 10,700 ft) from Champex involved an ascent of 1800 m (5900 ft), and that from Bozel to Mont Jovet (2550 m, 8400 ft) a 1700 m (5600 ft) climb.

*'Our first three days of camping were spent at Bozel in brilliant sunshine; in fact, after an enjoyable but very strenuous day climbing the 8,350 feet of Mont Jovet we were compelled to spend a very hot day resting.'* (Ulula 1947 Savoy)

*5,500 feet may seem to be an excessive height to climb for any view (certainly the most we ever went up in a single day), but when we saw the magnificent panorama which awaited us at the top of Mont Jovet our efforts were hardly regretted.'* (Ulula 1949 Savoy)

But the record altitude gain in one day in the Alps was not to a summit at all. On each of the five occasions when Trek did the Tour du Mont Blanc between 1950 and 1972 an excursion was made from the village of Entrèves above Courmayeur to the Torino hut (3371 m, 11,060 ft) and the Col du Géant on the shoulder of Mont Blanc. This involved an ascent of 2070 m (6800 ft) and led to some considerable heroics. It is a record height gain which was surpassed only in 1996 in the Atlas mountains of Morocco.

*'One of our excursions took some of us, after a long rock scramble, up on to the snow-field of the Col du Géant (11,000 ft.) beyond the Torino hut. Satisfied with this climb of 6,800 feet, we descended part of the way by cable-car, which in itself was a fine experience.'* (Ulula 1950)

*'The best excursion of the Trek was made from here, to the Refugio Torino and the Col du Géant, at 11,090 feet. It being after rest day, half the party had tummy trouble. They ascended the last 5,000 feet by cable railway and were sick while waiting for it, while in it and while out of it! The view, however, was compensation enough. Conditions being practically perfect, the Alps for a distance of up to seventy miles were visible all round. A most enjoyable day!'* (Ulula 1954)

*'Trek's most ambitious excursion - a 7,000 ft. climb up to the Col du Géant - had been planned for the day after rest day, but the continuous rain thwarted our plans. However, the storm cleared, and we were not deprived of our daily walk. We climbed Mont Chétif, a little mountain standing by itself above Courmayeur. At 3-30 the next morning it was not raining, so the fags got up and endeavoured to prepare a wholesome meal, which would send trek happily on its way at 6-30 to begin its long climb up to the Col. At ten we were eating our lunch outside a desolate hut halfway up the mountainside shivering in a cold wind under a sunless sky. Pressing on straight after lunch, we were soon scrambling up a rock and scree ridge, cut off from our neighbours by a wet, white void of mist. After what seemed an eternity of climbing we arrived at the Rifugio Torino. Never was a plate of soup more welcome!*

*Most went on for the extra quarter of an hour to the col, but there were no views: only a huge expanse of snow, dissolving in every direction into a swirling mist.’ (Ulula 1959)*

*‘Our most dramatic experience was on neither a trek nor a bivvy, but on an excursion from Peuterey to the Rifugio Torino at 11,250 feet. We climbed twice the height of Snowdon in eight hours, at first at the excellent pace of 2,000 feet per hour, but the way became progressively more difficult. A little above the snow line we had to start rock climbing. The pace slowed literally to a crawl. Stones began to roll and much of the time we were scrambling up very loose scree. Twice we had to stop and be pulled one by one up pieces of sheer rock. Rest fags were abandoned and we toiled up at our own pace in a long single file. On two snowfields we had to use the rope and we finished with a squirming, twisting climb round several exposed rock faces to the top. All this with a drop, or rather a roll, of 2000 feet or so nearby, at one time within a foot on either side. We certainly deserved the cable railway journey down. At least we had our first real view of the summit of Mont Blanc, cause of all our troubles. Somehow we seemed to have won a strange victory over it.’ (Ulula 1966)*

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The exploration of the Pennine Alps, in the Valais area of Switzerland, and the area round the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa began with the 1957 Matterhorn Trek and continued with six further Treks in 1960, 1965, 1967, 1971, 1974 and 1975. Pioneering and ambitious high altitude itineraries were established with many new peaks, passes and mountain huts over 3000 m included. The 1957 Trek climbed to over 3000 m on at least three occasions: an impressive and heroic crossing of the 3111 m snow pass of Col de Severeu; excursions to the Col de Bertol (3311 m) and the summit of Bella Tola (3025 m), and possibly to the top of the Mettelhorn (3406 m).

‘The following day the weather cleared and in the afternoon we struck camp and set off on a steep climb up the Val de Severeu with the intention of bivouacking near a mountain hut called Le Dâ. After the recent bad weather the snow line was several thousand feet lower down the mountain side than normal for that time of year and so it was in snow that we camped at Le Dâ. This was a ‘bivvy’ site to end all ‘bivvy’ sites—utterly desolate and miles from anywhere. Only six tents were pitched and into two of these all the kit was stacked. The occupants of four tents slept in the hut and in a low building nearby, christened ‘The Pigsty.’ The remainder of trek crammed itself into the other four tents.

During the night it froze hard so that the following morning the Pom left in the plates from the evening meal had to be chipped rather than washed away. The fags arose at three thirty, breakfast was served at five o’clock and it was then that we all witnessed the most beautiful of Alpine sunrises. The sun rose behind us and tipped peaks of the Combin range across the valley from us with a rich orange, whilst all the rest lay in deep shadow. The effect was heightened by the fact that this was the first time that the high mountains had been seen at all.

During the day that followed we climbed up to the Col de Severeu in brilliant sunshine and towards the end of the ascent the leaders worked extremely hard kicking steps, so deep was the snow. Progress was necessarily slow but when the top was reached the hard work was rewarded by our first view of Mont Blanc, the dome-shaped top of which appeared over the nearest ridge. The descent from the Col was equally steep but of course much more rapid and it was a very weary party that pitched camp near Pralong in the shadow of the great dam dominating the Val des Dix.’ (Ulula 1957 Matterhorn)

1965 brought the first recorded excursion from a mountain campsite rather than a valley base.

‘The choice of excursions this year (there were ten of them) was very good. The climb from an 8,000 ft. campsite to the Quintino Sella hut at almost 12,000 ft. [3585 m] along a path ‘prone to avalanches’ (to quote a certain master), and the last excursion of all, to the top of the 11,188 ft. Mettelhorn, were excellent. I am told by the seven who reached the summit that the Testa Grigia [3315 m], a peak climbed from Gressoney, was also in this class.’ (Ulula 1965 Monte Rosa - Matterhorn)

This Trek also crossed the Theodulpass (3301 m, 10,800 ft) from Cervinia in Italy to Zermatt in Switzerland and so made four ascents to over 10,500 ft.

The Mettelhorn (3406 m, 11,180 ft), which involves an 1800 m (5900 ft) climb from Zermatt, was the most popular summit excursion on these Pennine Alps Treks, with further ascents in 1971 and 1975 (and possibly a prior ascent in 1957). Other big excursions in the area were to mountain huts on the flanks of the 4000 m giants: in 1960 the Mischabel hut (3329 m); in 1971 the Hörnli hut (3260 m); in 1975 the Britannia hut (3030 m) and the Gnifetti hut (3611 m).

'The excursion to the Mischabel Hut was the highest and best. The latter half of the climb was a business of using hands and feet to spiral up the snow covered mountain-side. We prepared and ate our lunch on the very doorstep of the Rifugio, so to speak, no-one venturing inside, except perhaps to buy a postcard or two.' (Ulula 1960 Monte Rosa)

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Meanwhile, in 1963 the 3000 m line had been crossed for the first time in the Tyrol, with a 1700 m ascent from Zwieselstein in the Ötztal to a summit which is marked on current maps as Nederkogel (3163 m, 10,400 ft).

*'One of the best excursions of the whole Trek was the next one, which took us to the top of the Nörderkogel, 10,550 feet. Had we been able to see the mountain when we set off, the climb might have seemed a lengthy one in prospect, but as we were plunged in thick cloud most of the way, we unconsciously maintained a brisk pace and soon emerged from the clouds onto the desolate summit, where, of all things, a visitors' book awaited us.'* (Ulula 1963 Tirol)

Just a few days later another 1700 m excursion, from the village of Vent a little further up Ötztal, to Kreuzspitze (3457 m, 11,340 ft), was dismissed by the author of the Ulula report as a mere stroll.

*'The 11,332 ft. Kreuzspitze was the next target, and proved to be a surprisingly easy excursion. The peak was probably the highest that Trek has ever climbed and the views from the summit were quite extraordinarily fine. On one side rose white peaks which must have been in Italy, while far away in the other direction we could see the giant Schrankogel mountain near which we were shortly to be. A bowl of soup in the Martin Busch Hütte on the way down was a luxury all the more appreciated for being quite unexpected.'* (Ulula 1963 Tirol)

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With a growing list of ascents to summits well over 3000 m it was a natural progression to look for possibilities of climbing above 4000 m. With campsites at heights greater than 2000 m being a regular feature of Treks the problem was not the physical effort involved in a big ascent, but rather the technical difficulties of serious glacier travel and rock, snow and ice climbing with a party comprising what were essentially 'walkers'. The first 4000 m summit attempt was in 1973, and that not from a high camp but from the village of Pont (1960 m) at the foot of Gran Paradiso (which has a height of 4061 m, 13,324 ft, not the 12,700 ft quoted in the following extract).

'Gran Paradiso, 12,700 feet—the highest mountain of the range—lay before us. 4 a.m. Thursday morning 8th August: pitch darkness: the only thing to be seen was the tiny blue glow from eleven camping gas burners slowly heating our early morning tea. The weather didn't look too bad—we had seven hours climbing up 7,000 feet before lunch. It was grim as we trudged off, the twisting path lit only by the feeble yellow light of worn-out torches. We had a short break at the refuge Vittorio Emanuele II at 6.15 a.m. and then set off up the snow field and glacier which led to the summit some 4 hours away. The weather was deteriorating; we were soon swathed in blizzard and mist. There was no trace of footsteps and eventually about half an hour from the top we had to turn back. But Trek had reached its highest point: 12,500 feet.' (Ulula 1973 Gran Paradiso)

Staff on that Trek report that the excursion ended in white-out conditions at a bergschrund just 200 ft short of the 13,324 ft summit, and so exactly on the 4000 m contour line.

The second possibility of a 4000 m peak was considered in 1975. The Breithorn was reconnoitred by staff but not actually attempted by Trek because *'The final climb to the summit is an exposed, steep ice slope only negotiable with ice axe and crampons for full security'* (Trek Log 1975). However the substitute peak, the Kleine Matterhorn, still stands, 30 years later, as the highest Alpine summit Trek has climbed. (The height of the Kleine Matterhorn is given on contemporary and current maps as 3883 m, not the 3700 m quoted in the following extract). Sadly, its value as a trekkers' peak has been considerably diminished since the building of a cable car to the top from Zermatt.

One pass remained before we reached our final destination of Zermatt. This was the Theodulpass, 3290 metres, a high glacial pass. We hoped on the way to climb the Breithorn, 4165 metres, but a reconnoitre proved this was not feasible in the prevalent snow conditions. We contented ourselves with the Kleine Matterhorn, 3700 metres, a rocky promontory jutting Northwards from the Theodul snowfields. We rose at 4 a.m. from the bivouac site, and reached the col by 7 a.m. After an easy snow plod and a sharp scramble, we soon reached our peak, the highest point of the trek. The view was appropriate, covering all the Western Alps from Mont Blanc to the Bernese Oberland and the Gran Paradiso. We returned to the Col, picked up our sacks for the last time, and after a brief encounter with a passport officer on skis, crossed the glacier safely and descended into Zermatt. Aching shoulders could rest at last. Not so our aching calf muscles, which carried us up the final excursion to the Mettelhorn, 3406 metres, on yet another perfect day. This is an ideal view point for the magnificent cirque of Zermatt peaks, exemplifying Alpine scenery of the highest quality. (Ulula 1975 Monte Rosa)

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From the 1970s, aided by new lighter weight tents and equipment and a gradual change in philosophy which regarded camping high in the mountains as worthwhile in its own right (rather than something to be endured while ‘bivvying’ from one valley to the next), new high-level routes were established throughout the Alps, and from 1978 in the Pyrenees too, and 3000 m peaks too numerous to mention individually were scaled (a list is included as a separate appendix). In terms of number of peaks climbed, the 1990 Trek probably set a record with 10 summits reached (three over 3000 m) in 13 glorious days walking in the East Tyrol. On the unashamedly ‘peak-bagging’ 1991 Trek to the Vanoise mountain huts were used to enable ascents to six 3000 m peaks to be made.

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It was on the first Morocco Trek to the High Atlas mountains in 1992 that the first 4000 m summit was reached, although it is open to debate as to *which* mountain was the first 4000 m peak.

*The 1:50,000 map gives Ifrouane’s height as 4001 m and the 1:100,000 map gives it as 3996 m. In view of the doubts about the fourth figure, and the fairly large discrepancies in the heights given for some other summits (Jbel Oukaimeden varies by 11 m and Jbel Attar by 21 m), the sensible **scientific** thing to do is to round the height to 3 significant figures, 4000 m. (Trek Log 1992)*

Whatever the truth of the matter, three days later Trek climbed Toubkal, at 4167 m (13,670 ft) the highest peak in the Atlas Mountains and in north Africa, (with about half the party making an afternoon ascent and bivouacking on the summit), and the day after that most of the party made the ascent of Ouanoukrim (4088 m), the second highest in the range. The 1996 route was a reprise of the one in 1992 with some additional summits, and it was the continuation along the Ifrouane ridge to include the two subsidiary summits of Adrar-n-Dern (3853 m and 3533 m) which gave rise to probably the biggest ascent of any Trek, 2120 m (6960 ft).

In addition to the descent of the spectacular Mgoun Gorge, the 1999 Moroccan Trek completed the set of all the 4000 m Atlas peaks with an ascent of Mgoun (4068 m), and in 2003 a long and ambitious Trek included ascents of both Mgoun and Toubkal. The 2004 Trek based around Chamonix used mountain huts to explore the glaciers of the Mont Blanc range, and made a guided ascent of the Mer de Glace and the glaciers above it to reach the Aiguille du Midi (3842 m) which now takes its place as Trek’s second highest Alpine peak.

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Not all recent Treks have set off in search of the big peaks. The 1984 Trek in Iceland was much more of a wilderness experience, though it does have the distinction of including Trek’s only ascent into the summit cone of an active volcano, Hekla (1491 m, 4890 ft) which erupted just two years before Trek’s visit. The 1993 Trek to Andorra was to an area of wild beauty, a multitude of tarns, flower-filled meadows and lofty ridge walks - and no 3000 m peaks. And of course the recent Desert Treks have a quite different philosophy from that of the more traditional mountaineering Treks.

And what of Trek’s first 5000+ m peak? Kilimanjaro? Peru? The Himalaya?  
The new century beckons.

Allan Witton

September 2004

*(Wherever possible heights quoted in the main text are taken from current maps. There are, understandably, discrepancies between these and the ones given in Ulula articles which were based on maps current at the time, but now many decades old.)*

## DEFINITIONS OF TREKKING

The 8th Edition (1990) of the Concise Oxford Dictionary defines *trek* as follows:

- Verb     1. To travel or make one's way arduously  
          2. (Especially historically) To migrate or journey with one's belongings by ox-wagon
- Noun     1. A journey or walk made by trekking  
          2. An organised migration of a body of persons

The 10th Edition, Revised (2001) defines the noun first:

- Noun     1. A long and arduous journey, especially one made on foot  
          2. (S. African) A leg or stage of a journey
- Verb     1. To go on a trek  
          2. (Historical, chiefly S. African) To migrate or journey by ox-wagon  
          3. (S. African - of an ox) To draw a vehicle or pull a load
- Origin    C19 from South African Dutch, *trek* (noun), *trekken* (verb) 'pull, travel'

In his book '*Trekking - Great Walks of the World*' mountaineer and writer John Cleare defines a Trek as:

*'A long and difficult journey in remote country, usually on foot, a journey off the beaten track that demands physical endeavour, that requires a feeling for a new country, for unfamiliar places and people, a trip that combines a personal quest with an element of adventure in places unimagined by the conventional tourist.'*

All these have elements which describe MGS trekking over the years, but to cover the variety of Treks which

- (a) have included staying overnight in mountain huts, camping in tents or bivouacking<sup>1</sup> without tents or any other accommodation,
- (b) involved carrying camping, cooking and all other equipment from one site to the next or which used pack animals to carry much of the supplies,

perhaps the following comes closest to defining MGS trekking:

Undertaking a strenuous and extended journey  
involving walking from one overnight stopping place to another  
often in mountainous, remote or other arduous terrain.

<sup>1</sup> The 8th Edition (1990) of the Concise Oxford Dictionary defines *bivouac* as follows:

- Noun     A temporary open encampment without tents, especially of soldiers  
Verb     To camp in a bivouac, especially overnight

The 10th Edition, Revised (2001) defines *bivouac* as:

- Noun     A temporary camp without tents or cover  
Verb     To stay in such a camp  
Origin    C18 from French, probably from Swiss German *Bîwacht* 'additional guard at night'

It also notes the C20 informal abbreviation *bivvy* (noun) as a small tent or temporary shelter, and as a verb to use such tent or shelter.

Allan Witton    September 2004

## NOTES ON FOREIGN TREK LOGS

There follows a copy of the original hand written introduction to the Foreign Trek Log Book written by Chris Little in 1977. The book contains hand written logs for the nine Treks from 1974 to 1982.

*Detailed records (or memories) of Trek prior to 1973 appear to have been lost in the mists of time. This is a pity, not just from a historical point of view, but also from the practical one that future leaders of Trek cannot easily benefit from the experience gained in these Treks. While Ulula articles are of some value, they cannot be detailed enough to be of great service to those planning future Treks. In order that a detailed record of subsequent Treks be available for reference, I suggest the following:*

1. *This book be handed on from one Trek leader to the next.*
2. *Trek leaders record the details of their Trek in the book, keeping to the same format as much as possible. Their report should include:*
  - (a) *details of the itinerary, including times (excluding breaks for lunch rests etc.), nature of ground, campsites, costs etc.*
  - (b) *details of equipment purchased*
  - (c) *details of balance of account.**Reading previous reports will help set a useful pattern for reports.*
3. *If for any unfortunate reason Trek should not run in the year following his report, the current Trek leader should hand the book to the Secretary of the Common Room before leaving the school, thus ensuring the book does not find its way into a neglected attic.*
4. *A library of maps, guides and other information should be kept in conjunction with this book and passed on in a similar manner. Without maps the details here are obviously pretty useless.*

*C.T.Little MGS September 1977*

When planning the first Trek I organised (to the Pyrenees in 1982) I found the log of the first Pyrenean Trek in 1978 a very useful reference, and I wholeheartedly concur with Chris Little's two reasons for maintaining a log i.e. as a practical help to future leaders taking Trek to the same area, and as an historical record more detailed than Ulula.

From 1983 to 1997 each year's log has been produced as a separate, word-processed expedition report, but still with the original aims. In these reports the itinerary has been essentially a brief, factual account, concentrating mainly on the route taken, times and conditions, although occasionally (for instance for the first Morocco Trek in 1992) there is a fuller account of life on Trek.

Sadly, from 1998 onwards Trek Log was discontinued. However, for each of the post 1997 Treks that I have been on (1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002) I have written 'LAW's Journal'. These bear a remarkable similarity to their predecessors, the Trek Logs!

For the purpose of the Trekking Centenary I had hoped to have word-processed the previously hand written logs from 1974 to 1982 in order to make them more widely available in digital form. I have made significant progress with this, but regrettably the task will not be completed for some time.

Allan Witton September 2004



## LIST OF TREKS - 1904 to 1955

| YEAR  | COUNTRY       | AREA                                           | LEADER  | STAFF                                                                                         |
|-------|---------------|------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1904  | England       | Marches from Grasmere Camp                     |         |                                                                                               |
| 1908  | England       | Route marches from Alderley and Grasmere Camps |         |                                                                                               |
| 1910  | Germany       |                                                | Paton/  | Nicholson                                                                                     |
| 1911  | England       | Three Shires Route March from Alderley Camp    |         |                                                                                               |
|       | France        | Brittany                                       |         |                                                                                               |
|       | Germany       | Black Forest                                   | Paton/  | Nicholson                                                                                     |
| 1912  | England       | Three Shires Route March                       |         |                                                                                               |
|       | France        | Brittany/Normandy                              |         | Porter Daan Hartley Cooper Brown                                                              |
| 1913  | Belgium       |                                                |         |                                                                                               |
|       | Ireland       | Donegal                                        |         |                                                                                               |
|       | Ireland       | Cork/Kerry                                     |         |                                                                                               |
| 1914  | England       | Three Counties Trek                            |         |                                                                                               |
|       | France        | Normandy                                       | Hope    |                                                                                               |
| <hr/> |               |                                                |         |                                                                                               |
| 1919  | Wales         | Snowdon                                        | Green   |                                                                                               |
| 1920  | France        | Brittany                                       | Green   | Lob Heathcote                                                                                 |
| 1921  | Scotland      | Trossachs                                      |         |                                                                                               |
|       | France        | Normandy                                       | Jadhava |                                                                                               |
| 1922  | Scotland      |                                                | Rivers  |                                                                                               |
|       | Scotland      | Perthshire                                     | Lob     | Green Heathcote Smith Radford                                                                 |
|       | Britain       | Devon                                          | Hulme   |                                                                                               |
| 1923  | Italy         |                                                | Lob     | Green Saunders Smith McEachran Cunliffe                                                       |
|       | France        | Normandy                                       | Hulme   | Allen                                                                                         |
| 1924  | Spain         |                                                | Lob     | Green Saunders Cunliffe Golding                                                               |
| 1925  | Germany       | Black Forest                                   | Lob     | Green Cunliffe                                                                                |
| 1926  | Italy         | Dolomites                                      | Lob     | Green Cunliffe Field Kemp Hulme McClaren Coates<br>Doughty McEachran                          |
| 1927  | Scotland      | Trossachs                                      | Lob     | Green Cunliffe Field Moore Smith Kemp Doughty Porter                                          |
|       | England       | Devon/Dorset                                   | Simkins |                                                                                               |
|       | England       | Northumberland                                 |         |                                                                                               |
|       | France        | Alsace                                         | Hulme   | Kennelly                                                                                      |
| 1928  | France        | Savoy                                          | Lob     | Green Cunliffe Field Oldham Doughty McEachran Hyslop                                          |
| 1929  | England       | Lake District                                  | Lob     | Green Cunliffe Field Kemp Lund Oldham Smith<br>Doughty Somerford Kenyon Kelly Hyslop Richmond |
|       | France        | Jura                                           | Hulme   | Allen Parker                                                                                  |
|       | England       | Kent                                           |         |                                                                                               |
|       | Norway        |                                                | Madden  |                                                                                               |
| 1930  | Germany       | Bavaria                                        | Lob     | Green Cunliffe Field King Marsden Miller Oldham<br>Smith Doughty Richardson                   |
|       | Swiss/Germany |                                                | Rhine   | HulmeSimkins                                                                                  |
| 1931  | Scotland      | Cairngorms                                     | Lob     | Green Cunliffe Field Hodge Lund Hyslop Doughty Owen                                           |
|       | Norway        |                                                |         |                                                                                               |
| 1932  | Scotland      | Argyllshire                                    | Lob     | Green Cunliffe Field Hyslop King Maugham Doughty Owen                                         |
|       | England       | Cotswolds                                      | Simkins |                                                                                               |

|      |          |                  |           |                                                                         |
|------|----------|------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1933 | England  | Lake District    | King      |                                                                         |
|      | Italy    | Dolomites        | Lob       | Green Cunliffe Field Hyslop Doughty McEachran Richardson                |
|      | England  | Devon            |           |                                                                         |
|      | Austria  | East Tyrol       | Poskitt   | Storey                                                                  |
| 1934 | Wales    | Snowdon          | Lob       | Green Cunliffe Field Toft Doughty Owen                                  |
|      | England  | Devon/Cornwall   |           |                                                                         |
| 1935 | England  | Somerset         | Simkins   |                                                                         |
|      | England  | Cornwall         |           |                                                                         |
|      | Scotland | West Highlands   |           |                                                                         |
|      | France*  | TMB              | Lob       | Green Cunliffe Field Bennett Lingard Oldham Toft Doughty McEachran Owen |
| 1936 | England  | Dorset/Wiltshire | Simkins   |                                                                         |
|      | England  | Devon            | Hodge     |                                                                         |
|      | Austria  | Tyrol            | Lob       | Green Cunliffe Lingard                                                  |
| 1937 | England  | Yorkshire Dales  | Lob       | Green Cunliffe Field Lingard Somerford Hill                             |
|      | England  | Devon            |           |                                                                         |
| 1938 | France   | Dauphiné         | Lob       | Green Cunliffe Lingard                                                  |
|      | France   | Brittany         | Hodge     | Lund                                                                    |
|      | Ireland  | Connemara        |           |                                                                         |
| 1939 | Scotland | Perthshire       | Lob       | Green Cunliffe Field Lingard Copley                                     |
|      | England  | Devon/Cornwall   | Hodge     | Lund                                                                    |
| 1946 | Scotland | Perthshire       | Lingard   | Murphy Robinson Dubu                                                    |
| 1947 | France   | Savoy            | Lingard   | Murphy Dubu                                                             |
| 1948 | France   | Dauphiné         | Lingard   | Dubu Cooke Smith                                                        |
| 1949 | France   | Savoy            | Lingard   | Dubu Smith Bailey Hamflett                                              |
| 1950 | Germany  | Rhine            |           |                                                                         |
|      | France*  | TMB              | Lingard   | Dubu Smith Bailey Robinson                                              |
| 1951 | Austria  | Tyrol            | Lingard   | Bailey Raistrick Williams Cooke                                         |
| 1952 | France   | Dauphiné         | Lingard   | Bailey Raistrick Williams Young                                         |
| 1953 | France   | Meije/Mont Blanc | Lingard   | Bailey Williams Young Roberts                                           |
|      | Ireland  | Mayo             | Brockbank |                                                                         |
| 1954 | France*  | TMB              | Lingard   | Bailey Williams Young Roberts Robinson Stalker John                     |
| 1955 | Austria  | Tyrol            | Williams  | Bailey Roberts Stalker Raistrick Cooke                                  |

France\* TMB: The Tour du Mont Blanc passes through France, Italy and Switzerland.

The above list is derived from two sources.

1. A list compiled by Ian Bailey for the 1982 Open Day which although having details (including staff lists) of many Treks, only includes Lob's Treks during the inter-war years.
2. Reports of Treks in Ulula, many of which have few (and in some cases no) details of staff involved.

The combined list was compiled by Allan Witton for the Trekking Centenary in 2004.

## FOREIGN AND DESERT TREKS 1956 to 2004

| YEAR | COUNTRY                      | AREA                        | LEADER     | STAFF                                               |
|------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1956 | Italy                        | Dolomites                   | Williams   | Roberts Young                                       |
| 1957 | Switzerland                  | Matterhorn                  | Williams   | Roberts Young                                       |
| 1958 | Austria                      | East Tyrol                  | Williams   | Roberts Kahn Snook                                  |
| 1959 | France*                      | TMB                         | Williams   | Roberts Snook Womersley Bowles                      |
| 1960 | Switzerland                  | Monte Rosa                  | Williams   | Kahn Dobson                                         |
| 1961 | Italy                        | Dolomites                   | Cooke      | Kahn Bowles Dobson Thompson                         |
| 1962 | Switzerland                  | Bernese Oberland            | Cooke      | Kahn Womersley Dobson Barlow Medlyn                 |
| 1963 | Austria                      | Tyrol                       | Cooke      | Dobson Barlow Medlyn Forster Gibbs                  |
| 1964 | Switzerland                  | Engadine                    | Cooke      | Barlow Medlyn Phythian                              |
| 1965 | Switzerland/Italy            | Monte Rosa                  | Barlow     | R.G.Harris Hunt Robinson                            |
| 1966 | France*                      | TMB                         | Kahn       | Phythian Robinson Simpkin                           |
| 1967 | Switzerland                  | Pennine Alps                | Phythian   | Wylde Kershaw                                       |
| 1968 | Switzerland                  | Bernese Oberland            | Phythian   | Wylde Bowyer                                        |
| 1969 | ---                          |                             |            |                                                     |
| 1970 | ---                          |                             |            |                                                     |
| 1971 | Switzerland/Italy            | Monte Rosa                  | Bowyer     | Brydon Jackson                                      |
| 1972 | France*                      | TMB                         | Erschine   | Brydon Blagden                                      |
| 1973 | France/Italy                 | Vanoise/Paradiso            | Wylde      | Bowyer Stubbs Geoghegan                             |
| 1974 | France/<br>Switzerland/Italy | Mont Blanc/<br>Matterhorn   | Wylde      | Bowyer Stubbs Geoghegan Peacock<br>Buckley Poole    |
| 1975 | Switzerland/Italy            | Monte Rosa                  | Peacock    | Stubbs Geoghegan Buckley Little                     |
| 1976 | Italy                        | Dolomites                   | Little     | Stubbs Buckley Walker                               |
| 1977 | Austria                      | Tyrol                       | Little     | Peacock Buckley Walker Hancock                      |
| 1978 | France/Spain                 | Pyrenees                    | Walker     | Little Peacock Stubbs                               |
| 1979 | Switzerland                  | Bernese Oberland            | Little     | Lerversha Gomersall                                 |
| 1980 | Italy                        | Dolomites                   | Lerversha/ | Little Witton (Hamment)                             |
| 1981 | Austria                      | East Tyrol                  | Lerversha  | Witton Stubbs Dobson Souster                        |
| 1982 | France                       | Pyrenees                    | Witton     | Lerversha Stubbs Dobson Souster Willson             |
| 1983 | France/<br>Switzerland       | Mont Blanc/<br>Grand Combin | Witton     | Lerversha Stubbs Dobson Souster<br>Brierley Kennedy |
| 1984 | Iceland                      |                             | (Witton)/  | Willson Souster Adams Green Orrell                  |
|      | Italy                        | Dolomites/Ortler            | Lerversha  | Stubbs Bridges                                      |
| 1985 | Austria                      | Zillertal                   | Witton     | Lerversha Willson Dobson Souster Adams              |
| 1986 | France                       | Vanoise                     | Witton     | Lerversha Stubbs Dobson SousterDuffy Hesketh        |
| 1987 | France/Spain                 | Pyrenees                    | Witton     | Stubbs Dobson Duffy Hand                            |
| 1988 | France*                      | TMB                         | Witton     | Dobson Hesketh Staufenberg (Staufenberg)            |

|      |                |                |           |                                                                       |
|------|----------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1989 | Italy          | Dolomites      | Witton    | Dobson Duffy Thorpe Milne (Witton)                                    |
| 1990 | Austria        | East Tyrol     | Witton    | Dobson Hand Milne (Witton)                                            |
| 1991 | France         | Vanoise        | Witton    | Dobson Seel                                                           |
|      | Norway         | Lyngen/Romsdal | McDonald  | Hesketh Milne Burin                                                   |
| 1992 | Morocco        | High Atlas     | Witton    | Dobson Duffy Seel                                                     |
| 1993 | France/Andorra | Pyrenees       | Witton    | Dobson Duffy Seel Bedford Uren                                        |
| 1994 | Switzerland    | Bernina Alps   | Witton    | Dobson Duffy Cittanova                                                |
| 1995 | Austria        | Stubai Alps    | Witton    | Dobson Willson Hand Cittanova Taylor                                  |
| 1996 | Morocco        | High Atlas     | Witton    | Dobson Willson Cittanova Milne                                        |
| 1997 | France         | Vanoise        | Witton    | Cittanova Milne Renshaw Williams Burin                                |
| 1998 | France/Spain   | Pyrenees       | Cittanova | Willson Hand Renshaw Burin Pattison Anderson                          |
| 1999 | Morocco        | Atlas/Sahara   | Cittanova | Witton Willson Hand Renshaw Burin Pattison                            |
| 2000 | Mauritania     | El Bayyed      | Cittanova | Hand                                                                  |
|      | France*        | TMB            | Cittanova | Witton Willson Hand Burin Pattison                                    |
| 2001 | Mauritania     | Wad Esh Shuk   | Cittanova | Hand                                                                  |
|      | Italy          | Dolomites      | Cittanova | Witton Willson Hand Williams Chandler                                 |
| 2002 | Mauritania     | Tarf Agenjob   | Cittanova | Travers                                                               |
|      | France/Spain   | Pyrenees       | Cittanova | Witton Willson Hand Pattison Williams<br>Chandler Coller Gardner Farr |
| 2003 | Morocco        | Atlas Traverse | Cittanova | Willson Hand Pattison Burin Coller McMurray-Taylor                    |
| 2004 | Morocco        | Zagora         | Cittanova | Hand                                                                  |
|      | France         | Mont Blanc     | Cittanova | Willson Hand Coller Gardner                                           |

France\* TMB: The Tour du Mont Blanc passes through France, Italy and Switzerland

The first part of this list was compiled by Ian Bailey for the 1982 Open Day

It was updated by Allan Witton for the Trekking Centenary in 2004.

## FOREIGN TREK HIGH POINTS 1974 - 2004

This is a list of the highest points reached by Foreign Trek since detailed records were started with Trek Log in 1974. Many other summits and high passes have been climbed but only those over 3000 metres are listed, except when a Trek didn't reach this height in which case the highest point reached that year is given.

|      | SUMMITS             |                                                                                                                               | OTHER HIGH POINTS                                            |                                                                           |
|------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2004 | MOROCCO (Desert)    | --                                                                                                                            |                                                              |                                                                           |
|      | CHAMONIX            | Aiguille du Midi<br>le Buet                                                                                                   | 3842<br>3096                                                 |                                                                           |
| 2003 | MOROCCO             | Toubkal<br>Mgoun                                                                                                              | 4167<br>4068                                                 |                                                                           |
| 2002 | MAURITANIA (Desert) | --                                                                                                                            |                                                              |                                                                           |
|      | PYRENEES            | le Taillon                                                                                                                    | 3144                                                         |                                                                           |
| 2001 | MAURITANIA (Desert) | --                                                                                                                            |                                                              |                                                                           |
|      | DOLOMITES           | la Varella                                                                                                                    | 3055                                                         |                                                                           |
| 2000 | MAURITANIA (Desert) | --                                                                                                                            |                                                              |                                                                           |
|      | TOUR DU MONT BLANC  |                                                                                                                               | Col des Fours                                                | 2665                                                                      |
| 1999 | MOROCCO             | Mgoun<br>Jbel Tignousti                                                                                                       | 4068<br>3819                                                 | Jbel Aguensou-n-Issis<br>Tarkeddid S ridge<br>3300<br>3216                |
| 1998 | PYRENEES            | Pimené                                                                                                                        | 2801                                                         |                                                                           |
| 1997 | VANOISE             | Rateau d'Aussois<br>Pointe de l'Observatoire                                                                                  | 3131<br>3015                                                 |                                                                           |
| 1996 | MOROCCO             | Toubkal<br>Ouanoukrim<br>Toubkal West<br>Iferouane<br>Adrar-n-Dern East<br>Adrar-n-Dern West<br>Jbel Oukaïmeden<br>Jbel Attar | 4167<br>4088<br>4020<br>4000<br>3853<br>3533<br>3273<br>3267 | Tizi n'Tadat<br>Tizi n'Ouanoums<br>Tizi n'Ouraine<br>3740<br>3664<br>3120 |
| 1995 | STUBAI ALPS         | Rinnen Spitz                                                                                                                  | 3006                                                         | Gamsspitzl (N ridge)<br>3050                                              |
| 1994 | BERNINA ALPS        | Piz Languard<br>Piz Ot<br>Munt Pers<br>Piz Nair                                                                               | 3262<br>3246<br>3207<br>3057                                 |                                                                           |
| 1993 | ARRIÈGE - ANDORRA   | Pic Carlit                                                                                                                    | 2921                                                         |                                                                           |
| 1992 | MOROCCO             | Toubkal<br>Ouanoukrim<br>Iferouane<br>Jbel Oukaïmeden<br>Jbel Attar                                                           | 4167<br>4088<br>4000<br>3273<br>3267                         | Tizi n'Tadat<br>Tizi n'Ouanoums<br>Tizi n'Ouraine<br>3740<br>3664<br>3120 |
| 1991 | VANOISE             | Pointe de la Sana<br>Grand Roc<br>Rateau d'Aussois<br>Pointe Boussac<br>Pointe des Fours<br>Pointe du Pisset                  | 3436<br>3316<br>3131<br>3090<br>3072<br>3033                 |                                                                           |
|      | NORWAY              | Galdhøpiggen                                                                                                                  | 2469                                                         |                                                                           |

|                                   | SUMMITS                  |                | OTHER HIGH POINTS               |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1990 OST TIROL                    | Kleine Muntanitz         | 3192           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Böses Weibl              | 3121           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Wilden Kogel             | 3022           |                                 |                                   |
| 1989 DOLOMITES                    | Piz Boè                  | 3152           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | la Varella               | 3055           |                                 |                                   |
| 1988 TOUR DU MONT BLANC           | Tête Nord des Fours      | 2756           |                                 |                                   |
| 1987 PYRENEES                     | le Taillon               | 3144           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Petit Vignemale          | 3032           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Grande Fache             | 3005           |                                 |                                   |
| 1986 VANOISE                      | Grande Sassièrè          | 3747           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Pointe de l'Observatoire | 3015           | Pointe de la Réchasse (W Ridge) | 3044                              |
| 1985 ZILLERTAL                    | Schwarzenstein           | 3369           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Schönbichlerhorn         | 3134           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Richter Spitz            | 3052           |                                 |                                   |
| 1984 ICELAND                      | Hekla                    | 1491           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | DOLOMITES/ORTLER         | Mont Confinale | 3370                            | Mont Cevedale (NW Glacier) ~ 3600 |
| 1983 MONT BLANC -<br>GRAND COMBIN | Mont Rouge du Giétro     | 3439           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Mont Avril               | 3347           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Pointe d'Orny            | 3270           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Grand Tavé               | 3158           |                                 |                                   |
| 1982 PYRENEES                     | Vignemale                | 3298           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Pic Perdiguère           | 3222           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | le Taillon               | 3144           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Pic de Néouvielle        | 3091           |                                 |                                   |
| 1981 EAST TIROL                   | Kasteneck                | 2836           |                                 |                                   |
| 1980 DOLOMITES                    | Tofana di Rozes          | 3224           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | La Varella               | 3055           |                                 |                                   |
| 1979 BERNESE OBERLAND             | Wildstrubel              | 3244           | Les Diablerets (NE Ridge)       | 3109                              |
| 1978 PYRENEES                     | Vignemale                | 3298           | Mont Perdido (NW Ridge)         | ~3050                             |
|                                   | le Taillon               | 3144           |                                 |                                   |
|                                   | Grande Fache             | 3005           |                                 |                                   |
| 1977 TIROL                        | Hohe Geige               | 3395           | Riffeljoch                      | 3100                              |
|                                   | Schaufel Spitz           | 3333           | Ölgrubenjoch                    | 3095                              |
| 1976 MARMOLADA                    | Piz Boè                  | 3152           |                                 |                                   |
| 1975 MONTE ROSA<br>3611           | Klein Matterhorn         | 3883           | Gnifetti Hut                    |                                   |
| 3029                              | Mettelhorn               | 3406           | Britannia Hut                   |                                   |
| 1974 CHAMONIX - ZERMATT           |                          |                | Col du Mont Rouge               | 3325                              |
|                                   |                          |                | Theodulpass                     | 3290                              |
|                                   |                          |                | Hörnli Hut                      | 3260                              |
|                                   |                          |                | Col Collon                      | 3087                              |
|                                   |                          |                | Col de Valcournera              | 3066                              |

I started this list, by reference to Trek Logs, in 1986 and have updated it each year since.

Allan Witton September 2004



## SCOTTISH TREKS 1956 - 2004

| YEAR | AREA                                 | LEADER        | STAFF                                          |
|------|--------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1956 | Cairngorms and Argyllshire           | Bailey        | Bamford, Gee, Stalker Watson                   |
| 1957 | Inverness-shire and Wester Ross      | Bailey        | Hamflett, Watson                               |
| 1958 | Argyllshire, Mull and Iona           | Bailey        | Hamflett, Raistrick, Watson                    |
| 1959 | Inverness-shire and Torridon         | Bailey        | Critchley, Hamflett, Raistrick, Watson         |
| 1960 | Easter Ross and Sutherland           | Bailey        | Critchley, Hamflett                            |
| 1961 | Argyllshire, Inverness-shire to Skye | Bailey        | Critchley, Hamflett, Harris, Raistrick, Watson |
| 1962 | Inverness-shire and Wester Ross      | Bailey        | Critchley, Harris, Watson                      |
| 1963 | Argyllshire, Mull and Iona           | Bailey        | Critchley, Harris, Watson                      |
| 1964 | Inverness-shire and Wester Ross      | Bailey        | Critchley, Harris, Watson                      |
| 1965 | Argyllshire, Inverness to Skye       | Bailey        | Critchley, Harris                              |
| 1973 | Knoydart                             | Bentham       | Handley, Willson                               |
| 1974 | Affric and Mullardoch                | Bentham       | Andronov, Handley, Willson                     |
| 1975 | Torridon                             | Bentham       | Andronov, Handley, Willson                     |
| 1976 | Cairngorms                           | Bentham       | Davies, Willson                                |
| 1977 | Mamores                              | Willson       | Davies, Frost, Witton                          |
| 1978 | Ben Alder                            | Willson       | Gomersall, Witton                              |
| 1979 | Sutherland                           | Willson       | Hamflett, Orrell, Witton                       |
| 1980 | Cairngorms                           | Willson       | Hamflett, Orrell, Peake                        |
| 1981 | Black Mount - Ben Nevis              | Willson       | Hamflett, Peake                                |
| 1982 | Affric and Kintail                   | Hamflett      | Orrell, Peake, Shufflebottom                   |
| 1983 | Torridon                             | Hamflett      | Adams, Hand, Orrell, Shufflebottom, Willson    |
| 1984 | Knoydart                             | Hamflett      | Hand, Peake, Shufflebottom                     |
| 1985 | Central Grampians                    | Hamflett      | Bridges, Hand, Shufflebottom,                  |
| 1986 | Sutherland                           | Hamflett      | Hand, Shufflebottom, Willson                   |
| 1987 | Cannich - Torridon - Fannichs        | Hamflett      | Hesketh, Shufflebottom, Willson                |
| 1988 | Glen Coe                             | Hamflett      | Hand, McDonald, Shufflebottom, Willson         |
| 1989 | Grampian and Cairngorms              | Shufflebottom | Hamflett (OM), Hand, McDonald, Yates           |
| 1990 | Coast to Coast                       | Shufflebottom | Hamflett (OM), McDonald, Willson               |
| 1991 | Breadalbane                          | Shufflebottom | Hand, Willson                                  |
| 1992 | Dalwhinnie to Fort William           | Shufflebottom | Hand, McDonald, Willson                        |
| 1993 |                                      |               |                                                |
| 1994 | Knoydart                             | Shufflebottom | Hand, McDonald, Willson, Buckley               |
| 1995 |                                      |               |                                                |
| 1996 |                                      |               |                                                |
| 1997 |                                      |               |                                                |
| 1998 | Grampians and Cairngorms             | McDonald      | Powell                                         |
| 1999 | Cairngorms and Lochnagar             | McDonald      | Hesketh, Hodkinson, Shufflebottom, Whiteley    |
| 2000 |                                      |               |                                                |
| 2001 |                                      |               |                                                |
| 2002 | Fannichs and Glen Carron             | McDonald      | Hesketh, Thorpe                                |
| 2003 | Central Grampians                    | McDonald      | Gardner, Hicks                                 |
| 2004 | Torridon and Letterewe               | McDonald      | Herne, Hesketh, Hicks                          |



Scottish Trek 2003: Loch Etchachan and Ben Macdui from Beinn Mheadhoin

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Paul Shufflebottom for his article 'Scottish Treks 1956 – 2004'  
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I already had my copies of Appendices A to H

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Allan Witton

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