

THE MANCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL

FOREIGN TREK 1983 MONT BLANC - GRAND COMBIN



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Cover photographs: Top *Early morning after the first night's mountain camp at Lacs Noirs, with Mont Blanc and the Chamonix Aiguilles across the Chamonix valley*

Bottom *The camp at Lac de Tsofeiret, with Grand Combin on the skyline*

The text of this report was originally produced in the autumn of 1983 on a BBC computer using Wordwise. It was the first Trek Log to be word-processed; the previous Logs (1974 to 1982) were hand-written in the Trek Log Book which was initiated by Chris Little. This log was later reprocessed using an Apple Macintosh and Macwrite 2, and this final version with images and digital sketch maps was reprocessed using an Apple Macintosh and Microsoft Word in 2015. The images were scanned from 35 mm slides taken for the Trek Reunion in November 1983.

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Version 1

LEADER Allan Witton

STAFF Gerry Leversha, Derek Stubbs, Bill Souster, Adrian Dobson, Roger Brierly, Tom Kennedy
(3 tents)
Dennis Hughes (Coach driver)

TREKKERS

Tent	Leader	Members	38 Trekkers	* denotes a previous Foreign Trek
1	John Davis 2Mw**	Jon Bowland 2Mw*	John Barnes 2Mw	Robert Waller MS2p
2	Neil Stanford 2By	Tom Solomon 2By*	Hugh Nicholson 2Mb*	Rick Bailey 2Mw
3	Nick Plimmer 5H*	Howard Foxall 5H*	Paul Fletcher 2Ma*	Chris Hopkinson 2Ma
4	Lewis Grundy 3Ma*	Howard Lister 3Ma*	Bruce Nelson MS3p	John Mottershead 2Ba
5	Peter Kimpton 6T	Ben Dyson C3	Harry Adshead M3	Paul Goldberg M3
6	Guy Lowe MS3t	Steve Lodge MS3t	Adrian Cohen 6T	Simon Brunert 6T
7	Richard Williams MS3p	John Stinson 3Mz	Paul Atkins 3Ba	Steven Blomeley 3Ba
8	Andrew Mellor 5G	Martin Freeman 4K	Farrel Igielman 4G	Steve Edmondson 4G
9	Chris Rains 2My*	Rupert Nichols 2My	Kevin Henry 2My	
10	David Storer 2Mb*	Steve Williamson 2Mb	Alistair Wright 2Mb	

DATES Monday 18th July to Friday 5th August (19 days)

COST £180



Staff on the summit of Grand Tavé: Gerry, Bill, Roger, Derek, Dennis, Allan, Tom, Adrian

TENT GROUP PHOTOGRAPHS



Tent 1 John Davis, Jon Bowland, Robert Waller John Barnes
at the Lacs Noirs campsite



Tent 2 Rick Bailey, Hugh Nicholson,
Tom Solomon, Neil Stanford en route for
Fenêtre d'Arpette with the Trient glacier
and Aiguille du Tour



Tent 3 Paul Fletcher, Chris Hopkinson, Nick Plimmer,
Howard Foxall outside the Chanrion hut with Grand Combin



Tent 4 Howard Lister, Bruce Nelson,
John Mottershead, Lewis Grundy



Tent 5 Harry Adshead, Peter Kimpton, Ben Dyson, Paul Goldberg above Lac de Mauvoisin



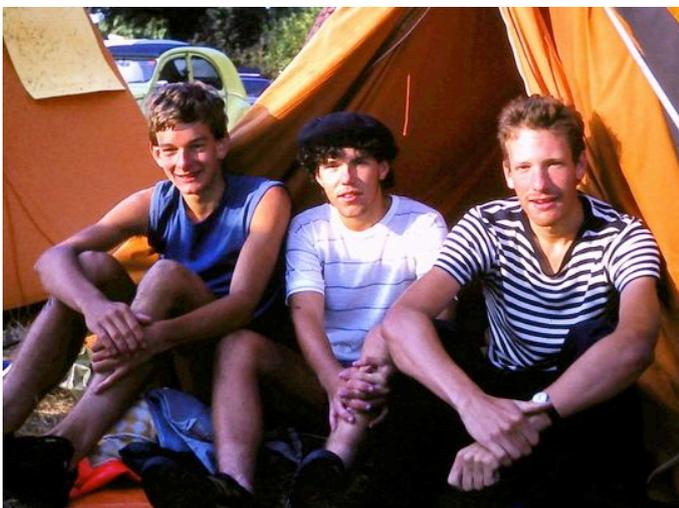
Tent 6 Adrian Cohen, Guy Lowe,
Steve Lodge, Simon Brunert
on the glacier de Brenay, with Mont Avril



Tent 7 John Stinson, Paul Atkins, Richard Williams,
Steven Blomeley below Pas de Chèvres



Tent 8 Martin Freeman, Farrel Igelman, Steve Edmondson, Andrew Mellor



Tent 9 Rupert Nichols, Chris Rains, Kevin Henry



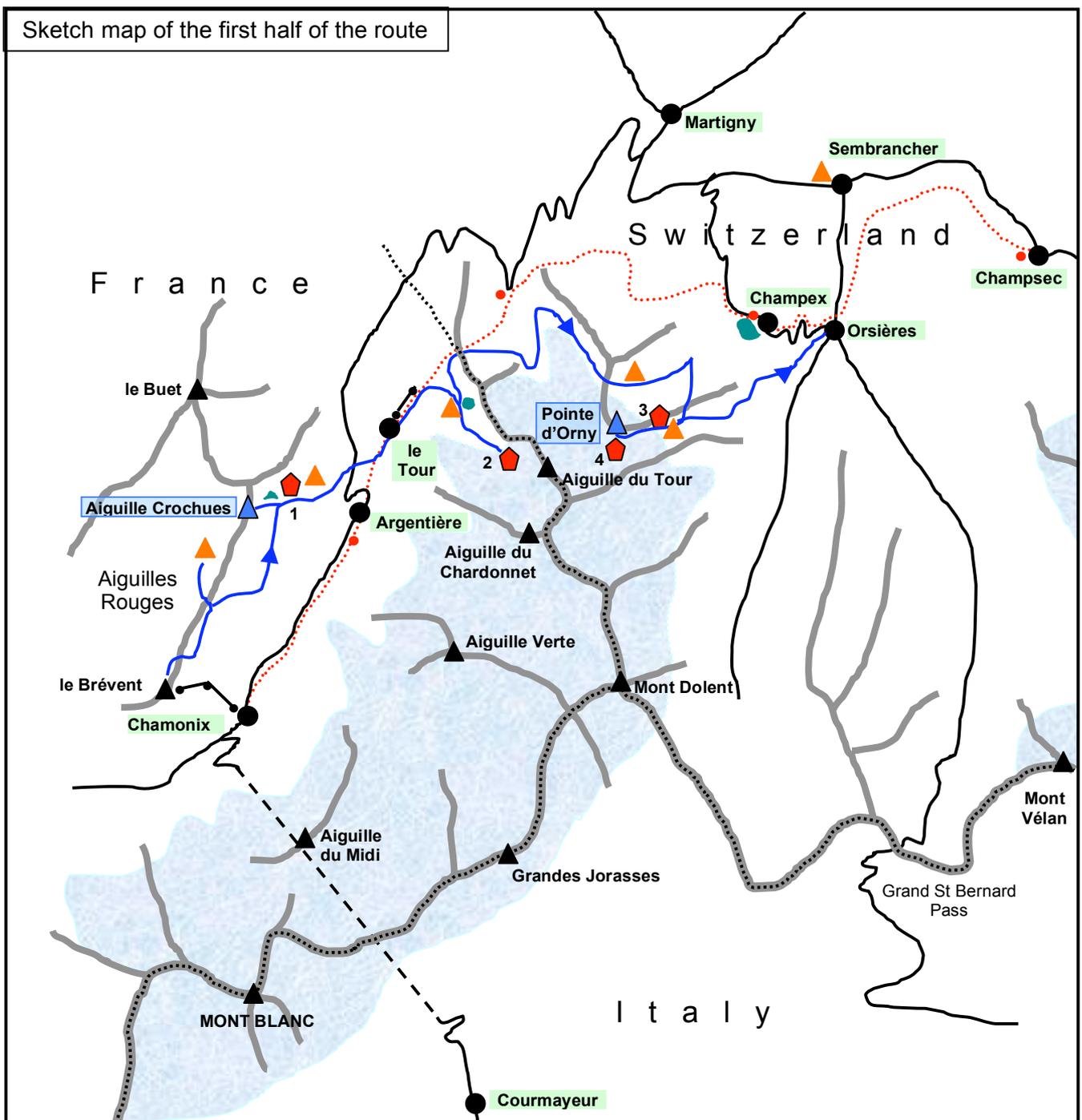
Tent 10 David Storer, Alistair Wright,
Steve Williamson

THE WALKING ROUTE

The route was a variation of the Chamonix to Zermatt theme for walkers, going only as far as Arolla. Finishing at Arolla allowed some time to be spent in the Aiguilles Rouges, and it avoided the difficult crossing between the Bertol and Schönbiel huts or the much longer alternative via Col Collon, through Italy and over the Theodulpas to Zermatt.

To try and avoid difficulties in finding campsites in popular valleys (particularly Chamonix) I planned to spend most nights camping in the mountains. The glorious weather we had for the first 12 days meant that we could stay high and the route needed little modification.

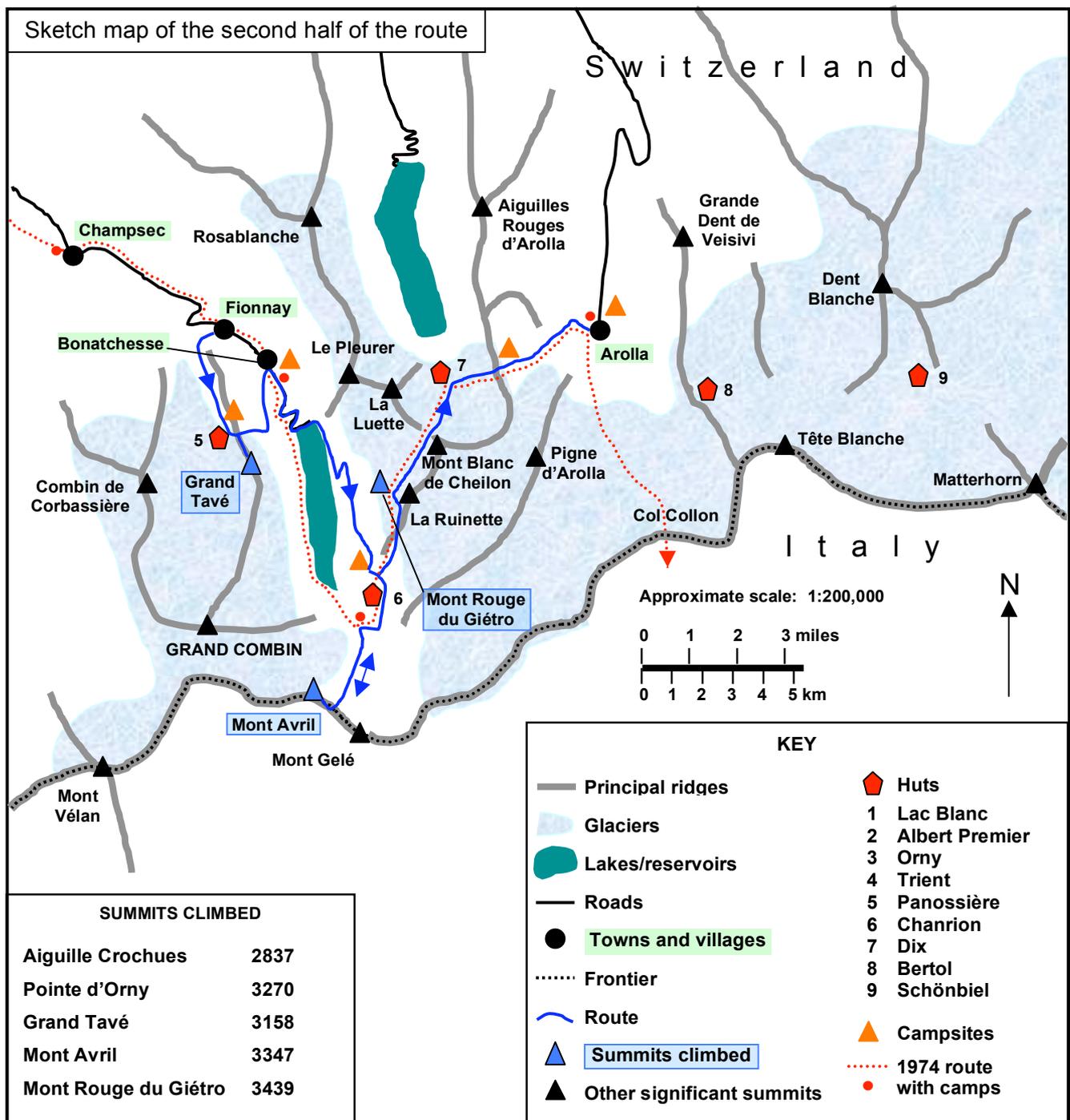
The first half of the route was a 6-day section from Le Brévent to Orsières, through the Aiguilles Rouges and the northern part of the Mont Blanc Massif, camping in the mountains all the way, and culminating in an ascent of Pointe d'Orny, at 3270 the most northerly 3000 m peak in the Mont Blanc Massif.



After a free day in Sembrancher we spent 4 days at the head of Val de Bagnes before the long glacier crossing to Arolla in Val d'Hérens. There was a 2-day circuit to the Pannossière hut which included an ascent of Grand Tavé (3158). The final 4-day section was via the Chanrion and Dix huts to Arolla, and included a whole-day excursion to Mont Avril (3347) an ascent of Mont Rouge du Giétro (3439) and a crossing of the Giétro and Cheilon glaciers.

Although the route followed the same general line as the first part of the 1974 Trek, on only the Chanrion to Arolla section was the same ground walked. The 1974 route as far as Bonatchesse was almost entirely along the valleys and there was little to recommend it except to develop fitness or as a bad weather alternative. This year's route at a higher level had much more interest, though of course progress to Orsières wasn't as quick.

There had been a late spring snowfall and it was still lying considerably lower than seems usual. This meant camping on snow at Lacs Noirs and at the Orny hut, but it caused us no difficulties.



ITINERARY AND WALKING ROUTE SUMMARY

19 Days		5½ days travel		11½ days walking		2 free days				
July/Aug		Height m	Distance km	Climb m	Daily totals					
					km	m	hours			
18-20	Coach	Manchester > Amiens > Macon > Chamonix							OC	OC
20	Cable car	2524								
	Trek	2550				5	500	2-30	*	
21	Trek	2140	8	485					*	
	Excursion	Aiguille Crochues	2837	3	485	11	970	4-00		
22	Trek	2271	10	930					*	
	Excursion	2702	5	450		15	1380	6-00		
23	Trek	2160				13	1210	6-00	*	
24	Trek	2700	9	780					*	
	Excursion	Pointe d'Orny	3270	5	570	14	1350	6-30	*	
25	Trek	901				9	0	3-30		
	Coach	Sembrancher							OC	
26	Free day	Sembrancher							OC	
27	Coach	1491								
	Trek	2590	6	1130					*	
	Excursion	Grand Tavé	3158	5	570	11	1700	5-30		
28	Trek	1577				8	260	2-30	OC	
29	Trek	2572	12	1020					*	
	Excursion	2700	5	290		17	1310	5-00		
30	Excursion	Mont Avril	3347			18	1880	5-45	*	
31	Trek	2740	11	830					*	
	Excursion	Mont Rouge du Giétro	3439	2	90	13	920	6-00		
1	Trek	1892				6	0	1-15	OC	
2	Coach	Dijon							OC	
3	Free Day	Dijon							OC	
4-5	Coach	> Montreuil > Manchester							OC	

Grand Totals:	140 km	11,500 m	
(or about	(87 miles	37,600 ft)	
Daily average:	13 km	1045 m	4h-50
(excluding 1st)	(8 miles	3430 ft)	

A Trek is a walk from one campsite to the next (with full packs).

An Excursion is a return walk (without full packs).

Times are walking times, excluding stops.

- Mont Avril** = Summits are in bold
 * = Mountain campsite
 OC = Official campsite (with the coach)

"He went away a boy, and came back a man."

Father of Stephen Edmondson at Trek Reunion

MAPS

Carte Nationale de la Suisse (Landeskarten der Schweiz)

Scale	Sheet	
1:100,000	46	Val de Bagnes
1:50,000	5003	Mont Blanc - Grand Combin
1:25,000	1344	Col de Balme
	1345	Orsières
	1346	Chanrion
	1366	Mont Velan
	1347	Matterhorn

All the Swiss maps are excellent with accuracy, detail and clarity second to none. The 1:100,000 and 1:50,000 sheets cover the whole route and most boys had one of these. The 1:50,000 is a superb map with such good detail that 1:25,000 maps were hardly needed.

Institut Géographique National (Carte Touristique)

1:25,000	231	Massif du Mont Blanc Argentière-Jorasses
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GUIDES

Alpine Club Guide Books:

Mont Blanc Range Vol. 3	Lindsay Griffin	Alpine Club	1980
Pennine Alps West	Robin Collomb	Alpine Club	1979
Pennine Alps Central	Robin Collomb	Alpine Club	1975

These are essentially climbing guides and were used mainly for route descriptions of ascents to huts and deciding which summits might be easy enough for Trek. On good paths where the going was easy our ascent times were usually rather shorter than those given in the guides.

Tour of Mont Blanc	Andrew Harper	Cicerone Press	1982
100 Hikes in the Alps	Spring & Edwards	The Mountaineers	1979

These were quite useful as general background where they covered our route.



The party on Mont Avril (3347m, 10,981 ft) with view north-east to Le Pleurer, La Ruinette and Pigne d'Arolla

ITINERARY

Monday 18th July	Coach	MGS - Amiens
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We left school at 8 a.m. for the 4 p.m. Dover to Boulogne ferry and arrived at Amiens about 8.30 p.m. Camping Municipal de l'Etang Saint-Pierre - convenient and cheap. 8 hours driving from Manchester.

Tuesday 19th July	Coach	Amiens - Macon
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Senlis - Meaux - Melun is a convenient by-pass round Paris. The rest was on motorways and we arrived just within the 8 hours allowed driving time. Camping Municipal (2 km north of town on the N6). A thunderstorm at 2 a.m. caused those bivviing to scuttle into their tents.

Wednesday 20th July	Coach	Macon - Chamonix	
	Cable car	le Brévent	
	Trek	Lacs Noirs	2250

We left Macon at 8.30 and reached Chamonix at 1.00, with a half-hour break. The two-stage lift to le Brévent (£85 for the party) was crowded, and after a food distribution it took an hour for us all to get to the summit, where we arrived at 3.00 for a late lunch. With its excellent panorama of the Mont Blanc range this must be the most spectacular starting point to any Trek!

The walk to Lacs Noirs via Planpra and Col de Lac Cornu took 2h-30 in two legs, with more superb views of the Mont Blanc peaks. There was complete snow cover from the col to Lacs Noirs with little evidence of these lakes or Lac Cornu below. Although there were no signs of a path from the col, the route to Lacs Noirs is obvious and easy.

On the summit of le Brévent looking along the Aiguilles Rouges with the rock peak of Aiguille du Pouce and snowy le Buet beyond



Aiguille Verte from the leg-stop en route to Lacs Noirs

It was a spectacular and seemingly isolated campsite on level snow on the west bank of the upper 'lake', with just a trickle of melt-water for cooking and 'washing'.

There was a glorious sunset over Rochers des Fiz, then the temperature dropped rapidly below zero, and it was a very cold, clear night.

The campsite beside Lacs Noirs with the rock peak of Aiguille du Pouce

Distance: 5 km	Climb: 500 m
Time: 2h-30	



View south towards Mont Blanc



Sunset over Rochers des Fiz

Thursday 21st July	Trek Excursion	Lacs des Chéserys Aiguille Crochues	2140 2837
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We had an hour's ice axe braking practice before breakfast on the ridge to the north of camp from where there was a fabulous view over the tents to Mont Blanc and the Chamonix needles (the cover image). We left at 10.00 and in 15 minutes we had reached Col de la Glière where we investigated the descent into Combe de la Glière to avoid the long elbow in the path down to the Charlano chalets. It was a fairly easy scramble down to the snow-filled combe to join the Flégère path near point 1874. It took one leg from the col to the hotel where we had a long lunch stop on the balcony with the famous view south. Dennis left us to move the coach to Montroc.

We left at 1.00 along the path crowded with tourists and reached the snow-filled Lac Blanc in 70 minutes. The hut is an understandably popular place to linger, but the complete snow cover tempted some of us

(16 boys and 5 staff) to make an unscheduled ascent of Aiguille Crochues (2837), while the rest did some 'poly-bagging' or sunbathed. In the conditions the ascent was quite straightforward, following an almost direct line from the west end of the lake to the summit, on snow all the way. It took 45 minutes up, we had 20 minutes on top with splendid views not only of the Mont Blanc massif but also along the Aiguilles Rouges, and then 25 minutes down.

There is ideal camping amongst the Lacs des Chéserys, 20 minutes from Lac Blanc. After dinner we spent an hour helping to search for a boy missing from a French school party camping nearby. We later heard he'd been found in Argentière. It was a clear night but much milder and several bivvied.

Distance: 11 km	Climb: 970 m	Time: 4h-00
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Ice axe braking practice on the ridge above camp



Descent to Col de la Glière



The balcony path to Flégère with the Grandes Jorasses, Chaminox Aiguilles and Mer de Glace



Gerry, Derek and Bill on Aiguille Crochues



The camp at Lacs des Chéserys with Col de Balme on the skyline ... and Aiguille de la Perseverance above

Friday 22nd July	Trek	Lac de Charamillon	2271
	Excursion	Albert Premier hut	2702

We struck camp at 8.40 and followed the path down to Montroc. The path is steep where it passes through a rock band at about 1900 m, with some fixed cables but no real difficulty. However, with the whole party moving together it took a long time to get everyone down this section, with a queue at the top and a long wait at the bottom. We arrived at the coach at Montroc station at 10.40, had an early lunch, restocked with supplies and were off by 12.10.

The chair lift from le Tour to Chalet de Charamillon was operating, but we chose to walk. It was a very hot slog in blazing sun to reach about 1700 in one leg from Montroc. Some boys were wilting in the heat so we left in two parties. The slow group took 90 minutes plus stops to reach the lake, arriving at 3.45.

There is delicious spring water feeding the Charamillon stream at 2140. We set up camp on the dried-out northern half of the lake bed, and although the shallow remains of the lake were fringed with snow, the water was ideal for bathing.

It was still very hot at 5.00, so only 4 boys chose to join the 7 staff on the optional excursion to the Albert Premier hut. It's an easy and interesting path up to the hut, with fine close-up views of the Glacier du Tour from the path along the crest of the lateral moraine. It took an hour up, half an hour down, and we had half an hour at the hut with its splendid panorama - well worth the effort.

Distance: 15 km Climb: 1380 m Time: 6h-00



The sun hits camp



Quite a bivvi spot!





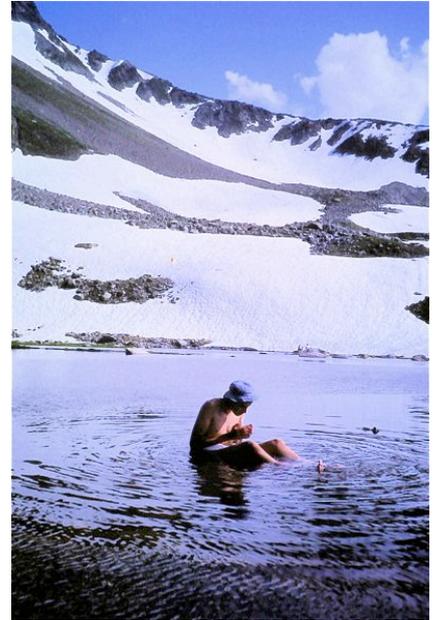
Waiting below the rock band



Source spring of the Charamillon stream



The camp at Lac de Charamillon



Tom Solomon takes a bath!



*The Aiguilles Rouges from across the
cravassed Glacier du Tour*



Aiguille du Chardonnet from just above the Albert Premier hut

We made an early start (7.25) to get as far as possible before the midday heat. It was an enjoyable 2 hour walk along the almost level path via Col de Balme and La Remointse to the ruined huts at Les Grands. There is good camping by the huts with fine views of Glacier des Grands and the peaks beyond. It was a further 20 minutes down to the Chalet du Glacier for elevenses.

The start of the path to Fenêtre d'Arpette is not very obvious and care is needed not to follow the lower path towards the Trient glacier. The long, hot climb to the fenêtre took 2h-30 plus two stops and a long lunch break, but the improving views of the Glacier du Trient were some compensation.

The path through the fenêtre is steep on both sides and the east side is loose too, so we descended in small groups and it took 70 minutes for all to get down to the valley floor.

It had been quite a long and very hot day and it was a tired party which arrived down at 5.00 to set up camp at 2160. The area is not well supplied with streams and we had to use melt-water from snow just above camp. Dennis joined us having moved the coach round to Orsières.

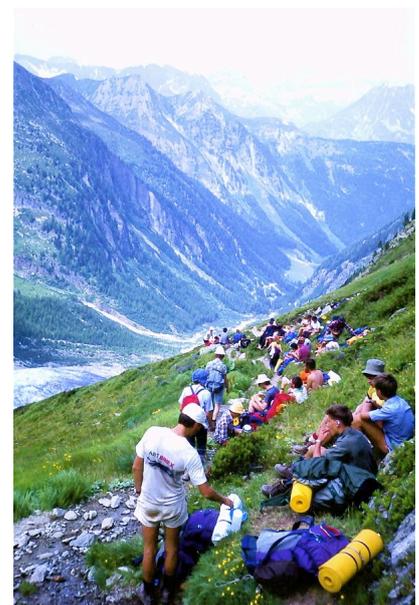
Distance: 13 km Climb: 1210 m Time: 6h-00



The balcony path near les Grands, with the Glacier des Grands



The start of the long (1080 m) climb to Fenêtre d'Arpette with Glacier du Trient



The first leg-stop



The third leg-stop and lunch, now high above the Glacier du Trient

The descent from Fenêtre d'Arpette into Val d'Arpette



The campsite in Val d'Arpette, with the following day's summit, Pointe d'Orny, the peak to the left of the 'Y' snow gully

Sunday 24th July	Trek	Lac d'Orny	2700
	Excursion	Pointe d'Orny	3270

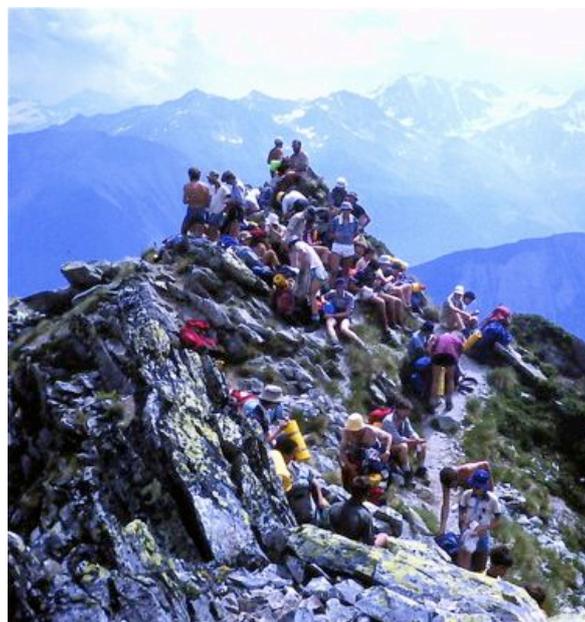
We struck camp at 8.20 and in one leg had reached the café in Arpette for a second breakfast. It was a steep climb through woods at first, then over rocks and scree to Col de la Brea in 1h-50, with a welcome spring at the end of the first leg just above the tree line. We had lunch on the col with our first views of the Grand Combin massif 10 miles to the east. We reached Lac d'Orny at 2.00 after a long leg (1h-20) without a stop and set up camp on snow just south of the lake. The last 150 m of ascent was entirely on snow.

We left for an excursion to Pointe d'Orny at 4.10 (all but Adrian, Tom and two boys). It was an easy walk up a well-beaten track below the Orny hut and along the edge of the Glacier d'Orny to an obvious and marked right turn onto rocks leading to the Trient hut.

A steep but easy scramble over the rocks then led to the hut, 70 minutes from camp. The hut was very busy so we didn't stop either on ascent or the return. It's an easy 15 minute walk from the hut to the summit, initially over snow then large boulders. It was quite windy and rather cool on top with some cloud threatening rain, but the views over the Plateau du Trient to Aiguille du Tour and Aiguilles Dorées, and down to our campsite of that morning, 1100 m below, were superb. The return to camp took 70 minutes plus a stop at the Orny hut, arriving back at 8.00. It was quite a windy night, but the tents stayed up even though only pegged into snow.

Distance: 14 km	Climb: 1350 m	Time: 6h-30
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Ready to leave the Val d'Arpette campsite, with Fenêtre d'Arpette the notch in the right hand skyline



Lunch on Col de la Brea



Camp by Lac d'Orny, with the distant Grand Combin

Retrospective view of the campsite (on snow just right of Lac d'Orny) from the path leading to Pointe d'Orny



On Pointe d'Orny, with the Trient hut in the bottom left and the Aiguilles Dorées across the Plateau du Trient

View from Pointe d'Orny down into Val d'Arpette, with our campsite of that morning, 1100 m below



Monday 25th July	Trek Coach	Orsières Sembrancher	901
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It was a very pleasant walk down through Combe d'Orny to reach Orsières in 3h-30 plus about an hour for stops. The path alongside the stream below point 1490 was overgrown and became impassable, so we had to retrace our steps and contour round to point 1500 before descending through the Forêt Voutaz where wayfinding wasn't easy.

We had an hour in Orsières, the first 'civilisation' for 5 days, and then took the coach to the booked campsite in Sembrancher (Camping La Prairie, just west of town). It was a surprisingly uncrowded site in a fine setting, with good facilities including a shower, shop and bar.

Distance: 9 km	Climb: --	Time: 3h-30
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From a camp on snow at 2700 m (8860 ft) below the Orny hut (top right) ...



... to civilization in Sembrancher

Sembrancher wasn't a very good choice for a free day, but we'd booked and paid in advance for 2 nights. It's a pleasant place but very rural with only a few small shops and a couple of bars, so we took the coach to Martigny for the day and found it much more lively. The weather continued sunny and hot.

A day to relax!



A traditional barn on stilts in rural Sembrancher



Wednesday 27th July	Coach	Sembrancher – Fionnay	
	Trek	Pannossière hut	2590
	Excursion	Grand Tavé	3158

We left Sembrancher at 8.45, reached Fionnay within an hour (though the coach only just managed the hairpins above Lourtier) and we were walking by 10.15. It was a delightful 2h-30 walk (in 3 legs) to an idyllic campsite on the banks of the un-named lake just north of point 2645, 700 m from the hut. (The guide book time from Fionnay to the hut is 4 hours!).

The path is initially very steep with many zig-zags but the gradient eases from point 2141 to pass through Plan Goli (where there is also good camping) before the final ascent to the lateral moraine. The fine views south over the Glacier de Corbassière to the peaks beyond are revealed in stages, which makes it an ascent full of interest.

All but 7 opted for the afternoon excursion to Grand Tavé. It took 1h-45 from camp to the summit, with a short break just before Col des Otanes while we decided on a route up the debris on the north-west slopes. There is a choice of ways up, all steep, loose and fairly unpleasant, but well worth the effort for the superb views of Tournelon Blanc and the glaciers and peaks of the Grand Combin group.

On descent we chose a slightly different line, but great care was still needed and we put up a fixed rope to protect one steep section. It took 1h-15 to descend to the hut which was very quiet in spite of its splendid location and friendly warden (Maxime Dumoulin).

Distance: 11 km Climb: 1700 m Time: 5h-30



Approaching the lateral moraine of the Glacier de Corbassière, with Combin de Corbassière ahead

Idyllic lakeside camping





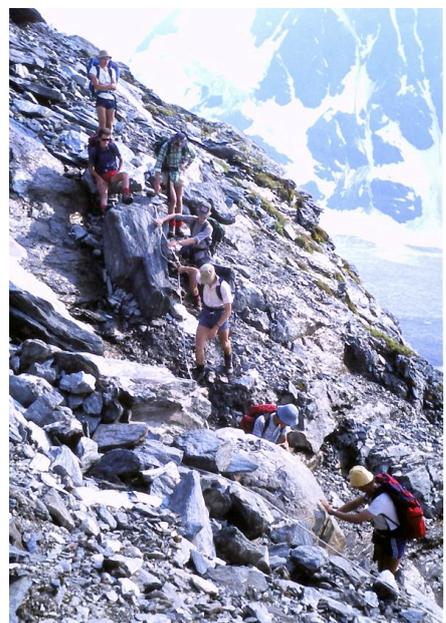
The Grande Tavé excursion heads off, with the rock wall of Tournelon Blanc and snowy Grand Combin ahead



On the summit



View over the hut (on the moraine left of centre) and camp by the far lake



Ropework on the steep descent

We broke camp and assembled at the hut for a 9.40 departure. Col des Otanes is broad and was snow covered for about a kilometre, not a difficult crossing in fine weather, but in poor visibility it would be easy to make the mistake of descending towards Plan Goli instead of towards Bonatchesse. In one leg we had reached the far end of the snowfield at about 2770. It took 40 minutes along an easy path to the path junction at La Tseumette then another hour down to Bonatchesse for lunch.

The very primitive campsite is in open woodland just south of the hamlet with no facilities except for water taps and corrugated iron 'toilets' perched over streams (but the village has a bar!). There is no reception, the warden comes round to collect site fees in the evening. It was another very hot day and we spent the afternoon lazing in the sunshine. Dennis brought the coach up from Fionnay and we restocked for the next four days.

Distance: 8 km Climb: 260 m Time: 2h-30

*Time to strike
camp and
assemble up at
the hut*



*Once more up
to Col d'Otanes*

*Leg-stop before
the long descent
back into Val de
Bagnes*



Friday 29th July	Trek	Lac de Tsofeiret	2572
	Excursion	Glacier du Brenay	2700

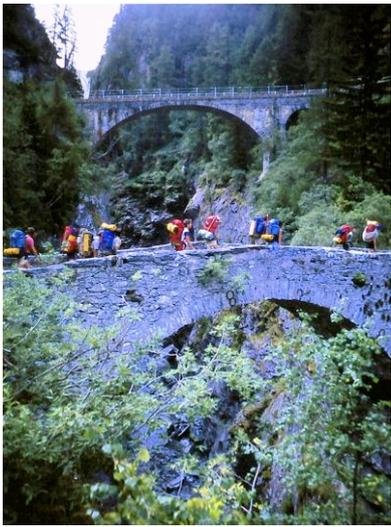
We set off at 9.15 along the track through the campsite to join the road up to the dam, with the 2000 m west flank of Le Pleureur dominating this first hour's walk. The dam and the cascades bringing water from other collecting grounds into the lake are very impressive, and we spent half an hour ambling over the dam and through the tunnels and galleries on the east side.

From there it's a delightful 2-hour walk to the Lac de Tsofeiret, with particularly fine views over Lac de Mauvoisin to the Combin massif. This approach to the Chanrion hut now seems to be the usual one and it looks rather more interesting than the track which keeps close to the lake on the west side and leaves all the climbing until the end. We arrived at 2.00 and set up camp on the level, springy pastures north of the lake, with tents looking out to the 1200 m walls of Grand Combin de la Tsessette - perfect!

After lunch and a siesta, at 4.30 we set off for crampon practice on the Glacier du Brenay. The descent from the col just south of the lake is steep and rather exposed. We followed the northern lateral moraine and got onto the glacier at about 2700 m, an hour from camp. The bare ice was running with melt-water after the hot afternoon sun, and as the glacier is not very steep here we used the sides of ice ridges to practise using crampons. Although properly fitted instep crampons do increase traction, when fitted by the boys they tend to work loose and would not be ideal if needed in earnest. The walk back to camp took 40 minutes, arriving at 7.00.

It would be easy to walk from the Pannossière hut to Lac de Tsofeiret in a day, without the descent to Bonatchesse. There is a clear path from La Tseumette which joins the road just below the dam. The walking time would be about 4 hours.

Distance: 17 km	Climb: 1310 m	Time: 5h-00
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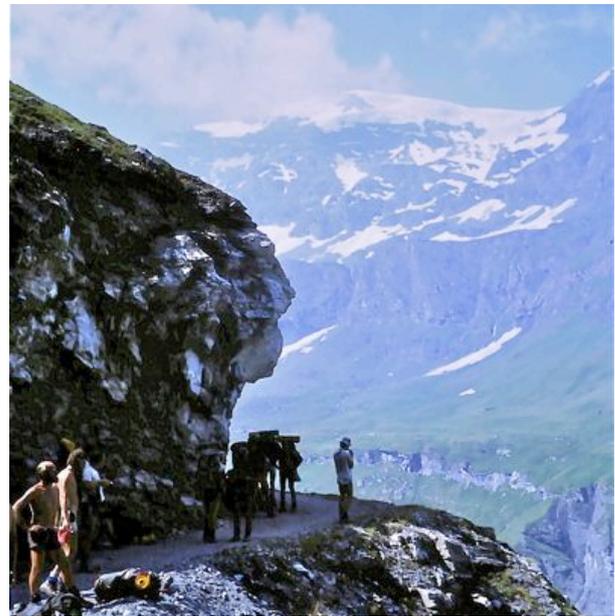
The path up the valley ...



... led to the road across the dam ...



... and through tunnels ...



... to the track above the reservoir ...



... and up onto the open mountainside, with Mont Gelé and Mont Avril ahead



Pointe d'Otemma looms overhead as we approach Lac de Tsofeiret ...

... where we found perfect, level camping with a view to Grand Combin ...



... and ideal conditions for a siesta.





Heading up from camp to the Glacier du Brenay for crampon practice



We left at 8.30, and reached the Chanrion hut in 35 minutes. It was a crystal clear day again and we had a long coffee break, admiring the superb setting of the hut, with cattle grazing on rolling pastures studded with lakes, and big peaks all around.

It's a deceptively long drop of 560 m from the col at Lac de Tsofeiret to the bridge over the stream in the valley bottom (2182). It's then a straightforward walk to the Fenêtre du Durand, crossing a few snow patches on the way. From the col to the summit is an hour's steady plod, zig-zagging up a uniform gradient of 1 in 2 over bare rock and loose scree, but with no technical difficulty. We arrived at the summit at 1.00, in a walking time from the hut of 2h-50, well inside the guide book time of 4 hours.

The panorama from the summit is superb, particularly of the Combin massif and of the glaciers, to the east. We thought we could just see the summit of the Matterhorn, but without an appropriate map it was difficult to be sure. We had a good hour on top, then walked down to the hut in 1h-40. The 300 m climb to the hut and then the ascent back to camp (40 minutes) made a very tiring end to a fairly long day, but this is a highly recommended excursion nonetheless.

After dinner we spent an hour or so practising roping up and moving together in preparation for the following day's glacier crossing.

Distance: 18 km	Climb: 1880 m	Time: 5h-45
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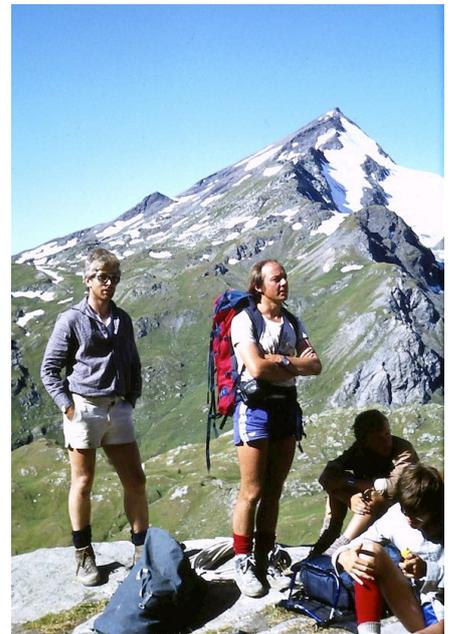
Morning view over camp



The Chanrion hut with Mont Gelé, the Fenêtre du Durand and Mont Avril



Party on the sun terrace of the hut with Grand Combin



Tom, Gerry and Avril



Summit views: west to Mont Velan ...



... north to Grand Combin ...



... and NE to Mont Blanc de Cheilon (and definitely the Matterhorn peeping over the ridge on the far right)

Sunday 31st July	Trek	Pas de Chèvres	2740
	Excursion	Mont Rouge du Giétro	3439

Dennis returned to Bonatchesse to move the coach round to Arolla. Derek was on the 1974 Trek which did this crossing of the Giétro and Cheilon glaciers (page 51 of the old Trek log) and he considered that in fine weather and with the experienced leadership in this party a guide wouldn't be necessary. We decided to make quite a late start to allow time for the snow on the Glacier de Lire Rose to soften up a bit. An advanced party (Derek, Gerry and a small group of boys with snow climbing experience) set off at 8.30 with the intention of fixing a rope up the south snow slope of Col du Mont Rouge.

The main party left at 9.40 and followed the path as marked on the current map i.e. initially on the west of point 2708 then along the spur and up over scree to the Col de Lire Rose without difficulty (75 minutes from camp). From there the advance party could be seen nearing the top of Col du Mont Rouge across the complete snow cover between us.

The Glacier de Lire Rose drops steeply to the west but as everyone had an ice axe and had practised using it we didn't rope up.

The glacier was quite icy for a short initial section where it was shaded from the sun but then it's an easy snow plod to a rock outcrop below Col du Mont Rouge at about 3220 where the others were waiting. (30 minutes from Col de Lire Rose).

The ascent of the very steep snow to the col was made easy by the work of the advance party in fixing a rope as a hand line (2 lengths) and cutting steps, so it took only half an hour to get everyone up. We wore crampons for the climb but they gave no real advantage. Although the views are limited the col is a fine spot for lunch with a convenient supply of melt-water, and we had a long break there.

About half the party opted for the short impromptu excursion to the highest point on the Mont Rouge du Giétro ridge (3439). It was a very easy scramble along the ridge and took only 15 minutes up and 10 minutes back to the col. It was well worth it for the stunning views west across Lac de Mauvoisin to the Grand Combin group and east across the Glacier du Giétro to the ice-falls of the Mont Blanc de Cheilon - La Ruinette ridge.

The party on Col de Lire Rose with the Glacier de Lire Rose and the steep snow slope leading to Col du Mont Rouge ahead



Approaching the snow climb to Col de Mont Rouge

We left the col at 3.30, rather late for a glacier crossing but the Glacier du Giéto is almost level and was clear of any fresh snow. There were stupendous views of the ice-falls to our right as we crossed the glacier, a walk that seemed much longer than its actual 2 km. We had been considering camping on the glacier by Col de Cheilon, but as we approached the col there was evidence of crevasses so we roped up and Derek expertly led the party through them, over the col and down the Glacier de Cheilon. We found the upper part of the Cheilon glacier much more badly crevassed than it was in 1974 and we came across a huge open crevasse at about the 3200 m contour which caused us to retrace our steps to get round it.

We had to cross several more minor crevasses before we reached the lateral moraine at about 3000 m and walked down to the Dix hut. From Col de Mont Rouge to the hut took 2 hours including the time to rope up and later recoil the ropes.

The Dix hut was very busy but is big enough to take the whole party and we had a long stop, eating and drinking chocolate.

We considered camping nearby and attempting La Lurette the following day, but there is hardly room to pitch even a couple of tents amongst the rock outcrops and moraine around the hut.

We left the hut at 6.40 and in 40 minutes had crossed the moraine-strewn, dry lower Cheilon glacier to the 20 m iron ladder at Pas de Chèvres. A line of poles indicates the route across the glacier for poor visibility. Although the ladder is almost vertical nobody wanted to be roped up, but we insisted on a safety rope for two lads who we thought needed the extra security, and everyone was up within 20 minutes. Distant views were hazy, but we could see the Bertol hut and we did spot the Matterhorn this time.

The lads were keen to carry on down to the 'fleshpots' of Arolla but as it was fairly late (8 p.m.) and we had 3 days in hand we made camp at the first suitable place - at a height of 2740, 15 minutes down from the col. The ground there is fairly steep and rough but we managed to find enough pitches for all the tents.

Distance: 13 km	Climb: 920 m	Time: 6h-00
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The snow climb to Col de Mont Rouge



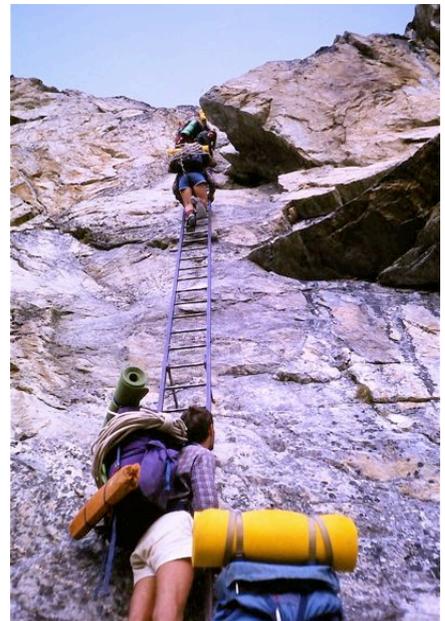
The party on our highest summit, Mont Rouge du Giéto 3439 m (11,283 ft), with Le Pleureur beyond



Crossing the easy, flat part of the Glacier du Giétro with the ice-falls of La Ruinette



Re-grouping after negotiating the area of crevasses on the Col de Cheilon in small roped groups



Heading out across the dry lower Cheilon Glacier towards Pas de Chèvres with its iron ladder

Keen to return to civilisation, the boys were ready early for a change, and we were off at 8.30. It was an easy 75 minute walk down to Arolla with Pigne d'Arolla looming impressively overhead. There is good camping by the stream at 2512, with more level ground than higher up where we had camped.

The campsite is not in evidence from the village but we eventually located the rather weird owner who directed us to the site - on a sloping clearing in woods below the village (grid reference 6036,973). It's another site with very basic facilities, and this one was expensive too.

Distance: 6 km Climb: -- Time: 1h-15



Rather rough camping just below Pas de Chèvres with a view across the Arolla valley



Pigne d'Arolla and the Glacier de Tsijiore Nouve from the path down to Arolla

On the provisional itinerary 3 days had been allowed for making excursions from Arolla. It was anticipated that we might lose a day or two en route due to bad weather, and these days in Arolla were really a 'buffer' to allow for that possibility. As the weather had been glorious the whole way, there was time left for excursions. The possibilities considered were as follows.

1. Pigne d'Arolla (3796) Derek had climbed it from Arolla previously and said it could be done in a day, given a very early start (the guide book time is 5h-30 up). The boys were certainly fit enough to cope. Alternatively it could be done in 2 days by a small party, staying overnight at the Vignettes hut.

2. Tête Blanche (3724) A 2-day excursion for a smaller group, staying at the Bertol hut then making the easy snow ascent of Tête Blanche and returning to Arolla on the second day.

3. Grande Dent de Veisivi (3418) A long day (5h-15 up from Arolla) but easy enough in good conditions.

Easier one-day excursions:

4. Bertol hut (3311)

5. Vignettes hut (3158)

6. Aiguilles Rouges hut (2810)

However the excursions were not to be. Shortly after setting up camp a storm developed and we spent the afternoon and evening sheltering from torrential rain in the nearby bar-restaurant, and reviewing the situation.

Occasional breaks in the low cloud revealed that fresh snow had fallen above about 2800 m, and the forecast was that the storms would continue for the next few days, so plans to end Trek with a big peak were abandoned.

After such a fine high-level route and perfect weather the idea of ending with some low-level walks in poor conditions did not appeal, and we took the decision to return home 2-days early.

There were problems in contacting some parents (via Manchester home base) about our early return, and in making other arrangements for boys whose parents would not be at home to meet them. Altogether the early return was more trouble than it was worth, and it's not something I would do again.



The campsite just after arrival ...



... and a few hours later

Tuesday 2nd August	Coach	Arolla - Dijon
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It was a short day's drive and the weather was fine well away from the Alps. Camping Municipal du Lac, 43 Avenue Albert Premier (1.5 km west of town) - convenient and very cheap.

Wednesday 3rd August	Free Day	Dijon
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The campsite is just a short walk from the centre of Dijon, which is a pleasant place for a free day with plenty to see and do. Trek meal at a cafe in town was adequate but nothing special, though there were a number of very good after-dinner speeches.

Thursday 4th August	Coach	Dijon - Montreuil
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Camping 'La Fontaine des Clercs', Montreuil-sur-Mer. Although not as convenient for the early ferry, this is a much better site than Boulogne, and less expensive too.

Friday 5th August	Coach	Montreuil - MGS
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We caught the 8 a.m. Boulogne - Dover ferry, and arrived back safely in Manchester at 7 p.m.

ROUTE AMENDMENTS

Experience suggests few modifications to the route, given the fine weather that we had. The Fionnay-Arolla section could easily be done in 4 days:

1. Fionnay - Pannossière hut. Excursion to Grand Tavé
2. Pannossière hut - Lac de Tsofeiret
3. Excursion to Mont Avril
4. Lac de Tsofeiret - Arolla

This would make a total of only 10 days walking and allow extra summit excursions to be included or the route to be extended at either end.

SUMMARY

It was a fairly ambitious and extremely successful Trek through some of the finest scenery in the whole Alps, and the glorious weather we had until we reached Arolla meant that we could keep to the planned route staying high, and enjoying the mountains to the full. The only disappointment on the whole route was not being able to finish with a big summit.

I was particularly pleased with the high-level mountain campsites (bivvy sites in old Trek terminology), all of which, but for the Pas de Chèvres, were planned in advance using just the maps. This must be one of the finest selection of such sites that any Trek has used. However, at heights between 2100 m and 2700 m, their suitability depends very much on the weather.

The route was also logistically sound. From Chamonix to Bonatchesse there are easier lower-level paths in case of bad weather (see 1974 log!), and support by coach is convenient. Without a mobile base there would be food supply problems at Montroc and Bonatchesse.

Although often very steep and sometimes rough, the paths were all good and generally easy to follow. The summit ascents fitted in well with the trekking route and all 5 were well worth doing. However, the crossing from the Chanrion hut to the Dix hut is a serious undertaking with a party of this size and should only be attempted in good weather and with leaders with lots of glacier experience in the party (or a guide).

There were no problems with organised campsites in the valley this year, though those in the Chamonix valley looked very crowded.

The party was very good indeed and, although there were the usual few slower walkers, they all coped well even on the harder days.

Finally, it is a route I can recommend very highly and one which is well worth repeating in due course.

Allan Witton



On Mont Avril

ARTICLE FOR THE SCHOOL MAGAZINE, ULULA

1983 FOREIGN TREK - MONT BLANC - GRAND COMBIN

The sun shone. It shone as we stepped from the cable car on the summit of le Brévent and looked out over Chamonix 5000 feet below to the massive snow dome of Mont Blanc. It shone twelve days later as we left our 9000 feet camp to walk down to the picturesque village of Arolla. And it shone for the whole of the 90 miles we walked between as our route threaded its way from France into Switzerland.

The first night's camp at Lacs Noirs was a surprise and a delight. There was little evidence of the lakes in a landscape still covered with the late spring snowfall, but the sunset over the cliffs of Rocheres des Fiz and the early morning panorama of Mont Blanc with its western satellites and glaciers were ample reward for a cold night camping on snow. The fine weather enabled us to remain high in the mountains with a succession of impressive campsites between 7000 feet and 9000 feet: the snow-rimmed Lac de Charamillon whose water was shallow and warm enough to bathe in; on snow again beside the Glacier d'Orny which at 8900 feet boasted a public convenience (the last remains of the old Orny hut); the spring-interior pastures beside Lac de Tsofeiret with the east wall of Grand Combin as a backdrop. On warmer nights some of the party dispensed with tents altogether to sleep under the star-filled skies.

The scenery, always spectacular and continuously varied, was punctuated by sudden changes as we crossed cols from one valley head to the next: the broad grassy sweep of Col de Balme as we crossed the frontier; the rocky Fenêtre d'Arpette with the path zig-zagging precipitously on both sides; Col de la Brea with its surprise view of Grand Combin; Fenêtre de Durand from where we looked down into Italy; Pas de Chèvres with its 80 foot vertical iron ladder.

But not all the walking was done under the weight of a 40 lb pack. The impromptu excursion to Aiguille Crochues was made possible by the continuous snow cover from its summit down to the Lac Blanc hut. In the hot afternoon sunshine we escaped from the crowds and wearing only boots, shorts and sunhat made the 1600 foot ascent in 45 minutes. Our walk up lateral moraine to the Albert Premier hut, perched high on a rock ledge beside the Glacier du Tour, was accompanied by the thundering collapse of séracs in the glacier's shattered snout. The strenuous snow plod to Pointe d'Orny, Mont Blanc's most northerly 3000 metre peak was rewarded by a fine prospect over the Plateau du Trient.

Grand Combin is one of the lesser-known 4000 metre Alpine peaks but a beautiful mountain nevertheless. In four days we walked halfway round its complex massif with close-up views from two of its outlying summits, Grand Tavé after a tricky scramble over loose rock, and Mont Avril whose superb summit panorama also included much of the western Pennine Alps.

The crossing of the glaciers of Giétro and Cheilon to Arolla was particularly memorable. In perfect weather and amongst magnificent rock and snow architecture we kicked steps up the steep snow of Col de Mont Rouge, crossed two more cols and four miles of ice, negotiated crevasses and a bergschrund, reached the highest point of Trek at 11,200 feet and drank hot chocolate at the Dix hut!

Potential trekkers be warned: Trek is demanding, uncomfortable, exhausting . . . exhilarating and addictive.

L. A. WITTON

FOREIGN TREK ACCOUNTS 1983

EXPENDITURE	1983		1982	
		Cost/head (38)		Cost/head (38)
See Note				
Coach	£2500.00	£65.79	£2625.00	£69.08
Ferry	£900.00	£23.68	£795.00	£20.92
(1) Other travel	£329.04	£8.69	£259.71	£6.83
(2) Food	£1514.86	£39.86	£1375.74	£36.20
(3) Equipment	£520.61	£13.70	£820.51	£21.59
(4) Camping	£220.30	£5.80	£256.34	£6.75
(5) Maps	£13.77	£0.36	£60.55	£1.59
(6) Guides	£38.08	£1.00	£19.05	£0.50
Insurance	£127.62	£3.36	£112.95	£2.97
Postage, phone, etc	£47.61	£1.25	£39.37	£1.04
Gaz	£112.96	£2.97	£11.30	£0.30
Photographic	£22.47	£0.59	£58.40	£1.54
First aid	£12.00	£0.31	£10.87	£0.29
(7) Currency/bank charges	£42.56	£1.12	£17.30	£0.46
Prizes	<u>£45.15</u>	<u>£1.19</u>	<u>£33.34</u>	<u>£0.88</u>
	£6447.03	£169.66	£6495.43	£170.93
(8) 'Nominal' cost per head		£165		£163
Waterproofs	£126.00			
Cine camera	<u>£69.95</u>			

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

£6642.98

INCOME Charges: 38 @ £180 per head £6840.00

Deposit account interest	£65.20
National Savings interest	£285.32
Equipment hire	£81.00
Sale of Trek T-shirts	<u>£10.00</u>
	<u>£441.52</u>

TOTAL INCOME

£7281.52

PROFIT FOR 1983

£638.54

BALANCE at 1-1-83	Current account	£965.74
	Deposit account	<u>£180.16</u>
		£1145.90
	Profit for 1983	<u>£638.54</u>
		£1784.44
BALANCE at 10-1-84	Current account	£177.63
	Deposit account	£276.49
	National Savings account	<u>£1330.32</u>
		£1784.44

DETAILS OF EXPENDITURE

(1) Other travel

Practice walks	£29.30
Practice camp	£168.70
Petrol	£46.00
Cable car	<u>£85.04</u>
	£329.04

(3) Equipment

2 Mk5 tents	£224.26
1 Mk4 tent	£94.88
7 stoves/13 windshields	£88.18
Vango spares	£50.90
Billie set	£7.44
Ice axe hire	£9.00
Miscellaneous	<u>£45.95</u>
	£520.61

(2) Food

In Manchester	£1178.86
On Trek	£36.11
Allowances	£97.66
Trek meal	£179.83
Reunion wine	<u>£22.40</u>
	£1514.86

(About £150 tinned food left)

(4) Camping

Amiens	£12.61
Macon	£23.13
Sembrancher (2)	£71.80
Bonatchesse	£19.29
Arolla	£40.11
Dijon (2)	£28.15
Montreuil	<u>£25.21</u>
	£220.30

(Average £24.50 per night)

(5) Maps

In addition £50 advance order paid in 1982

(6) Guides

TMB	£2.50
100 hikes in the Alps	£4.76
Mont Blanc III	£6.00
Pennine Alps west	£7.50
Pennine Alps central	£8.00
Scrambles in Wales	£3.32
Scrambles in Lakes	£3.60
Equipment catalogues	<u>£2.40</u>
	£38.08

(7) Bank charges

Trav. cheques commission	£13.00
Currency commission	£1.87
Loss on change back to £	£8.04
Current a/c interest	£18.97
Current a/c charge	<u>£0.68</u>
	£42.56

(8) 'Nominal' cost per head

This figure reflects the running cost of *this year's* Trek, ignoring the exceptional expenses on waterproofs (which will be recouped in hire charges over the years) and the cine camera, and using the following adjusted expenses:

Food (£150 left over)	-£150
Equipment (£521 - 38 @ £12 annual 'allowance')	- £65
Maps (1982 order)	<u>+ £50</u>
	-£165

Hence nominal running cost is £6447 - £165 = £6282 i.e. £165 per head

ORGANISATION

RECRUITING

Outline plans for the 1983 Trek were given at the 1982 Trek Reunion in November. A display of prints, maps and other promotional material, together with a continuous slide show were set up in the new Exhibition Area for the first three weeks of the Lent term (jointly with Scottish Trek). Perhaps because of this, and possibly the Open Days display the previous summer, recruiting went much better than in 1982, with 36 applications in the week following the promotional meeting on January 13th. As seems usual, the majority of trekkers (23) were sixth-form scientists, but there was a good sprinkling from the Modern Studies side this year. There were 12 repeat trekkers.

TRAINING

As last year all boys who hadn't been on Foreign Trek before were required to go on one practice walk and the practice camp. The walk was optional for past trekkers, although most came on one of them.

Walk 1 23rd April Circular walk from Glossop station.
Route: Doctor's Gate, Bleaklow Head, Bramah Edge, Glossop (11 miles)
Left Piccadilly at 9.30 and returned at 4.20.

Walk 2 8th May Minibus to Hayfield.
Route: William Clough, Kinder Downfall, Kinder Low, Brown Knoll, Mount Famine, Hayfield (10 miles)
Left school 9.30 returned at 4.15

Practice camp Saturday 9th - Sunday 10th July

I had planned to camp in the Lake District for a change (Langdale area), but five days before we were due to go the coach company, Brierleys, cancelled the coach we had booked and it wasn't possible to find a replacement at such short notice, so we took the train to North Wales.

Rail to Llanfairfechan.
Route: Saturday: Aber, Aber Falls, Afon Gam, to camp at head of Afon Llafar. (~10 miles)
Sunday: An interesting scramble up Llech Ddu to Carnedd Dafydd, then Carnedd Llewelyn, Foel Grach, Foel Fras, Drum, Llanfairfechan. (~11 miles)

It was a hot and sultry weekend. With a good long walk on both days and a testing scramble as well it was the best training weekend route I've been on.

FOOD

Efficiently organised by Gerry with Bill's assistance. Again almost all the food was bought in bulk at Macro and dried foods were bagged into individual tent portions and then bagged again as complete meals. It was then boxed and packed in the coach boot so as to be available in chronological order. This pre-packing is a lengthy process but is worth it for the convenience and time saved on Trek.

As we were in the mountains for almost the whole time, little fresh food was bought. Allowances were given on two occasions (Sembrancher and Dijon). A copy of the menu is included in the file.

FIRST AID

Organised and administered by Adrian. There were no problems.

INSURANCE

The usual Commercial Union School Journey policy extended to cover Trek equipment (£2500) and with the special endorsement about trekking not being considered mountaineering. This endorsement, according to Trek Log first negotiated in 1975, has been a feature of the insurance each year since. It reads "It is understood that members of the party insured will be 'trekking' along recognised footpaths in the Alps. This activity is not considered to be mountaineering as referred to in Sections 1, 2, 3 etc. of the policy provided that ropes are not used for climbing, but only as a safety measure." There were no claims.

EQUIPMENT

Tents

Vango Force 10: 11 Mark 5 1 Mark 4

Three new tents were bought, two mark 5 and one mark 4, labelled 28, 29 and 44 respectively. Two old (pre 1974) Mark 5 tents were used again this year and Adrian used his own nylon lightweight.

As last year all the tents were spread over benches in the Chemistry labs the day after Trek returned to air them off for several days before packing away. In the past when boys took the tents home to dry them this important job was not always reliably done.

Stoves

Camping Gaz S 200 and S 206 (new versions)

Some of the older ones were in poor condition and were discarded. Seven new ones were bought but not all were needed this year. 130 cartridges were used, which works out at 11 per tent group for the 17 days that the stoves were in use.

Ropes

6 were carried. 2 were used for the ascent of Col du Mont Rouge, 1 was used as a safety rope when descending Grand Tavé and for 2 boys up the ladder at Pas de Chèvres, and the whole party was roped up to cross the Col de Cheilon. A selection of slings, some karabiners and a deadman were also carried.

Crampons

No new ones were bought. As last year, Derek fitted the crampons to individual boots before Trek. The adjustable-size variety are less satisfactory than the single-piece ones and will be phased out, even though this means having a larger stock of fixed sizes to match all the boots.

Crampons were worn for the ascent of Col du Mont Rouge, although with the fixed rope and cut steps we could easily have managed without.

Ice axes

No new ones were bought. Trek's 33 + 3 private + 9 hired from the mountaineering club covered everyone. They were needed in earnest for security crossing the Glacier de Lire Rose.

Kit list

Essentially the same as last year. A copy is included in the file.

Equipment hire

For boys considering trekking for the first time the cost of a full set of personal kit (upwards of £150 for boots, waterproofs, a sleeping bag and a rucksack) on top of the cost of Trek itself may make some feel that trekking is too expensive. Alan McDonald has for some years run a rucksack hire scheme for Borrowdale Camp and trekkers have increasingly made use of it. To extend the possibilities of hiring equipment and so encourage first-time trekkers, 12 sets of waterproofs were purchased. These are the PVC-on-fabric type which are relatively heavy, but 100% waterproof, cheap and durable.

Discount

Estcourts reduced their offer of discount to 10% for boys' purchases but were persuaded to increase it to 15% on 3 evenings only, when the shop was opened specially for trekkers (Foreign and Scottish). Well informed and fairly impartial advice is given and these open evenings worked quite well for both sides. However, they carry a rather limited range of most stock and prices (even with discount) are fairly high.

The discount for Trek purchases was still 20% and although maps and a few smaller items were bought there a much better deal was offered by Camping and Outdoor Centre Contracts (a division of Scout Shops). Their price for the 3 tents, 7 stoves and 108 gaz cartridges was £70 less than Estcourt's discount price, and was even lower than Field and Trek's contract price.

TRANSPORT

The coach was a 52 seater with 3 double seats removed to stack rucksacks. With a total of 45 in the party the outward journey was even more cramped than last year. Dennis Hughes came over with the coach on the evening before Trek, left the coach at school and stayed overnight with Derek to give the full 8 hours allowed driving time from MGS to Amiens.

In response to an inquiry to the tourist office in Sion as to whether the roads to Bonatchesse and Arolla could take a large coach I received the reply that it was possible but because of a low weight limit a special permit was required from:

Departement des travaux publics,
Service de l'entretien des routes,
Batiment MUTUA,
1950, SION, Valais.

The details required were the registration number (MUR 218L), dimensions (12.2 m long, 3.1 m high and 2.5 m wide), unladen weight (8.5 tons) and dates of travel. It wasn't long before Trek departed that I sent the application off, so Dennis collected the permit in person when he moved the coach from le Tour to Orsières.

The hairpin bends on the road to Fionnay were only just negotiable and at one point we all had to get off to allow enough ground clearance to round the bend. The hairpins on the road from Les Haudères to Arolla were less severe although low tunnels could be a problem with a taller coach.

Dennis had some problems taking the coach into Switzerland. Officials were unhappy about an empty coach entering, later to leave with a party. But after a 2-hour delay and several phone calls he was allowed through.

FERRY

Last year was the first time since 1977 that a short ferry crossing (i.e. not overnight) had been used. The change was due to the steep increase in the cost of the Southampton - le Havre route, and although a short crossing is less convenient for the Pyrenees they can still be reached in 3 days' driving.

For the western Alps, the short crossing has the advantage (apart from cost) that it's possible to drive for 2 hours before camping for the first night, and this head start on the second day means that the Alps can be reached fairly comfortably by lunchtime on the third day, as this year. The disadvantages of a short crossing are that two extra nights' camping are needed and the departure and return times are less convenient.

CAMPING

Booking letters were sent to the official campsites (addresses from the AA camping guide and a Valais camping leaflet) and all but Amiens replied. Sembrancher required a £35 deposit. Bonatchesse is a very basic site with no reception and very basic facilities, and it's not possible to book. It consists of a large area in woods and the warden comes round to collect the fees on site. There were no problems with any of the official sites.

Letters were also sent to the guardians of the Orny, Pannossière and Chanrion huts requesting permission to camp nearby. Although camping 'wild' is prohibited in Switzerland, they all suggested a suitable place; in the case of the Chanrion hut this had to be over 1 km away as the land round the hut is private. There were no problems camping in the mountains.