



Rock Rendezvous: Volume 12; Issue 8: September 2002

Rock Rendezvous

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August meeting notes

By Tom Kidd

A compact and bijou gathering of twelve people in the agoraphobic confines of Paul's apartment marked the August Meeting. It was almost a year ago that Paul hosted a meeting here and it was sad to know that in just a few days he would have moved out back to England. Brighid and Catriona had already gone, back to the land where it has been such a bad summer, children have been promised a week off school if it gets sunny... probably a safe promise. Simon opened the meeting in a very civilized manner but he made up for this when he later told me how excited he had been to carry his own poop on Whitney. There was a reminder about the J-Tree trip until someone pointed out that you can't sign up yet. There was also a discussion of what to spank Carolyn with on her birthday – rawhide, #6 hex, wet celery and so on.

In recent trips, Paul Drew had a two week climbing vacation, but was slightly disappointed by Dark Star and Sun Ribbon Arête on Temple Crag, which were slightly loose. Bear Creek Spire was better and the best route on his trip was the Third Pillar of Dana. Noriko and a Diamox loaded Simon did the East Face of Mt. Whitney. The

toughest part was getting the gear up to the base. The second toughest part, at least as far as Noriko was concerned was the descent down the Mountaineering Route which was very steep and would probably have been easier with a bit of snow. There were entertaining tales of the exposure on the ramp at the start and Noriko going too high on the Fresh Air Traverse. Andy failed miserably on Hoodwink – he used to be able to do it. Bruce temporarily woke up to welcome Andy to old age. Friends of Andy's on South Crack provided a running commentary with the refrain "he's off again..." James Balasalle visited Boulder Canyon, Dream Canyon and Eldorado which seems kind of funny as he is moving back there for good soon – so surely he should be climbing in other areas, e.g. California. Oh well, it sounded like he did some impressive leads. Carolyn had her first two trips to Tuolumne. On the first, Scott made his first 5.11a lead (whistles) on Daff Dome, and it was reportedly a stiff second (Eds comment – actually it was an aid second!). Carolyn's first 5.8 lead had a similar degree of epic. This climb was "Honeymoon's Over" which is stiff for 5.8. On the second trip, Trevor

tried to lead his first 5.10a but took a couple of twenty foot whippers.

Em showed us a few slides of what needs to be done at Mickey's Beach during the Adopt a Crag day and then spent more time telling us how to find the secret hot springs. Simon once again got excited at the thought of nudity, even if it is leathery old men. We are sworn to secrecy unless a large bribe presents itself. The clean up is on the 14th, but it was suggested that the summit could be cleaned up on the 7th September. And there was discussion about whether to have a party at Stinson Beach after the clean up or reserve sites at Pantoll. No decision was made!

Carolyn kicked off her slideshow with some outrageous slides of climbing in the United Kingdom (remember that weather I mentioned earlier?). There was Wales in the sleet, the Lake District in fog, Derbyshire in the fog, Stanage with a vague blue sky, a waterfall in Wales which turned out to be a route and winter climbing in the Lakes. The

waterfall was completely out of control and looked like reverse canyoneering for masochists. My one complaint was that she went through this part too fast – I needed to be reminded why I like it out here, and because it is wonderful to be nostalgic from a safe distance. Carolyn switched to Spain but it was hard to live up to the hype of those first few images. Calpe near Benidorm and Costa Dorada near Barcelona, both limestone sport climbing venues were the locales and after a few sun drenched shots I began to yawn – it just lacked the character of those British climbs. Carolyn then focused on the personalities from her climbing club and we saw Adrian pretending to be the SAS on rappel (looked more like an inadvertent anal flossing was imminent, but anyway), Rupert pondering a crack, Pete overtaking, Lynn emptying her water bag (some references to English woman were made at this point) and Rachel who was at Courtwright and her pussy (thanks Simon for pointing that out). Thanks to Carolyn for the slides and Paul for hosting.

Adventure on Conness

An article by Tom Kidd

Setting up camp in Tuolumne Meadows at half past midnight and rising a mere five hours later wasn't easy. The trip was a last minute decision to go to Tuolumne with Paul Drew. I hadn't done any real climbing yet this year but felt reasonably fit. I knew Paul was considerably fitter as I had followed in his wake on a five hour mountain bike ride only a couple of weeks before. By the fifth hour, I had repeatedly found myself hanging over the handlebars trying to gulp down air as fast as possible. So I figured we could deal with the West Ridge of Conness which had a reputation as a fantastic and full day out. A few stories of benightment or returning to the Bay Area so late as to get caught in rush hour traffic around Tracey circulated, hence the early start.

We rose at 5:30am and were impressed to find the other member on the site had already left for the day. By the time we had had breakfast, sorted gear and driven round to the Sawmill campsite below Saddlebag Lake, it was just after 7am. We walked through the campsite and used the pit toilet. A few minutes up the trail, both of us stopped again. This pattern continued for some time, and we took it as a healthy sign that our bodies were adjusting to the altitude, having slept at 8,000ft, and now hiking in at 10,000ft. The dirt road followed the river, and where the river split, we crossed to remain with the main branch. The small tributary probably went to Saddlebag Lake, and had a faint trail which we ignored. We passed the Carnegie Research Institute, a ramshackle wooden building that appeared to be on the verge of collapse,

rather than the building with smoked glass windows the name might have evoked. The trail continued quite distinctly until we found ourselves starting to climb a hillside. At this point, the mosquitoes found us. This was bad, very bad. The hordes felt Alaskan in their intensity. My polypropylene top was no match and I shortly began to itch like crazy. Unfortunately the DEET was in the car. Paul helpfully pointed out that you can't actually feel them bite, but I could tell he was suffering as well. I resorted to flicking a t-shirt like a cow's tail which helped a little. The swine were to remain with us for the rest of the day, leaving us temporarily a couple of pitches up the climb, but waiting for us at the top.



The river split once again, one half coming down from high above us, the other meandering up the flatter valley floor. We now know that we should have stayed close to the steep river if we had wished to follow the guide book description, but instead we took an intermediate line and eventually found ourselves climbing talus beside snow into a large cirque. We had been aiming for Alpine Lake, but were now south and west of it. Rather than traversing a steep and nasty talus field, we opted to follow a slanting diagonal line through the cliff band. The line turned out to be 1-2ft wide and easy. One short section involved traversing across loose rock in a rock-fall scar, but otherwise it was exposed walking. Near the end, the line disappeared and we thought that we would have to get the rope out, but a chimney presented itself. Paul climbed up and in, and I pushed the rucksacs through to him. I then climbed past him and he pushed the rucksacks onto me. On the far side a steeper line of weakness led to the rim, and although we had to scramble out onto a slab

to pass a snow patch, it remained easy. Suddenly we found ourselves on the summit plateau with an amazing view out over Tuolumne Meadows and further south. The transition was so abrupt that we were both giggling wildly, exhilarated by the view and because we had avoided the risk of failing to get through the cliff band on our impromptu line.

The plateau was incredibly dry and dusty, with a moonscape feel to it. We followed a trail towards the summit which we couldn't really see (it was a somewhat lopsided plateau), but broke off to cross to the other edge. We crossed a stream and filled an empty water bottle as a precaution. We didn't intend to drink it unless we had to, especially given the rather large marmot which was living under a rock nearby. However, Paul's recent epic trying to descent from the valley rim had left him willing to drink untreated water to survive. Or at least get down the same day. We wandered over the edge and started to descend steep talus, but with no real scrambling required. After a few hundred feet, we were able to start traversing in the direction of the west ridge and eventually rewarded with our first view which took our breath away. Steep at first, then what looked like a mile of ridge to the summit. All poised above the expanse of the awesome (scary) southwest face. I was silently grateful that we weren't launching onto one of the hard lines up the middle of that face. Although we could now see the ridge, our approach wasn't over as we had to descend talus, manzanita, snow patches and even down climb in several places. Despite this I think our variation was easier than the guidebook recommended descent down the gully closer to the summit. The toe of the West Ridge was scarred by a recent rock fall, so we continued a little further on to a gully left of the ridge proper. It had taken us about three and a half hours to do the approach so we snacked while the mosquitoes continued to snack on us.

We geared up for simul climbing, taking about eight coils apiece and I led off up the shallow gully. This was easy enough going, so when I thought I was high enough to avoid the rock fall scar, I headed out for the crest of the ridge. The rock was more

compact here, still easy, but harder to find gear and requiring a little more thought., Both of us were aware of how much ridge lay above us, so I went back into the gully for faster progress. The quality of the rock in the gully gradually decreased, so when we swapped the lead on a large ledge, Paul followed an obvious traverse line onto the steeper ground of the crest of the ridge. None of the climbing was particularly hard, but if anywhere was to be labeled 5.6, it was probably around here. We continued to simul-climb smoothly, with several pieces between us. As we had a small rack, it was quickly my turn to lead again. After a steep step, I found a glorious double crack with added chicken heads allowing me to increase the pace, keeping only one piece of gear between us. The altitude was having its effect on me, so maximum speed was low. At the top of the crack, the angle of the ridge changed as we finished the first section and I found myself astride some fantastically exposed pinnacles. The rock structure was such that the ridge leaned out over the southwest face giving an instant 600ft of exposure. On the other side the drop to the gully was about 150ft. It was hard not to whoop in delight and spoil the solitude. There was another team ahead of us, but sufficiently far ahead that we couldn't hear them.

The quality of the rock was extremely high, solid with more holds than you could choose from. The climbing was outrageous as a result of all these holds, coupled with the tremendous position above the southwest face. The easy angle and the heat of the sun made me change out of my climbing shoes into my approach shoes for comfort. Paul put on a couple of pairs of socks and my climbing shoes for the same reason. As my feet are considerably bigger than his, I expected to feel as though I was being stalked by a demented aquatic bird when we resumed climbing, but they fit him well enough with two pairs of socks. We found a melting snow patch and stuffed our nearly empty water bottles with it in the hope that it would melt. After some mainly horizontal climbing with more spectacular pinnacles, the ridge gradually steepened again.



Midway up the ridge, a soloist passed us by. This was easy for him to do as there are so many ways to climb, it is unlikely that any team follows the same path as the ones that have gone before. We watched as the soloist headed up golden granite slabs and went straight over a small overhang above us. When I reached the overhang, I passed it to the left and came face to face with another giant marmot. As I had run out of gear I had to belay just above him and I could sense him eyeing my rucksack with avarice. I had no idea how something that large finds enough to eat two thirds of the way up a very long rock ridge, so I surreptitiously looked around for evidence that the soloist had failed to pass this point. Another soloist appeared behind us and threatened to overtake us, but the climbing was getting progressively easier. He was clearly surprised by our speed given the rope between us and commented on it. We stopped to remove and coil the rope, and I then watched as Paul and the soloist raced towards the summit. I was convinced my lungs had stopped working, and it was very reminiscent of the mountain bike ride with Paul except that I had no handlebars to drape my heaving frame over.

Eventually I caught up with them as they enjoyed the spectacular view in all directions. We could see Tuolumne Meadows, Cathedral Peak and Half Dome, the latter significantly lower than the other peaks. Below us we now had the north side glacier in the cirque leading to Saddlebag Lake. It had taken us less than four hours and about seven "pitches" to do the climb. It was absolutely wonderful, one of the best alpine days I have had. Paul said it was as good as anything he had done in the Bugaboos the previous summer. I was feeling a little wiped by the altitude and heat. A Clif bar threatened to lodge in my dry throat, so I chugged from the mix of stream water and snow in my water bottle. It was nectar and I am happy to report that there were no ill effects.

The descent followed the old surveyor's path to the plateau, easy but quite spectacular. We decided to try and descend via Alpine Lake and hiked down the plateau before cutting over to the rim. We descended too far and had to head back up to the distress of my lungs and legs. When we could look down on Alpine Lake, our immediate response was "no way". The ridge we were supposed to descend was steep, loose and long. After looking the problem over from several angles, we opted to descend to a notch in the ridge much lower down which we had seen on the way up. Back onto the plateau which gradually changed to a steep sandy slope. With every easily gained foot of altitude loss, I thought of the nightmare that we could have been in if we had descended via Alpine Lake. To our right and far below was a lake gradually filling in with sediment, and verdant algae was created dramatic ribbons of color through it.

At the notch, we did some slightly tricky down climbing. However, I would recommend this approach and descent, and it is the one described in the Tuolumne Meadows Guide's description of the SW Face of Conness. Paul stopped to put on his new nifty instep crampons, but I merely grasped my nut tool as an impromptu ice axe and carried on. I stepped boldly onto the

snow slope below and promptly one leg punched through into space. For me this was the psychological low point of the day. I was stuck with one leg in a minor bergschrund, up to my crotch in snow and was still being bitten by mosquitoes... I alternated between swatting and digging my leg out. The rest of snow slope was easy, but very wet. We then stayed in the center of the valley for a mile and a half until we were able to bushwhack over to the trail.

When we passed through the Sawmill campground again, someone came over to ask us what we had done and told us that people had been turning back because of the mosquitoes. Maybe we should have done that... Paul's expression the next day when he looked at my back as I prepared to jump into the soothing cool waters of Tenaya Lake told me I shouldn't look in a mirror anytime soon. Nicole later worried that I would exceed the maximum daily dose of cortisone through skin absorption alone.

We finally made it back to the car, about twelve and a half hours after leaving it after a memorable day's climbing. The Tioga Pass Resort was open so we dived in as neither of us wanted to try and cook dinner. The fine art of conversation was notably absent at our table as we were both exhausted, so we shoveled down our meal and a beer before heading straight to bed. In the morning we finally met George who was also staying on the campsite. He asked what we had done, and when we told him, he responded "you've had an adventure!" It was a statement, not a question and very true.



Coming Trips...

Hope to see you out there!

We have autumn sites booked in Yosemite, so log on, and book yourself a space, at <http://www.rockclimb.org/rr/trips.html>.

If you are booked on a trip that you can no longer attend please DO remember to 'un-book' your place. It would also be courteous if you could also e-mail the trip leader and person first on the reserves list.

Michael can be contacted by e-mail (mbrodesk@interwoven.com) or phone (415 948 8529).



Mickeys Beach Erosion Control Work:

This is to be held on Saturday September 14th. Rock Rendezvous volunteers will work with Mt. Tamalpais State Park Trail Maintenance to improve access trails and do erosion control work at Mickeys Beach.

We have campsites booked for the following weekends:

			Leader
Sept	6-7	Meadows	
	6-7	Yosemite	
	13-14	Yosemite	Carolyn Dent
Thanksgiving	Nov 28 th -30 th	Joshua Tree	

A note from your Editor

Next months Newsletter will feature an article by Scott Johnston on Whitney, accompanied by photographs contributed by our very own Simon Kenney. Fortunately I have looked at Simons photos and can

Benefits include possible beta on the location of the hot springs at this popular nudist venue!

For those who can't make the 14th, there are additional events on Sept 7th (Mt. Tam – contact Rebecca Revel - 415-485-6931) and Sept 28th (Goat Rocks – Jerry Dodrill 707-824-4862).

Joshua Tree:

Of course we have the Thanksgiving trip to Joshua Tree coming up in November. Last year this trip was a huge success, with a huge turkey feast, drinks round the campfire (and yes, the memory of that hangover has faded and I am drinking again despite swearing otherwise!), and, last but not least, some excellent climbing.

This year we have a huge campsite booked that will take up to 50 people, 15 cars, so it looks like a good party weekend is in order!

thankfully verify that none of them contain scenes of nudity!

The usual editorial request remains – if you have done anything interesting, and feel like

writing an article, please send it to me at carolynldent@aol.com.

Tree from last year it would be great to feature some of those in the run-up to this years Thanksgiving extravaganza!

Photographs would also be really welcome. If anyone has some good photos of Joshua

Next Meeting - Tuesday September 10th (7:00pm)

The Next meeting will be in Berkeley, and hosted by GianLuca. I believe we will be having a slideshow on Peru by Scott Johnston. Scott's last slide show featured such ground-breaking technical achievements as climbing in crampons strapped onto – yes – his trainers! So, if you are one of those climbers who can't afford to miss an advance look at what this winters mountaineering fashions will be, don't miss Scott's slides!

Address:

2837 Webster apt. #4 (Webster & Magnolia) in Berkeley
Phone: 510-508-4804

Directions:

By car: the place is well served by freeways and there is plenty of parking nearby.

From SF & South: Take 24 E from either 580 or 880 (after the bay bridge, stay on the center-right lanes to 580 E (Hayward) and 24. Exit 24 on Claremont, take a left at the end of the ramp, go up Claremont past the College intersection (gas stations) and another minor traffic light. Take a left at the next intersection (Claremont/Ashby, left turn signal). Skip the first 3 alleys to the left and take a left on Magnolia (Pine, Linden or Piedmont are also good). Go one block to Webster.

From East: Exit 24 after the tunnel on 13/Berkeley, or follow 13 N until it becomes Ashby. Go down past Claremont and follow previous.

From North: Go south until you get to Ashby, go uphill on Ashby past the College intersection, take a right on Magnolia (after Linden) go one block to Webster.

Public transport: get off BART at Rockridge and either walk 10-15 min. along College (north) or take bus #51 to Webster (just before Ashby, there's a post office next to the bus stop). Then go uphill on Webster for a few short blocks until Magnolia. You can also take #51 from the North (Berkeley Marina, University, Central Berkeley BART, Durant/UCB campus, College) to College & Ashby.

Warning/Disclaimer

San Francisco Rock Rendezvous is not a teaching organization and does not endorse or insure rock climbing. Trips advertised in the newsletter are private and are only listed to allow for the co-ordination of car pooling and camping. Each participant on a trip is solely responsible for his or her safety during the entire trip, including the transportation to and from the climbing area and site, and any necessary insurance.

Rock Rendezvous Newsletter
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