

DMC Alps Meet 2014 – Bregaglia

July 19th – 27th

Mike Dowsett

A meeting in January was held at the Temple Hotel for those interested in going to the Alps. Several areas were discussed; the Dolomites, the Ecrins, Aosta valley, Val di Mello, Arco and the Bregaglia. The Cassin route on the north face of the Piz Badile was on a couple of member's wishlist and given the scope of other activities in that area; walking and cragging, the Bregaglia was chosen.



N. Face and N. Ridge of the Piz Badile

We chose to base ourselves in Chiavenna, which being at the crossroad of 4 valleys gave us plenty of scope to avoid bad weather. Unfortunately this became the norm during our stay as the Alps in general seemed to experience a particularly bad summer. We prebooked ourselves onto the Aqua Fraggia campsite in Chiavenna and on Friday 18th eight of us met up to erect tents in blistering heat. Jon, Jeff and Steve had flown out that day whilst



The tarp boys get busy

Mike, Dave and Greg arrived a hour later having driven from Matlock. Eddie and Helen had already spent a week in the Alps and arrived another two hours on after summiting Cengalo that day. The campsite posted a daily weather forecast for the next 5 days which was to become the subject of much frustration, as it became apparent that anything forecast more than 48 hours hence was totally unreliable, making planning at altitude nigh impossible.

Anyway the meteo on Friday evening showed an almost glorious week ahead so Saturday's plans were made. Mike , Dave and Greg would sample the delights of Placche Bette multipitch cragging in the valley base whist the others headed for the Vicosoprano cablecar and the granite of Spazzocaldera. Helen and Eddie climbed the 7 pitch normal route followed by the iconic granite blade La Fiamme whilst Jon, Jeff and Steve climbed the 7 pitch, 3 star, Dente Per Dente.

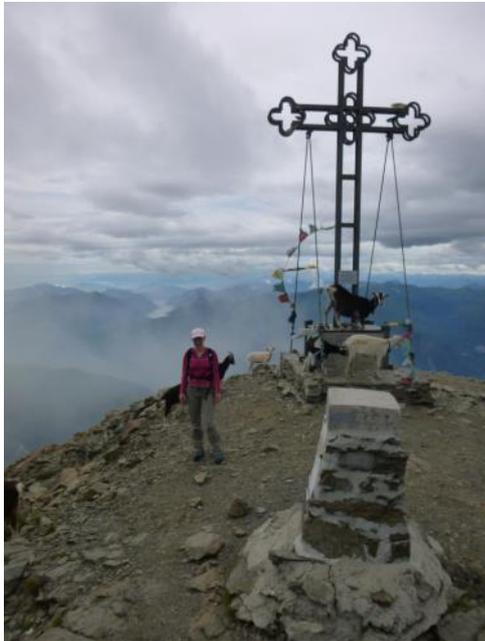


Sunday morning 'el scorchio' turned to 'el raino' as we went in search of a roadside crag. One called 'The Drive In' sounded suitable and was still dry when we arrived. After a mammoth 4 metre walk in, all managed to get several routes completed, before the rain stopped play for a short while and we found a café with football table to pass away an hour or two. The rain stopped and a few more routes were done before calling it a day.



Monday was grim so a full car load headed south alongside Lake Como to hopefully find some sun on the Grigne but that was not to be, but heading back the skies started to clear and a quick check of the guide book located a south facing crag not too far off our route. Sasso di Bianco turned out to be a good choice and a few excellent routes were snatched before dark. Jon, Jeff and Steve spent the day under the tarp thinking about the badile.

Tuesday morning and most of us were woken by Jeff who having been across to look at the meteo declared that we had a small window of opportunity and should plan accordingly. Suddenly there was frantic packing of rucsacs. Mike planned to go for a walk and the summit of Piz Cam, 2634m, was the aim. Starting directly opposite the Spazzacaldera cable way, so I was able to drop off Dave and Greg who were going to spend the night at the Albigna hut. Their intention was to climb on the Spazzocaldera on the first day and the Albigna the second. Jon, Jeff and Steve spent the morning



preparing for the Badile. Their intention was to walk up to the foot of the North Ridge, bivvy, and set out on the ridge early the next morning. Eddie and Helen opted for a walk up Monte Legnone, 2609m, to the south of Chiavenna sharing their lunch with goats on the summit



Eddie and Helen headed south the following day to find some sunshine in the Como area. Dave and Greg took the shortish walk from the hut to the foot of the Punta d'Albigna and climbed the Meuli Route. Mike took a walk to the summit of Piz Lunghin, 2780m.



Piz Lunghin summit



Dave on Meuli Route

Mike found Dave and Greg in a bar in Vicosoprano having caught the last cable car down. Back at the campsite we found the tarp boys who related their tale.

They had found a bivvy site tucked away under some large boulders at the foot of the North Ridge and had had enough time to put some fixed ropes up the first 3 pitches so that they could get a very quick getaway in the morning. Jeff, the early bird, awoke at 0400hrs keen to get started but found that they were in the cloud. An immediate decision was made to retrieve the ropes and get down to the valley.



The following day Dave, Greg and Mike headed off for the classic walk in the Val Bondasco. This involved walking very nearly up to the foot of the Badile and traversing a very narrow path across steep crags and then across moraine under the Badile and Cengalo. I had heard that this route had been closed because of rockfall two years ago but missed more up to date signs to this effect when we took the wrong bridge across the first river. Further up signs had been knocked down. Just as we got to the 'avenue' a large rockfall cracked off to the side of the Badile. (Our first warning shot?). Half way down the narrow path a second rockfall, this time off Cengalo, stopped us in our tracks. We about turned. Jon, Jeff and Steve headed for Spazzacaldera and climbed Via Felici, E2 5b.

Steve on 'Via Felici'



The following day, forecast for rain, dawned sunny so we all headed off for another roadside crag , Palestro della Sassella. This is the ultimate roadside crag as Jon and Greg belayed each other from the road itself. Fortunately not very busy.



Saturday was time for Mike Dave and Greg to make their way home. The weather was abysmal as we left packing wet tents into the car. Jon, Jeff and Steve managed to steal another day on Sunday at Spazzacaldera climbing the normal route and La Fiamme before catching the plane back on the

Monday. Unbeknown to all of us, Ed and Helen had decided to drive to the Aosta valley, in order to do the Gran Paradiso, and succeeded.

Where to next year?



Summit
of Gran
Paradiso