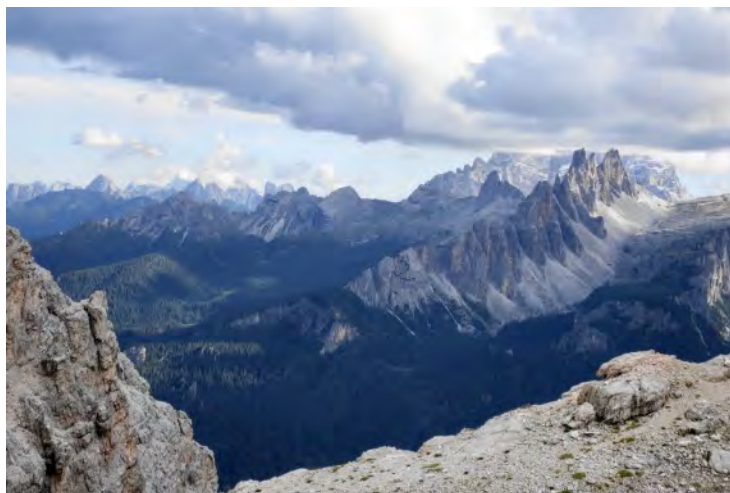


**Overseas  
meet**

**Dolomites  
Italy**

**August 31  
September 14**

The Dolomites in northern Italy are undoubtedly one of the most beautiful mountain groups in the world and the seventy-odd via ferrata climbing routes mostly put up during the First World War conflict are an added attraction. The first two weeks of September were selected for the meet as the Italian holidays are over, but the lift systems and huts are still open.



The leader had been to the Dolomites over half a dozen times before, and hired a large comfortable self-catering chalet in Arabba, a centrally located village which offered good access to seven different mountain groups.

As a venue for a meet, the spires, peaks, ridges and valleys of the Dolomites offer plenty of scope for a wide range of activities: walks, mountain biking, via ferrata climbing routes, scrambling and both sport and traditional rock climbing. The lift infrastructure makes using a valley base compatible with reaching most routes and summits without resorting to nights in refuges. This made for a relaxed and sociable meet with shared catering and nightly opportunities to share experiences and plan outings.

The two-week trip gave those members only able to manage a week some flexibility with dates while those with more time found no difficulty in finding interesting routes to fill every day. The weather was mostly good but with a couple of wet days when waterfalls and salamanders became the main attractions.

At the start of the second week, precipitation plastered the mountains with snow down to below pass level creating new challenges for the next few days but enhancing the mountain views. Gentians, edelweiss, various saxifrages, autumn crocuses and many other flowers together with some late-emerging butterflies enriched our days out, complementing the stunning scenery.

The proximity of Venice tempted several members to spend a day there tagged onto the meet.

### Sat 31<sup>st</sup> August

Arrived and shopped etc.

### Sun 1<sup>st</sup> September

Mick, Michael, Helen, Richard, Fliss (on her first via ferrata), Kjetil and Ann-Karin climbed the new VF Sottotenente Fusetti installed on Sasso di Stria last year, then walked to the summit cross and down via the First World War trench systems dug by Austrian troops opposite the Piccolo Lagazuoi.

Ged, Becca and Tim climbed the excellent VF delle Trincee above Arabba with its great views of the Marmolada, enjoying the fine situations along the airy Padon ridge.

### Mon 2<sup>nd</sup>

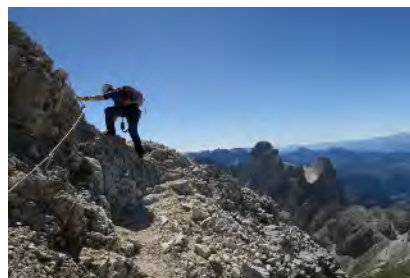
On a wet day, Mick, Tim, Michael, Helen, Richard, Fliss, Kjetil and Ann-Karin drove through Cortina to the Val di Fanes and walked the Sentiero de Canyon e Cascata with its easy via ferrata up to the 120m Cascade di Fanes, with several black squirrels and numerous black salamanders seen along the way.

Becca and Ged did various sport climbs on Sass di Stria, including Enemies and Friends both 4a, dodging the showers.

### Tue 3<sup>rd</sup>

In lovely weather, Mick and Becca completed a fine VF traverse of the Catinaccio d'Antemoia (3002m) and returned to stay at the Rif Vajolet.

Meanwhile Ged and Tim climbed the sensationally exposed Piazz Arete on Torre Delago (featured recently in a BBC documentary about the iconic Welsh climber and adventurer Eric Jones) and stayed overnight in Rif Vajolet with Mick and Becca.



**VF Catinaccio d'Antemoia**



Michael and Helen, Fiona and Dave took a convoluted route from Passo Campolongo taking in the Rif Franz Kostner and Lech de Boa.

Richard and Fliss visited the Lech de Boa.

**Vajolet Towers**

Kjetil and Ann-Karin followed the historic military supply line of the VF Kaiserjäger from the old Austrian Tre Sassi Fort at Passo Valparola up to Piccolo Lagazuoi and descended via Monte de Lagazuoi and Forcella Salares back to the pass.

### **Wed 4th**

Mick and Becca walked up to the Passo Principe, then ascended to the summit cross on Cima Scialeret (2889m) with its fantastic views of the Vajolet valley and the towers opposite. Returning to the Rif Gardeccia via the VF Scalette, they saw a herd of nine chamois.



### **Torri del Vajolet and Rif Re Alberto from Cima di Scialeret**

Ged and Tim descended from the refuge and drove over to a crag at Passo Fedaia which is a buttress on the north flank of the Marmolada and climbed five sport routes: Zaino blu, La dieta, La regola della rigola, Scacco matto and the three-star 5a Statica. The ropes only just reached with a bit of stretch!

Michael, Richard, Fiona and Kjetil made up our second party to visit the classic VF delle Trincee. Helen, Dave and Ann-Karin walked from Passo Pordoi to Passo Padon via the Sentiero Viel de Pan to meet the others at the far end of the VF in time to take the last cable car back down to Arabba.

### **Thu 5th**

Mick and Becca drove up to the Passo Fazarego and in a queue, slowly climbed the excellent but too-popular VF degli Alpini to the Col dei Bos, then walked up to the Piccolo Lagazuoi.

A descent was made down the famous Lagazuoi Tunnels and out onto the Martini Ledge, with its poignant WW1 remains, then down to the Bar Strobel.

Ged and Tim climbed the renowned South Arete on Sasso de Stria, an exposed eight pitch route culminating in a stiff corner leading almost directly to the summit cross. With time to spare they climbed on the lower sport crag and did Incas 4b, before returning for cooking duties.

Helen, Michael and Ann-Karin walked in Alta Badia to Lago di Lunch and Lech da Sompunt returning to Badia alongside the river with Fe and Booker's dog.

Richard, Fliss, Booker and Fe attempted the Sella Ronda by mountain bike with Richard getting a gravel rash.

### **Fri 6th**

On another wet day, Mick and Becca did an easy walk to the Rif Palmieri for lunch situated beside the delightful Lago di Croda but did not try and sample all 47 different home-made grappas on offer.

Ged and Tim decided to walk up from the Sella Pass to do VF Col de Rodella despite the wet and afterwards enjoyed a good lunch in the refuge. They were somewhat held up by a large party of young Czechs, allowing Ged to exercise his considerable instructional skills.

Mike, Helen and Ann-Karin headed up to the protected path over Col di Lana, the scene of several WW1 mine explosions and followed the interesting fortified ridge and trench systems past the military chapel.

Richard and Fliss walked to the Cascata di Retiz near Pieve di Livinallongo. Dave and Fe walked along the waterfall path from Corvara to Colfusco to see the Cascate del Pisciadu.

We all went out for an evening meal and after starters, most were defeated by the enormous pizzas and finished them for lunch the next day.



### **Sat 7<sup>th</sup>**

Ged, Richard and Fliss returned to the airport for their flights back to the UK. Mick and Becca walked up to Rif Bec de Reces via the Panorama path and back to Arabba. They then drove to Cortina to collect Esther and Lloyd who had arrived at the bus station from Venice.

Tim walked up to the Col di Lana and along the protected path. In gathering clouds and quite alone, wandering among the atmospheric ruins of a futile war was an unforgettable experience.

Kjetil, Michael, Helen, Dave and Fe - walked up Pizac (2213m) and back to Arabba before attempting the Cascata di Retiz walk but didn't find the waterfall due to trees felled in last year's major storm.

Ann-Karin had a relaxing day in Arabba.

### **Sun 8<sup>th</sup>**

Snow was forecast to below pass level, so Kjetil, Ann-Karin, Michael, Helen, Mick, Esther and Lloyd drove up to the Pordoi Pass and visited the new WW1 museum with its extraordinary collection of military artefacts and thought-provoking insights into the "White War" fought here.

After lunch at the chalet, Mick and Tim did the Cascata di Retiz walk and did find the waterfall.

Becca did a run up to Rif Plan Boë and back to Arabba via the ski pistes.

Esther and Lloyd walked from the Chalet to the Rifugio Bec des Rocas (eerily deserted), and an excellent strudel at the Hotel Monte Chertz.

Michael and Helen visited Alan and Angie at their hotel for tea and cakes.

Dave and Fe drove up to the Col Alto and stayed on the plateau in the snow.

### **Mon 9<sup>th</sup>**

Mick and Kjetil took Esther and Lloyd on their first via ferrata outing selecting VF Ra Gusela on the Nuvolau followed by VF Averau to make a high-level circuit above the iconic Cinque Torre from Rif Col Galina. This was made more interesting by the covering of new snow and everyone enjoyed it hugely, especially the magnificent views towards Monte Pelmo, the Civetta, Antelao, Sorapis and the not far-off Tofana di Rozes.

Tim, Michael, Helen, Becca and Ann-Karin struggled up snow-covered scree from Passo Pordoi to Rif Forcella Pordoi

then traversed towards Piz Boé, reaching the rock bands at 3,000m.



**Becca  
below  
Forcella  
Pordoi**

Mike and Tim continued up the last 150m to Rif Boé in soft snow up a steepening slope. The zigzag descent above a significant drop and in light boots was thought provoking; both heaved a sigh of relief on reaching safe ground. The party regrouped at Rif Forcella Pordoi before returning on the cable car to Sasso Pordoi.

Dave and Fe repeated the delightful Sentiero de Canyon e Cascata in Val di Fanes.

### **Tue 10<sup>th</sup>**

Mick, Lloyd, Esther, Tim, Becca, Kjetil and Ann-Karin followed the protected path up Sassongher (2665m) which towers above Corvara, hand-feeding the noisy alpine choughs some lunch at the summit cross with its outstanding views.

Again, the summit snowfield required concentration in descent.





Michael and Helen descended from the Piz La Ila to Alta Badia with Alan and Angie. Dave and Fe completed the Sella Ronda by mountain bike.

**Wed 11<sup>th</sup>**

Mick, Becca, Tim, Lloyd and Esther made a highly recommended circuit of Tofana di Rozes from Rif Dibona, including going underground on the VF Grotta di Tofana, then ascending the unique stemple ladder of VF Scala di Minighel (possibly the oldest VF in the Dolomites).



This was a splendid tour, encompassing easy but spectacular ferratas, caving, WW1 battlefields and stark lunar landscapes, culminating in a much-anticipated beer at Rif Giussani, where they were reunited with Kjetil and Ann Karin, who had missed out the ferratas.

Michael, Helen, Dave and Fe parked at Rif Col Galina, walked to the cable car and did the Giro di Cinque Torre and VF Ra Gusela to the Rif Nuvolau

Dave and Fe returned via Cologne and Bruges on their drive to the cross-channel ferry.

#### **Thu 12<sup>th</sup>**

Mick, Esther and Lloyd took the Dantercipies gondola from Selva and walked across the Altiplano Crespeina to its lake and on to Rif Puez for an espresso, then descending via the textbook deep glacial trough of Vallunga, and pausing to visit the charming tiny chapel of San Silvestro and its 300-year old frescos, uncovered in 1993. This varied walk was very enjoyable.



**The glacial trough of Val Longaru**

Tim, Becca and Kjetil drove to the Gardena Pass and did the famous VF Brigata Tridentina with its suspension bridge, immortalised in the film “Cliffhanger”.

Although the route was very busy, everyone was moving smoothly and there were no delays. After a lazy lunch they descended by the very steep Val Setus, more of a gorge than a valley, with the winding pass road visible far below.

Michael, Helen and Ann-Karin did VF Santa Croce in Alta Badia from the midway chairlift station.

#### **Fri 13<sup>th</sup>**

Tim and Becca left early for a last day in Venice.



Mick, Esther and Lloyd motored over to Misurina and paid the exorbitant toll to drive up to the Rif Auronso parking. They then enjoyed VF Senterio Della Forcelle and summited Monte Paterno (2744m) to with its amazing views before following the second part of VF De Luca/Innerkofler to Forcella Laveredo and back via refreshments at Malga Langalm to complete a magnificent circuit of the Tre Cima di Laveredo.



**Tre  
Cima  
Di  
Laveredo**

Michael and Helen did the Kaiserjäger Steig then descended the Lagazuoi tunnels, reascending to Forcella Lagazuoi for their return via Forcella de Salares to the Valparola Pass.

Alan and Angie explored Selva and later the Forcella Sassolunga via the “coffin” lift from Passo Sella and Kjetil and Ann-Karin repeated the lovely high-level circuit to the Rif Puez from the Dantercipies gondola in Selva.

### **Sat 14<sup>th</sup>**

On his route to the airport, Mick drove to Passo Staulanza and enjoyed a last walk up through the pine forest to see the three tracks of dinosaur footprints from the late Triassic period imprinted on a huge block of dolomite collapsed from the flank of the towering Pelmo massif above.

Michael and Helen drove back to the airport the scenic way exploring the town of Treviso en route.

Kjetil and Karin-Ann dropped off Esther and Lloyd for an extra day in Venice, visiting the Biennale and the Accademia and taking in an incense-laden morning service at St. Mark's.

### **Participants**

**MB**

Mick Borroff (Leader)

Dave Booker-Smith

Fiona Booker-Smith

Ged Campion

Esther Chadwick

Lloyd de Beer (G)

Becca Humphreys

Tim Josephy

Alan Linford

Angie Linford (G)

Fliss Roberts (G)

Helen Smith

Michael Smith

Richard Smith

Ann-Karin Tveranger (G)

Kjetil Tveranger