

Jack Ashcroft

Jack Ashcroft was a member of the CMC from its early days. He died in hospital on 22nd May after a bad fall at home. Jack was an all-round mountaineer who had completed several alpine seasons and an early Himalayan expedition before he joined the CMC.

He was born in the early 1930s and remembered being evacuated to Shropshire to avoid the heavy bombings of Birmingham and Coventry. He met his wife at university and they both moved to the Derby area. Here he became a member of the Oread- a thriving club with many keen and capable members. Jack's first Himalayan experience was a trip with them to the Kulu region in 1961. In those days this involved a lengthy voyage by sea before the mountaineering could begin.

As well as the Oread and the CMC, he was a member of the Midlands Association of Mountaineers and The Alpine Club amongst others. He served as treasurer of the BMC and was a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society.

He joined the CMC after moving to Sheffield in the early 1970's. He will be remembered as a keen, energetic walker who thought little of walking 30 miles in a day. Starting and/or finishing in the dark was regarded as normal. He did all the classic long-distance walks – Eastern Edges, Derwent Watershed, Horseshoe of the Peak, Three Peaks, Welsh 14 – as well as devising his own routes. He would famously resort to “bee-lines” to cut out unnecessary descents or to make up for lost time. As well as mountaineering and walking, he enjoyed cycling, running and photography. He had been an able climber and often turned up on crag meets to photograph CMC climbers in action.

As well as many trips to Scotland and Wales with CMC members, he went on several Himalayan treks with Castle members – Zanskar, Ladakh, Everest and Kanchenjunga.

Many of the older members of the club will remember him for his enthusiasm, his stamina, his quirky sense of humour and his love of a decent argument about politics and social equality.

Frank & Jennifer Mellor – 30 May 2024

Jack joined the Castle Mountaineering Club in April 1970, less than three years after it was founded. He served on the committee from 1973 to 1979, was Vice-president in 1974 and President in 1975.



An Oread group on the Marsden - Rowsley walk in 1957. Jack is second from the right. Photo: Harry Pretty

As noted by Frank and Jennifer above, long distance walking in the Peak was a passion for Jack. He did all the classics many times, often extending or modifying them and inventing new ones. Some of those I have noted were Eastern Edges (Flouch to Beeley). Marsden to Ashbourne, West - East Peak walk (Teggs Nose to Wyming Brook), Three Barns walk (Kinder/ Bleaklow), Edale to Midhopestones, 5 Trigs walk, Ten Trigs walk, Five Inns walk (this was a joint meet with the Oread in September 1979). You can read Jack's report of the Ten Trigs walk, done on 19th July 1987, in the 1987 Meet Reports in the Archives section of the CMC website. Also there, is Frank's poem about the Derwent Watershed Walk, led by Ian Lauriston on 6 June 1981 (Jack was a member of the party), which gives an idea of the sort of walks we used to do in those days.

Jack organised the Club photo competition in the '70s and also won the Veterans prize in the 1982 SACC (Sheffield Association of Climbing Clubs) Fell Race. Jack's last appearance on a Club meet was the walk from Curbar Gap to the Grouse on 22 October 2017, done as part of the 50th Anniversary celebrations.

Notes added by Andy Smith, 2 June 2024



Jack 50 years later at the CMC 50th anniversary dinner in 2017. Photo: Ian Smith