

## Impromptu LMC Loft meet 6-10<sup>th</sup> Jan 2025

My first mountain meet of the year - WOW!



Tony and myself had tried a few times to get to the recently spruced up Loft. The last time we were worried about the snow forecast for the lakes so diverted to CY – guess what – NO snow at the Loft, it was different this time!

Tony and I arranged to meet around 3pm at the cattle grid where you turn up to Blea Tarn. This was a good plan as we got up in the daylight having had to grit the road and clear ice by Blea farm but it was fine.

On Tuesday we walked from the Loft down through the campsite to New Dungeon Gill car park as the road was literally a river of ice, more on that later! We waded up the path towards Pike of Stickle passing a few people who had turned back due to deep snow, but we heroically pressed on. Progress was slow so after summiting we decided to make our descent especially as we had to walk back up to the Loft. The snow was soft, so crampons were not needed. The original intention was to come back down the path to the north side of Dungeon Gill but the conditions had deteriorated with a high wind so we went back down the way we had come up past Loft crag. A jolly evening followed in the Loft with a few glasses of wine drunk.



I left my car at the bottom cattle grid Tuesday evening as I had a early start and we didn't know what the road would be like but it was passible and Tony dropped me off. I drove to Glenridding where I met Mark Braithwaite and a couple of other pals to skin up to Raise ski tow which was running. We piled into Marks Freelander and

drove to the very snowy top car park. This is where I realised, I had made a schoolboy error and left my ski skins in my car – so nothing for it but say ‘see you later’ to the others, strap my skis on my rucksack and boot up to the ski tow. You can imagine my disappointment when I eventually got there to see the tow was not working! I went into the lovely warm ski club hut which was packed. ITV Borders were there to film, I think the camera man who

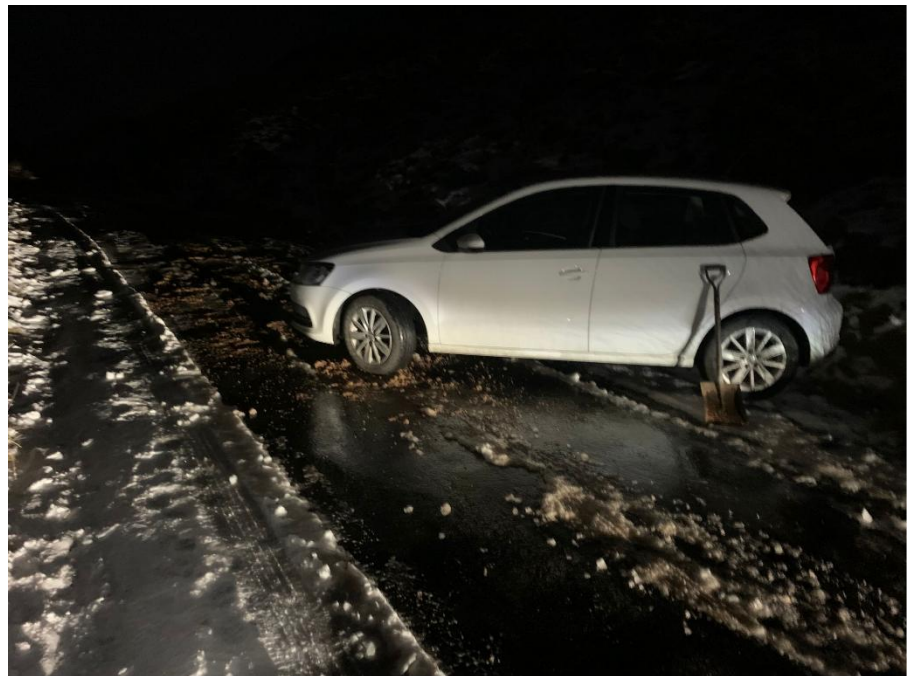


wasn't skiing had a hard time getting around thigh deep in his boots!

But after lunch the Tow was fixed and I did several runs and met up with Mark. Morzine it isn't but it was a stunning blue-sky day with no wind although the snow was a bit wind scoured. After a drink in the hut Mark and myself took the lift to the top and skied back to the car (no skins required!)

Our pals Andy and Pete had even managed to skin down the track and were sat by the fire in the Travellers Rest pub where we had to join them. I drove back towards the Loft getting there in time to see the taillights of a car sliding back down the road to the Loft – the excitement had begun!

It was Steve Lyon driving having met Tony in Great Langdale. They managed to stop but as Steve got out he realised what the road was like as he promptly fell straight onto his back shortly followed by Tony. We decided to leave vehicles there and carried some clothes and sleeping bags up the road – thank goodness for micro spikes. Jon Ellis and Mick had managed to slip sideways on the steepest bit of the road blocking it. Luckily Roger Gott had given Patrick from the farm a lift from the Old Dungeon Gill pub. He managed to speak to a farmer chum from the valley who came up on his quad bike and after spreading some road salt towed Micks car up to the Blea Tarn car park. Roger drove into the car park demonstrating just how good winter tyres make a rear-wheel-drive BMW cope with snow! After ferrying some gear to the Loft and spreading more grit we all had a well-earned meal with more wine and beer.



On Thursday – (another stunning day) we walked down the road a bit and went across to gain the footpath that leads around Blea Tarn and onto side pike. After a late lunch at the Loft we checked the road and the sun had done a great job melting the ice and we decided to make our escape after lunch Friday.



The next morning (stunning again) we actually walked down the road – praising our micro spikes to see the hapless stranded Range Rover. To be fair he had got two thirds of the way up before he left the road and got bogged down to the axles, thankfully leaving the road clear. Some wit had written ‘Wa\*\*ker’ in the frost on the windscreen. I’m sure our local farmer saviour will earn some beer money towing him out when it melts. After lunch at the Loft we set off in Tonys

RAV and were delighted to see the gritter lorry backing up to the farm spreading lots of lovely road salt. We followed him down with no issues and all safely departed for home, not sure what happened to Jon and Mick though!

It was an incredible 4 days. I put All season tyres on my car a month ago and it demonstrated just how good these tyres are even on a 2-wheel drive. The value of micro spikes was also show with the majority of walkers wearing them, yes we took proper crampons on the mountain though.

John Cairns 13/01/2025

