

Dave Westby

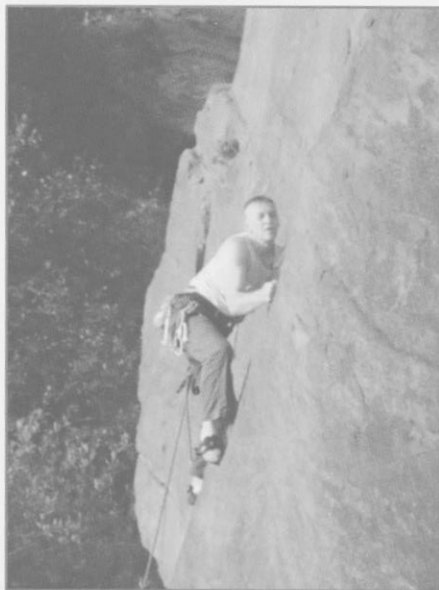
As remembered by Rob Lewis

Photographs courtesy of Tony Hulme

Dave passed away on 6 March 2024 having suffered from a series of strokes. He had been an FMC member since the 1970s until illness forced him to take no further part in mountaineering, but even after his first stroke he was back at the wall trying to regain coordination, with me at Preston and Iggi at Blackpool. Dave was a very determined climber who didn't give up easily.

I vividly recall the first time I met him which was on the day I joined the F.M.C. He drove up to Little Langdale with that big grin on his face which those who knew him will always remember, and before long Dave, former member Gary Nuttall and I were on our way to Pavey Ark. It was a blue cloudless day and we made the most of it, climbing *Arcturus* and *Red Groove*, both now E1. Dave showed what a character he was and joked as I completed the second pitch of *Arcturus*, pretending he was belayed to a loose rotten flake. He wasn't of course, in fact, he was a very safe climber. Later, he encouraged Gary as he grappled with the steep start to *Red Groove*. This was another aspect of Dave's character which I liked - he would always encourage you and give you the confidence to succeed. I don't think I would have climbed many of the routes I did without Dave gently pushing me on. 'You're thinking about it too much', he would say, and it would be true and you would just get on and do the pitch. I didn't know at the time that we would form a climbing partnership which would last for more than a quarter of a century.

Dave was a very sociable climber who would always tell you a tale and entertain you. I particularly remember an occasion when we had had a pleasing day in White Gill culminating in Dave's lead of *Man of Straw* (E1). We stopped at the Britannia Inn at Elterwater and sat outside in the sunshine to have a beer. Dave struck up a conversation with a group of walkers. We were still there as the sun went down, having had a most convivial evening after an excellent day's climbing. My family had a static caravan in the woods at Skelwith Fold, which meant we would see Dave's wife Diane and their boys on days when climbing wasn't top of the agenda, so we had plenty of varied social events.



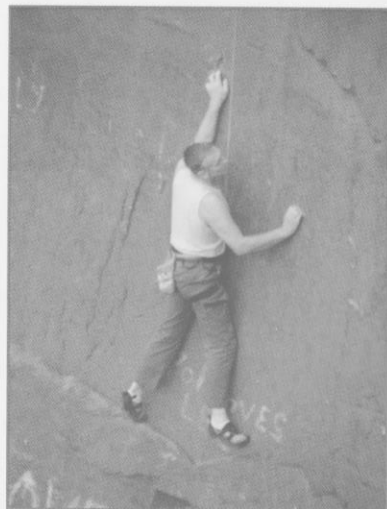
Dave and I were quite prolific in the mid-nineties, and during this time climbed over a hundred routes of quality at HVS / E1 with the occasional foray into E2 mainly in Borrowdale and Langdale. One particularly good day on Castle Rock was when, after warming up on *Zig Zag*, Dave forced his way up *Harlot Face* (E1) then led the top pitch of *North Crag Eliminate* (E1). One of his finest leads was *Gillette Direct* (E2) on the Neckband Crag. I thought he was going to do the easier original route but he went straight on up the steep three star classic. He also led *Deuterus* on Raven Walthwaite - HVS but with no protection at all.

We had to have two attempts at *Kipling Groove* on Gimmer (HVS), as on the first go we were forced to abseil off the stance due to freezing rain. When we did *Gimmer String* (E1) Dave laybacked up the top pitch then disappeared round the corner onto the face. From the belay he told me of the 'thin' moves I would have to make before reaching a jug. I am very tall. As I came round onto the face I reached up and there was the jug.

'This one?' I said.

Dave said some quite unprintable things to me referring to my physique, but he had his usual grin on his face.

Bleak How was just the crag for us with a profusion of routes at our grades. You could add to that a charge down the hillside on a hot day and immersion in Black Moss pot. Whilst on this crag one day we met a climber called Tony Hulme. Dave encouraged him to join the F.M.C. The rest is history. Dave and Tony climbed together on many occasions.



The last outdoor meet I remember Dave taking part in with the F.M.C. was on Lining Crag in 2002. We were not staying at the hut and had made an early start, so had the crag to ourselves as we saw a large group of climbers making their way up the valley. The club members arrived; I remember Martin was climbing with Mick Tolley. My most notable recollection is that in the midst of a very pleasurable and sociable meet, Dave led the unusual *City of Love and Ashes* (E1) which had a number of sharp edges on it.

Dave remained a member for some years more and I recall him being with me at the A.G.M. in 2011 when I was elected Secretary. Soon afterwards he ceased to be a member as his health was in decline.

Dave was an enthusiastic middle-grade climber and a kind person who would do anything for you. He was a good friend whose last years were increasingly affected by ill health, surprisingly so considering how fit he always was. I shall miss him a great deal.



Rob