

The Les – that Glasgow Branch didn't know! March 2024

Assembling to hear Les Lambert entertain us this time with 'the Les Glasgow Branch didn't know', the Seniors encountered an impressively refurbished Crookston Hotel, under new management. This created an unexpected issue in that the white wall we previously used for slide viewing was now covered with smart new patterned wallpaper. Not being allowed to touch this, Les persuaded the hotel staff to rearrange the furniture so that we could sit in one area and his slides could be projected onto the white central partition when closed. Initial chaos became fun!

All set up, Margaret Tough and Carolyn operated the projector, keeping it stable and focused. Les had even brought a couple of props to help illustrate his talk: a pair of old fashioned climbing boots, an ice axe and his old moleskin breeches.

Fortified by lunch which calmed the pressure of having arrived via A&E, Carolyn sporting injuries after tripping on a broken paving slab, Les began with how he had started climbing as a teenager on his local Northumbrian crags. Then he graduated to the Lake District, and after a few years to the Scottish hills particularly the Cuillins of Skye, spending a rewarding, successful week climbing, including completing the traverse of the Cuillin ridge. Whilst celebrating this expedition in the bar of the Sligachan Hotel, the very pretty novice barmaid attracted Les's attention. But more of that story later, as Kirsty Wark would say.

Eventually, as his enthusiasm for climbing increased, and looking for a bigger challenge, Les decided to give up his job and spend the summer in the Alps as part of a group of climbers which included big John from Edinburgh. Imagine Les's delight when he returned home at the end of the summer to discover the pretty barmaid was John's sister, Carolyn. So the next trip to the Alps included four guys and - Les's new bride, Carolyn, who was introduced to the joys of sleeping in mountain huts all packed on to one big wooden platform. What a way to spend a honeymoon!

Les continued with a series of wee stories and anecdotes including climbing in bare feet; because having taken off the new climbing shoes (tight and painful), these dropped off the ridge he was resting on. Then he and companion had a very close shave, narrowly missing a rockfall on the Piz Badile in Switzerland by pressing tightly against the rock face. They were counting their blessings thinking they had escaped unharmed, only to discover that the falling stones had cut their 300 foot climbing rope into small pieces. A problem which resulted in them taking two days to climb down the 2000 feet that had taken them 5 hours to climb up with no way of contacting Carolyn who was waiting at the bottom of the mountain. His climbing exploits then took him to Kenya to climb on the spectacular Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya only to have yet more adventures, this time being chased by a herd of elephants!!! Eventually it was time to settle down and move on from mountaineering. But Les, as daring as ever, decided that he must take up something just as daring - Scottish Country Dancing.

