

*I love children,  
especially when they cry,  
for then someone takes them away.*  
Nancy Mitford

This was a luxury only afforded to Tony and Mike (The Beards), although they have both been through it all before. Along with the Beards, three families attended the Lofoten meet in northern Norway. The Hayes', Bashfoths and Westons. The guidebook says that the Lofoten Islands are "a long way from anywhere" and I think that all those who attended would agree.

The Hayes' took the Dover-Calais ferry and drove just over 2000 miles to get there whilst the Bashforths and Westons took the 24 hour Newcastle-Bergen ferry and drove a more modest 1100 miles. The Beards, being (much) older and (a little) wiser flew, although even this took three separate flights.

The journey was plagued with several mini epics including a forgotten passport, a failing exhaust pipe, a self-distrusting trailer, a shredded tyre and virtually non-stop rain. Despite all this everyone arrived at the destination in reasonably good spirits.

The Beards had arrived a few days before the families and reported that the rain had not yet stopped and that the day we met them (overcast and drizzling) was the best yet. However, they had managed to bag a couple of peaks earlier in the week and got a few routes done at Paradiset the local sea cliff.

The Westons tent blew away whilst being erected on the first night and this along with the rain prompted a retreat to the very convenient local system of Rorbus. These were converted fishermens cabins, which proved very comfortable and were available on a night by night basis. Firstly we stopped at the small fishing village of Kalle and after a few day moved round the coast to Lyngyoeret

After the dust had settled and everyone had got over the journey, the weather began to pick up and we all managed to get out together and walk up the local hill of Glamtinden. This gave brilliant views across our island of Austvagoya.

The following day saw the first real climbing. In the morning Tony, Mike and Graham headed for the Lofoten classic, Pianohandler Lunds Rute. This gave four pitches of good climbing on very rough granite with a very short walk from the road. The Hayes' and Bashforths were out on a family type day. After their return and after tea they were persuaded that the route was worth a visit so at around 10:30pm Mick, Stephen and Alison set off. They returned shortly after midnight having completed the route and been treated to a spectacular sunset display. This was possible as it never really got dark whilst we were on the islands (you could sit outside and read a book at midnight).

This availability of light nights led to going to bed far too late and the inevitable late start the next day.

The next route on the list was Bare Blabaer, again an Island Classic according to the guide. Tony, Mike, Stephen, Mick and Graham all set off on the long walk in. Long that is in Lofoten terms, which means about an hour. This route followed a thin crack into a series of corners then onto a slab. Five pitches of perfect granite crack and slab climbing in a deserted (apart from a French couple) fjord with the sun on our backs.

Two days later Mick and Graham returned to attempt a new line near Bare Blabaer. This had been spotted on the previous visit and the line did not appear in the guide or in the new routes book (which was conveniently located in the best cafe the islands). The main feature of the route was a large corner containing an overlap. Graham backed off the first pitch and passed the lead to the bolder Mick who had no problems. The next pitch Graham managed to lead with little incident, leaving the big corner for Mick. This proved to be the crux pitch, not at the overlap as had been expected but a little higher where the protection was at its thinnest. Mick rose to the challenge and left the final pitch to Graham. This was a continuation of the corner but at an easier angle. Another route on very good rock in a fantastic location. The route was christened "Child's Play" (as the kids were on the beach and apparently Bare Blabaer means similar in Norwegian).

Whilst this was going on the Beards were engrossed on the Svolveargeita. This is a very impressive hill overlooks the town of Svolvær and is topped by the Norwegian version of Adam & Eve. There are several routes that gain the top but Tony and Mike did "1910 Ruta" and said that it was very good and would have been a very bold and impressive lead in 1910.

The Bashforths had made a cultural visit to the Viking Centre the same day which turned out to be

It was so interesting as to require a second visit later in the holiday. On the way back Stephen managed to pull in a walk to the top of Hoven, a hill that appears to stick straight out of the sea. He reported very good views although the going was hard and the path difficult to follow.

Tony and Mike were active again a couple of days later, this time with Alison, Graham and Nea. A walk had been planned up a hill on the neighbouring island of Vestvagoy. Similar to Stephens experience on Hoven the path on Hatinden was virtually non-existent, although there was no path shown on the map so there was little to complain about. The way up was not difficult but the ridge down did prove a little more exciting.

Further climbing was limited to the sea cliffs at Paradiset mainly due to lack of time and poor weather.

During the holiday climbing and walking days were interspersed with warm, sunny beach days involving all the families, cycling trips and even a meal out in the cafe. Most evenings were spent watching the sun go down very slowly and socialising. We were all invited to a very nice barbecue by a group of Germans who had caught too much fish (90 Lbs.) and did not know what to do with it all, (no one mentioned the war!).

The journey back was much more pleasant than the outward trip. Everyone took a different route but we all managed to meet up for a days walking in the Fjords and all made the ferry trip back to Newcastle together.

Overall it was a very enjoyable trip and I would like to thank everyone who made the (very long) journey that made the trip very successful.

Those present were: -

Stephen, Nicola, Rowena and Charlotte Bashforth. Mick, Helen, Emma and Thomas Hayes. Tony Howard and Mike Jones (aka The Beards). Alison, Graham and Nea Weston.

Pictures from the meet can be seen [here](#).

I am trying to get pics from other people too, so if you were there and have any, please can I

borrow them. Thanks GW.