

## FORT WILLIAM MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL 2010

Thursday 11 - Monday 15 February

A celebration of mountain culture

<http://www.mountainfestival.co.uk>

News Release - Friday 5 February 2010

### LEGENDS OF SCOTTISH CLIMBING FACE AN EXTREME 50th ANNIVERSARY CHALLENGE

Six winter ascents of Ben Nevis on six consecutive days

Fort William Mountain Festival 2010

The highlight of this year's Fort William Mountain Festival, being staged across the Outdoor Capital of the UK - Fort William and Lochaber - will be an attempt to repeat Jimmy Marshall and Robin Smith's now legendary achievement of six first winter ascents of Ben Nevis on six consecutive days in February 1960; a feat that was to transform the shape of Scottish winter mountaineering, advancing it a full ten years.

Despite the modern equipment and techniques of renowned Scottish climbers Dave Macleod and Andy Turner, the weather, ice conditions, threat of avalanches and their physical fitness will have a huge impact on the awesome challenge they face exactly 50 years on, from Saturday 6 to Saturday 13 February 2010.

Paul Diffley, a multi-awarding winning adventure filmmaker, will film each ascent and edit the footage every evening in the CIC Hut, one of the only genuine alpine huts for mountaineers in Scotland, situated on the north side of Ben Nevis. So desperate are the mountain festival organisers for the footage to be posted on the web that every night volunteers from Lochaber Athletic Club will don their head torches and run to the CIC Hut, where the climbers will be based all week, to pick up the footage ready for upload onto the web.

The challenge will be followed by a very special evening to celebrate Jimmy Marshall, the architect of modern Scottish climbing, on Sunday 14 February 2010 at the Nevis Centre Fort William. Dave Macleod and Andy Turner will present their own experiences of the six gruelling climbs (and a seventh on the official rest day) with film clips of the ascents, comparing the 21st Century experience of climbing the same routes using state of the art equipment and techniques with Jimmy's recollections of the first ascents using one ice axe and cutting holes in the ice for hands and feet.

Dave MacLeod said: 'This challenge is something that a few of us in Lochaber had been talking about doing for a while. However, Mike Pescod from the Fort William Mountain Festival really galvanised us into action over the past few weeks. He also roped in Diff [Paul Diffley - also part of the Festival programme] from Hot Aches to film us during the week and arranged for us to talk at the festival at the end of the experience about our thoughts on the challenge and the importance of Marshall and Smith's incredible story and massive achievement in Scottish winter climbing.'

Mike Pescod, Chairman of the Highland Mountain Culture Association, organisers of the Fort William Mountain Festival, said: 'The Jimmy Marshall Project is an incredibly exciting part of the Mountain Festival in 2010. It pulls together so much of the culture of mountaineering that we enjoy. The uncertainty of success right the way through the week,

the team-work involved in capturing the climbs on film and the personal talent in climbing them all, together with the recognition of those who have gone before all play a part. It will be a unique experience to take part in the challenge and a unique experience to be part of the celebration of Jimmy Marshall's achievements, not only in his climbing but also in the inspiration of generations of mountaineers after him.'

This major event and lecture evening will be a significant moment in modern Scottish climbing history and a must for all outdoor enthusiasts.

Further Information:

In one legendary week on Ben Nevis in 1960 Jimmy Marshall and Robin Smith transformed the shape of Scottish winter mountaineering. On consecutive days they climbed six first winter ascents, including the mini Alpine-route Orion Face Direct (V, 5), while also making the second and much quicker ascent of Point Five Gully (V, 5) for good measure - in seven hours as opposed to more than 40 hours when previously climbed.

The fact they achieved all this using rudimentary ice-climbing gear and by cutting steps up the snow and ice appears, from the remove of the 21st century, to be almost unbelievable. This was a feat of fitness, skill and commitment that some would argue has never been bettered; and the finest achievement in ice climbing using the step cutting technique.

'Marshall's skill was such that he could lead routes almost faster than some of his talented seconds could follow.' Colin Wells, Who's who in British Climbing.

Smith and Marshall were also to interrupt their week with a single rest day involving a descent to Fort William, a pub crawl and temporary arrest by the local constabulary (for the theft of the Fort William Pub's set of Draughts) before re-ascent to the CIC hut beneath the north face of Ben Nevis. This brief respite was not to slow their pace, indeed their final day was to be one of the finest of their climbing careers with the ascent of Orion Direct, a climb alpine in atmosphere and so advanced that Scottish winter mountaineering had to wait a decade before changes in technique and equipment permitted a repeat.

Exactly 50 years on to the day and to mark this stunning achievement two pioneers of modern Scottish climbing, Dave MacLeod and Andy Turner, today's Marshall and Smith, will attempt to repeat the most legendary week of Scottish climbing ever, with each ascent being filmed by award winning film-maker Paul Diffley (Saturday 6 - Saturday 13 February 2010). Dave and Andy will repeat the Grey Corries traverse as Smith and Marshall did for their 'rest day' on the 13 February.

Any number of challenges could stop their attempt. The weather and conditions of the snow and ice will of course have a huge impact. There is always the threat of avalanches. Plus the physical impact of climbing seven big classic routes in seven days, even with modern equipment and clothing, is not to be underestimated.

The full list of climbs -

The Great Chimney (IV,5) 6th February 1960  
Minus Three Gully (IV,5) 7th February 1960  
Smith's Route (V,5) 8th February 1960  
Observatory Buttress (V,4) 9th February 1960  
Point Five Gully (V,5) 10th February 1960  
Piggot's Route (V,6) 12th February 1960

Orion Direct (V,5) 13th February 1960

That week of climbing by Smith and Marshall has been described as 'The very pinnacle of Scottish winter mountaineering' Ken Crocket in his book - Ben Nevis

Extract from The Hard Way

By Mark Jenkins

In Outsider Magazine

... but the sole ice axe of the first ascensionist had a straight, 90-degree pick with tiny teeth. You couldn't wang it into steep ice and hang on for dear life-the pick would pop right out. Instead, the climber used the wood-shafted ice axe as precisely that-an axe, hacking out a handhold above his head with the axe, grasping the hold and pulling up on it with one woolly-mittened hand, chopping another pigeonhole, swapping the leashless axe to the opposite hand, and doing another pull-up. Handholds became footholds, although the deeper and more sound you made them, the more exhausted you became. Hence early masters cut tiny, ephemeral steps. It seems insane, bold beyond believability. And yet I know that this route, The Chute, is just one of dozens put up in Scotland in the 1950s and '60s by a genius named Jimmy Marshall.

Extract from a book review

Dave Hewitt, 'On The Edge' 2002, May, No. 117, p. 64-65

<http://www.climbandmore.com/climbing,389,0,1,books.html>

'Trouble is, [Dougal] Haston is by no means the book's most interesting character. Robin Smith holds more allure (Baptist to Haston's Christ) and there is the intriguing Jimmy Marshall: talent scout, mentor, kingmaker.'

'Climbing with one tool,' he says, 'you always have to end up in balance, because if you're not, you're fucked. I really love that whole idea of finding ways to balance yourself. You have to be a real genius to pull it off. You know who was the all-time master of that stuff? Jimmy Marshall.' Yvon Chouinard on one tool climbing

For full details of the Fort William Mountain Festival programme and to book tickets go to - <http://www.mountainfestival.co.uk>

Ends

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If you are keen to attend the Fort William Mountain Festival for a commissioned travel feature or adventure / activity feature please contact Paddy Cuthbert to discuss a funded press trip to The Outdoor Capital of the UK.

Notes to Editors:

The Fort William Mountain Festival, presented by The Outdoor Capital of the UK, runs from Thursday 11 to Monday 15 February 2010 - <http://www.mountainfestival.co.uk>

Festival information:

Tel: 01397 700 001 / E: [info@mountainfestival.co.uk](mailto:info@mountainfestival.co.uk)

Book Tickets:

Online - <http://www.mountainfestival.co.uk>. All online sales are subject to a £2 fee.  
Ticket Office - Nevis Centre, An Aird, Fort William  
Phone - 01397 700 707  
Concessions for under 16's only.

### Festival Organisers

The Highland Mountain Culture Association Limited, is a not for profit organisation, whose aim is to promote the understanding and appreciation of the world's mountain places and people, by creating opportunities for people of all ages to share their mountain experiences, ideas and visions. To showcase these ideals, it stages annually a programme of events within the Lochaber area, called The Fort William Mountain Festival.

### Sponsors and Partners

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Presented by The Outdoor capital of the UK - <http://www.outdoorcapital.co.uk/>

Formed in 2003, the Outdoor Capital is a not-for-profit community company established to promote Fort William and Lochaber as the best place to experience the outdoors in the UK; with the vision: To establish and maintain Fort William and Lochaber as the UK's premier destination for outdoor pursuits and adventure tourism in an exceptional natural environment.

Visitors interested in the outdoors are increasingly important to economy and community of Lochaber. There are over 65 different activities to choose from in an amazing landscape that encompasses the small isles to Ben Nevis with white water rivers, sea, lochs, beaches, forest, glens, cliffs and mountains in between.

To find out about what The Outdoor Capital has to offer everyone, from the most rabid outdoor enthusiast to those keen to just give things a try, visit: <http://www.outdoorcapital.co.uk>

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Rio Tinto Alcan - <http://www.riotintoalcan.com/>

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Scottish Outdoor Access Code - <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/>

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