

Ötztaler Alpen 2016

An octogenerian reminiscence by Chris Marshall



Chris (L) and Dave on Similaun summit July 1992: Dave Raeburn

My middle son, James, has put me up to writing this! Back in 1992, with my climbing partner, the late David Raeburn, I passed by the Similaunhütte, which was then something of a chaotic building site. Our route that day started from the Martin-Busch-Hütte, via that building site, to the summit of Similaun, returning to the Martin-Busch-Hütte via the Marzellkamm. It was a great day all those years ago.

This summer (2016), now in my mid-eighties, I actually spent two nights at the renewed and excellent Similaunhütte. I was on a modest trip to the Ötztaler Alpen with two of my sons, two grandsons, and two friends of theirs. In view of my advancing years, I gave myself a limited objective: simply to get from the Hochjoch-Hospiz to the Martin-Busch-Hütte and finally to the Similaunhütte, leaving the 'peak-bagging' to the youngsters.

Happily, at octogenarian pace, I made it without any great difficulty, partly because the boys insisted I had just a small rucksack. As one gets older, rucksacks seem to get heavier, so much so that when I tried to lift that of my grandson, I found I could not get it off the ground!

As has been the case over the years, I enjoyed the atmosphere of the huts, the marvellous views, the company (often of people from other nationalities) and the *Schnapps* often so kindly given by the hut wardens. Over the years I have climbed and walked not only in the Austrian Alps, but in France and Switzerland, including a trip to the Himalaya with my son, James.

Weighing it all up, the Alps in Austria have been the real love of my mountaineering life. If asked what has been (and is) my favourite area, I think it has to be that iced wilderness of the Weißkamm, which includes my favourite hut, the Rauhekopfhütte. So, will 2016 be my last Alpine year? My eldest son, David, says I have been asking this question for the past five years! I have always kept an Alpine log and this year my current volume finished. So, do I buy a new notebook for 2017? Time alone will tell.



Chris at Similaunhütte July 2016: James Marshall