


How I First Met Chris Bonington – 30 Years Ago!

By Rick Crandall

In 1989 I was in my 19th year as CEO of Comshare, Inc., a public, international software company. British mountaineer Ian McNaught-Davis (“Mac” for short) was my executive in charge of the international part of Comshare, headquartered in Chelsea, England. Mac was also one of the world’s most unique characters, often featured on the BBC’s The Computer Programme in the early days of the personal computer. Mac turned 60 in September 1989 and his wife, Loreto, threw quite a weekend-long party at the Scafell Hotel in Borrowdale in Cumbria. Some of Mac’s illustrious climbing mates were going to be there, and so was I. As instructed, we came equipped with “*full walking gear, rucksacks and waterproofs*” which I interpreted to mean backpack and raingear.

**WHO'D GIVE
A PARTY
IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?**



BORROWDALE CP

WEEKEND

We have the Scafell Hotel for the entire week-end to ourselves.

Dinner, bed and breakfast are included during Friday and Saturday and breakfast on Sunday.

The suggested plan is as follows:

Friday September 1st

a.m. to p.m. Guests arrive

19.00 – 20.15 Dinner at your leisure

20.30 – 21.15 Late supper for late arrivals

Saturday September 2nd

8.30 – 9.30 Breakfast

10.00 onwards Departure for climbing or walking or relaxing.

19.30 Party Time

With cocktails in the lounge

Dinner

Drinks-Drinks-Drinks-Drinks-Drinks-Drinks...

Sunday September 3rd

Breakfast if you can make it before 10.00 am!

Essential to bring full walking gear, do not forget rucksacks and waterproofs (you never know!)

The party started as soon as we all gathered. We had the entire hotel to ourselves. I can recall long conversations with Joe Brown (known as the “human fly” for his ability to climb anything) who had a climbing gear shop and was very interested in talking business. Chris Bonington and I talked a great deal that weekend, primarily about leadership. I was leading my tech company as CEO and he led major Himalayan climbs with a large contingent of climbers, Sherpas and others that were a group as diverse and larger than a lot of companies. Chris hadn’t been knighted yet (that was in 1996), but he had led the first successful ascent of Annapurna’s South Face in 1970, was the first Brit to climb the Eiger’s North Face, and led treks up Everest “The Hard Way,” via the South Face.

The hotel owner, Miles Jessop, was a strong hiker in his own right: he was responsible for the

inauguration of the Borrowdale fell race in the 1970's. Fell races are foot races off-road and across hilly territory. He loved the weekend Loreto was putting together and he fitted us with lunches in our packs for a day in the fell (the hills). Off we all went on a several hour hike to quite the climbing show.

It was a gorgeous day...



The terrain got increasingly steeper until we'd climbed to a resting place opposite a vertical spire sticking up a few hundred feet.

It was Napes Needle. Little did I know that Napes is recognized as the most photographed piece of rock in the United Kingdom. The 100-meter spire was first climbed in 1886 by Haskett-Smith. Some credit the Napes as the beginning of British rock climbing.





Joe Brown led up the spire like a human fly, as though he had suction cups on his hands and boots. Chris Bonington (pictured) headed up next.



I attempted (facing away in the photo) but quickly decided to be the audience.



Then Mac went up...



Joe Brown is at the top. There wasn't a lot of room at the peak...

The Celebration

When the three of them got to the summit that could barely hold one, I could see they were quite happy just hanging off the sides. Then I looked down at a totally unexpected sight.

Miles, the hotel owner, was trekking up the rocky slope with a huge backpack that extended from his bum up to above the back of his head ... it looked quite heavy. He was followed, nervously, by one of his waiters. They stopped a few feet down from us, and out of Miles' pack came the waiter's serving jacket and a small round cork serving tray! What???



Miles got up to us and proceeded to unload real bottles of champagne and glass champagne flutes – a heavy load to have carried for the hours it took to get to us.

Well, the climbers looked down from above, saw the champagne and immediately slid down their ropes faster than a fireman on his pole. Miles poured, the waiter served, and we toasted Mac’s birthday with great champagne in real glasses (the only way to have good champagne!) out in the middle of nowhere.

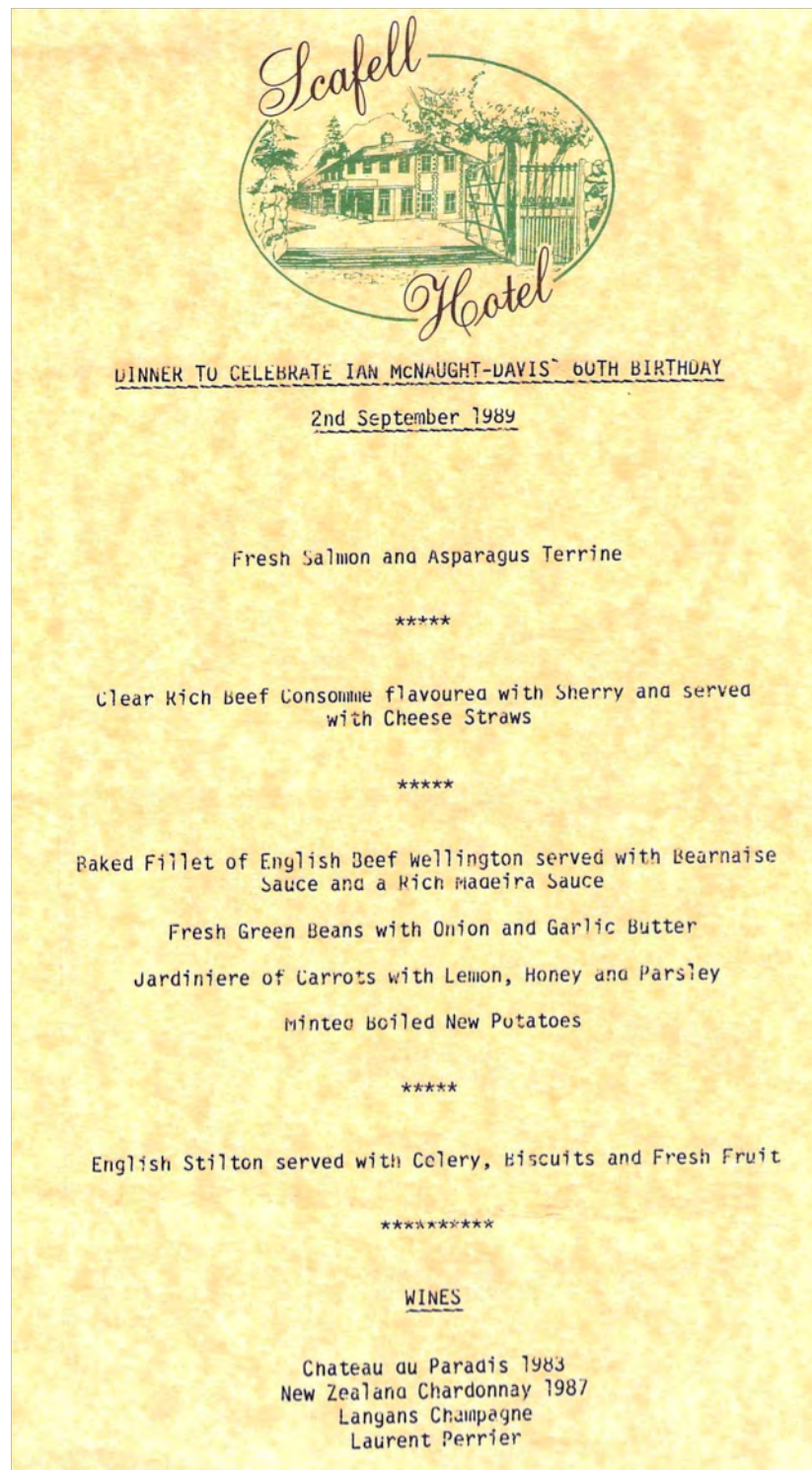


With all of us clustered around the champagne, we were blocking the path upwards to some other spires. Soon some other rough-looking climbers scrambled up the hill, saw us drinking champagne in glassware ON THEIR HILL and their first reaction was PISSED.

One of them exclaimed, “*what’s this country come to? Fooking stockbrokers clogging up our spires, bloody hell!*”

That was the worst insult they could call us, stockbrokers!! When they realized the “stockbrokers” actually included some of the most famous climbers on the planet, they calmed down and took a glass of bubbly for themselves as well.

After a great day in the fell, we got back to the hotel and enjoyed many laughs and a dinner set for kings.



It was Happy Birthday, Mac ... and the first time I met Chris, not knowing that almost exactly 30 years later we would reunite in Aspen and spend 4 days hiking together.

That was a weekend I'll never forget.