

THE  
CLIMBERS' CLUB  
JOURNAL

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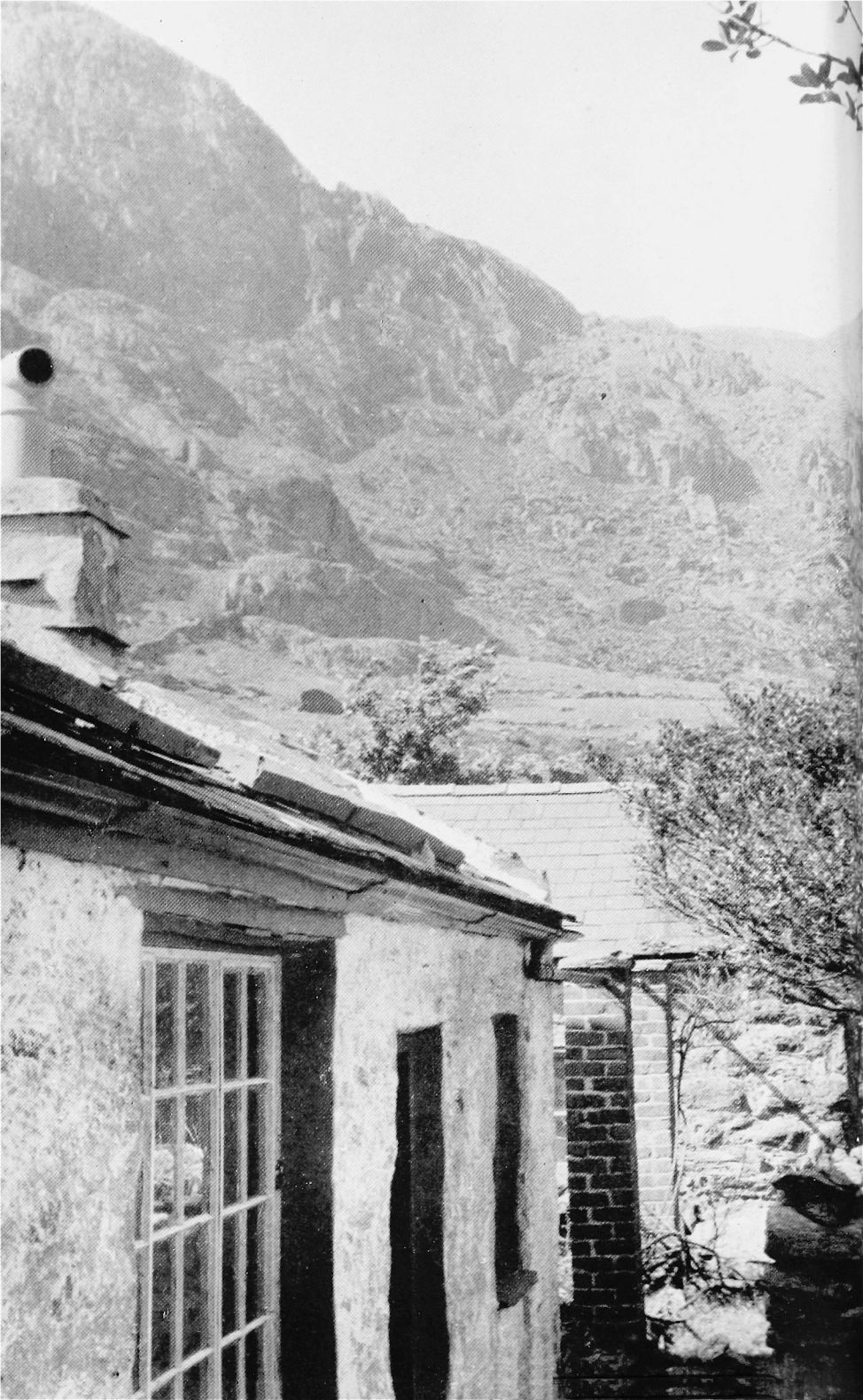
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EDITED BY  
A. D. M. COX

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## PART ONE

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# THE JUBILEE OF THE CLUB

BRYAN DONKIN  
(President)

A JUBILEE puts the observer, as it were, at the fulcrum of Time and gives him a brief moment of balance in which to attempt to weigh the value of the known past against the unknown future. He looks backwards to the birth and growth of the Club and forwards to its continuation and to whatever the future may hold in store.

Going back to the beginning, we owe our thanks to those early climbers who frequented the "Welsh farm house" called Pen-y-Gwryd in the 'nineties of the last century : for it was they who, because they enjoyed each others' company, both on the hills and in the evenings by the farmhouse fire, decided to hold a couple of informal dinners in London, at the second of which on 6th December, 1897, it was decided that a Club be formed. Accordingly, a circular letter was issued on the 25th March, 1898, intimating the decision to form a Club under the title "The Climbers' Club." The response was immediate : about 200 members were quickly enrolled, which was about double the number expected by the provisional committee. We owe a debt of gratitude to our founders and in particular to our first President, C. E. Matthews, for the broad and generous terms of the Club's constitution and its first set of rules which, with only minor alterations, survive to this day.

At the time of our foundation, it was customary for climbers to forgather in Wales in August and September, but that does not mean that winter climbing was not practised. In fact it was at Easter, 1895, that J. M. A. Thompson made the first ascent of the Devil's Kitchen by cutting steps in the ice most of the way. It was not until 1898 that W. R. Reade and W. P. McCulloch made the first purely rock climbing ascent of this chasm of waterfalls. In the first volume of the *Journal*, the



Abrahams record their original ascent of Slanting Gully on Lliwedd, and—more remarkable—the Editor, E. Raymond Turner, has a note referring to the unknown Clogwyn du'r Arddu and its ill-deserved neglect ; a very shrewd comment in view of the many great climbs which have since been made on this crag.

The foundation of our Club, 40 years after that of our progenitor, the Alpine Club, by men whose principal mountaineering had been done in the Alps, endowed it with a richness of hereditary experience from which succeeding generations of climbers have not failed to profit. The history of mountaineering hinges on the discovery and development of techniques for overcoming the problems which at various times and places appear to bar further progress. This is not the place to list and review these developments, but it will suffice if we recall those advances in climbing technique, design of equipment and clothing and of physiological knowledge which, for example, enabled the small 1938 Everest expedition to remain for several weeks at or around the level of the North Col (23,000 feet) under very unfavourable weather conditions. A comparison of this expedition with, say, the vast expedition of de Saussure on his ascent of Mont Blanc in 1787 gives some indication of the advances which have been made.

The men who founded our Club were mostly members of the Alpine Club. It has been suggested that our forerunners used the British hills merely as a gymnasium and training ground for the Alps, but I doubt whether this is more than a half truth. The fact that the same people, who went regularly to Wales, decided to form a Club suggests that their feelings went much deeper and that in fact, as is the case with most of us today, their climbs on British hills were an essential and complementary part of their mountaineering life. The formation of the Club probably marks the point in the history of mountaineering when it was realised that our home mountains provided, in their variety of size and shape, in the vagaries of their climate and in the kinds of people who live in their valleys, a type of mountaineering which by itself was of sufficient interest to endure. The decision to form a Club was, in fact, the concrete expression of the realisation that British mountaineering offers more than a training ground for the larger mountain ranges overseas.

We are sometimes inclined to envy our predecessors because they seemed to live in more spacious times and had the means of travelling far and wide ; but that is, I think, only relatively true. Although they probably had more time at their disposal (and less interruptions by wars and compulsory national service), the practical difficulties which they had to overcome in reaching remote valleys, in making themselves understood, in getting the help of the local inhabitants to accompany them and in bivouacking, where now we have well equipped huts, certificated guides and well marked paths, were incomparably greater than the minor irritations of passports and foreign exchange restrictions which we have to face today. There is also the not unimportant fact that they found the routes and blazed the trail where we, in the majority of cases, either follow, or produce more difficult variants of, the original routes.

After the 1914-18 war there was a time, of which Herbert Carr has written in this *Journal*, when the continuance of the Club seemed in doubt. At the time of our foundation the farmhouses and inns sufficed for all who wished to climb, and were within their means ; but, as the years went by, more and more young people wanted to climb and to do so every week-end if possible. They could get to the mountains cheaply by bicycling, or by borrowing the paternal car and sharing the petrol expenses amongst the party, but the farmhouses and inns were too expensive and had not enough beds. The hardy and resourceful brought tents or bivouacked. To meet this need Helyg cottage was obtained, and from that time the Club has never looked back. Those who know only the present Helyg with its spacious dormitory added in 1933, with its electric lighting, heating and cooking, and with hot and cold water laid on, would hardly recognise the original one-room Helyg with a river flowing across its stone-flagged floor in any weather, except after prolonged drought.

The existence of Helyg brought a steady flow of young members to the Club, who in their devotion to the sport made many new routes and advanced the technique of rock climbing to new high standards. In spite of occasional accidents, the standard of safety does not appear to have been reduced, which means in effect that the technique of safety precautions has advanced in step with the advance in the technique of climbing. Such

accidents of consequence as did occur were mostly on easier climbs, and were not infrequently the result of the omission to take elementary precautions in rope management, or against the onset of bad weather. In this country there has been little or no mountaineering of the death or glory type, and certainly none of the international competitive type whose adherents in the Alps have achieved such notoriety, and the success of whose expeditions depended more on their luck in not being killed by falling stones or by exposure to sudden bad weather than on their undoubted skill and endurance as mountaineers. We must, however, beware lest, amongst the rapidly growing numbers of mountaineers in this country, there are even a few people who place greater value on the achievement of the climb on which they happen to be engaged than on their ability to return and climb another day. Anyone holding such an opinion even momentarily is likely not only to cause irreparable harm to his friends and fellow members, but to bring grave disrepute upon the sport of mountaineering.

In the later 'thirties Helyg was full most week-ends in the summer, so that casual visitors who had not reserved space had little chance of finding a bunk. The question which had to be decided was whether to extend Helyg, or to build a new hut elsewhere. There is no doubt that an extension of Helyg would have been cheaper, both in first cost and in running cost, but it would have had many other disadvantages ; the Committee therefore wisely looked for other sites, and found in Ynys Ettws an ideal position from many points of view. Plans were drawn up and we were ready to appeal for the money, but the shadow of war was already upon us and caused postponement of the project. As it turns out, we could, I think, have gone ahead and built Ynys before the war started in earnest in May, 1940. Although postponement of the project has brought upon us all the family of delays and frustrations which accompany every attempt to do anything in these post-war years, especially if it be private enterprise, it has also been a blessing in disguise in that it has given rise to a gift from our fairy godmother (and recent Vice-President), Mr. R. W. Lloyd, of the magnificent sum of £3,500, which is the estimated post-war cost of the hut. We are now in the very happy position of owning the freehold of Helyg ; we have paid off the cost of the 1933 extension ; and

we have the money we need to build the new hut at Ynys Ettws, which is to be called the R. W. Lloyd Hut, as a mark of appreciation of our benefactor.

Some people hold the view that Helyg, with all its modern facilities is a sybarite's paradise, but against that there is no staff (other than our ever faithful Stuart Chantrell, now Vice-President) to run the place, which must therefore be done by members themselves. To make the place easy to run and easy to keep clean is the best and probably the only way of inducing members to do their share of the work. Conversely, if the place were cheap but archaic, it might soon become insupportably dirty and even bug-ridden ; but in any case experience shows that members generally will not devote more than a small part of their short week-end at Helyg to house chores, and this is the real reason why the design of the buildings and their equipment has been done with the prime object of labour-saving.

The replies received to the referendum on the proposal to limit membership of the Club show a refreshing diversity of outlook and an absence of prejudice which accord well with the principles and practice of self-government ; and it remains for the Committee to make proposals for the realisation of the majority wish that the Club should continue as a Club in which most members not only know each other but find in each other's company a considerable community of experience and outlook.

The Club was built upon the common interest in mountaineering in Britain of a group of people who knew each other well and who frequently climbed together in the hills. That tradition is, I think, as well appreciated by our members as it is jealously guarded by the Committee. If we are to be sure of continuing to enrol the right type, each one of us who proposes a new member must be able to put his hand on his heart and say something like this : " I have known this man for so long, and have climbed with him, and have taken him as a guest to Helyg ; I am in consequence perfectly sure that he is suitable for membership of the Club." In this way we may cautiously and slowly increase our numbers. It is true that our membership, after remaining steady during the war, is now increasing rapidly, but this rapid rise is probably mainly due to the people who, but for the war, would have joined us during the war years ; and if this is the case the rate of increase will soon fall until we reach

stability at some rather higher level of numbers than in the past. It would, however, be a wise precaution to have ready some carefully thought-out plan for limitation of numbers, in case the situation shows signs of getting beyond control by the exercise of our present rules.

A marked feature of our Club life has been the widespread activities of our members, although, because of our Clubhouse in North Wales and our considerable activity thereat, we are sometimes regarded as a purely local rock climbing club. Any-one not knowing the Club who reads our Club *Journal* over a period of years will, I think, be surprised at the variety and distribution of our activities. The following instances are taken at random from our *Journals* over the last 22 years :—

Mt. Wellington (Tasmania) ; various Meets (summer and winter) in the Alps ; Horungtinder ; Corsica ; the Pyrenees ; Mount Cook (New Zealand) ; the Southern Carpathians (Roumania) ; Table Mountain ; Babberton Mountains (S.A.) ; the Himalaya ; the Devil's Thumb (Greenland) ; the Caucasus ; the Lofoten ; Mt. Clemenceau (Rocky Mountains) ; Sikkim ; Jebel Kassala (Sudan) ; the Lebanon ; Popocatepetl (Mexico) ; Mt. Kenya ; Ruwenzori ; Mt. Hermon (Syria) ; Mt. Olympus ; Kinabalu (British North Borneo).

There are not many mountain ranges except the Andes missing from this list, and it is a remarkable collection from the records of a small Club having no qualifications for membership other than the encouragement of hill walking and mountaineering in England, Wales and Ireland. (In passing, one notices the omission of Scotland from Rule 1, but it must be remembered that the Scottish Mountaineering Club had already been in existence a number of years.)

So much for the past, but to what shall we turn our eyes and thoughts and bend our muscles in the future ? Firstly, we should do well to uphold the traditions and practices of our forerunners and exemplify them in our future developments. Secondly, we must see to it that the Club continues to facilitate and encourage mountaineering and hill walking, and particularly among its newer members. Our founders had a rich and varied experience of mountaineering, both in the British Isles and overseas, and of those riches they gave generously to the Club. In these days when our daily life is for most of us sharply

divided between work and play, and when enough time and means for play are increasingly scarce, it behoves us to plan carefully to make the best possible use of our leisure. To this end, the Committee have given much time and thought to the design and location of our Club huts and to the holding of climbing meets both in this country and overseas. Furthermore, we have been granted facilities to use the huts of many other Clubs, a facility which appears to be much more used by our members than the converse facility, enjoyed by other Clubs, of visiting Helyg.

A Club, though primarily self-centred in the pursuit of the objects for which it was formed and for which it continues to exist, has in certain circumstances moral obligations in addition to the normal ones of running the Club for the benefit of its members. We have to bear in mind the fact that our members, together with those of other Clubs, have individually and collectively a vast store of specialist knowledge about mountaineering and all matters affecting it, but especially, of course, of the many techniques involved in the safe enjoyment of the craft. At a time when the practice of mountaineering is increasing rapidly among all sections of the people, there is a risk, and the evidence shows it to be a serious risk, that eager novices will set out on mountaineering expeditions with little or no appreciation of the dangers which they are thus forcing unknowingly on their whole parties. It should, therefore, be our constant aim to give help and advice whenever the lack of it appears to endanger the best interests of the sport. Individually, Club members have been in the past, as I am sure they will be in the future, generous with their time in helping and training novices and in other ways promoting the interests of mountaineering. Collectively, we have the B.M.C. which, supported by all the principal Clubs, is doing much good work in the sphere of organisation and in guarding our interests in the mountain and moorland terrains throughout the British Isles. In this sphere also our members have given yeoman service. Indeed, it is a very healthy sign for the future well-being of the Club that so many of our members, both young and old, give unstintingly of their knowledge and spare time for the benefit of the Club and of mountaineering as a whole.



# GENESIS TO NUMBERS

GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG

THE origins of our Club go far back. They can be looked for in the early stories of Pen-y-Gwryd, by C. E. Mathews and C. Myles Mathews in the *Journal* and in Lister and Carr's *Snowdonia*. But they must be traced even farther back, to the independent-minded and individualistic walkers of the early and mid-nineteenth century, who penetrated the recesses of the Welsh mountains and developed the sanctuary of P.Y.G. Like the Alpine pioneers to whom many of them belonged, they were men of literary and artistic tastes, from the midlands or the south, who had discovered from Byron, Wordsworth or Ruskin, that wild scenery was beautiful, and who in the course of the adventure had uncovered the curious mountain passion. They found also that hill walking was healthy and stimulated thought, and that good company was all the better when enjoyed in a noble environment. Towards the end of the century hill-rambling of this character focused more and more attention upon the cliffs. It became climbing, and dropped some of the conventional pretences of angling or nature study. Among these enthusiasts of hills-for-themselves the point had been reached of a general and mutual acceptance, when by our nineteenth century social traditions a Club could be, and should be, formed.

A Club then meant something different from what it does now. Its intention and conduct were social, and it could only come into being around a nucleus of men of a certain standing, age and fixed habitat, with the will and the leisure to promote and to attend comfortable meetings and meals. The modern "Club" formed by any mixture of dispersed younger folk to provide material opportunities, information, transport, lodging, is very different. The older type of social Club is now fast

disappearing under modern economic conditions ; but in considering the history of our climbing clubs, which reflected contemporary life, the original tradition must be kept in mind. Much more of our Club life in earlier years existed only in personal relationships and sociable meetings, much less could be recorded on paper or survives in its *Journals*.

The Scots, with their favourable mountain environment, formed the first island Club. The Yorkshire Ramblers, with the attraction of local pot-holing emphasised for them by Martel, and under the direct inspiration of Cecil Slingsby, keenest of all promoters of sociable climbing in our country, soon followed. The fluctuating group of climbers and ramblers who had for some time been assembling at P.Y.G. once or twice a year then reached the same social point, and decided to "bridge the long intervals by a dinner in London." This was at first to be only a "Pen-y-Gwryd dinner," or dining Club, to perpetuate the friendly meetings among the Welsh hills. In May, 1897, the first P.Y.G. Dinner was held, at the Café Monico. "Nunky" Halliday was in the chair, the large genial grey-whiskered midlander who had followed Charles Mathews as the doyen of the P.Y.G. gathering.

At this dinner a step forward was taken, and a Club for Wales was discussed, which should be called the "Pen-y-Gwryd Club." During the next few months the matter was widely debated among the habitual frequenters old and young, many of whom were also climbers in the Lake District, and the plan took on a larger scope. Another Meet was held at Wasdale as well as at P.Y.G. and the home climbers of the north also took up the Club idea. In December, 1897, a second P.Y.G. Dinner was held. Another patriarch, the white-bearded, blue-eyed Revd. J. Nelson Burrows, portly, impressive and benevolent, took the chair, and among the company was Lord Coleridge, the second of his family in succession to belong to the group. It was then resolved to circularise all supporters of the Club plan, and to form an English Climbing Club. This was to include all Welsh and Lakeland climbers alike. The formation was formally and worthily proposed by Roderick Williams, who with his brother Tom is generally credited with having been the first to use a rope on Welsh rock. Agile, swift, tall, with a clear brain and reserved but witty speech, he for





*Roderick Williams*

PEN-Y-GWRYD, 1892

L. to R. standing : W. E. Corlett, T. S. Halliday, Mrs. Halliday, Dr. Gardner  
 In carriage : Miss Thirnell, Miss Smith, L. K. Pagden and his brother ;  
 Hugh Owen, driving



*S. B. Donkin*

PEN-Y-GWRYD, EASTER, 1898

L. to R. : J. M. A. Thompson, R. Williams, B. Hopkinson, M. K. Smith,  
 J. Hopkinson, L. W. Clarke, E. R. Clarke (sitting).

many years did yeoman's service for the Club in many capacities, his modesty always declining the Presidency. The motion was seconded by H. Gale Gotch, an old and enterprising Alpine mountaineer of independent views and long experience among our hills ; whose son, M. C. Gotch, subsequently was very active in working for the Club and in writing for the *Journal*. A provisional Committee was formed, comprising C. E. Mathews who was now lending the campaign the support of his immense experience and prestige, Cecil Slingsby, Nelson Burrows, Halliday, Roderick Williams, W. E. Corlett—one of the most strenuous of early Snowdon rock climbers and who still survives after half a century of valiant service and valuable assistance to the Club—T. K. Rose, E. R. Turner and George B. Bryant. This Committee took the first action. Two hundred original members were admitted. Mathews became first President, and Frederick Morshead and F. H. Bowring vice-presidents. Fred Morshead was famous as perhaps the finest and fastest Alpinist of his day, who had climbed Mont Blanc alone. He was a constant Snowdon climber, and I have elsewhere recorded our meeting with him in the P.Y.G. bar in the later 'eighties, when his son reported how they had skirted under the Lliwedd East buttress that day, and how hardly he had prevented his father from starting up it on his own. Bowring was to us a dignified and rather awesome figure, ascetic, remote and straggle-bearded like a prophet. In the black morning coat, full grey trousers and low black stove-hat of our Victorian elders, he strode upon the hills. Solitary, hardy, a link with the Romantic movement, he had wandered for fifty years and, as Haskett Smith reports, "he knew every rock face in Britain." Ill-health took him out of the Club in its second year, but he lived on to 1918 and to ninety-five years of age.

The first elected Committee consisted of Nelson Burrows ; of Roderick Williams ; of R. A. Robertson, the tall handsome white-whiskered President of the S.M.C., who later made an admirable President of our Club and died only just before its jubilee in his ninety-eighth year ; of Owen Glynne Jones, then just becoming known as a rock climber and a most active promoter of the Club ; of H. Gale Gotch and of E. R. Kidson, whose colossal energy was recorded in I forget how many hundred ascents of Snowdon recorded in the P.Y.G. book ;

Rose, later Sir Thomas Rose and our President, became first treasurer ; E. R. Turner, the first Editor ; and G. B. Bryant, the first Secretary. To Bryant much of the credit for the formation of the Club was due, and to him belonged also the credit of carrying it through its early years. Small, hawk-faced, bright-eyed, with smooth grey hair and a strong will, he was a first-rate business and social organiser, incisive and persuasive. Haskett Smith's joke survived for its truth : with him it was not Bryant and May but Bryant and Must. He was no climber, but with his wife a fervid hill scrambler, and his recorded ascent from the road of his eponymous gully is great fun—the only gully, as Myles Mathews used to explain, which never was one.

The original pan-Britannic character of the Club was signified by the inclusion of the Presidents of the two existing Clubs, Slingsby and Robertson, among its officers. This emphasised its claim to have been started to complete a climbing-club structure and not in competition. How nearly also it complied with the usual lines of English institutional development was made plain by the attendance at the first Club Dinner, where of eighty members a third were already of the Alpine Club. For the few and select mountaineers of the period, who were either Alpine climbers or on their way to becoming so, the Club was to be just another occasion of pleasant sociable meeting.

At this first Dinner Fred Morshead spoke to us, a scholarly, bearded, serene figure with the suggestion about him of a half-sheathed sword very ready to flash again into action. Charles Mathews was in the chair, and made one of his most polished addresses. A romantic lover of hills and climbing, he showed praiseworthy energy in encouraging others to share his lifelong enthusiasm, and a Victorian absolutism as to the fashion in which they should do so. A man of liberal mind and one of Joe Chamberlain's closest friends and political supporters, he was one of the very few great Alpine pioneers who cared almost equally for home climbing and who put his authority behind its development. The exclusiveness of the large majority of his Alpine colleagues is not unhappily illustrated by the verses—recalled to me by Lord Schuster—appearing in Douglas Freshfield's privately-printed *Quips and Cranks*. In them Freshfield chaffs Mathews for his support of the new Club, as well as for his famous “impromptu” after-dinner speeches :



Why is it to the Alpine Club  
Our C.E.M. no longer keeps ?  
Why should he found—himself as hub—  
A Climbers Club for “chimney sweeps” ?

The answer, Sir, is very clear :  
To give elsewhere those famous speeches  
That flow—impromptu ?—year by year  
From your épergne of grapes and peaches !

At that first Dinner I remember well the restrained perfection of Mathews' short silvery side-whiskers, and the flicker of his heavily-chased rings as he gesticulated above the épergne, of which I had then no suspicions ; and how his modulated voice charmed us with his poetic periods and admirable delivery. His son Myles, when his turn came to preside, modelled his literary eloquence closely upon his father's, but he had the more robust and humorous style. I shall note here that, having attended climbing dinners for over fifty years, I can say truthfully that the good level of speaking at the C.C. dinners has been the most consistently sustained of all. It has been marked by the courage with which speakers, and especially the Presidents, have let themselves go : they have dared to be eloquent and even dramatic, in description and citation. It was a good augury that we heard this tradition gallantly maintained by our President, Bryan Donkin, second of the dynasty, in the close of his speech at the Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner.

It may also be recalled here that Douglas Freshfield, one of the greatest and most enterprising pioneers of mountaineering in foreign ranges, owing to a critical habit of mind and an intolerant manner that belied his very kindly nature, seemed to be cast for the part of Devil's advocate in the beginnings of our home climbing. Pontificating at the time in the *Alpine Journal*, he attacked with heavy irony a slight and harmless article in our Club *Journal*, which told us how to pass a wet day at Wasdale in the exercise of room tricks and wall stunts ; and he was effectively answered by that sincere and attractive climber and writer L. J. Oppenheimer. In the first year also (Sir) Edward Davidson and (Sir) Maurice Holtzmann his close friend and Alpine colleague resigned, not liking, I think, their company. Imperceptibly from about this date, and simultaneously with

the growth of the home climbing Clubs, the Alpine Club, with its strong Victorian stress upon "social" characteristics, grew more and more isolated from the developments in progress in active mountaineering, and this more particularly in our own country.

But the link with our great Alpine originators was not at once broken. At the second Dinner I remember that Martin (Lord) Conway spoke, and Sidney Lee, the Shakespeare biographer. Conway was one of our rare genuinely-impromptu speakers, and if the occasion appealed to him he could sparkle with spontaneous wit or move an audience deeply with his own deep feeling for mountain beauty.

At the third annual Dinner Edward Whymper was present—he asked me many questions about the British cliffs; and A. J. Butler spoke, a fine scholar and Dante expert and a member of a great Alpine family. (Sir) George Morse also spoke, later President of the A.C. and one of the few of them to lead his family up Lliwedd; and Hugo Young, K.C., a faithful Pen-y-Gwrydite who presented the locked books for our climbing records and had the old visitors' books bound and cared for.

So far the Club's activities had largely followed traditional social Club lines, as was to be expected. But as early as 1900 we do find the Committee contemplating more serious activities with gravity and some naiveté. They actually proposed an "exploration of all the Welsh mountains, in detail and by sections." What a sudden light this throws upon the romantic conditions of mind and of mountains existing at our beginnings, when hills are found to be still remote and unexplored even at the turn of the century.

Haskett Smith succeeded Charles Mathews as President, an obvious and excellent choice, for he personified English climbing for any public opinion that existed. He made a good chairman of dinners and was a jocund speaker in a lighter and often punning vein, with his material as well prepared and as literary in quality as Charles Mathews'. His interest in place-names, folk-lore and in all quaint information or historic references, did much also to lighten our early *Journals*. It was always a matter of regret that his able amateurism was too eclectic or whimsical ever to allow him to produce the considered story of the Fells, and of the start of climbing, for which he had

so many qualifications. It was under Haskett's chairmanship that, having been myself the youngest of the original members, I was called upon by Bryant for my first full-dress after-dinner speech, to represent the "younger climbing element." Scrutton, the eminent K.C., later a Judge and our President, and the great Charles Mathews himself, were all going great guns before me, and I shall never forget Mathews' perfect courtesy to my novice efforts, in which I had pictured how the widening ripples of our new Club were circling variously across the countries of the world. Echoes of this "ripple" speech and the amusement it caused at the time used to come back to me from many quarters for many after-years. It was at this dinner that Mathews spoke—and I think it was his last speech before his death—of having then been climbing in Wales for over fifty years. My own memories of Welsh climbing now cover another sixty years or more. So that with some slight overlap we have covered between us at the Club the whole century of mountain discovery.

Slingsby followed Haskett Smith, combining in himself the mountain explorer and, from boyhood on, the enthusiast for home cliff-climbing. Grey-bearded with wide blue eyes and a youthful complexion, at once courtly and impetuous, a hereditary tory and the democratic friend of all the world, he could capture the affections of a hall-full of strangers with his first two exclamatory half-sentences. He was as interested in promoting climbing, and in its rigorous technique, as in the Club's social occasions, and his personal popularity did much to prevent the small jealousies of these new societies and of the new sport from growing into wider rifts.

A period of reaction was in fact setting in. Its cause was inherent in the character of the Club. London was a good social centre for the older type of Club, and for men of the original Alpine order who possessed probably two or three Clubs. But the hills were very far off, especially in pre-motoring days. The Club had no localised climbing area and embodied no particular group or interest: it lacked in fact a local root and environment. Further, the Alpine nucleus was dying out or seceding. The Fell and Rock Club was born and began to draw off the northern element. The Rucksack and Midland Association were on their way to do the same for central and western England. Local separatism began to be reflected in rifts within

the Club membership. Most Clubs suffer from such a reaction period after the first begettors fade out. But the C.C. suffered the more because it had not the funds to establish itself with artificial London roots, such as rooms of its own or even a library for its books might have supplied.

I do not forget that J. M. Archer Thomson, with Eckenstein as councillor, perfecting the new rock technique in North Wales in company with his localised friends W. J. Williams (a veteran mountaineer still with us), Harold Hughes, Elias, Reynolds, Kenneth Orton and Humphrey Owen Jones, was providing a strong Welsh bias for the Club ; but this was not equivalent to a local root.

Heroic efforts were made by Bryant and Myles Mathews in turn to find us rooms, and Henry Chandler, an able and loyal friend to the Club, strove hard to contrive storage and care for the books. Charles Sayle, one of the Cambridge University librarians, gave notable help in this to our officials. Dark-haired, bright-eyed, red-cheeked, with a hospitable passion for promoting friendships, Sayle proved an excellent ally, and it was only because inquiry and experiment proved that Universities were not yet ripe for climbing Clubs that his efforts to establish a branch of the C.C. at Cambridge failed. The library was the more missed because Rickmer Rickmers had presented the Club with a fine collection of books, which Bryant had to house in his City offices. By the end of the first decade the numbers were at best stationary. Slingsby's tact had smoothed out the deeper wrinkles dividing Cambrians and Cumbrians. But the inevitable self-congratulations of the Club at its annual dinners rang a little hollow. The time came when Bryant resigned the secretaryship, and Myles Mathews took on the pious task of sustaining his father's foundation.

In 1906 a Northern Dinner had been held, in imitation of the earlier northern dinners of the Alpine Club, and with the same idea, of maintaining the pan-Britain character of the Club. This had been attended by Horace Walker, even then a legendary figure and a most sensitive, generous personality ; by Professor Wilberforce, a stirring northern influence ; and by Godfrey A. Solly. But our northern root, in what was already Wayfarer soil, never took hold until Helyg was invented ; although, a little later on, W. R. Reade and C. W. Marshall both did fine

work in training and encouraging a northern Club element.

A few of us, youthful and unheeded, made protest from the first years that if a pan-England Club was to be of service and vitality from a London base it must be of the looser, more elastic character of an association, not simply one more social dining-club. When, again, Barrow and Keswick and then Manchester and Liverpool climbers began to cluster and to rumour of their own Club-hive, we pressed for a wider federative organisation for the C.C., which should combine all new branchings, leaving them as self-governing sections, while giving mountaineering the advantage of a single central authority and one strong associated Journal. But this was not sympathetic to our English historic habit of parochial and local beginnings. We had no hearing ; and the Club, pruned as to its members and planted on soil of the plains, struggled through some lean years.

Meanwhile our *Journal* was pursuing its undulatory or sometimes staggered course, with A. W. Andrews following Turner as Editor. E. R. Turner, good-looking, quiet, a little unapproachable, has a firm place in my respectful memories ; because, while he declined to publish in the *Journal* the first contribution I ever wrote for the press, the story of the first Man Hunt in the Lakes in 1898, with almost alarming politeness he had it all set up in type, and sent me a proof to keep—a unique courtesy so far as my experience goes. Since Andrews still directs our Cornish cliff-climbing which he invented fifty years ago, and still figures in youthful games tournaments, I must not write of him as in the past. Originality has been his feature, either as introducing football or winning the high jump in Germany, or exploring Lliwedd for new routes in the first rubber shoes regularly worn in Wales. A geographer and scientist, he has had always new surprises for us, either by producing three numbers of the *Journal* on one day—a feat oddly balanced by a later editor who suppressed three numbers altogether—or by the romantic quality of his first Presidential speech, or by the delightful nature-poetry issued in his later years.

From the first indeed, notable names have flitted across the *Journal* pages. A photo of Sturrall was by Jimmie (Sir James) Jeans, then still a flushed and fluffy-haired Trinity undergraduate. Arthur D. Godley's sets of verse earned the *Journal* a

wider public ; and they were followed by verses from that great mediaeval scholar and personality, W. P. Ker. The notable lady, Ka Cox (Mrs. Arnold Forster) who had been the centre of the Cambridge group which included Rupert Brooke, the Keynes brothers, George Mallory, David Pye, Jaques Raverratt, and other famous men, climbers and artists, wrote two travel articles. O. G. Jones wrote for it his first notices of English climbing, the material of his exhaustive volumes. H. V. Reade made his first appearance in it, writing of climbs on Arnescliffe, which he followed later with his "trumpet-blast" of climbing remonstrance, written in conjunction with the scholarly Ascherson. I had met H.V.R. when exploring on Scafell in 1903, and he soon joined us, and upheld among us for many years his high standard of climbing ethic and technique, of English style and of evening talk. Dakyns sent in his informative letters. One of the famous trio of Clifton masters, with the poet T. E. Brown and the elder Wollaston, it was to him that T.E.B. wrote his noble mountain poem "Three Places, Dakyns." He was a long-time frequenter of Snowdon and student of Cwm Glas. Small, intense, brown-bearded, with a slight stoop, I well recall his sudden emergences from the wet mists under the ridges when we were making our own first explorations of the Clogwyn y Person rocks and of the upper Cwm Glas cliffs. But the *Journal*, of course, could never more than reflect the vitality of the Club, and after the early years of the century "declining numbers" might have been said of both *Journal* and Club.

It was not for lack of vigorous personalities within, or joining, the Club. Geoffrey Bartrum came in in an early year, and meeting W. R. Reade at our Pen-y-Pass party began the historic rock partnership and the long service to the Club which culminated in his war-Presidency, that did so much for mountaineering in general and began a new and flourishing Club era. (Sir) Alfred Ewing, director of Naval education and later of Admiralty Intelligence, became a Vice-President and his seductive voice and the pointed wit of his speeches remain unforgettable. The youngest of the P.Y.G. group in C. E. Mathews' time, M. K. Smith, although his modesty steadily declined office, by his fine presence—not unlike Nansen's—his cordial resonant voice and his explosive approval, or the reverse, in



company or on the hillside, impressed and maintained a very high tradition of climbing and collegueship, and remained through the years and into great age a pillar of strength.

Pen-y-Gwryd too was persisting in its remarkable succession of "Capital M's." W. P. Marler, who only missed the Creation by one year, was treasurer for eleven years and in office for some seventeen : S. A. Marples, librarian for sixteen years and in office for some twenty-six, a most loyal Club personality : W. Mordey, whose mountain climbing defied age or its appearance : H. G. Morrish, an original member and still among us. C. W. Nettleton, who also missed the Genesis by only one year, was six years librarian and with Mrs. Nettleton continues to be as prominent in other and athletic fields as they were for so long upon our hills and the Alps : L. K. Pagden, who alone of the original P.Y.G. group defied the blizzard to share in our Fiftieth Anniversary : C. T. Lehmann, active with us on so many mountain ways : Leslie G. Shadbolt, brilliant and safe pioneer climber and mountaineer, for twelve years in office in the Club : H. C. Lowen, a vice-president of early membership ; and the well-known brothers Abraham who have stood by the Club through its whole career. But I can only recall here a few of our earlier names. In the years before the first war another group was coming into prominence at P.Y.G. still with some "M's" among them : M. G. Bradley, a leading climber for many decades and for eleven years in office ; Reid, the rugby player ; B. K. O'Malley, whose climbing only grew more daring with passing years, and Robertson Lamb, a veteran of the same order. In the same period, from P.Y.P., Page Dickinson with Conor O'Brien and E. L. Julian pioneered Irish rock-climbing for us, and Marcus Beresford Heywood opened up the Northumbrian cliffs.

Slingsby had been followed in the Chair by R. A. Robertson, a stately and kindly presence, but residing too far off to do all he wished for us. He was succeeded by (Sir) John Bretland Farmer, a famous botanist, an angler, and an audacious rock-climber. His solitary traverses across Lliwedd East buttress and Scafell Pinnacle, both then still unexplored, in the alleged search for rock plants, can surprise us even now. A man of great ability, tall and bald and something like a sea-lion, he possessed also a mellow roll of voice and a tremendous laugh

which could get a whole hall of guests going by its joyous thunder. For many years he cultivated plants in Cwm Glas, and he held a mountain meet for his students alternately with his pioneer climbs with Andrews. Some of "Farmer's cairns" still mark the best route to Cwm Glas.

I came on to Committee in 1907, at the time of Robertson's election, and worked on as vice-president under Farmer. Sydney Donkin joined me on Committee in 1908, the beginning of a continuous and devoted work for the Club which ended in the Presidency and in the founding of a dynasty. R. Wylie Lloyd, who had joined us in climbing in Wales and in the Club in 1905, also came on to Committee in the same year, served upon our first editorial sub-committee for the guide-books, and has proved himself a consistent and valued supporter of the Club.

Upon Committee at this time, lengthy and frequent were our discussions as to how to better things and confirm our numbers. To widen the intake, I suggested altering the first rule so as to bring in hill walkers and ramblers. We did so, but I think it had no effect. The Rambler movement had still twenty years to wait, before it got under way between the wars with its vast organisations. And our climbing Club was not the place for it when the floods began. We instituted informal dinners, and had meetings with informal talks, to promote sociability; and we appointed an editorial Committee to stabilise the *Journal*. Soon after, in order to deal with the always increasing current climbing news, we arranged with the secretary, Myles Mathews, to issue Bulletins. This was a fortunate idea, for they alone now preserve something of the real and active doings of the earlier Club.

It was during these years, when there was a relative slack water in the Club, that the annual or sometimes two-a-year parties at Pen-y-Pass, which had started with the opening of that hotel and more or less with the century, were flourishing exceedingly, and attracting the best climbers of the two older Universities. In order that our Club also might profit from them, I agreed with Myles Mathews that these private gatherings should be counted as complementary Club meets, and to justify this, the duty of joining the Club was tactfully impressed upon climbers attending them. The Universities responded gallantly. I may remark that, if Cambridge has had the more consistent and numerous succession of mountaineers, the Oxford wave, when

it has come, has always crested with great effect. Under the powerful influence of Arnold Lunn the Oxford Mountaineering Club had been formed, and had issued the best collection of mountain essays ever published. Hugh Pope, Trevenen and Julian Huxley, Nigel and Geoffrey Madan, Nigel Finlay, Harold Porter, Norman Young, Arnold Lunn, many of them from Eton and all of them scholars and athletes of many talents, they gave climbing a remarkable impetus and a worthy style. They were balanced from Cambridge in our numbers, at intervals, by H. O. Jones, Raymond Bicknell, David Pye, George Mallory and Claude Elliott. United at Pen-y-Pass, they took up the Club and took on the *Journal*, and began in practice that closer connection between the Universities and the Club which had been originally contemplated ; and which was once again to be revived and further strengthened after the first war. By a gentleman's agreement among themselves, they arranged to take on the Editorship of the *Journal* for a year each.

The *Journal*, after its prodigies of gestation and survival, now steadied onto an even level of merit. I know of no serial publication, sacred or profane, which has maintained a more consistently high standard of articles than did our *Journal* from about the years 1912 to 1915, and the resumption in 1920, under the successive Editorships of Arnold Lunn, Myles Mathews, Trev. Huxley and George Mallory. 1914 is a monument of wit, even to its Index, and 1920 was so much sought after that even the British Museum failed to get its copy without advertisement.

During these same good years, when we were still trying to find a Club centre or focal point for much individual activity, we resolved upon producing the pocket Climbers' Guides, on the model of Conway and Coolidge. Much controversy lay behind this resolve. Many of us were convinced that handbooks must in time destroy much of the romance which we ourselves had enjoyed in climbing. The sense of the unknown, of uncertainty, the enchantment of hostile or undefined mystery must disappear with them. Could we have left the cliffs for each man still to find for himself, we should have done so. But already then much inaccurate information and many misleading claims were circulating in written or verbal form ; and as a Club we realised that we had a responsibility to an increasing number of beginners, more likely to be led into accidents by inaccurate description and

evaluation than by the rocks themselves. Archer Thomson, a profound individualist and romantic, who by this time knew the Welsh cliffs better than any of us, was a strong opponent of guide-books. But he yielded finally to my arguments in a long correspondence, agreeing that it was too late to turn back the clock. The Club undertook to produce a series of pocket Guides for Wales first, and Myles Mathews had the heavy extra work of their business management, while I and a small Committee were to look after the literary revision and standardisation. We started with Thomson and Andrews on their chosen ground of Lliwedd, and followed it by Ogwen and the Glyders. Mallory and Ralph Todhunter began work upon guides to other districts. Meanwhile I arranged with the Oxford Press to bring out another series, for the Lakeland climbs and Herford started the editorial work on Scafell. It was with this in view that he made the first ascent of the Flake Crack, and sent me a postcard with his route marked when I was already out in Belgium. The war, in which Herford fell, put an end to this further Club scheme ; which was taken up later by the Fell and Rock Club.

The work upon the guide-books undoubtedly gave our Club a new cohesion and impulse. The growing popularity of the motor-car was also bringing London, Cambridge and Oxford within reach of week-end Welsh climbing, and in this way it was reducing the handicap upon London as a Club base. But it was not until well after the first war when H. R. C. Carr as Secretary, backed by that second Oxford wave, Raymond Greene, M. S. Gotch, M. W. Guinness, and working with E. S. Chantrell, Corlett, Reade, Marshall and others from the north, carried through the admirable Helyg hostel scheme, that we could feel that the Club had at last secured a firm and healthy root : one well planted among the hills and rocks of its natural origin, between our southern and northern elements, and no longer dependent for its vigour upon social and personal stimulants to an artificial soil.

The Club, we remember, had started its growth upon Snowdon and the Welsh hills. But we climbers were then only few, and every cliff, wherever situated in our country, was a new and open adventure for our climbing. For our merely social meetings, therefore, it was not so unnatural that the Club should have been placed in an urban and railway

centre. For a period the Club, thus deracinated, had tried to be universally convenient and useful ; and it had languished accordingly. Then, and almost unconsciously to its members, owing to the persistent success of the P.Y.G. and P.Y.P. gatherings ; to the taking up of the Welsh guide-books as a first assignment ; and to the toughness of the original tradition, Wales became accepted once again as the recognised Club area ; and the seal was consciously set upon this by the post-war purchase and development of Helyg. Students of our English history must recognise in the story another example of the vital necessity of establishing upon a local root any institution which is to thrive in our country.

I had succeeded Bretland Farmer in the Chair before the first war ; and I occupied it—if one can occupy a chair in absence—for seven years : an indulgent term which even the second war and the second Geoffrey did not exceed. Through it all, Myles Mathews carried on our affairs. It is right that I should emphasise the large and enduring part which Myles played in our Club history. He was a big man of wide, all round interests outside his busy profession, and of a very sane judgment that proved useful in more than one difficult problem of our Club life. A musician, singer, theatre expert, artistic and literary critic, and an athlete, with a deep and quiet devotion to the hills and to his father's memory. With all our Club work for many years added to this, he had indeed well earned a partial rest when he succeeded Andrews and Mallory as President, after Mallory's tragically short term. It is sad that even that rest came too late.

I shall always think the last years just before the war to have been peculiarly happy ones for the Club, and for mountaineering in general. We were prospering, and attracting remarkable recruits. The celebrated Captain Percy Farrar became a keen and diverting convert to Welsh climbing. Sir Foster Cunliffe, Oxford historian, cricketer and Fellow of All Souls, climbed with us in Wales and spoke to us in London with equal gaiety and power. Charles Donald Robertson a few years before him, Fellow of Trinity, oar, scholar, poet and already spoken of as the future head of the Civil Service, proved himself also a mountaineer of dominant quality, and gave our Club a memorable speech and the Alpine Club one of its very best lectures.

It was in his memory, after he fell on Glyder Fach, that the beautiful little chapel was built at Glansevern, designed by Page Dickinson, a prominent Irish member of the Club, and that the Charles Donald Robertson Fund was established at Cambridge, which now for forty years, supported by voluntary gifts, has been sending undergraduates on mountain and foreign holidays each summer. The later establishment of the Irvine Fund at Oxford, upon identical lines, made yet another link between the Universities and the Club. It should be added here that our first President, Charles Mathews, is commemorated by the library of mountain books, first housed at P.Y.G. and later at Helyg, and that he and our later President, George Mallory, who fell on Everest while he held the position, are also commemorated by special grants given under the Robertson distribution each year.

In recalling these great men, our friends, and their happy art of speaking, I can almost come to regret that A. E. W. Mason the novelist and I, by a conspiracy of refusal to go on correcting garbled drafts of our speeches in cold blood after the event, put a welcome end to the custom of reporting speeches in the Journal. At our last dinner before the war, there was a throng of young and eminent mountaineers, Mallory and Herford and George Finch, from Cambridge A. C. Pigou, Terence Hickman and as a guest Philip J. Baker ; together with Oxford and Midland groups. Athletes and men of varied abilities, they well represented the end of an era when minds and tastes could still develop in peace, and young men were left free to find their own adventures and to fashion their own way of living.

With the ending of the first war, and with the social and economic changes which it precipitated in the country, disappeared many of the outstanding figures to whom the Club might have looked for future leadership, and something also of the social tradition which gave grace to Club meetings and to the more leisured gatherings for climbing. With Myles Mathews as unwearying secretary, and pressing George Mallory into the editorship, we set to work to revive the Club. Eleanor Slingsby and I entertained a great company of members at an evening assembly in London, including most of our ex-Presidents and ex-Officers. We launched the campaign to create a joint

mountaineering Council for all Clubs, for the protection of scenery and in the hope of establishing a joint Journal: a scheme which proved then to be still unworkable. We took up again the Climbers' Guides, and we all but achieved a Club room in conjunction, I think, with the Ski Club. We took advantage also of a new and energetic Oxford wave to reinforce once again our connection with the University mountaineers. Cambridge, during these same years, began to produce its remarkable band of explorers and climbers, many of them since then leaders in the Club. After Mallory's death, Myles Mathews for two years doubled the parts of President and Secretary. But in 1926 he ceded the Secretaryship to H. R. C. Carr, who also became editor; and the new generation, with Helyg at its heart, opened the new age for the Club. In 1927, after twenty years of official responsibility for the Club in different capacities, I retired from close contact with it. And so the later story, like the later responsibility for the Club, falls to a later generation.

Looking back over the first half century of its activity, I believe we can say with some truth that the Climbers' Club, begun with a vague and sociable purpose and with no very clear idea of what area it should cover or what function it should discharge, has more than fulfilled the modest hopes of its founders. Thanks to a succession of hardworking and understanding officers and individual members—never more than a few in each climbing generation—it has been guided to respond faithfully to the rapid changes taking place in our society and, correspondingly, in our climbing. In meeting more recently the vast and unforeseen development of climbing as a national activity, it has proved possible for our established but elastic Club tradition, under wise presidential guidance, to produce a succession of younger and very responsible mountaineers, who have contributed more than any other mountaineering organisation to inculcating a high climbing tradition of technique and comradeship among the armies of beginners, and to organising efficiently what looked at one time like becoming a clamour of powerless isolated Clubs and a chaos of hill climbing-grounds and conditions. When I spoke at our Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner to this new company of climbers, I felt once again the friendly intimacy of response, and of understanding, which used to be the atmosphere charac-

teristic of our earliest Club meetings, when we all knew one another and all held the same purpose.

It has been a steady and a well-deserved Club progress ; one which has made a vital contribution to all mountaineering, and to the training of manhood.



# THE TWILIGHT IN THE 1920's

H. R. C. CARR

THE Editor has asked me to write about the early 'twenties for this number of the *Journal*, a very flattering request because my active association with the affairs of the Club only lasted a few years, from 1924 to 1927. That was due to misfortunes ; first a fall in Cwm Glas in September, 1925, then matrimony on the income of a "poor beggarly usher," combined to prevent further co-operation in the climbing "life force," that Nully Kretschmer has described so ably in his chapter on the period between the wars in this year's edition of *The Mountains of Snowdonia*.

Compared with the brilliant climbing period which was ushered in by the conquest of the main cliffs of du'r Arddu, the early 'twenties were certainly a time of twilight. The war of 1914-18 left terrible gaps in the small climbing world of those days. My own discovery of the hills happened in the early months of that war, and with so many in like condition both then and since, I had my vision of the mountain Grail across the valley of the shadow of death ; what heaven it was to find oneself in 1919, alive, more or less whole, and with Oxford's glorious vacations to be devoted to the hills which had been waiting so long. The members of the Club who survived the war were mostly in positions of responsibility which allowed them scanty leisure ; some, of course, were honoured—almost canonised—members of the Old Guard. It was some years before youngsters began to stir the embers into new flames (I refer to exertions other than post-prandial eloquence, which was always of the highest order and often had big results—like the Helyg garage, whose inspiration was due to Myles Mathews' customary brilliance at a Northern Dinner).

In 1923 and 1924 I was often in North Wales at work with George Lister on the scheme of our book (we are delighted that

the long delayed "revised and enlarged"—and cheaper!—edition should come out in the year of the Club's first Jubilee), and we had little time for climbing, for our editorial labours involved many strange excursions and curious interviews. We always stayed with David Hewitt, the artist, at his charming little home at Beddgelert, and the many happy days we spent there set me thinking of a cottage of my own where climbing friends could meet at holiday periods. I began to take an interest in derelict buildings on convenient sites; for instance, Helyg. I paid a visit to the agent at Bangor, but put off a decision. Then Maurice Guinness interested me in the Climbers' Club and soon, between us, the idea of Helyg as a Club Hut in Ogwen took shape. The place was a mere hovel, but the site was ideal. The Rucksack Club's Cwm Eigiau Hut in the pre-war days had failed; it was too remote, too far from the best climbing. The subject had long been contemplated by members of the Club, so our idea found ready support. One week-end in May 1925, Maurice, Raymond Greene, Marples and I made an "official" visit to the property. For some reason we could not get the key that Sunday and had to break into the place. Helyg's devotees of antiquarian tastes may care to look up the illustrations in the Club's Bulletin of that year: you behold the infenestration of a very great physician, the first Club member to set foot within the doom-burdened precincts: there is also a group showing the opening ceremony in October that year, at which I was delighted to be able to be present, though in a very battered condition. Maurice and I (both crocks) stayed there in the early spring of 1926, when we worked hard while a Mr. Roberts put in a moderately comfortable and even sanitary "closèt." There was a jolly party at Easter the following year, when we entertained distinguished members of the G.H.M.

May I recall one memory of C.W. Marshall, the first custodian? Marshall was, indeed, a man; Helyg's old walls almost burst asunder at his energy, and well he knew how, when roused by the carelessness or apathy of some unhappy young member, to call a spade something more than a so-and-so shovel. One week-end he and I had the job of buying the site for the garage on the other side of the road. I think the land there was worth about £5 an acre; it had quite recently been sold by the Penrhyn Estate to the local farmer. Of course we only needed a few

square yards. The farmer (120% Welshman facing the ancient Saxon foe) saw the strength of his position : his price, he said, was £25 an acre : we couldn't bring him down. At last Marshall said : "Well, you must have £25 for the acre?" "Yes." "Right. We only want quarter of an acre. We'll give you £10." "£25 is my price for a quarter of an acre, whatever." For nearly five minutes Marshall surpassed himself ; the farmer changed colour . . . but would not change his price, and in the end we had to pay.

In 1925 I undertook the publication of a Snowdon guidebook to complete the Club's series. Work for it had to be sandwiched in between other Club business, Helyg and the first Alpine Meet. I hope I do not err in saying "first" : elder statesmen usually recall earlier events—and ascents. So I did not dare to say that any climb was new : what did it matter ? We had some splendid days on rock "as good as new." Some are good climbs (or so I still think !) and quite hard ; over others I was wrong in my estimates. As for Clogwyn du'r Arddu, if you care to look up the *Journal* of the Rucksack Club, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1920), you will find that I predicted the conquest of the main buttresses ; the unfortunate phrases I used in the Guide were based on the reports of very strong parties which had begun the attack and gave lurid accounts of their gardening operations.

Others have found, as I did, so much to do ; so little time in which to do it. I fear this was the root cause of the accident in Cwm Glas—Van Noorden and I were both rather tired after a longish day exploring first on Clogwyn du'r Arddu and then on Clogwyn y Ddisgl, trying to fill in gaps. We dashed down to look at the cliffs in lower Cwm Glas for an hour before trekking to Pen-y-Gwryd to catch an evening bus back to Beddgelert. The climb we were trying was a hard one : too hard to be taken so late in the day.

I suppose the provision of guidance for walkers as well as climbers was not a success : the idea was to widen the appeal.

A final word about the Alpine Meets. The "collective" in the Alps had long been familiar to continental climbers—but I believe I am right in saying that the British Clubs had not attempted much in this line : there was not really a great need in the small mountaineering world of the pre-war days, when access was so easy—and so cheap. We tried Alpine Meets

first with the O.U.M.C. and then with the Club in 1925, 1926 and 1927. I look back upon those Meets with great pleasure, and I hope others can do so too. I feel they carried some slight inheritance in the Pen-y-Pass tradition. Club Meets are now of vital importance to the future of British mountaineering. I hope I may again help with them, if only they may be held in the only month possible for a schoolmaster !

In those days the sands of time ran all too swiftly through the glass. Good fellowship, mountains in plenty and accessible both at home and abroad, lovely grub, beer which had had some acquaintance with hops. A time of twilight ? Perhaps—but in memory a twilight for the Gods.

### HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE

The author of the foregoing article has touched only lightly on the period of depression through which the Climbers' Club passed after the first World War, and the activities which led to its revival. This is understandable, as Herbert Carr was himself the prime mover in these activities, and modesty would preclude him from enlarging on the theme. At the risk of making his ears burn I am adding this footnote. It seems wrong that half the story should remain untold, in case future historians should delve for material in this Jubilee Number of the *Journal*.

There can be few today who realise how low the Club had sunk in the early 'twenties. The war had dealt it a hard blow. Numbers had dwindled to a disturbingly low figure. Active members were resigning right and left, and no new candidates were coming up for election. Each year a smaller Connaught room had to be found for the Annual Dinner. Councils of despair were freely uttered in the Committee, and from one most influential quarter it was even suggested that the Club's period of usefulness had passed, and that it should be wound up forthwith.

When Mallory learnt these depressing facts, on becoming President in 1923, he refused to accept defeat, and appointed a special sub-committee to study measures for putting the Club on its feet again. This body—which became known amongst its members as the "Demoribundisation Sub-Committee"—consisted of S. A. Marples, Raymond Greene and the present writer. We met, deliberated, dined, consulted and, finally, produced a Report. Its recommendations sounded very well on paper—a Club Hut for North Wales, Club Premises in London, regular production of Bulletins and Journals, new Guide Books, revival of Club activities, etc. etc. But how to get action on all this ? The members of the sub-committee eyed each other despondently. Clearly what the situation called for was not Measures but a Man.

I think it was Raymond who had the inspiration of co-opting Herbert Carr—who at that time was not even a member of the Club.

From that moment onwards the sub-committee was swept along like the tail of a peculiarly active comet. Within a few months Helyg was found, inspected and approved, rail-roaded through the main Committee, negotiated for, repaired and equipped. Alpine Meets were organised. New Club headquarters were established at Beddgelert. A guide-book to the Snowdon climbs was put into production. Journals were brought out with something approaching regularity. Fresh climbing grounds were explored, and neglected old ones were reopened to traffic. New members, individually sought out and canvassed, were inducted in such numbers as to effect a real transfusion of fresh blood. (When one recalls how much bullying and cajolery were needed in those days to win a new recruit for the Club, it is interesting to learn now that it has been decided to *limit* membership in future!)

In all this activity Marples lent staunch and invaluable support, but it was Herbert who supplied the motive power, and much of the work was done by him single-handed.

By mid-1925 the danger that the Club might die of inanition had faded, but the membership figures were still distressingly low, and financial insolvency was not far off. It was not enough that a new spirit was abroad; the world at large had to be made aware of it if the spontaneous flow of new candidates was to be stimulated. A little advertising seemed to be indicated, and to provide a suitable medium for it the defunct Club Bulletin was revived. Then began a period of intensive literary activity, with Herbert as Chief Scribe, and Raymond Greene performing prodigies of editorship from the academic groves of Oxford. Articles, climbing notes, reports of Club events, and features of all kinds began to fill the pages of the Bulletins. These "contributions" were sometimes based on the flimsiest material, and appeared for the most part over *noms-de-plume* or phony initials in the hope of creating the impression that the entire Club was seething with activity. Our journalistic consciences during this period were necessarily somewhat elastic. In writing, for example, the account of a Club Meet at which only one member had turned up, it needed a certain amount of *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi* to convey the notion that the affair had been a howling success!

Participation in these somewhat dubious literary activities nearly cost me the friendship of that pleasant writer and good mountain companion, Claude Benson. The Hon. Editor (Raymond) had commanded that a controversy should be started in the Bulletin. Obediently I concocted, as the first move in the game, a provocative letter on the classification of climbs, or some such topic. This appeared over the pseudonym "Moderate Climber." Nobody rose to the bait, so the lot again fell upon Matthias. The next number of the Bulletin featured an abusive answer to "Moderate Climber," containing sneers and insults such as no man of spirit could endure. This was signed "Mountaineer." Benson, who happened to know that I was the author

of the first letter, wrote to me commiseratingly and begged me to let him take the matter up with the Committee, with a view to getting "Mountaineer" identified and ejected from the Club. There was nothing for it but to tell him the truth. He was not amused.

It was while his labours for the Club were at their height that Herbert met with his accident in Cwm Glas. His injuries were severe, but there was no loss of enthusiasm or slackening of effort. From a hospital bed he continued to direct and inspire, and as soon as he was allowed up he was off to Wales to superintend the alterations to Helyg. These were finished just in time for the formal opening in October, 1925. A photograph of the ceremony published in one of the Bulletins shows Herbert swathed in bandages and surrounded by what for those days was quite a respectable Club gathering.

The opening of Helyg probably marked the real turning point in the fortunes of the Club. We knew then that the issue was no longer in doubt. Since then there has been no looking back, and the Club has progressed from strength to strength. Its vigour and prosperity today far exceed the most optimistic hopes we entertained in that dim and distant era.

M. W. GUINNESS.

## 1925-1930

J. L. LONGLAND

THE last four or five years of the nineteen-twenties may seem an odd period to choose to write about, neither post-war nor pre-war, a little late for Herbert Carr's revival of the Club and a bit earlier than the greatest days of Kirkus and Edwards ; a fluid sort of time in which it was not yet clear whether the mainspring and centre of the Club's most active climbers would still be Geoffrey Winthrop Young's parties at Pen-y-Pass or the small and doubtful new venture at Helyg. The choice is of course personal and arbitrary—this is the bit of the film that I know best, in fact “this is where we came in”—but when you look back on such a transitional period you can now begin to see, as you couldn't at the time because too closely involved, just what the links were between the heroic past and the great days that were to follow, and how some of the sharpest changes in tradition and method came about.

By the end of the five years about which I am writing the hut had succeeded the mountain hotel and the week-end teams were more numerous than the sociable Easter and Christmas parties, and whereas Carr can still refer in the Helyg log-book in 1926 to Beddgelert as Club Headquarters, by 1930 Helyg was the unquestioned centre of the Club's activities. In recording something of these changes, perspective can best be kept if one begins with a quick backward glance. The making of the good roads, Capel Curig—Bangor and later Capel—Llanberis, in the early years of the nineteenth century, the acquired mountain habits of “the literary, the learned, and the artistic elements,” the discovery that British hills gave good practice for more serious Alpine seasons gradually brought into existence Pen-y-pass, Pen-y-gwryd and Ogwen Cottage, which were the cradle of Welsh climbing tradition and in time of the infant Climbers' Club. Undergraduates, dons and schoolmasters turned mountain reading parties into climbing parties, and before the turn of

the century C. E. Mathews and others like him had founded the type of party, regularly meeting each year at P.Y.G. and composed of Alpine Club friends, which for years to come was to be responsible for exploring the possibilities of Welsh climbing. So our Club came into being, founded by frequenters of P.Y.G. with C. E. Mathews as first President, and although in the early 1900's the focus shifted to Pen-y-pass and leadership passed for twenty years to Geoffrey Young, the method and the tradition remained substantially the same. The regular Christmas and Easter parties changed in composition, included women, bridged three generations at once, and gave far more care to the training of beginners, but they remained companies of friends and of the friends of friends, and, as Geoffrey Young makes clear in his chapter in the *Mountains of Snowdonia*, they came together as much for sociable as for mountaineering ends, and were valued for their contribution to the "good society" more than for their eminence in the distant world or even their prowess as mountaineers. We nevertheless owe to them our present technique and the whole set of our climbing habits, and modern climbing is explicable only in terms of the discoveries of the innovators in their ranks, Eckenstein, Archer Thomson, Geoffrey Young, A. W. Andrews, W. R. Reade, and later on Mallory and Herford and Hugh Pope. "The slab and face ascents which are now the main feature of our rock climbing were the invention of these new masters; and they were only rendered possible by their patient and ingenious elaboration of novel balance style." The climbers who continued to frequent Pen-y-gwryd and Ogwen Cottage played their contributory part, but the main impulse, until well on in the 1920's, came from the regular gatherings at the top of the pass.

Let the exploration of Lliwedd serve as example. It is chosen because until after the first war it remained the touchstone of Welsh climbing, the test-piece set to visiting Lakeland experts or gritstoneers, who, if they returned dejected or contemptuous after probing its peculiar virtues, were complacently written off as incomplete mountaineers, aliens to our training and traditions. The tale begins with Eckenstein and Scully's Central Gully and West Peak in 1887, is followed hard by Archer Thomson's fourteen great years from 1894 to 1908, years which included Elliptical, Avalanche, the Girdle, Geoffrey Young's Shallow



Gully and Roof Routes, and Mallory's own Slab, and which were followed in 1909 by the appearance of the first of all the guide books, Archer Thomson's *Lliwedd*. The years just before and after the 1914–18 War added an important footnote or two to that great period of sustained exploration and invention—H. O. Jones' Paradise in 1909, Pope's Yellow Slab in 1912, Solomon with H. E. L. Porter and G.W.Y. in 1914, and the 1919 Garter of Mallory, C. A. Elliott, and David Pye, with two excellent later climbs by an "outsider," I. A. Richards. The loss of many of this generation during the 1914–18 War, and the consequently more difficult re-birth of Welsh climbing after it, are underlined by the absence of any further discoveries until the late 1920's. During that time the succeeding generation were busy learning their way about Lliwedd from Pen-y-pass talk and tradition, and occasionally by use of Archer Thomson's guide, with the result that Menlove Edwards, looking back from the later heights of 1938, can write of it, a little too kindly, as "a period when the harder East Buttress routes had been thoroughly taken up and familiarised by the groups of forceful climbers from the older Universities that dominated Welsh climbing at that time." But we had indeed, after the war break, to learn our way about Lliwedd again and we did it incidentally, for the most part, as part of our admission fee to the privilege of joining P.Y.P. Easter parties almost every year. It was not until 1928 or so that we had by further knowledge conquered our respect for Lliwedd sufficiently to try to fill in a gap or two, Purgatory, the Garter reversed from W. to E., and the fumbles of Birch Tree Sidle. And the break in new invention is sharper still if you turn to the more complicated West Peak, on which there is practically no new discovery between 1909 and Menlove Edwards' ruthless spring-cleaning in 1937, though some of us spent many hours vainly trying to unravel the mysteries of the Elliptical face. It is worth emphasising that there was no source from which reliable knowledge about Lliwedd could be obtained, during most of the thirty years before Edwards' guide followed Archer Thomson's, except through personal and hero-worshipping contact with the survivors of the exploring epoch who returned each Easter to Pen-y-pass. When Edwards' guide came out, this personal continuity was emphasised by the preface from Geoffrey Young, who is also

found among the four subscribers of the introduction to Archer Thomson's guide in 1909.

In the rest of the district, the same story can be followed, if a little less coherently. The bulk of new exploration was done by Archer Thomson between 1894 and 1910, and it is interesting to note that his usual companion in the Ogwen district was Hughes, another climber who lived nearby, so that we find the beginnings of the tradition of regular week-end climbing, as opposed to climbing done in the course of Easter or Christmas parties, long before motor transport made week-ending easy. During the same period Ogwen attracted rather more pioneers from other climbing grounds than were found on Lliwedd or the Snowdon group. The brothers Abraham from Lakeland, following in the wake of O. G. Jones, explored Idwal, Tryfan, and Craig yr Ysfa, and were followed by Barlow and Steeple, whose Grooved Arête climb on Tryfan, in 1911, set a new Ogwen standard for open face climbing, since the Abrahams' Hawk's Nest Buttress in 1904 had had no obvious successors in the same class. And K. M. Ward and H. B. Gibson, who should perhaps also be regarded as a "foreign" party, imported an even higher level of technique to make the Direct Climb on Glyder Fach, which was to remain the hardest climb in the district for many years to come. But in the main the new climbs were the work of raiding parties from Pen-y-pass. W. R. Reade's Devil's Kitchen and Devil's Staircase, Mallory and Geoffrey Young on the Gribin and Craig yr Ysfa in 1909, the Ortons on Allt yr Ogof in 1910, and H. O. Jones' variants on the Milestone Buttress all enhanced the P.Y.P. tradition, though Archer Thomson's rapturous discovery of Creigiau Gleision in 1910 was a curious over-estimate of the possibilities of that muddled crag. It is, I think, possible to risk the generalisation that, though the inventions of "foreigners" occasionally set new standards of technique, the attitude of those visitors towards Welsh crags remained coloured by the different traditions obtaining in their normal climbing grounds. A rasher generalisation might be that the P.Y.P. tradition was that the best climbing was on big cliffs which you could climb to the top, like Lliwedd, whereas the Lakeland climbers were more apt to go for rock problems on the smaller rock facets. For instance, C. F. Holland's description of the Milestone Buttress, then criss-crossed with

routes, in the *Mountains of Snowdonia* as "the brightest jewel in Ogwen's crown" would surely have provoked a contemptuous sniff or two in the smoke-room at P.Y.P. The first wave of exploration round Ogwen ends with the 1914-18 War, in close parallel to the history of Lliwedd, Idwal Slabs and the Holly Tree Wall being well worked over by I. A. Richards, David Pye and Holland, and a neat but temporary full-stop put in by N. E. Odell's Tennis-Shoe Climb in 1919, a climb which "maintained its rubber reputation for about ten years." And then the curtain comes down, in Ogwen as round Snowdon, until the mid and later 1920's, and I come back again at last to the years about which I am supposed to be writing!

To sum up, from 1919 to about 1925 Welsh climbing showed no new inventions of importance. The first great period of exploration, sustained at a high level for many years, seemed to have petered out, and the losses caused by the war had been heavy. By 1925 H. R. C. Carr had completed his intensely valuable work of publishing the results, up till then only available in the Pen-y-pass book or in the folk-lore records of the original explorers, of the climbing accomplished to that date on all the crags in a wide circle round Snowdon which had not been included in Archer Thomson's two books. Carr also made a number of most useful new discoveries of his own, but he would be the first to admit that his main aim was to reopen neglected climbing grounds to the larger number of climbers now coming to the district for the first time. By 1925 it had become clear that the standard of new invention and technical achievement was for the time being much higher in the Lake District than in Wales, and that the Welsh pioneers had not yet been succeeded by climbers of comparable stature. The Club itself, started by C. E. Mathews and his friends, invigorated later by new recruits and by its lion's share in the discovery of new climbs, both stemming from the central impulse of the regular Pen-y-pass gatherings, was now again after the war in the doldrums, with no continuous home in Wales and no fixed headquarters in London or any other district. With public transport improving, and cars just beginning to come within the reach of modest incomes, the number of regularly visiting climbers was rising, but it was still quite uncertain whether the next forward movement in exploration would come from members of the established

seasonal parties or from those who were catching the week-end habit. Meanwhile, the general level of performance was not high, and the abler climbers were, if young, finding their way on the classic routes, and, if older, mainly content to repeat what they had done before the war.

At this critical moment in the fortunes of the Club and of Welsh climbing generally, Helyg comes in pat on its cue. The moment produced the men, and they brought new life to the Club. Carr tells something of these days elsewhere in this *Journal*, but it was his own inspiration to which we owe most, with the staunch help he received from Geoffrey Bartrum, McNaught, and W. R. Reade, of the older generation, and from M. W. Guinness, Raymond Greene, the Pooles and the Marples, among the younger men. Helyg was opened October 30, 1925, a date of some poignancy to me, since it was that of my own first visit to North Wales. A personal record is perhaps forgivable here, since the experience is fairly typical of that of other members of the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club, who played their part in the next phase of Welsh climbing. Ivan Waller and I arrived in an ancient air-cooled Rover on the first of many week-ends snatched from Cambridge term. We knew nothing of tradition, nothing of the Climbers' Club or of the aura round Pen-y-pass, in fact we chose the Royal Hotel as the obvious centre for a climbing party! We drove through the night, as became usual, and went straight to Idwal to fight our way up the ordinary route on the Slabs. Next day we lost ourselves heroically on the North Buttress of Tryfan, and later descended to investigate a strange place called Helyg, which a kindly senior, met at Capel Curig the night before, had told us we might find of interest! We came in, ignorant but impressed, at the tail-end of the opening ceremonies, and were thereupon invited to join the Club. I do not suggest that other C.U.M.C. members came into the Climbers' Club as ignorantly and as uncereemoniously. But we nearly all had a common background. The C.U.M.C. told us that climbing was a good sport, and tried to teach us how to do it. The Alps, the Lakes, North Wales and Cambridge roofs were places where climbers went, so we escaped from Cambridge, usually after a very brief grounding at a C.U.M.C. Meet somewhere or other, and went and had a look at these mountains for ourselves. But there was one point

impressed on the C.U.M.C. climber of the time which has a bearing on the scope and method of our subsequent attempts in Wales or Lakeland. It was our firm belief that the proper goal and exercising ground for the developed mountaineer was not to be found in this island at all, but in the Alps. In spite of Archer Thomson's dictum in the 1910 Ogwen Guide, that "British climbing is not undeveloped Alpinism, but diverse," most of my C.U.M.C. generation regarded their British climbing, great fun though it was, as subsidiary to the main purpose of learning to go safe but guideless on the Zermatt classics, the Grépon Mer de Glace face, and the great southerly ridges of Mont Blanc. Helped by long holidays, borrowed cars, and the fact that few tutors refused exeats for short term-time dashes, we found ourselves often in Wales or Cumberland for a day or two at a time, and so could get more British climbing in the year than most of our predecessors managed in their longer but more leisurely visits. But we never came near to the habit of coming to Helyg week-end after week-end, from Liverpool or Cheshire or Caernarvon, and could not, as others later did, work away steadily at a crag or a single problem. Nor do I think we had developed the mental attitude, as we certainly had not the technique, that carried Colin Kirkus and Menlove Edwards on their triumphant waves of discovery. Our main planning and our pipe-dream ambitions went towards each new Alpine season, or more distant ploys in the Arctic and elsewhere. Flipping back through notes, I find that between 1925 and 1937 I missed no Alpine season except 1933 spent in Tibet, 1935 in Greenland, and 1934 when I got married and spent a honeymoon in Skye instead! All this is not just put in as evidence to excuse the meagreness of our inventions on British mountains: it is to show that one at least of the groups who were fairly active in Wales between 1925 and 1930 had their eyes mainly focussed on more distant ranges, whereas the great achievements of the 1930's came from those who, for a number of excellent reasons, found in British climbing all or most of that which they wanted.

For the rest, we were exceptionally lucky in having two places we could call home, two separate sources of inspiration and tradition on which we could draw. It was no accident that the revival of the C.U.M.C. in the 1920's coincided with the years during which Geoffrey and Len Young lived in Cambridge.

Their house at Bene't Place was the centre for all the most active ambitious, and no doubt insufferable among young Cambridge climbers. Looking back, I marvel at the patience with which G.W.Y. instructed, inspired and cautioned us all, and still more at his generosity in making us free of the traditions and the company at Pen-y-pass. If I did not miss an Alpine season, I hardly missed a Pen-y-pass Easter between 1927 and 1936. It was at P.Y.P. that we began to learn something of Welsh crags and their traditions. It was from P.Y.P. that we began to venture with slightly bolder steps, and bring back small offerings like Purgatory and the Red Wall continuation on Lliwedd, the direct finish to the Crack above the Fallen Block on Ddisgl, and minor improvements on the Javelin or the Geography Climb at Idwal. The West Buttress route on Du'r Arddu was partly worked out during the Pen-y-pass Easter of 1928, it was to P.Y.P. we came back at Whitsun for the actual ascent, after a day on Lliwedd, where G.W.Y. put us on our mettle by coming up Route II with us, and to Pen-y-pass we blissfully returned after sharing the West Buttress ascent with the Rucksackers who deserved the conquest as much or more than we did, to celebrate the victory on champagne at Geoffrey Young's expense !

But Helyg more and more became our second home. The C.U.M.C. Meets started coming there, sometimes to the acute distress of the Hon. Custodian, and there were besides the odd week-ends, or a day or two before or after an Alpine season. At Helyg we began to meet the regular week-enders, and to realise increasingly that the future of Welsh climbing lay with them. The Helyg Log during the years 1925 to 1930 shows, in addition to the rapidly increasing number of Club members climbing regularly in the district, how the new wave of exploration began and gathered momentum. After the lean years from 1920, the first big new climb was made by the Marples from Helyg, on November 1st, 1925, the Sub-Wall Climb on the Slabs. There follow night ascents of the Milestone, by Wyn Harris (Christmas, 1925), more and more visits to Great Gully, Craig yr Ysfa, and then another new climb, the first among many from Stuart Palmer, the Needle's Eye on Glyder Fach in 1926. C.U.M.C. names persist, the Wagers, Peter Lloyd, William Dyson, Charles Warren, Ivan Waller, Hugh Balfour, Paul Sinker, but Charles Marshall and Stuart Chantrell are already gathering

round them a more numerous and regular band of climbers who return week after week. I rather think the C.U.M.C. began the good tradition of making camping forays from the base at Helyg. Among many camps above Llidaw, I remember best the party of Gino Watkins, Peter Lloyd and myself in December, 1927, when, after a night ascent of the Milestone Superdirect on which Gino got cramp while in the lead and the moon remained obstinately hidden behind the N. Ridge of Tryfan, we moved to the old miners' hut by Glaslyn, and found the cold so intense that we pitched our Mummery tent inside the hut, and made a very Arctic round of the Horseshoe next day.

Meanwhile, Fergus Graham had set a new standard by inventing the Javelin Buttress, and soon C. W. Marshall was diversifying his frequent ascents of the Milestone Superdirect, Tennis Shoe, and Holly Tree Wall by leading parties up the Javelin. In other words, the advance once made, a quick improvement in the standard of the better parties soon followed. And there were still impressive links with the past, such as the day in July, 1927, when the veteran Robertson Lamb led Marshall, Tilby, Stuart Chantrell and E. M. Wood up Paradise and the Horned Crag. Shortly after, Ivan Waller, having fortified himself by running up and down the Javelin alone, climbed Belle Vue Bastion on Tryfan with Stuart Palmer—a superb and Ivan-ish climb with, as Marshall put it, “an agonising step in it.” A little later Waller climbed the Crack above the Fallen Block on Crib y Ddisgl, and he has not perhaps been given sufficient credit for providing this foretaste of the harder short climbs which were to be done by Ted Hicks and Colin Kirkus a year or two later. But in pioneering the fast-driving car week-end at Helyg, Ivan Waller is acknowledged to be without serious competitors, both then and later !

In those days it was remarkable how W. R. Reade continued his self-imposed task of showing each new generation where the possibilities of new climbs lay. His careful eye and his encouragement lay behind many of the new discoveries, and occasionally, as with the Wall Climb on the Milestone in 1924, he consented to join the first party to do the climb which he had himself worked out. In his turn, C. W. Marshall encouraged the young Helyg week-enders, sometimes as much by telling them what they could not possibly do as by pointing out obvious chances ;

and at the same time Marshall, and later Stuart Chantrell, were doing week after week the hard, steady, unspectacular work of founding the right traditions for the use of Helyg, the routine of hut-chores, the code of unwritten rules that enabled it to be occupied in friendly companionship by the hundreds of diverse parties who made Helyg their base. The Club has been exceptionally lucky in its hut custodians, and it should be recognised that they provided the conditions and background from which our best climbing parties emerged to make their new discoveries. The art of the proper use of the climbing hut is not a small part of the good mountaineer's equipment, and Marshall and Chantrell have been superbly gifted teachers of it.

The year 1928 saw an interesting and effective coalescence between the two streams of climbers I have been trying to describe, the regular week-enders and the "irregulars" trained in P.Y.P. and C.U.M.C. stables. In June, 1928, the magic initials C.F.K. appear for the first time in the Helyg Log, and by the autumn he had become a regular member of Alan Hargreaves' party. Hargreaves was the main link between the Cambridge climbers and Colin Kirkus and his friends, climbing now with Ted Hicks and now with Colin, and by 1929 the three had become a regular and brilliant team, and the entries in the Log in A.B.H. or C.F.K.'s handwriting thicken like the Vallombrosan leaves! Ted Hicks begins first with the Piton route on Holly Tree Wall, in part repeating I. A. Richards' earlier explorations, and 1929 was a wonderful year for him, during which he led Ash Tree Wall and followed it up by the whole series on the East Wall of the Idwal Slabs. Colin set the standard for his own era by leading Lot's Groove, on 25th June, 1929, with Ted Hicks coming up second, a meteoric portent of the great days that were to follow. And the same climbers were testing their technique in other areas, the second ascent of the Du'r Arddu West Buttress, led by Colin, and the third of the East Buttress, led by Ted Hicks. Both, with A.B.H., did Central Buttress, Scafell, at Easter, 1929, and by the middle of that year the great wave of new exploration is rushing on, with Terrace Wall and the East Wall of the Slabs being cleaned up, and the Du'r Arddu tentatives leading to C.F.K.'s unmatched series of new climbs there in 1930. In 1930 another magic set of initials appears in the Logbook, J.M.E., with Menlove



Edwards making his first appearance at a Liverpool University Meet. I was out of England during most of 1929-30, and came back in the summer of 1930 to find the new era in full swing. There was a reunion at Helyg with Alan Hargreaves, Colin Kirkus and Ivan Waller, who fetched us for the Northern Dinner in his Alvis again. I don't think we did very much that time, except some straightening-out of the Solomon-Birch Tree Sidle tangle, and A.B.H. rediscovered the neglected Far East Arête on Lliwedd too, and we all combined on one last search together for the true Elliptical Route. But I stray beyond my chosen period of 1925-30, and the later discoveries should be chronicled by those who made them or their most frequent companions.

The Cambridge climbers visited Helyg from time to time after this, and I remember watching Colin pioneer his West Rib on Dinas Mot, while I was failing on Menlove Edwards' Western Slabs ; and in the later parties of 1931 and 1932 Alf Bridge was mostly there as well as A.B.H., and I was even allowed to lead Pigott's climb on Du'r Arddu, in 1932, before C.F.K. took over and invented the East Buttress Direct Finish. Alan Hargreaves and Alf Bridge between them did more than form a link between one generation and the much more brilliant group who were succeeding them. They played the biggest part in directing Colin Kirkus' early wanderings, and I think they were largely responsible for keeping him safe and sound before he had reached his full climbing stature. And, typically, A.B.H. is mostly to be found leading the second ascent of each new discovery soon after it was made.

So 1925-1930 appear now as preparatory years, years in which the balance was shifting from one type of Welsh climber to a new kind, in which there were a few scattered ears of corn to presage the incredibly rich harvest of the 1930's, and in which some of us had the rare privilege of being admitted to the fellowship of two different climbing generations, who nevertheless for all their differences in achievement, understood and liked each other well.

1927-1934

A. B. HARGREAVES

**L**ONGEVITY has always been noticeable among mountaineers—at any rate, among those of them who habitually follow the hills into their middle age, though perhaps not among those whose appearance on the mountain scene when young has been brief and meteoric. You need to be fit to climb, but climbing keeps you fit. Incidentally, one of the most difficult things to do in mountaineering—in rock climbing, at any rate—is to get back to it again after giving it up for any length of time ; this I very well know, having had a break myself between the ages of thirty and thirty-five. The desire to climb is something that gets into your blood and should not be thwarted. The point of all this is that when I began to climb there was quite a remarkable array of well preserved and effective old-timers still keeping up a pretty high level of performance, and mostly very willing to take newcomers in hand and pass on their tradition. And by old-timers I mean people who had begun their careers long before the 1914-18 War. My very first day's climbing on a mountain was with Robertson Lamb who was then over sixty, and it was an unforgettable experience to see this old chap moving about so neatly and easily on quite difficult rock. Then I had a good many expeditions as an "improver" with J. M. Davidson, W. R. Reade and M. G. Bradley, from whom, each in his different way, there was much to learn. I also had one day with C. W. Marshall, a younger man (who, nevertheless, had climbed as a beginner with S. W. Herford) and a very good climber but showing a curious mixture, in his attitude towards rock climbing, of enterprise and the opposite, which was very likely due to there having been a break of some years in his climbing career. I list the names of these people because they, much more than the generation of climbers immediately preceding my own, taught me by talk and example the right principles: which were that a fairly long apprenticeship as

“ follower ” was desirable before any attempt was made to lead ; that the stepping-up of one's standard of leadership should be gradual ; that to learn in boots was essential ; and that whereas rock climbing could be treated as a sport in itself, it was advisable—if you wanted to be good at it—to get general mountaineering experience as well. Having had the good fortune to be taken in hand as a novice by people such as I have mentioned, I am convinced that that is the best way to start, and in particular is very much better than the modern method of buying the B.M.C. Penguin, plus a Club guide, then proceeding to the foot of the rocks and trying to batter up the hardest things in the book.

After this introduction to climbing came the introduction to the Clubs—to the Fell and Rock, Wayfarers and this Club. This also was done in traditional manner, without haste and after careful, but unobtrusive, testing of the newcomer's attitude towards climbing and climbing Clubs. Not for those who put me up for these Clubs the mass-manufacture of members ! That remark is not intended to indicate that I got in because I was a superior piece of humanity carefully selected by a lot of old snobs. What I mean is that at that time the average member of these Clubs took his responsibilities as such seriously and was careful to check up very thoroughly on a candidate before he committed himself to proposing. I do not suggest that the average present day member of these Clubs is careless about his sponsoring—but there are certainly a number who propose almost anybody who asks them to without knowing very much about them ; which brings me back to my point that in 1927 the process of gaining entry into a climbing Club was rather more difficult (and that was a good thing too) than it subsequently became. A further point is that having got me into these Clubs, my proposers continued to take an interest in how I got on, some of them in particular making it their business to show me how I could become a better member.

Then, after the admission to the Clubs—or rather, in the case of the Climbers' Club, before admission—there came the introduction to Helyg. Looking back on this, it is difficult to over-estimate the value to the young climber of this facility, with its cheapness and its freedom from the irksome meal-time timetable of a farmhouse or a hotel. I always think that the Committee of this Club, at the time it was decided to acquire

Helyg, deserve much gratitude for having the foresight and imagination to make this move, which has undoubtedly been largely responsible for the attainment by the Club of its high standing in British mountaineering. Possibly the decision was due more to good luck than good judgment, but I like to think it was the latter. At any rate, it was both good luck *and* good judgment that caused the Committee to appoint as its first custodian Charles Marshall. C.W.M. had—as those who encountered him will remember—a “way with him,” and he was the ideal man to set up a new undertaking like that and get it into a proper way of working. The impress of his personality remained on Helyg for a very long time after his death. Most of his rules (unwritten) were jolly good ones, including that all occupants should contribute towards the efficient working of the Hut and that the youngest or most junior members (whether they were tigers or rabbits on the rocks) should do the tiresome and dirty jobs. Marshall was quick to detect and deal suitably with a slacker or an incompetent—but in this, of course, he was much aided by the fact that in the original small Helyg it was comparatively easy to spot the un-housetrained. Then there came the great extension of Helyg. I was one of those who, at the time, was doubtful about the wisdom of extending the place and I was quite certain then that it was not necessary to install electricity and in other ways make it more luxurious. There have undoubtedly been some disadvantages from this development but on the whole, having regard to the rate of increase of membership of the Club, I suppose it was a good thing. But I believe it would have been better if, from that time, the use of the cottage had been reserved entirely to our members and their guests and to the University clubs from whom the Climbers' Club has always recruited. For the general running of Helyg—that is, the keeping up of a tradition as to the use of the place and behaviour therein, as well as the extension and maintenance of the building—much praise is due to Chantrell, McKenna, French, and latterly Eggleshaw and others, who have kept the place going efficiently despite very much increased use.

Then in addition to the willing old-timers, and the Clubs, and Helyg, there was another important influence at work in those days. Geoffrey Young's Easter parties at Pen-y-Pass were then going strong, and to those many young climbers who were

fortunate enough to be able to join those parties, and were anxious to learn as much as they could about the sport of mountaineering, they were of great value. Here the 'tradition' was, naturally, a bit different from that of Helyg, and the Climbers' Club, but it was long established, and strong. One of the things that one learned was that the expert was expected to give freely of his time and skill to the teaching of the less-expert and the novices; another was that it was simply 'not done' to take undue risks, and, above all things, to fall off. Many of 'my generation' owe much to these G.W.Y. Easter Meets which had a great deal to do with the extraordinary revival of Welsh climbing in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties.

As to the climbing in those days. I suppose I was on the hills, and usually on the rocks, for at least three week-ends out of four, and during all holiday periods as well. I have a clear recollection of the extraordinarily low standard of climbing in North Wales in 1927-28. I could see this because I also climbed a good deal in the Lake District, where the standard was obviously much higher. It was as if Welsh climbing was in a state of doldrums. There were usually quite a number of people about, but, so far as one could gather from the Helyg and Tal-y-Braich books, and from meeting them, very few of them ever ventured beyond the Gashed Crag, Route II, the Great Gully and so forth; and not only were very few new climbs being attempted, but the majority of the harder old climbs were left alone. The Cambridge group of just before this period started to alter all that, and the group with whom I climbed carried on with the process. We began to use the hackneyed routes only on wet days or for exercise, developing technique and generally getting into form, and whenever we could we went onto the more unfashionable of the old routes and tried new ways. Another curious thing about the average climber met with in Wales at that time was that he had a great disinclination to go anywhere else for climbing, particularly to the Lake District, so we (that is to say, my generation) made a point of going beyond Wales—not only to the Lake District but to Skye, Glencoe and Ben Nevis—to gain experience, and also to the Alps to improve our power-to-weight ratios. The result was that very soon, taking the Cambridge group into account, there were at least half-a-dozen first-rate climbers concentrating

on Wales for preference, and making new routes, whilst curiously enough, the spate of exploration in the Lake District died down a bit temporarily (some sort of saturation point having been reached) so that many of the best Lake District climbers such as A. T. Hargreaves, Reynolds and Macphee began to come to Wales, too. Thus in the space of three or four years the standard of climbing in North Wales was boosted up enormously and much harder things were being done there than anywhere else in Great Britain. Since then, of course, the pendulum has swung back somewhat and Wales no longer has all the very hardest climbs, but while the boom lasted it was certainly very exciting.

The books contain the records so I shall not say much about the climbs that were done during my period 1927-34, but I think it is appropriate to refer at least to the early days in the exploration of Clogwyn du'r Arddu. When we first went there the original opening-up by Pigott and Longland was eighteen months or two years back, and we began by doing those climbs several times and so got the hang of the place. Then Kirkus started methodically to test each apparently weak spot and soon began to secure new routes. Linnell also took a hand in this and so did Menlove Edwards, who very early on in his career showed that he was capable of doing the hardest things. Those were wonderful days but rather a strain on the nerves, especially if one's attitude was—like mine—that the main objective was not *either* to get up the climb *or* fall off, but to go to any amount of trouble to avoid getting hurt, maimed or killed. Nowadays, of course, you see people crawling all over the place, some of them looking as if they would be safer employed on the Milestone Buttress, but personally I have never succeeded in getting away from the idea that Clogwyn is a place only to be led upon by the expert in first-class form. No doubt great changes have taken place in the surface details, due to gardening and traffic, since my generation used to frequent the place, but I still cannot believe that it really is a suitable crag for the comparative novices and weak parties who are so often to be seen upon it now—even though they may be carrying hundreds of feet of abseil line and bags of assorted ironmongery in case it should be necessary to beat a retreat.

During this period, also, the Welsh school of climbers, mostly members of this Club, carried out some quite important opera-

tions in the Lake District, such as the Girdle of Pillar and the opening-up of the Scafell East Buttress, whilst collecting second ascents of many of the new hard climbs done by those who were concentrating on the Lake District.

As to the climbers. It should suffice to say here, as the detailed records are there to be read, that the outstanding leaders of this period were Edwards, Linnell, Kirkus, Bridge, Hicks, Waller and Longland—all members of this Club—and outside this Club (most of them chiefly concentrating on the Lake District), A. T. Hargreaves, S. H. Cross, G. G. Macphee, J. A. Musgrave and A. B. Reynolds, with G. S. Bower, A. S. Pigott and H. M. Kelly of an earlier generation still very active and contributing new climbs. It is doubtful if even in these days, when there seem to be four or five first-rate rock climbers for every single one that there was in the early 1930's, a team could be picked which was equal in talent to this lot ; moreover, these names include those of some remarkable personalities. It would be tempting to try and give a sort of thumbnail sketch of each of these people but space does not permit, and in any case such a process would involve odious comparisons ! What I would say, however, is (to return to my very first point) that all but one or two of those who are still with us of these stars of twenty years ago, are still climbing more or less regularly and effectively. At the same time many of those who have come to the front subsequently have already disappeared from the mountaineering scene, presumably finally. Quite a number of people came in towards the end of this 'golden' period 1925-35, rapidly worked up to the new level of performance, ticked off a lot of the new hard things, and then equally rapidly gave up climbing. I think the explanation is that all those who are still climbing, out of those I have named, developed slowly, perfecting their technique in traditional manner.

I will wind up with a few random reflections. It appears to me that the standard of climbing, both in Wales and the Lake District, continues amazingly to rise, and that as these districts become more nearly worked out, the 'centre of gravity' of climbing seems to be shifting to Scotland. Some of the things now being done, often under far from perfect conditions, would, I believe, have been considered unjustifiable twenty years ago by the majority of those I have named, yet the accident rate

among the really expert is, as ever, exceedingly low. Another thing I notice is that it is now customary to do all but the very hardest climbs in nails. This rather pleases me because I have always held the view that a really good man in well nailed boots should be able to get up practically anything that has been done in rubbers. On the other hand it is sad to find climbs which depend for their attraction upon delicate footwork being battered away and ground down by parties whose leader is using friction footgear. There ought to be an unwritten law against chaps following in boots up climbs of such difficulty that they could not possibly lead them in boots. There is one very good thing to record. In 1934 there was some reason to fear that the use of pitons, not only for securing purposes, but as a means of getting up pitches, was likely to become common. But although many of the present generation *carry* pitons (and all the accompanying paraphernalia), and may sometimes use them, it is not noticeable that they habitually use the things, except as essential belays.

Now that the controversy about limitation of membership in this Club has, at any rate for the time being, come to an end, and now that the tidal wave of new would-be climbers seems to be spending its force, I will refrain from making comparisons between the state of the hills as they were in 1927-34 and the state they are in now—but I cannot help remarking that it does not seem to me to be feasible or desirable to attempt to mass-produce competent climbers by issuing Penguins, and printing numbers of guidebooks far beyond the requirements of Club memberships, or even by holding ten-day courses for beginners under the auspices of the B.M.C. and C.C.P.R. It seems to me that some sort of *resistance* rather than encouragement should be offered to people who think they want to climb so that only the really keen and persistent proceed with their desire ; then those who get through the first barrier should be taken in hand individually and trained in the tradition of those climbers and Clubs who have been responsible for developing the sport to its present stage—preferably in accordance with the principles of those old-timers mentioned at the beginning of these notes.

Finally, I could use up quite a lot of space forecasting what sort of things will, in the future, be done in this country, but will



content myself with mentioning for the benefit of the present generation that I believe it should be possible to girdle the West Buttress of Clogwyn du'r Arddu and to get up the tower at the top of the East Buttress. It should also be possible to make a nice girdle of Craig Ogof, Cwm Silin, and there is a little thing called Cyn Las which should have a climb on it just to the right of the gully. On Pillar in the Lake District the existing girdle traverse breaks off at Walker's Gully. What about working down and across Walker's Gully and then round the Shamrock, just to make the Girdle a full day's work ?

# MEMORIES OF A CUSTODIAN

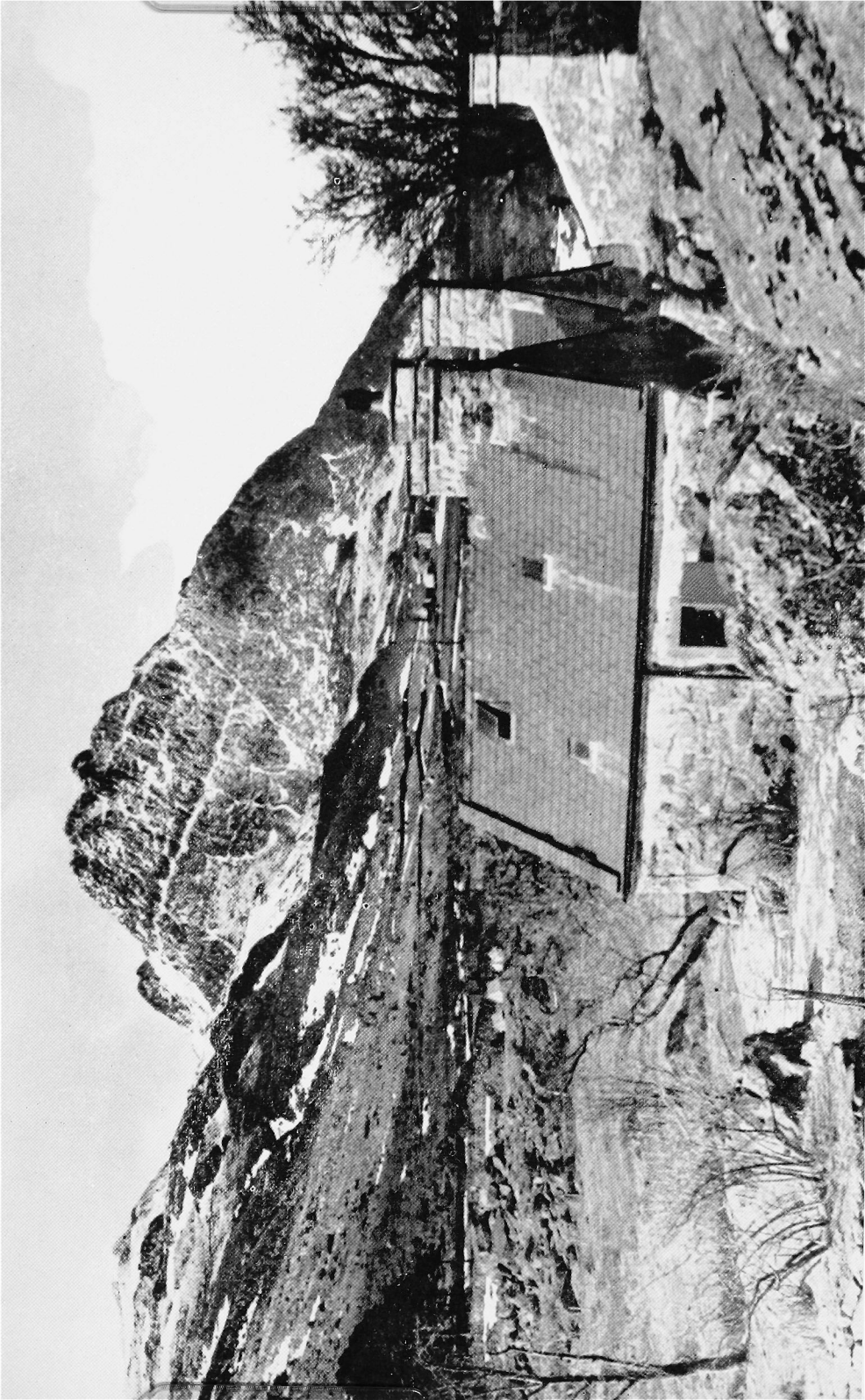
E. S. CHANTRELL

**A**LTHOUGH Helyg cannot yet celebrate its Jubilee, it is fitting that this *Journal* should include an article on its history of 23 years. It has seemed to me that those who have joined the Club in the last few years will like to know something of its development while the majority of members will prefer to hear some of my personal recollections, of events and the people concerned in them. To these I offer no apologies.

It was in 1925 that H. R. C. Carr found what George Borrow had 70 years before described as "a wretched hovel," and, realising its possibilities, leased it for the Club, equipped it and finally performed the official opening ceremony by climbing through the tiny window. It must be difficult for those who have only known the Helyg of today to visualise it as it was in 1925, when 12 men could cook, eat and sleep in that space which is now used as a kitchen. The loft had three camp beds and there were bunks for nine below it. Water had to be fetched from the stream, oil lamps provided the illumination and cooking was done on primus stoves.

My knowledge of Helyg dates from October, 1926, when I stayed there as a guest of the first Custodian, Charles Marshall. Although the accommodation was somewhat primitive I was surprised by its comfort, but it was a shock to find that one was expected to enter the river each morning. Any attempt at evasion was met by such a storm of abuse from C.W.M. that most of us chose the river as the lesser of two evils.

In 1927, thanks to the generosity of an original member, Mr. W. E. Corlett, the garage was built. It was designed by Mr. Stewart McLauchlan to take three cars and two motor-cycles, it being thought that this would satisfy all needs. By this time the Cottage was becoming popular, but it was only at





occasional week-ends and holiday periods that the accommodation was really taxed. So far, the laying on of water from a tank upstream was the only attempt at improvement.

Early in 1928, the Club suffered an irreparable loss when Marshall was killed climbing at Helsby. He was the perfect Custodian in every way and it was tragic that he could not live to see the results of his early work. On Marshall's death I was asked to take over the Custodianship temporarily (!), until someone more qualified could be found.

During the next five years we saw more and more activity at Helyg till, finally, I persuaded Lord Penrhyn's agent to sell the cottage and four acres of land to the Club. I thereupon urged the Committee to tackle the question of enlarging the building and made suggestions for raising the money. It was the opinion of the Committee that I was insane to propose such a scheme in the middle of a trade depression, but the appeal for funds was met with ready response and we were able to proceed. Our architect again showed his skill in designing a building which provided the accommodation required and at the same time fitted so admirably into its surroundings. To W. R. Reade must go the credit for planning the interior, and to this he gave much care and thought. The official opening ceremony took place in March, 1933, and was performed by the President, Dr. Tom Longstaff, assisted by Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, being followed by a Dinner at P.Y.G.

Two major improvements followed subsequently, the installation of electricity and the provision of proper sanitation. It is interesting to recall the fairly general opposition at the time to the electrification of Helyg, yet I know no one who would now like to see the cottage return to its pre-electric condition.

With this brief account of the history of the building itself I can now turn to mention some of those who have been seen there. Among the first visitors were Jack Longland and W. McNaught, the latter now having the unique distinction of spending over a hundred nights by himself in Helyg, much of his time being spent in listening to his portable wireless and drafting his articles for the *Listener*. Jack Longland's first visit was precisely 22 years ago, and he can therefore claim a wonderful record. His climbing has been of a consistently high standard and he can still hold his own with the best of our present

members. As President of the C.U.M.C. he had the strongest team of climbers any University has sent to Helyg.

It is a pity that Carr was only seen in the early years, but one visit, anyway, was memorable. Two celebrated French climbers were being entertained and Carr decided that the loft, in which they were to sleep, lacked a certain bedroom utensil. Being determined to remedy this defect he cycled to Bethesda and returned carrying a second-hand one which he failed to observe to be cracked. The same night the occupants of the lower bunks had a most unpleasant experience, and it is officially recorded that the offending article was subsequently stoned to death in the garden.

I was not only introduced to the hills by Marshall, but spent many days on them with him, often joined by Robertson Lamb. Although so dissimilar in every way, one could not wish for two more delightful companions. Lamb was no youngster, but it was a joy to watch him on a tricky pitch. Technically, I think he was the equal of anyone I have seen despite his limited reach, but there were occasions when he would jib at a comparatively easy pitch for no accountable reason. I remember, for example, how, after practically walking up the crack on the Zig-Zag, he refused to lead the right-hand top pitch saying "I can't do it—it's me little legs, you see." There is a nice story, which Marshall used to tell, of Lamb's first and unintentional rock climb. In the Lake District in 1912, Marshall and Herford decided to climb on Gimmer, but Lamb, maintaining that the sport was stupid and dangerous, decided to sit with a book below the cliff. The others proceeded to do a climb graded as V.D. and on reaching the top were surprised to find the little man quietly reading. It transpired that he had "scrambled" up what he took to be the easy way, actually one of the hardest climbs to be found on Gimmer. Perhaps my best day's climbing was on my twenty-seventh birthday when Lamb (probably nearer seventy than the sixty he claimed) led us up Paradise and the Horned Crag. The former was led in rubbers, but the others in the party, Marshall, John Tilby and E. M. Wood, made the first ascent in boots. Not long after, Colin Kirkus led it in boots in very wet weather.

The name of C.F.K. first appeared in the Visitors' book in December, 1927, when he was a very young man and practically

unknown. A few months later came his first meeting with W. R. Reade who, as usual, took a great interest in such a promising young climber. On his suggestion, Colin led us both up the Oblique Buttress, the first of his many visits to Glyder Fach. After two pitches, W.R. turned to me and remarked: "the best I have ever seen at his age." From then on he never ceased to encourage Colin, and loved nothing better than to hear of his efforts and to give him the benefit of his sound advice and judgment. He urged him to aim for the bigger mountains and never ceased to believe that, of all the men he had seen, none stood a better chance of getting to the top of Everest.

So much has been written of C.F.K.'s climbing feats that no one has mentioned the more human fact of his remarkable capacity for eating. Those of us who made regular visits to Helyg will never forget the sight of his sitting at the table on a Sunday evening polishing off everything left uneaten. He might commence with a tin of bully, go on to a large plate of porridge, liberally spread with syrup and butter, and then proceed to clear the table systematically. It was a most impressive spectacle.

Grosvenor's first entry into Helyg was notable, accompanied as he was by a large cask of ale, this being followed by a hamper containing *paté de foie gras*, chicken and other delicacies. He relied on others for staple foods and they were willingly exchanged.

While touching on the subject of food, I cannot refrain from referring to the meals we enjoyed at Helyg in pre-war days, when the slogan was "the best is good enough for us." The order for an Easter week-end always included 15 lb. butter, 12 lb. bacon and an enormous quantity of meat, etc. I used to pride myself on being able to fry forty-two eggs for breakfast without breaking a yolk. Those were the days! Particular as we were to have the best that could be obtained, a few members had tastes for which I had to cater especially. A. B. Hargreaves, for instance, insisted on using a patent griller on which he could reduce his meat to the charcoal condition he liked. It is not true that he was seen frying one of our special outsize rats, though he was adept at catching them, as was J. M. Edwards with his own technique, which consisted of standing by the rat-hole with the coal tongs and grabbing the rodent as it appeared.

It was at the end of 1930 that the newly-formed Liverpool University Rock Climbing Club held a Meet at Helyg and gave us our first sight of the two brothers, Hewlett and Menlove Edwards. Little did we realize that this very shy and reserved young man was to be that tiger J.M.E., whose name would be known wherever rock climbing was discussed. We can read in the *Journals* and elsewhere of Menlove's deeds, but his more local ascents have not been recorded, his indoor gymnastics with the loft door and those extraordinary exhibitions on the Boulder. Did he not manage nineteen routes in twenty minutes on one occasion?

Oddly enough, I have no recollection of my first meeting with that member of uncertain age, Brian McKenna, the irresistible Irishman, who is now almost an institution. He was, at times, a very disturbing influence, particularly when he arrived late at night and proceeded to remove the blankets from each recumbent figure to find out who was present. Can we forget his tea-parties in the early hours, or the time when he and Hewlett Edwards served relays of tea all night and bacon and eggs at 5 a.m.?

It was on a very warm summer night when nine of us were asleep in the bunks of the old Helyg, that we were wakened by hearing at the open door a female voice with a pronounced American accent demanding "gasolene." Having unfortunately omitted to take my pyjamas I was in no state to heed A.B.H.'s whispered injunction to "shut that bloody door." It was only when things were getting really desperate and the lady threatening to come in, that we were relieved to hear McKenna's voice and realised that it was a leg-pull. When we have all seen the last of Helyg, B.McK. will not be forgotten, as the trees he has planted will continue to flourish and remind future members of one who, by his work at Helyg itself and the finding of Ynys Ettws, has contributed much to the development of the Club Huts.

C. H. French's skill in making sketches for the Club Guides has helped to make them successful, and we could do well with more of his caricatures than the few that adorn the walls of the Helyg Kitchen. It was not so easy to appreciate French's introduction of fireworks into the Cottage, and a fitting retribution awaited him when he was forced to satisfy the demands of



nature closeted with a large and explosive "Rip-Rap." I could hardly sympathise, having suffered a previous experience of a Roman Candle being fired under my bed and a "Sprinkler" inserted in my cigar.

For some years it has been the custom for some members to drive down to Helyg after the Dinners held in Chester, or Liverpool. In 1937, this proved to be impossible owing to the abnormal snowfall, but on the following day three cars started off and by devious routes reached Bettws-y-coed. From there the road was impassable, but the party was rewarded by the strange sight of John Jenkins skiing down the main road, this means of transport being the only one he found to get him down from Tal-y-braich, where his car was marooned for three weeks. An equally unusual sight was provided in Helyg itself on another Sunday morning, by the Stallybrass family giving a recorder recital, for which appropriately enough they wore evening dress! Perhaps the most extraordinary happening after a Dinner occurred in the home of a member, when a wrestling match took place between two other members, one the Mayor of a large town and the other a well-known rugby footballer. As might be expected with Norman Ward in the party, this developed into a free-for-all, the Civic Authority losing all his dignity and both his collar studs.

While on the subject of Dinners I must not omit mention of those very pleasant Xmas evenings, when the Cobden family has made us so welcome. Some of us can remember those earlier evenings, when we packed the "Snuggery" at Tyn-y-coed and sat, literally, at the feet of that grand old man, F. C. Cobden, listening to his stories of W. G. Grace and the other famous cricketers with whom he had been contemporary.

At the first Club Dinner I attended, I heard Helyg spoken of as "the jewel in the crown of the Climbers' Club," and I think this is an apt description. Not only our own members, but many others have appreciated its comfort and the possession of it has enabled the Club to contribute much to the encouragement of mountaineering in North Wales. Increasing numbers of University and other Clubs make regular application for its use, and as many as possible are accommodated.

In the course of nearly twenty-three years there are bound to be changes and one in particular is to be regretted. With so

many using the Cottage these days there has been lost a great deal of the old intimacy that was so much its attraction, more especially before the enlargement. Members who had stayed there a few times were always certain to arrive to meet others whom they knew ; but not so today. Such changes are inevitable, and those of us who can recall what we refer to as the better days may treasure those memories and take satisfaction from the knowledge that the building was designed for a most useful purpose ; and well it is achieving it.

# LAUGHTER AND GROANS

ELLIOTT VINEY

“To write realistically about rock climbing is one of the hardest things in the world.”

Owen Glynne Jones in No. 2 of the *Journal*.

ONLY two men, it is said, have read right through the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Aldous Huxley and C. S. Forester. I knew a third, a prisoner-of-war, who tried to emulate them but, even though he started in 1943, he failed to complete his task, for General Patton's distressingly swift advance caught him in the middle of *Inf—Kan* and never again will he have the opportunity to resume it. I have read right through the *Climbers' Club Journal*—all the seventy-two numbers between 1898 and 1947—but I claim no merit in that: it was a duty imposed on me by the Editor who was once a friend. Ten years ago our positions were reversed. But, and this is the point of my first sentence, the *Journal* was one of the first to recognise Aldous Huxley, for an article by him appeared in the 1914 number, two years before his first book was published.

The Committee decided in July, 1898, to publish a *Journal* every three months and appointed E. Raymond Turner to do it: and he did. He and Andrews after him produced those quarterly numbers from August, 1898, to December, 1910, without a break. To the Editors of the 'thirties, who received fulsome congratulations if they achieved two numbers in successive years, it is almost incredible. They were not long—perhaps forty pages in all—but they seldom lacked matter. In the very first number a new climb is described:

Directly above here is a steep slab, where a shoulder gave considerable assistance to the leader, who climbed up about twelve feet higher, until he reached some splintered rocks wedged into the chimney. These rocks afforded a capital hitch . . .

It is hardly necessary to name the distinguished authors, but this account of the first ascent of Slanting Gully may be said to set

the tone for the next twelve years. The barograph needle keeps an extraordinarily steady line : it rarely sags, but occasionally it rises slightly. There is a further sentence that should be quoted from number 1 for, though the writers did not realise it at the time, much of the future development of the Club lies in it. H. V. Reade and W. P. McCulloch finish an account of their ascent of Twll Du with the words :

... we eventually reached the cap stone at the top of the waterfall, and accomplished what is probably the first ascent of this remarkable chasm, except when two Bangor gentlemen cut their way up the frozen waterfall in the winter of 1895.

Thus is J. M. Archer Thomson obscurely introduced. But from then on there are few numbers without a contribution from him and, of course, they are of the best.

The second number had one notable article by Owen Glynne Jones on "English Climbing," a careful and interesting piece of prose on the benefits of a British training before visiting the Alps. But, historically, what is one to make of this :

Our climbing literature as well as our districts are becoming exhausted . . . and with every pillar and needle, figuratively speaking, dotted with routes, it is difficult for anyone who is not an expert to **make** a first ascent.

It is a *leit-motiv* that constantly recurs during the next half-century and usually from the pens of the most brilliant climbers of the day.

These early numbers have a great fascination. Primarily it is the first ascents, not of the surprisingly numerous climbs of which nothing more has ever been heard—and even Archer Thomson made some mistakes—but of the Welsh and other "classics," such as the Crowberry Ridge, the North-West on Pillar and Archer Thomson's long series of which the best are probably the Great Gully on Craig yr Ysfa (number 15) and the East Buttress of Lliwedd (number 21) ; above all, the brief and anonymous paragraph in number 4 :

A subsidiary buttress on the lake side of Tryfan starts from about the 1,100 feet level close to the milestone. The first three hundred feet are delightful, and if the same general directions are followed after the buttress has merged into the mountain side, slabs and cracks and pinnacles in plenty will attract attention and exhort both time and tissue.

The more "literary" articles do not make such easy reading as the first ascents. The Club was small then, most members knew each other, nicknames and all, so no doubt the allusions which obscure for us the long accounts of the Christmas and Easter meets were clear to them. But how naïf it could be :

"However, after your trouble in bringing that pot up that chimney, I'll do my duty at all risks. Here's to you, grand old pinnacle. But bury that pot under a stone, you lazy chap, and pick up the silver paper."

"What-ho!" shouts a familiar voice, and turning round we see the merry face of the photographer appearing over the edge of the rocks on Sca Fell, "Grand fun along the arête, isn't it?" His party is a right jovial one. . . .

Yet it gives a wonderfully vivid and real picture of the life of the Club and the climbing of those days, and its lack of self-consciousness is an object lesson for some later contributors.

The range of the climbing is extraordinarily wide. In these first fifty numbers almost every great mountain range in the world was touched on at least once except the Himalayas, Central Africa and N.W. Canada. Every unlikely rock in England seems to have been visited, some of which have been "discovered" with a greater flourish of trumpets two generations later. A 1906 number has A. W. Wakefield's first great Lakeland walk, something on the French Dolomites and a note on Popocatepetl. Beachy Head, the Channel Isles and even "Potholing around London," are not forgotten. There is an excellent series on Scottish climbing by E. A. Baker, a detailed account of the billiard table traverse and other notable Wasdale climbs, not to speak of a really heartrending waterless ascent of Beinn Eighe. In 1901 a Mr. G. Winthorpe Young (*sic*) contributes a (stylistically) prophetic article, "Benighted on Snowdon."

Science was not neglected: W. Piffe Brown contributed regular notes, whilst number 34 contained articles on Mosses, Alpine Flora, Wind, Cheesemaking and a note on the formation of the Fell and Rock (three years before the Editor had noted that "a successful little Manchester club, of which more is likely to be heard, has just completed its first year of life). "Amenities" and the National Trust were continually cropping up and although the Cwm Dyli power station was unsuccessfully opposed a railway through Aberglaslyn was thwarted.

In 1904 A. W. Andrews, still happily with us, became Editor. His first number boasted an array of half-tones and, strangely

enough, an article on the Cornish Cliffs. Both article and illustrations were unconsciously repeated by his rather dumb successor of 1937, who thought they were original matter and also mis-captioned most of the plates. Andrews never seemed to have difficulty in filling his *Journals*, though I have been puzzled by two successive entries in his notes in number 28.

The Editor will be glad to receive articles, etc., from members.

\* \* \*

A considerable number of articles, letters, etc., are held over for want of space.

So the years roll on with much that is domestic and drab, but with some articles that now have some historic interest, such as W. R. Rickmers on "The New Sport" (1905), when the word "ski" first appears (Arnold Lunn's first contribution was not until 1909), E. W. Steeple's Coolin explorations recounted in the same year and C. D. Robertson's speech at the 1910 dinner. The new members noted in number 43 would have added distinction to any climbing club—A. D. Godley, Marcus Heywood, J. P. Farrar, George Leigh Mallory and Micah Gedling Bradley, Jnr. It must be admitted that there was much pedestrian stuff such as this, which is typical of most of the Alpine articles :

The large, cup-like basin of névé, called the Plateau de Trient, lay at our feet encircled by the Aiguilles du Tour, Grande Fourche, Aiguille Dorées, and the Portalet, with the grand peaks of the Aiguilles du Chardonnet and d'Argentière and le Tour Noir beyond ; below us, to the north-west, was the fine ice-fall of the Trient Glacier, a wild confusion of crevasses and seracs, and farther down, the valley of the Trient, with Finhauts in the distance, and the Savoy and Vaudois Alps behind ; to the east we looked sheer down into the wild Val d'Arpetta and on the striking pinnacles of the Aiguilles d'Arpetta ; the distant view comprising the Grand Combin, Mt. Vélan, the Valais Alps and the Grand Paradis range.

It was a glorious day, and very warm, but over the Italian ranges ominous clouds were hanging. We spent  $1\frac{3}{4}$  hours on the top to enjoy the view, to refresh the inner man, to take photographs, and last, but not least, to smoke the pipe of peace. We left the top at 1-45. . . . Where have we heard all this before ?

One more subject must be chronicled before we reach the interregnum of 1911 and the end of Andrews' long reign—the Dinner. It is useless to be nostalgic about the menu : what excites one's awe are the speeches. There were never less than nine, sometimes thirteen, and all were reported in full Parliamentary style ; although they do not bear re-reading in

detail (for each dinner took up about twelve pages of the *Journal* in very small type), their reception (in square brackets) has a certain fascination. The President was inevitably, and possibly rightly, only accorded an occasional (hear, hear) and frequent (laughter). Visiting speakers, replying for the Guests, get ruder treatment (oh, oh) and are reproved (the Chairman: "Don't say it again."). The Visitors, it may be observed, had to stand throughout whilst their health was being proposed. Sometimes the levity got almost out of hand—"We have been, like the Athanasian Creed, a source of comfort to thousands" (great laughter). There were some very good speeches and, in 1907, an impressive list of speakers—Tom Longstaff, Clinton Dent, John Buchan (then Secretary of the S.M.C.), C. E. Benson, Geoffrey Young and A. E. W. Mason; and a good time was had by all (loud and sustained laughter).

Finally there is the Secretary. To a generation who cannot remember him and can only reconstruct him from the pages of the *Journal*, he is a shadowy but powerful figure; but like all sensible Secretaries he kept well clear of the *Journal* and so his only appearances tend to be at the Dinner. He seems to have been a man of gabbro with a tendency to send peremptory telegrams to wavering speech-makers, who try rather feebly to get their own back. "It is surely more than a mere coincidence that the name 'Bryant' contains  $83\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. of the letters of the word 'Tyrant' (laughter)"; and a few years later: "It is not with him a case of Bryant and May—it is a case of Bryant and Must (loud laughter)." A speech he makes is received with (laughter and groans). But after many years virtue is rewarded and he ascends to higher things: "The other change to which I wish to refer is connected with the matchless Bryant (laughter and oh)—our new and striking Vice-President . . .", and all ends happily with: "The toast having been drunk with great enthusiasm, Mr. Bryant rose to reply, amid loud cries of 'Bryant,' 'Ba-a-a,' 'For he's a jolly good fellow'."

The "Old Series" of the *Journal* came to an end in December, 1910, with number 48, the last edited by Andrews. There was a year of silence and then, with the impetus and brilliance of a rocket Arnold Lunn let off volume one, number one (New Series). This was, without question, the finest number the Club has fathered, not only for its size (160 pages), its contribu-

tors and the tales they had to tell of the brilliant 1911 Alpine season, but for the new orientation given to the writing itself and the change in the whole scope and outlook of the *Journal*. Gone are the solid Alpine narratives, the Kyndwr Club Notes, the Wasdale Christmas gathering and "How the Professor, the Explorer and a Mere Man climbed a Mountain," by the 'Mere Man.' Gone, for ever, is the Dinner: instead there is Todhunter's account of the first Mer de Glace ascent of the Grépon, an essay by Geoffrey Young, an early and authoritative article by O. Eckenstein on "Claws" ("the word *crampon* seems unsatisfactory . . . it also means a spike"), Karl Blodig on Welsh climbs (in German), the delightful "Counterblast to the Perpendicular," by Hilton Young and the first ascent of the Grooved Arête; there are further articles on climbing in Ireland, South Africa, Aetna, the Channel Island cliffs and the Pyrenees (of which more hereafter). Finally there are excellent reviews and a most interesting survey of Lakes Climbing by that fine writer and climber Hugh Rose Pope. Re-reading this number I feel sure it has never been surpassed by any *Journal* of any other Club: it certainly never was by this Club. At least half of it could be reprinted today without it "dating." It is fair to mention that a Bulletin was started at the same time which dealt with the more intimate and topical Club matters and with the details of new climbs. Since the Club had introduced the Climbing Guide book in 1909, more austere and factual details were required than the chatty articles of the past. Lunn evidently used up most of his material, as the 1913 number (edited apparently by remote control from Switzerland) is but a shadow of its predecessor: but the Club owes it to him that he set such a standard to his successors which, if never surpassed, at least prevented them from falling into either dullness or parochialism for long.

It is right and proper that the *Journal* of a local Club should reflect its district, but this can be—and still is—frequently overdone. Our Club has never been tied to one place or become the mouthpiece of a local pressure group. It is worth noting that, although it has always had a more than passing interest in Wales, it was founded in London which, at any rate until the opening of Helyg, was the centre of the Club—if anywhere was. The founders did not go as far as the founder of Caius College,



Cambridge, who barred entry to "the deaf, the dumb, the deformed, the blind, and the Welsh," but at any rate up till the Great War all districts were covered in the *Journal*. It was natural that the Fell and Rock should become the repository of new climbs in its own district. Since then the Club has concentrated its activities, huts and guides and so forth, more on North Wales ; but this has not been reflected unduly in the *Journal* which has continued to range far and wide, sometimes perhaps too far so that the result has been a rag-bag, a miscellany not knit together by the Editor, whose "impress" whether good or bad should always be visible. Certainly since 1912 there has been more imaginative writing but less solid matter, more wool-gathering but less peak-bagging. It is odd that Arnold Lunn and nine of his ten successors were from Oxford at a time when most of the new impetus to the Club and British climbing in general came from Cambridge.

The notable features of the 1913 number were the obituaries of Archer Thomson, H. O. Jones and H. R. Pope, tributes worthy of those they commemorated. But some witty verses by N. T. Huxley must be quoted as they enshrine an editorial obiter dictum of some value :

When I suggested rhymes from A to G  
The learned Editor instructed me  
To make some introductory remarks  
To frighten other literary sharks—  
I quote his words :—" For better or for worse,  
This journal sets an interdict on verse ;  
While every other reader, I believe,  
Has some unpublished fragments up his sleeve,  
Which he would shower on us soon enough  
If we would let him. If we take your stuff,  
It's just because, as everybody knows,  
You're quite incapable of writing prose."

Perhaps one more fragment may be quoted :

E stands for Edelweiss—avaunt the odium  
Of calling it Gnaphalium Leontopodium—  
A plantlet which, at least in theory, grows  
Only among the everlasting snows,  
Or clinging to the beetling precipice.  
Conceive, then, reader, my intense surprise  
At seeing with my own untravelled eyes  
A large plantation in the Vale of Dee  
Ten feet above the level of the sea. . . .

The author became the Editor in 1914 and produced an excellent number. New names appear, a foretaste of the post-war years, the Finches on Corsica, Mallory, and some notes on Lakeland climbs by the now almost legendary S. W. Herford. A very good number, well up to the Lunn standard and with a sting in the tail ; the Index to this Volume No. One of the New Series, presumably the Editor's work, makes better reading than some early numbers of the *Journal* itself. A large number of the entries will be found to refer to a single paragraph in Claude Elliott's article on the Pyrenees. His party were camping and had been warned that there were bears in the vicinity.

. . . we had all dropped off to sleep, when I was awoken by a crash and a scream. I have already warned the reader that he will find nothing heroic in these pages ; so he will not be surprised when he hears that I put my head under my sleeping bag and lay stiller than I had ever laid before ; and I believe the rest of the party did the same. Everything was as quiet as death, save for a scuffling among some junipers close by, which ceased at once. After an interminable time I ventured to put my head out, and found the others doing so too . . . we gathered together our wits, still numb with terror and discovered that . . . the bear had come to investigate us . . . and had knocked over an axe, on which was hanging a lantern ready for the morning, on to one of our party, who, starting up and seeing a bear looming above him in the starlight, had very sensibly screamed, and dived into his bag. The bear, terrified in his turn by the scream, had fled through the junipers, where we saw his tracks next day.

Here then are a few entries from the index :

Absence of Bears from Pyrenees Disputed  
 Bears, Pyrenean, Ferocity of  
 Daniel Out-Danielled  
 Englishmen, Calmness of, Under Difficulties  
 Fancy, Where Bred  
 Grandeur, Moral, of a Cambridge Don  
 Human Voice, Power of  
 Intelligence in Lower Animals  
 Kindness, Wild Nature Won by  
 Libel Action, Editor threatened with (see Index)  
 Munchausen Barony, Whether to be Restored  
 Nightmare, Unusual Strength of  
 Pyrenees, Fauna of  
 Questions, No, Asked  
 Rabbits, Magnified Appearance of, by Night  
 Salt, Grain of, Required  
 Ursa Major, Startling Appearance of  
 Valour, Better Part of  
 Xenophon, Troubles of, Recalled

The page reference is the same in each case.

The fact that between 1915 and 1928 only five numbers appeared, each with a new Editor, does mark a period when the Club, if not dormant, was neither very active nor vocal. Nothing appeared at all between 1915 and 1920—in marked contrast to the late war—and the *Journals* of Mallory (1920), Raymond Greene (1923), H. R. C. Carr (1926) and Malcolm Pearson (1928), excellent though they are, do not show the Club as a very live force, but are rather the brilliant individual efforts of their respective Editors. There are excellent contributions, Geoffrey Young's little-known "Mount Brandon," Mallory's review of *Mountain Craft*, and "Le Premier Pas," by M. W. Guinness, but in Carr's number no fewer than six of the articles had previously appeared in other places. It is redeemed by a very witty account of an Alpine Meet which begins :

I have never approved of the climbing of mountains. To write of the habit always seemed the apex—the very mountain peak of futility. An occasional perusal of the literature has failed to reveal more than one short passage with the ring of truth and sanity in it. I found it, I am glad to say, in an early *Journal* of the Climber's Club. It runs : "Plains have all the good qualities of quietness and sobriety, and they are best understood by tranquil minds."

Malcolm Pearson's number was most elegantly produced, though this point was not appreciated by Jack Longland, whose review in another *Journal* began : "This number appears in Gothic garb, a little too suggestive of a pornographic limited edition or a Hogarth reprint." This was a libel on the typography, but not perhaps on the contents, for there is certainly a Hogarthian ring about "Club Survey, 1926-28 : being information of an accurate and tedious nature, compiled from divers sources, and intended for historians, collectors, recollectors, anal-erotics and all those who live in the past." Certainly this Editor impressed his personality on the contents even though at the end he thanked some one else for collecting all the material.

In some ways the most significant part of this 1928 *Journal* was a brief two pages on the Terrace Wall, by I. M. Waller. It recorded the beginning of the great wave of rock climbing activity in Wales, which has never wholly ceased since then. Coincident with the founding of Helyg, the impetus mainly came from Cambridge—Longland, Hicks and others—or from the North-West—Kirkus, Edwards and A. B. Hargreaves. From their work sprang the new guide books of the 'thirties and,

indirectly, the revivification and enlargement of the Club as a whole. The *Journal* was slow to reflect this change and it was found necessary to apologise for giving a "detailed" description of Longland's route on Clogwyn du'r Arddu in Hargreaves' article in 1929. But the 1930 and 1931 numbers are full ones and range all over the world even if they usually end up in Corsica. A justifiable criticism could be made of the lack of weight in many of the contributions which are numerous, but often excessively slight anecdotes or sketches. The Editor (who from 1929-1934 was J. D. Hills) seems to have had difficulty in filling his pages and often came pseudonymously to his own rescue. However, a two-year gap was followed by the 1934 number, which had Hicks on Pallis' Gangotri expedition and a fine early Edwards, "Young Climber." And after a quarter of a century Andrews' Cornish cliffs raised their granite heads again. The Editor's memoir of two of the Eton masters who were killed on the Piz Roseg should not pass unnoticed. Of Hills' successor it can be said that at any rate he improved the illustrations.

The immediate pre-war *Journals*, apart from Robin Hodgkin's exploits on Ushba and Masherbrum, contained another notable article, by J. M. Edwards, "Scenery for a Murder," which was an outstanding piece of imaginative writing and especially tantalising in that so little else has come from the pen of that great climber, though there was a short sequel, "A Great Effort," in 1941.

No considerations of friendship will prevent me from praising Alan Pullinger's war-time numbers. Not only did he produce a *Journal* yearly from 1940 to 1945, a stupendous feat in itself, but some of them can hold their own with any of their predecessors in quality and variety, and they were beautifully produced under wartime conditions by The Cloister Press. Unlike some of his contemporaries he did not find it necessary to rely on the reminiscences of an older generation. True, some old friends reappear, Arnold Lunn (who first contributed in 1909), Andrews (1904), and even Cyriax (1902), yet the contemporary names Noyce, Hargreaves, Barford and Kretschmer are all there and three new Guides were thrown in for good measure. Nor were good illustrations ignored. Six *Journals* in seven years has only been equalled by two other Editors, so Pullinger was well

entitled to exchange the *Journal* for a wife who, even if she is not so prolific will, no doubt, be more rewarding.

David Cox has the privilege of producing this Jubilee number, more correctly Volume 8 (New Series), Number 3 and the seventy-third in all. The fifty years have been spanned by nearly a dozen original members: the early numbers of the *Journal* show us that much as the Club has changed the seeds of all future development were there from the start. On Christmas Day, 1898, "some of the party inspected Clogwyn du'r Arddu" and speculated hopefully on the West Buttress; but others were ready to warn "And is it not evident that traverses which would be extremely risky, unless made in stockinged feet, ought not to be made at all?" Luckily there was always someone to disagree, yet all along, at each different level, there were those who stated categorically that the limit had been reached—which will never be true. Truly there is nothing new under the sun—except perhaps Chantrell's latest address.

"Our *Journals*," said Mallory in 1914, "with one exception, do not pretend to be elevated literature, but aim only at providing useful knowledge for climbers." Perhaps a harsh judgment: perhaps things have improved. At least we can say that O. G. Jones was wide of the mark when he wrote in 1898 that "our climbing literature as well as our districts are becoming exhausted." No; we have come a little way in fifty years and these *Journals* "which appear with such fascinating irregularity" have a savour of their own, which ranges from our one anthology piece, A. D. Godley's *Ode on a Very Distant Prospect*, right down to that early entry in the P.Y.G. book, that most succinct and satisfying epitome of all mountain experience:

Been up Snowdon,  
A nice ascent;  
William Boden,  
Burton-on-Trent.

# MEMORIES OF AN OLD MEMBER

L. K. PAGDEN

**I**T was on a knapsack tour of the Lake District that I had my earliest experience of mountain country, and in the following year I first visited Pen-y-Gwryd with a Devonshire friend named Woollcombe. I had been advised to engage rooms in advance, but found that none had been kept for us. A kindly old gentleman allowed me to sleep on the floor in his room on condition that I cleared out before he got up. My friend occupied a small sitting room near the front door.

I recall the names of some of those I met on this visit—Tom Halliday and his wife (a cousin of my father), Rev. J. N. Burrows, Bowring, Brown, Roderick and Tom Williams, and Whitfield. Halliday at once adopted me as his nephew, and the sitting room already mentioned became known as Uncle Tom's Cabin. R. Williams enrolled himself as a nephew, and always called Halliday "Nunkie." Corlett and Bryant, our first Secretary, I met on subsequent visits. Most of those named were original members of the Club.

Brown gave me my first lesson in rock climbing, and impressed on me the rule: "Two handholds and one foothold, or two footholds and one handhold." I first met Roderick Williams on the top of Glyder Fawr, and Woollcombe and I went with him on the descent to Gorphwysfa. He walked so fast that we had to run to keep up with him. Halliday called him and his brother the Strollers, for on returning from a day's climbing they only admitted having been out for a stroll. The weather during this visit was generally wet, and I remember that on a specially wild day R. Williams, Woollcombe and I, tired of doing nothing, decided to see how quickly we could go to the top of Snowdon and back. As we were starting Williams said that if we wanted to make good time we must run. So we ran, against a furious wind and in almost ceaseless rain. We reached the top in one hour and nineteen minutes and after three

minutes' breather returned to Pen-y-Gwryd, which I reached in forty-seven minutes. But not without mishap, for in descending the " Humps " I lost the heel of my right boot, which handicapped me in the final run in. Williams and Woollcombe must have been ahead of my time by a few minutes. I recorded this excursion in some rhymes which I sent later to Williams.

In that year (1887) Harry Owen was still active, but Mrs. Owen entirely carried on the hotel, and not long afterwards his health broke down (I forget the date). Of the other members of the family, Johnny, the eldest son, ran the farm in Gwynant, Owen was the shepherd, and Hugh looked after the stables and usually drove the carriages. Johnny's daughter, Katie, helped her grandmother. Owen Owen was called Owen squared by Whitfield. All the sons on occasion acted as guides to parties ascending Snowdon, and the ponies, usually run loose on the hillside, were sometimes requisitioned in this service, and once also the donkey which brought up the milk from the farm was impressed to carry a visitor to the top. In those days there were only some huts on the summit, which were owned by a man named Roberts, a son-in-law of the Owens.

In the following year Woollcombe and his brother and I stayed at Pen-y-Gwryd in the course of a tour in North Wales. The brothers, who had been familiar with the rocks and streams of Dartmoor since childhood, took to rock climbing like ducks to water. Both were also expert fly-fishers, and I remember that they went down the Gwryd early one morning and returned about breakfast time with a basketful of good-sized trout.

In 1892 I went to Pen-y-Gwryd again, and I think also in 1894, but in later years my wife and I used to stay at a cottage at Capel Curig from which with bicycles we could reach both Pen-y-Gwryd and Ogwen. We always looked in at Pen-y-Gwryd when passing, and met many old friends there ; but I have only stayed there once since.

Though I have ascended most of the mountains in the Lake District and a good many in North Wales, I have never done any difficult climbs, Crib Goch, the Idwal Gribin, the North Ridge of Tryfan and the ridge between Tryfan and Glyder Fawr being the class that suited the capacity of myself and my wife and gave us enjoyment ; but I have read with interest the accounts in the *Journal* of the exploits of other members. I

cannot claim to have rendered any service to the Club beyond paying my subscription for fifty years, and I appreciate the more the honorary membership conferred by the Committee on me as one of the surviving original members.

Before the Club was formed two "Pen-y-Gwryd" dinners were held at the Café Monico. It was at the second that Roderick Williams proposed its formation. I was present at both, as also at the Annual Dinner of the Club held on 5th May, 1899, and have attended several since, including the fiftieth held on 21st February last, when snow lay inches deep and made travelling both difficult and unpleasant. The Menu of the first Dinner is given below : the price was 7s. 6d. a head.

# MENU

Hors d'oeuvres variés

---

Consommé Marie Louise  
Crème Chantilly

---

Saumon à la Richmond

---

Eperlans Colbert

---

Mousse de jambon, sauce suprême

---

Selle d'agneau aux petits pois nouveaux

---

Canetons d'Aylesbury—Salade

---

Asperges d'Argenteuil, sauce Maltaise

---

Pudding d'Orléans

---

Glace à la Monaco—Petits fours

---

Laitance sur canapé

---

Dessert

Compare this with the 17s. 6d. three course dinner of February, 1948. Shall we ever again see the like of those old days ?



The late W. P. Haskett Smith when presiding at the fifth Dinner of the Club told this story :

In his room at a hotel at Trèves the following notice was displayed :

Toucher une fois pour le valet.

Toucher deux fois pour la domestique.

Toucher trois fois pour le sommelier.

Below were translations in German and English. The English ran :

To touch one time you get the waiter.

To touch two time you get the room girl.

To touch three time you get the boot.

With this story the President concluded his speech, as I do these notes, for fear of the consequences.

# CLIMBERS' CLUB DINNER, FEBRUARY 1948

GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG

Fifty years since. Climbs then were few ;  
And far and fierce the cliffs that bred them.  
Then, every ridge looked stark and new,  
And giants seemed the men who led them.  
Mountains still frowned with dread and doubt,  
And all grew friends who sought them out.

So, half a hundred years have sped  
Since first we met, a few friend climbers,  
To gather wit from wisdom shed  
By eloquent old-Alpine-timers.  
Charles Mathews, fitly, first to teach  
The graces of post-prandial speech.

Here first we met with Mountain Grooms :  
Descending from our Mountain Glory  
To chatter in Committee rooms  
Club politics defamatory,  
Postponing our divine adventures  
To issue Journals, or Debentures.

We've hailed a pomp of Presidents  
Passing in prodigal procession ;  
Survived whole epics of events  
In progress, or in retrogression ;  
And seen the history of our age  
Mirrored in Club-life, stage by stage.

We've built a sober, staid tradition  
With few conspicuous climbing scandals ;  
We've kept our hills in fair condition,  
Repelling reservoirs and vandals ;  
We've learned the old, and new, rock skills,  
But still hold fast our love of hills.

Our vale of years leads on. A turning  
Ahead. What lies beyond the peak ?  
Adventure's beacon-light still burning ?  
Or long, grey valleys of technique  
Where the dry bones of dead sport wait us,  
Graphs, formulae and apparatus ?

Shall then our next half-century see  
All peaks made pedestals for pylons ?  
Climbing grown mere peg-olatry,  
On safety catch-nets noosed in nylons ?  
Where leaders soar on plastic wings  
To roost on carabines and rings ?

Will Snowdon's head be Summer camps,  
Floodlit for dancing from Crib Goch ?  
Will Napes be draped with coloured lamps,  
And Fun Fairs rage o'er Pillar Rock ?  
Will all Club members be enrolled  
As Mechanised Transport, State-controlled ?

Will Helyg then proliferate  
Each night in Helic-opteral planes  
Nosing all routes above Grade Eight  
For the *uncertified* insanes ?  
Will Tigers wear Broad stripes ?—their joints  
Rationed three falls per week—on points ?

Will the Club—then more democratic—  
Fill the Long Lands with countless pride ?  
Or—still numerically static—  
Lean Keenly to the other Side ?  
Will learning still its throne maintain,  
And the Don Kin perpetual reign ?

Let it be so. Not ours to care !  
We hold the heights for life's brief minute ;  
For us the crags and cwms loom there ;  
This is *our* Club, with good friends in it ;  
From rocks our children still may borrow  
Strength for their day, hope for their morrow.

We have climbed gloriously !—drunk deep  
Of the delight of bold endeavour :  
We have known the peace of star-touched sleep ;  
And watched cold dawns from darkness sever  
Harkening the hill-call once again  
From precipices dark with rain ;

Have captured earth's sublimest hour  
In solitude, on silent height ;  
Have learnt the truth of our own power  
Matched against elemental might ;  
And proved that life no nobler lends  
Than mountain faith and mountain friends.

The depth of feeling mountains brought us  
*Stays true* :—whatever lies before.  
The rule of life that climbing taught us  
*Stays good* :—though men should climb no more.  
Let us rejoice, that, in our time,  
Men found the hills, Man learned to climb.

## PART TWO

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# WALES REVISITED

E. E. SHIPTON

THE Editor, in a letter which has taken five months to reach me, complains that his *Journal* is in danger of being overloaded with stories of adventure from distant lands. To relieve his readers of the monotony of these overcrowded fields he has asked me to contribute an article on climbing in North Wales. He admits the incongruity of the request but omits to furnish a reason for asking me. Let me be frank. I have been to Wales five times in all : once as a small boy to climb Snowdon in the train ; once to drive grouse to their doom on the Glorious Twelfth ; and three times to climb, at intervals of nearly ten years on each occasion. I have never, to my knowledge, climbed anything harder than a nineteenth century " Severe." So it is clear that I am neither qualified to give a first hand account of the first ascent of the great North Buttress of Pen-y-Silin, nor to instruct in the latest developments in technique.

Why have I not climbed in Wales more often ? To say that I have not had the opportunity is not quite true. Still less is it true to say that I have not wanted to, for I have always recognised that its delights are second to none. My spells in England have always seemed too short and crowded, and my habit of procrastination has resulted in my letting slip the opportunities when they came. Perhaps moral timidity has also had something to do with it. There is an unfortunate tendency to assume that because a man is lucky enough to have some acquaintance with the Himalaya he must necessarily be an ace rock climber, of whom big things can be expected. When he fails to get up the first pitch of a " Moderate," or falls off the top of a British mountain in a fog, he is regarded as an impostor, or, at best, as a sadly degenerate veteran. He tends therefore to be shy of

Club meets and to confine himself to more understanding company.

But when Nully Kretschmer offered me a place in someone's car going to North Wales for Whitsun 1946, I accepted without much hesitation. The party, consisting of five, was somewhat scattered. Campbell Secord and Kretschmer worked in London, Elliott Viney in Aylesbury and Alan Pullinger in Bristol ; it happened that I had an engagement in Oxford on the night before Whit Friday when we were due to start. We were to travel in two cars, one belonging to Pullinger, the other to Viney. To one whose mental indolence has long devoted him to the simple expedition, the organisation of such a party seemed an impossible feat. However, I was content to trust to the organising genius of my hosts and to obey instructions. These were simple and pleasantly elastic. All I had to do was to take myself from Oxford to Brill, or to Bicester, or to Banbury (apparently it did not matter which), and to wait at the place of my choice until I was picked up sometime on the Friday afternoon. I did, and sure enough at about four o'clock an open two-seater containing Viney and Kretschmer hove in sight.

Viney had been entrusted with the commissariat arrangements. He had discharged his duties that morning by joining a bread queue and buying twenty loaves, with which he had escaped before the women behind had time to organise more than a vocal protest. Bread rationing was introduced shortly afterwards. I sat myself in a doughy nest in the boot and enjoyed a delightful drive to Shrewsbury. An excellent dinner had been ordered at the "Mytton and Mermaid," on the banks of the River Severn, at which we were joined almost immediately by Pullinger and Secord. I never quite grasped the details of the latter's part in the operation thus successfully completed.

After dinner it was decided that we should drive on until nightfall, when the leading car (Pullinger's) would select a suitable site for a bivouac. Here the only hitch in the otherwise perfectly executed plan occurred. Apparently there are two roads from Shrewsbury to Cwm Silin (our ultimate objective), and our leaders failed to allow for this. Viney's overloaded machine could not average more than fifty for long on the hilly roads, and of course the Pullinger car soon disappeared from

view. Cursing its occupants we drove on through intermittent rain storms until about eleven o'clock, and then went to sleep under a tree in a roadside field.

We awoke to find ourselves in a charming, wooded valley. The newly risen sun was shining through the trees. We packed ourselves reluctantly into the car again and drove on through Portmadoc and some other place whose name I forget. It cannot have been more than seven o'clock when we reached a point on the cart track leading to Cwm Silin about a quarter of a mile from the lake, beyond which the long-suffering car would not go. We spent about an hour carrying our camp to a site between the two lakes and pitching the tents. There we cooked breakfast which, unfortunately, the others arrived in time to share.

There seemed to be a general feeling among the party that enough had been accomplished for one day, and that it would be a pity to waste such perfect weather in anything but contemplation of it. My own attitude to this tranquil purpose was a mixture of relief and disappointment. We lay stretched on the grass and conversation became languid. Presently, however, I shattered the peace by asking questions about our surroundings. There was a fine crag standing at the head of the cwm, the most prominent feature of which was a wide grass terrace which divided the lakeward face of the crag into two. The upper part appeared to consist mainly of a fearsome overhang which seemed to be continuous throughout the length of the terrace. I asked nervously whether this overhang was considered difficult and pretended to be surprised to hear that it had never been climbed. It was uncertain even if the terrace had been reached. This notion seemed to do something to my blasé companions, and presently I found myself following them up the slope towards the crag, suddenly intent upon immortalising the day.

The climb to the terrace was disappointingly straightforward and we began to suspect that some hardy pioneers might have preceded us. But the terrace itself was a delightful spot, covered deep in luxuriant vegetation, and well worth a visit, even though it was probably not virgin ground. I had ample time to enjoy it while alternative plans were discussed for attacking the overhanging cliffs above. Eventually Kretschmer chose a place a little less frightful than the rest and led off with

confident determination. He climbed about fifteen feet up and clung there for a long time, bombarded from below with advice and suggestions for his next move. However, he did not yield to these blandishments and I was thankful to see him beat a firm retreat. As no one else seemed anxious to put his theories into practice we abandoned our bid for fame, and, traversing over to the left, climbed to the top of the crag by way of a slimy gully.

It was suggested that we should descend by a route known as "The Outside Edge." I protested, but Kretschmer explained that the name referred to the topographical position of the route and not to its standard of difficulty. As he disappeared into a void I began to suspect that I was being deceived. However all was well and I soon found myself stepping down a series of smooth yellowish patches which I remembered as such a comfort in my early novitiate to British rock climbing (a state from which, alas, I have never emerged).

Later that evening I persuaded Nully to show me one of the advanced routes devised by Kirkus on the crag. We spent some time trying to fit the features of the face with those described in the guide book. Then I sat myself comfortably on a tuft of grass and prepared to enjoy the fireworks, though my enjoyment was marred by the realisation that I would have to follow. However, before the rope was out something went wrong. We had apparently misinterpreted the guide book, and Nully was balanced on an isolated toe-hold from which he could see no way of advancing and had little inclination to retreat. Fortunately we were fairly close to our old friend the Outside Edge which enabled me to effect a gallant rescue. After that we climbed the crag by a more obvious route and reached the top of the mountain above in time to enjoy a magnificent sunset.

That night Cwm Silin was very beautiful under a large, clear moon. We slept in the open on the grassy slopes above the lake. I awoke at about five to find the sun shining over a bank of white mist. At seven I was awakened by rain falling on my face. We crowded together in one of the tents and occupied ourselves happily with breakfast until about ten o'clock.

My companions had promised to take me to Clogwyn du'r Arddu that day to watch the experts at play on the Very Impossibles. I had been looking forward keenly to this as it was a



sight I had never seen. My anticipation of enjoyment was not even damped by the possibility that I might be invited to tie on to one of their ropes. However, the rain had obviously come to stay and Clogwyn du'r Arddu was out of the question. I was bitterly disappointed. Now it may be another ten years before I get a chance to witness the spectacle of first-class rock climbing in Britain, by which time no doubt Clogwyn du'r Arddu will have ceased to attract the expert and will be used as a training ground for novices.

The delights of breakfast at an end, the rain showing no sign of relenting, the atmosphere inside the small tent became somewhat squalid and we decided to move to Helyg. We arrived in nice time for an early and protracted luncheon. I had last visited the Hut early in 1928, and, though of course I had heard of its renovations, I was most agreeably surprised. A brief clearing in the weather in the afternoon encouraged us to emerge, and, feeling at first somewhat bloated, we climbed Tryfan by some nondescript route, which, however, I enjoyed enormously. There was a fair number of people in the Hut when we returned, and after dinner we were treated to a discourse by an Austrian climber on some recent developments of climbing in the Eastern Alps. It was illustrated by some startling photographs, mostly of men suspended from pitons, looking rather like sailors engaged in painting the side of a ship. I retired to bed with a heavy sense of my obsolescence.

The next morning I awoke at six in time to see Barford stripped to the waist setting out to dig a trench. Satisfying myself that he was in the minority I went to sleep again until a more reasonable hour. It was still raining but we spent an instructive morning watching a demonstration of various methods of abseiling from one of the top bunks in the Hut. The show was admirably staged. It led its expectant audience from the simpler methods of getting down, which even I could understand, through the more complicated, to a way of abseiling uphill which seemed to call for a prodigious output of strength and ingenuity to gain a couple of hard-won feet. The climax was an exposition of how to abseil with an injured man on one's back. The conjurer asked for a volunteer from among the audience, and with some natural hesitation Michael Ward stepped forward to take the part of the injured man. The

preparations on the top bunk took a long time, while the performers wound themselves into an inextricable cocoon. At last the descent was launched. It was agony to watch. Eventually both rescuer and rescued reached the floor head first. It was explained that the manoeuvre would have been more impressive demonstrated from the top of a 100-foot cliff. Of this there could be little doubt. I made a mental resolve to do all I could to avoid breaking a leg in the company of the experts.

Among those at Helyg I had been delighted to find Gilbert Peaker. It was a curious circumstance, for it was with him that I had stayed there the only other time in my life, more than eighteen years before. Now he was there alone, and, as my companions had to leave that day to return to their labours, I decided to seize the chance to revive the memory of a very pleasant mountain companionship in such an appropriate setting. We set out together in the middle of the afternoon. The rain had stopped except for an occasional shower. Had I been able I would not have exchanged the wind and cloud for warm sunlight. We climbed Tryfan by one of the ordinary routes, dallied on the summit and descended on the other side. A sharp hailstorm hit us as we reached the foot of the rocks of Glyder Fach. But it stopped as suddenly as it had come, and we climbed comfortably up the Direct route, reaching the top of it in thick, drifting mist. As we were nearing the summit of Glyder Fach at about ten o'clock (Double Summer Time) the mist lifted, the light of the setting sun struck up beneath it and glistened upon those great boulders, that a moment before had been dark, looming spectres. As we reached the top the mists dissolved and we looked far across the Menai Strait and the sea, through a vast frame of flaming colour. This was reflected over the hills as we swung gently down. It was almost dark by the time we reached the farm where we drank the best part of a gallon of creamy milk.

The next morning we went to Craig yr Ysfa to renew our acquaintance with the Great Gully. After so much rain we expected to find it impossibly wet, and, as we had slept late, there was the added interest that to climb it and get back in time to catch our train at Bettws-y-Coed that afternoon meant working to a fairly tight schedule. The Gully was wet, though not unpleasantly so, and it did not rain while we were in it.





It was strange how each feature of the rock structure, so long forgotten, emerged one by one out of the past, some magnified, some dwarfed, the positions of some transposed, but each, like a tune or a smell, recalling its special sensations. Getting out of the top of the big chimney was a more strenuous business than I had remembered, the last pitch very much easier. We reached the top with plenty of time to spare for a gentle stroll back past the lake, while our wet clothes dried in the sun. Ten minutes before we reached the Hut a torrential downpour soaked us to the skin. This upset our time-table as we had to strip and dry our clothes against a night in the train while we ate our lunch, washed the dishes and tidied the Hut. But despite the fact that a tyre of Peaker's bicycle burst under its quite unreasonable burden, we caught the train.

The long night journey via Bristol to Warminster, standing in countless corridors and waiting on crowded platforms ready to do battle for a tiny space available in each belated train, was a sad contrast to the swift comfort of my outward journey. But even in the darkest hour I did not grudge the price I was paying for my extra day. The week-end had been commonplace enough. But, to those of us who spend much of our time abroad the memory of days spent among British hills remains fresher and provides more satisfaction than many of our ventures in grander and less familiar ranges of the Earth.

# ALPINE MEET 1947

## I. GENERAL ACCOUNT

**A**FTER an absence of at least eight years the Club was able to hold its Summer Meet in the Alps once more. Arolla was the centre of our activities and few of the party had been there before. In fact for more than half of us, the Meet was our first visit to Switzerland and our first chance of climbing really high mountains.

I don't think it was only that we had left behind England's austerity, and that we had just escaped from the train in which the 14th July French holidaymakers had been our fellow sardines, which made Lausanne, our first real halt in Switzerland, so enjoyable. After all we had already had a glimpse of the promised land at Vallorbe where we had invaded the station restaurant to consume those almost forgotten luxuries, fresh white rolls with butter and jam, and coffee which was *coffee*. No doubt the well-filled shop windows, the exquisitely dressed women, the good food, all played their part. But primarily it was the atmosphere, the fresh air from the hills which towered above the Lake of Geneva, which recalled memories of long ago to some and promised that none would leave without lasting recollections of an exceptional holiday.

The following day we went on to Arolla, picking up the motor-bike parties and Basile Bournissen, our guide, at Les Haudères en route. Tony Smyth and Mervyn Hughes we had last seen on board the channel steamer ; and Ali Szepessy, of the A.A.C.Z., had come from Zurich to join us. Not satisfied with the idea of walking up with us, they decided to go on to Arolla on the bikes, even at the cost of having to carry them from time to time when portage became imperative. Although the motor bikes did not quite get to the hotel, they nevertheless broke a ten-year old record for the highest mechanically propelled vehicles in the valley.



PANORAMA FROM THE CABANE DES VIGNETTES.



Peaks from left to right :  
MONT COLLON,  
MITRE DE L'ÉVÊQUE,  
L'ÉVÊQUE,  
PETIT MONT COLLON,  
LA SINGLA.



The party forgathered in full strength late that evening, and the following day all nineteen of us went for a training day on the Tsidjiore Nouve Glacier to practise a little ice work and to try out our crampons and other equipment, some of it only newly acquired. It was a useful day and gave us a chance of finding our mountain legs. Alas, two members of the party went out of action that day and were not able to climb again during the Meet. E. O. Toft twisted his ankle and Paul Burt bruised himself when an ice piton, from which he was abseiling, came out.

After this the party split up into at least two groups each day with several ropes in each group. During the first week we spent most of the time on the nearer hills : Le Pigne, Mont Blanc de Seillon, La Lurette, Les Douves Blanches, La Petite Dent de Veisivi and La Roussette were visited in turn. The weather, while not brilliant all the time, was at least good enough to let us plan ahead. Basile and Ali were completely members of the party now, and their presence gave us confidence to look towards bigger things before we left. But I must not pass over the first week without saying at least a few words about the Aiguilles Rouges, which is certainly one of the finest rock traverses I have done. Perhaps the thing that I remember about it best is seeing the sun rise on the major Alpine peaks to the east of us above the cloud bank rising from the Val Ferret ; and how exhilarating it was to move along that crest from peak to gendarme and col, and then on to the next peak. Unfortunately the weather clouded over for a time and we even had a little rain. All the same we saw an eagle circling round perhaps 800 feet below us just beyond the south peak. This expedition took us fifteen hours on four ropes with a party of nine. The expedition was repeated by a different party of the same size in about ten hours at the end of the Meet. I like to think that the decrease in time taken was due purely to the increase in speed and skill acquired during the Meet. But there was no common denominator in the two parties except Basile, so I have no proof.

With the end of the first week Ali had to return to Zurich and we were all very sorry for him to leave. He had proved himself just the sort of person one wants to have on a Meet, and we shall hope to see him again. However he had arranged for a relief,

Hans Spoerry, also of the A.A.C.Z., to take over and he joined us on the Sunday at Arolla. The whole of the rest of the week was aimed at getting the party up to the top of the Dent Blanche in relays. Just as we were ready to set off from the hotel for the hut on the Sunday afternoon it started raining hard, so we retired again, rather despondently. But by the evening the weather was again clear, and we recast the programme, hoping that there had not been too much fresh snow up above. One party was to carry out a three day trip, climbing the Tsa, Tête Blanche and Dent Blanche on successive days, while the other was to tackle a four day trip, the programme being the Évêque, Petit Mont Collon, Tête Blanche and Dent Blanche Hut, and finally Dent Blanche. The weather started off brilliantly, so brilliantly in fact that when the four day trippers returned to Arolla after two days, nominally to collect food in the Hotel and climb up to the Bertol for supper, having already climbed the Petit Mont Collon that day, we succumbed to the flesh pots and the thought of a night—is three hours a night?—in bed; and it was worth it. 2 p.m. the following day saw us at the Dent Blanche Hut welcoming the first relay returning from a successful climb to the top. Soon we were on our bunks trying to get a little sleep, but not helped by a couple of women who would talk. At six we had our meal somewhat gloomily, because the mist had just come down and it looked as though the weather was breaking up just when we were on the point of achieving our ambition. But the mists rolled away just before sunset and we went to bed confident that tomorrow would be The Day. We were on the way before five and up on the top by 7-30. The weather was perfect, the route in good condition, and the views superb. What more can one say? Every able-bodied member of the party got to the top of the Dent Blanche and down again; everybody was happy. It was pretty well the last climb we did as a Meet, and made a fitting climax to a first (and quite exceptionally good) season.

Before I conclude I want to say how deeply the Club is indebted to Basile Bournissen for the way he looked after us, and particularly for the way he briefed the guideless parties beforehand so that they went fully prepared for the climb. With such a large party as we were, and with pretty well 50 per cent. new to snow and ice work, at least on the Alpine scale, it was hard

work for one guide. We are also very grateful indeed to Ali Szepessy and to Hans Spoerry for giving up their holiday to come and help us. We hope that we shall climb with them again. If only the A.A.C.Z. could be persuaded to hold a Meet in this country we should be delighted to show them around.

The party consisted of the following :

|                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| P. H. Bartrum                | R. A. Hull              |
| N. M. Blackett               | A. N. Husbands          |
| P. E. Burt                   | K. C. Pearson and Mrs.  |
| E. Dudley Ward and Mrs. Ward | Pearson                 |
| R. C. Evans                  | R. L. Plackett and Mrs. |
| J. E. Grosvenor and Mrs.     | Plackett                |
| Hingley                      | R. B. O. Richards       |
| J. M. Hartog                 | H. L. Roberts           |
| R. M. P. Hartog              | A. J. M. Smyth          |
| M. G. Hughes                 | E. O. Toft              |
|                              | R. M. P. HARTOG         |

## II—LES AIGUILLES ROUGES

After various expeditions the party was united again at dinner on Friday, July 18th. Fridays are meatless days in Switzerland, and, as if in apology for this, large dishes of spaghetti were circulated as an extra course. Those who had only been acquainted with spaghetti as one form of 57 varieties experienced some initial difficulty in dealing with it in its native state ; but the contents of the dishes were soon disposed of in spite of this small handicap.

When the meal was finished everyone repaired à la Refuge for coffee or liqueur, though some people were evidently doubtful whether the management's efforts would in fact keep body and soul together judging by the pastries, fendant and young fruit tarts (delightfully modestly called Petits Gâteaux) that we brought to the table. However, this was as good a place as any for a discussion, and it was agreed that one group should climb La Petite Dent de Veisivi and another Les Aiguilles Rouges the following day.

As I was going on the longer expedition I reluctantly got out of bed at 2-15 a.m. Although Herbert woke up when I switched the light on he seemed more pleased at the thought of not having

to get up for another hour than annoyed at being woken up. We left at three o'clock after the inevitable distasteful meal, and had our first reward about two hours later when we saw *Le Pigne d'Arolla* in the first light. Having crossed the *Glacier des Aiguilles Rouges*, we climbed a rather steep scree and then crossed a snow field. Being now just above some clouds, we saw some very fine effects.

Basile was aiming to get on the ridge at a point between *l'Aiguille du Nord* and a subsidiary summit to the north of *l'Aiguille Centrale*; but before reaching the rocks it was necessary to climb a steep wall of snow, so we roped up. Basile, Roger Hartog and I made up the first rope, and the others went in pairs—Carol and Robin Plackett, Evans and Pearson, and Hull and John Hartog. Once on the rocks Basile led off at great speed and, after twenty minutes, we could only gather where the others were from the sound of their voices. We waited, and when everyone had caught up, Basile asked when we had to leave Arolla. Somebody volunteered that it would have to be in exactly a week's time, and Basile said meditatively that in that case he thought we should just complete the traverse in time. Some people had been making pitches all the way, as if on a British rock climb.

Having gained the ridge we descended to a col and found the first real difficulty immediately ahead. Owing to the difficulty of climbing the ridge direct we had to do a short traverse and then climb about 100 feet up a steep ice couloir. The ice was not very thick so that the steps could only be small and the axe was little help. However, everyone reached the rocks again and some pleasant climbing brought us to the main summit—*l'Aiguille Centrale* (3,650 m.). The clouds were still below us like a sea of cotton wool, and here I had my first real view of the Alps. There were all the major Pennine peaks, while to the south-west the Mont Blanc group could be seen beyond the Grand Combin, and, farther away, to the north-east we could see the peaks of the Oberland. We paused here to take in the magnificent view over our second breakfast. Due west the Weisshorn, Dent Blanche and Matterhorn looked particularly attractive; and *l'Aiguille de la Tsa* appeared completely dwarfed.

We now had to descend to the col separating us from *l'Aiguille du Sud* and then to make height again in spite of numerous

gendarmes. At one of these gendarmes we had to leave the ridge and traverse down on the east side until we came to the pitch known as the Cock's Comb. This starts off as a short, rather narrow chimney, and the rucksacks of some of the stouter members of the party came in for more abusive language than they in fact merited. Possibly the hardest pitch of the climb lies just above. The rock was rather rotten and Basile took his time here. Hull was the only other person to lead this pitch. The others all took the proffered rope.

There were still many pleasant pitches and gendarmes before we arrived at the south peak. With magnificent views all round and a friendly sun warming us from above this was rock climbing *par excellence*. Some sections of the descent were so steep and narrow that, had anyone "come off," the only thing to do appeared to be to jump off the other side and trust to the rope, as some of us agreed when discussing it the following day.

As often happens, we left the ridge some way before its lowest point, intending to get onto the glacier more directly, and thus became involved in a number of extra pitches. Gullies were chosen according to taste : in the end nine people arrived on the scree at intervals, and ropes were taken off for the first time after some nine hours. We finally arrived back at Arolla nearly fifteen hours after we had set out. It was unanimously agreed that we should have a complete night's sleep, and, on the strength of this, I decided to have a bath before going to bed. I remember settling down to enjoy the pleasant warmth, and the next thing waking up shivering. I hastened to dry myself so that I could get to bed where, once asleep, I could stay asleep.

A. N. HUSBANDS

### III—A TRAVERSE OF THE DENTS DES BOUQUETINS

In the second week of the Meet, the Dent Blanche found itself seething with large Climbers' Club parties. Conditions were ideal and we became jubilant conquerors of a four-thousander. Things went so exactly according to plan that there was still a climbing day available before the end of the Meet. Charles Evans and I decided to spend it on the Dent des

Bouquetins. The guide to the Meet, Bournissen, advised us that we might attempt it and that it was well worth doing.

So the two of us stayed behind at the Bertol, which was fairly empty. The only conversation I can recall was with four Italians. Entry from Italy was supposed to be restricted because of foot and mouth disease, but they had just done the Dent d'Herens, and were to tackle the Dent Blanche directly from the Bertol, not like us after a night at the Rossier. One of them held forth to us very volubly on the iniquities of the Swiss ridge of the Matterhorn, its wearisome and monotonous length in descent. We envied him his familiarity with it.

The Dents des Bouquetins is a ridge running north and south, and long enough to have fourteen routes on it described in the new guide book. The traverse of the whole ridge has so far been done on such a small number of occasions that they are listed in the guide. We traversed the shorter and easier half from the North Peak to the Central Peak. Leaving the Bertol in the cold crisp air of yet another perfect dawn, we spent the first hour and a half in reaching the foot of the steep snow slope leading to the north end of the ridge. I had some trouble here with my crampons ; they were new, and I was new to crampons anyway, and they had not been fitted properly. It was decidedly disconcerting to find them becoming detached from my heel ; but we avoided the steepest part of the slope by taking to the rocks on the right. Somehow the mountain became much more friendly after we had encountered a couple of abseil loops ; another snow slope, less icy and not so steep, and we were at the beginning of the rock ridge. The only casualty so far was a glove that I had stuffed into my pocket insecurely : I was sorry to lose it as it was one of a pair that I bought in Norway in 1933, and thus was quite hallowed with age. All this part of the ascent is well seen from the Bertol : in the evening sunlight the snow slopes have the same inviting fascination as those of the Evêque when seen from the Vignettes.

The ensuing rock ridge was described as “ une jolie varappe,” and we had already learnt that this means clean and delightful climbing, well after the hearts of an English party. There was one “ ressaut,” which we had to evade, moving one at a time. The rest was straightforward climbing on a pleasant light brown rock, mostly quite sound, and uphill as far as the North Peak.

The Central Peak, the highest, is then reached after two hours or so of ups and downs ; the main problem, as on all these rock traverses, is to decide whether it is quicker to go over or round the various gendarmes. From time to time we came across a broken wine bottle, always of the same kind. Whoever brought them is evidently a creature of habit ; perhaps the guide Pierre Maurys could tell us something about them, as he seems the person most addicted to this traverse. The last bit of the ascent, joining the false summit to the true summit, is out of keeping with the rest, being composed of loose shaly rock. Once on top we felt very content ; it was the first big peak we had done by ourselves.

For the descent we returned to the false summit and then down the rock ridge to the east. This was rough and red and warm, a succession of thoroughly enjoyable slabs. Eventually we were forced to the left towards the snow slope that descends from the gap between the North and Central Peaks. This slope is not particularly steep, but the stones coming down it and the many tracks of previous stones and boulders make it uninviting. We went down the gully which sun and water had carved at the edge of the snow. It was a very wet gully climb, but only because the day had been so warm. The rock to our right, which had by now become a formidable buttress, acted as a shelter against the stones, and this was even more true when we turned under its foot to consider the bergschrund. This we jumped, and scampered downhill with all speed to get beyond the range of the bombardment.

I don't know how often our section of the traverse is done. We found it just what we wanted, a mixture of snow work, rock work and route finding, interesting but not too difficult for us. We felt that we owed its achievement largely to Bournissen. He knew that we were keen, and he evidently felt we were worth encouraging ; for both at the Meet and later in the season, when we twice ran into him on our Zermatt climbs, he was most anxious to know what we had been doing and to discuss what we could most suitably tackle next. For Charles and me this was our first big season in the Alps, and whatever success we had owed much to him.

R. A. HULL

## IV—OMAR NODS

Ah ! take the Cash and let the Credit go ;  
 What Price is Life if we can never blow  
 Off Steam occasionally, tread the Alps  
 From End to End on Everlasting Snow.

Dreaming that Ben's Left Hand was in my Eye,  
 I saw a Night Mare, dimly did descry  
 An Albatross around my Neck was hung,  
 Garnished with Garlic, cogitated why

With Frenchmen, hither hurtled whence ?  
 To Profit by the loss of paltry Pence ;  
 Yet Climber after Climber goes this way,  
 Abides his destined Hour and hurries thence.

The Portals of this opulent Hotel  
 Closely resemble either Heaven or Hell  
 According to the Time of Day—I speak  
 With Feeling, knowing both these Places well.

Up to the Bertol, through a stony Waste  
 I rose, consuming Bread with Real Meat Paste,  
 And many Knots unravel'd by the Road ;  
 But not the Reason for such Frantic Haste.

Awake ! for Roger in the Dead of Night  
 Has raised a Shout that puts all Sleep to Flight :  
 And lo ! Bold Basile leads the Ghastly Crew  
 Who somnolently view the Morning Light.

Perchance the Alpinist may think He climbs ;  
 Perchance the Guide who pulls his Rope betimes  
 May think so too—so little do they know,  
 Compared with Him who writes these riddling Rhymes.

I am the Alpinist, the Rope, the Guide ;  
 I am the Boots and Crampons, I the Tide  
 Which sweeps them Upward, brings them Down again  
 And keeps them Indigestion-free inside.

Yes ! take the Cash and let the Credit shrink  
 To Nothing—or to less. With Basile drink  
 The Pure Serene, and taste the Well of Life,  
 Instead of staying Sober on the Brink. R. L. PLACKETT



# THE PLACE-NAME YNYS ETTWS

G. A. LISTER

MANY of us find interest and fascination in the derivation and meaning of place-names, particularly of the Welsh names associated with our climbing activities in Snowdonia. A notable example is the name by which our new club hut is known—Ynys Ettws.

In the 1941 issue of this *Journal*, Rudolf Cyriax wrote :

Ynys means “island.” The meaning of Ettws is obscure, as it does not appear in Spurrell’s standard dictionary, neither does the alternative spelling Hettws.

This statement is provocative. How did the name originate ? Is there justification for its use ? Should the Club accept it ? Is there an alternative ?

On the supposition that the best evidence as to the origin of the name might be found in Welsh literature or records, I approached the late Sir John E. Lloyd, Welsh historian and archæologist. He was interested and later wrote as follows :

Bangor, 5.5.47.

After some search, I think I have solved your immediate problem. *Ynys Hettws* as a farm does not appear in the old one inch map, for its name at that time—I judge by a comparison of the old and the new maps—was Blaen y Nant (Head of the Glen). Ynys Hettws is really an alias of the well-known Cromlech, which is not a prehistoric relic, but a heap of boulders. In Black’s *Picturesque Guide to North Wales* (Edinburgh, 1886), we are told (p. 106) that in this heap, there is a cavity, which an old woman named Hetty, used as a shelter—“hence it is called *Ynys Hettws* or Hetty’s Island, though more generally known as the Cromlech.” This explanation may be a fairy tale, but at any rate it makes it clear that the local pronunciation was Ynys Hettws.

J. E. LLOYD.

I gathered from this letter that Sir John’s search in Welsh literature had proved fruitless, but I determined to follow up his reference by an extensive search through the early descriptive Tours and Guides written in English.

The resulting story begins some 167 years ago when Thomas Pennant published *The Journey to Snowdon* (1781) as a second volume of his *Tour in Wales*. Describing the Pass of Llanberis, he writes :

Near the end of *Nant-beris*, pass beneath *Glyder Vawr*, and observe the strata of a columnar form, high above our heads. At times, vast fragments of this tremendous rock tumble down, the ruins are scattered about the base, and exhibit awful specimens of the frequent lapses. One is styled the *Cromlech*, for having accidentally fallen on other stones, it remains lifted from the earth, with a hollow beneath, resembling one of those *Druidical* antiquities. The length of the incumbent stone is sixty feet : the breadth forty-six : the thickness sixteen. The hollow is said once to have been occupied by an old woman, but now serves for a sheep pen.

Subsequent travellers refer to the old woman. The Rev. W. Bingley (1798) describes the hollow as :

... a considerable cavity where a poor woman for many years resided during the summer season, in order to tend and milk her sheep and cows.

William Hutton, the Birmingham historian (1799), in speaking of the Cromlech stone says :

This large stone, lying hollow, imagination has "converted it into a cromlech, then, the residence of an old woman, or rather, an old witch, and at last into that of a sheep pen."

William Williams, of Llandegai, in *Observations on the Snowdon Mountains* (1802) embellishes the story :

At a small distance above the church of Llanberis there is a huge stone, called *Y Gromlech*, resting upon other smaller ones, so as to leave a pretty spacious room underneath, insomuch that some years ago a poor old woman made her habitation under it, and lived there a long time *rent-free*.<sup>1</sup>

It was left to George Nicholson to adorn the tale. In *The Cambrian Traveller's Guide* (1808), he wrote :

... About 3 m. from Llanberis is a huge fragment of rock, far larger than Bowdar stone in Borrowdale, once probably loosened from the impending heights above, under which is a large cavity where a poor woman resided for many years during the summer season, to tend her sheep and milk her cows : the place is called *Ynys Hettws*, Hetty's Island.

This story is repeated in much the same terms in most of the topographical descriptions published between 1800 and 1900.

<sup>1</sup> The italics are those of William Williams.

A few give the story without name, but the majority give the woman's name as Hetty and the place-name as Ynys Hettws.

The word Ynys occurs often in Caernarvonshire place-names, and not necessarily in connection with land surrounded by water. A sheltered spot in a wild area, or green pasture amidst a rocky wilderness, might well be so described. The unfamiliar English word Hetty, assumed a form more acceptable to the Welsh ear—Hettws. Once in common use it would be accepted readily, including the aspirate, by English topographers, but the native, using the name in daily conversation, would change naturally to Ynys Ettws.

The Club use the spelling Ynys Ettws, which is the form used by the Vaynol Estate, from whom the property is leased. It is thus spelt in their records back to 1832. In the Llanberis parish registers the name first appears in 1801, in the form Ynys Hetws.<sup>1</sup> A somewhat similar spelling, Ynys Etws, is to be found in a description of the spot in *Cambria Depicta, a Tour through North Wales* (1813), by Edward Pugh, of Ruthin.

As this description includes the earliest recorded mention of the building we have acquired, I quote rather fully. Pugh approached the spot from Capel Curig, and having described the descent of the Pass, he goes on to say :

... The amazing projecting rocks on the right, which seem to support the sides of Glydar mountain, are wonderfully grand, and finely broken ; with deep fissures running sometimes perpendicularly, sometimes horizontally, and so often varying in their outline, that the artist is arrested by fresh subjects every fifty yards. Some of these great rocks project frightfully, and from the loose manner in which they are supported and propped up, the passenger goes by with dread, and great uncertainty of their remaining safe in their beds, till he is out of danger. I stayed awhile to gaze on what appeared to me, to be awfully grand ; but which perhaps may lose much of its interest if viewed in fine weather. The place I mean is called Ynys Etws ; it is a small cwm just above a mount of considerable height. The sullen gloom that overspread this cavity, with a noisy cascade above, and the sweeping clouds that skimmed the sides of the precipices, rendered the place, in idea, like the Devil's council-chamber. While I was looking at it, I saw a woman standing at the door of a solitary cottage, at the foot of the mount ; the river being impassable, I was under the necessity of requesting she would come near ; and, on my signal, she approached me with her arms a-kimbo. Her appearance was very singular, and not until I gained better information, could I be persuaded that she was not a man in

<sup>1</sup> See p. 321.

female habit. Her voice was strong and deep-toned, and her shape masculine to a degree ; the shoulders being broad like those of the male, while the *glutei muscles* contracted so, as scarcely to enable her to keep on her petticoats. She seemed to cultivate a beard with some care, which had already grown bushy through age. Her name is Cady (Catherine) Thomas. She lives by herself in this dreary spot, and holds a small farm of a few acres, which she manages without the assistance of any other person ; her stock consists of two or three cows, a few sheep, and two little ponies ; the latter used for plowing, herself performing the office of both plowman and driver.

One further reference is of interest, though not as a serious contribution to the problem. In 1883 there appeared an edition of Pennant's *Tours in Wales*, edited by Prof. John Rhys. The description of the Cromlech (Vol. II, p. 338) is identical with that of the 1781 edition already quoted, but the editor adds a footnote regarding the " old woman."

This refers to the fabulous cannibal *Cynrig Bwt* : see note p. 213. J.R.

On p. 213 we find this footnote :

*Cynric Rwth* was a sort of a she-Polythemus, who delighted to feed on babies' flesh ; she is called *Cynrig Bwt* at Llanberis, and had her abode under a huge stone called *Y Gromlech*, near the way to the Llanberis Pass . . . J.R.

Truly the ladies reputed to have been associated with the early days of Ynys Ettws form a very remarkable group !

The old maps are of interest. In the first one inch Ordnance map dated 1838 (Sheet 75) the place-name Blaen-y-Nant appears. It seems to apply to the area around the point where the Afon Genog, falling from Cwm Glas, joins the main stream of the pass. A little higher up, and north of the road, the map shows Cromlech, and higher still Pont y Gromlech. The name Ynys Hettws does not appear.

This map was the basis of many subsequent maps. It was used by Sir A. C. Ramsay, F.R.S., in preparing the map illustrating *The Old Glaciers of Switzerland and North Wales* (1860), and by W. R. Emslie, who, in 1886, produced " for private distribution only " a fine map of Snowdon and the adjoining country. Ramsay and Emslie, who both knew the district well, use the name Blaen-y-Nant and make no mention of Ynys Hettws.

The first six inch Ordnance sheets of the neighbourhood were surveyed in 1887-8. Sheet XVII, S.W. shows the present

inhabited farmhouse as Blaen-y-Nant, and the smaller cottage some 150 yds. higher up the pass as Ynys-Hettws. This building, now derelict, is to be rebuilt to form our new Club Hut. The Cromlech rocks are named in the old English type reserved for pre-historic or Saxon antiquities "Y Gromlech or Ynys Bettws." The use of the word Bettws is probably a mistake or misprint as in the adjoining Sheet XXII, N.W. the word Hettws is used in naming the same spot.

The next Ordnance issue was the Coloured Edition of the one inch map (1910). In this the name Blaen-y-Nant is dropped and Ynys-Hettws appears twice, once to indicate the smaller of the two houses, and again as an alternative name to Y Gromlech. This seems to indicate that the Ordnance Survey had decided to adopt the name Ynys-Hettws in place of Blaen-y-Nant. This map also confirms that the use of the word Bettws on one of the six inch maps was a mistake.

On the other hand, Prof. J. Lloyd-Jones in his book on the place-names of Caernarvonshire<sup>1</sup> lists Ynys Bettws, but makes no mention of either Ynys Hettws or Ynys Ettws. It is possible that he was misled by the mistake on the six inch map.

Subsequent one inch Ordnance maps, up to and including the sixth or New Popular Edition, Sheet 107 (1947), all restrict the names applied to the area between Beudy-mawr and Pont y Gromlech to one only—Ynys-Hettws.

We can now attempt to trace the course of events. It seems probable that for many years the neighbourhood was known as Blaen-y-Nant. The early travellers who recorded their adventures (1780 to 1808), while mentioning the summer use of the Cromlech cavity, do not refer to any habitation between Old Llanberis and Capel Curig. A habitation is implied by the entry in the parish register of 1801. The first mention of a house is by Edward Pugh (1813). It thus seems likely that Hetty haunted the Cromlech prior to 1780, and that the derelict cottage we have acquired was built about 1800. Between these two dates the Hetty legend flourished, and her reputed summer residence beneath the Cromlech stone became known generally as Ynys Hettws, and perhaps to the local Welsh as Ynys Ettws.

It would seem probable that the cottage was built in order to provide reasonable living accommodation for Hetty's successors.

<sup>1</sup> *Enwau Lleoedd Sir Gaernarfon*, pp. 39 and 118.

If so it would be natural to transfer to it the name associated with the Cromlech cavity. Apparently the Vaynol Estate thought so, for the cottage is named Ynys Ettws in their records of 1832.

But Ramsay (1860) calls it "the house of Blaen-y-Nant." He shows it clearly in one of his illustrations depicting the mouth of Cwm Glas. As the neighbourhood of the house is particularly rich in traces of glacial action, there can be little doubt that Ramsay spent much time there. In fact, in describing Cwm Glas, he wrote :

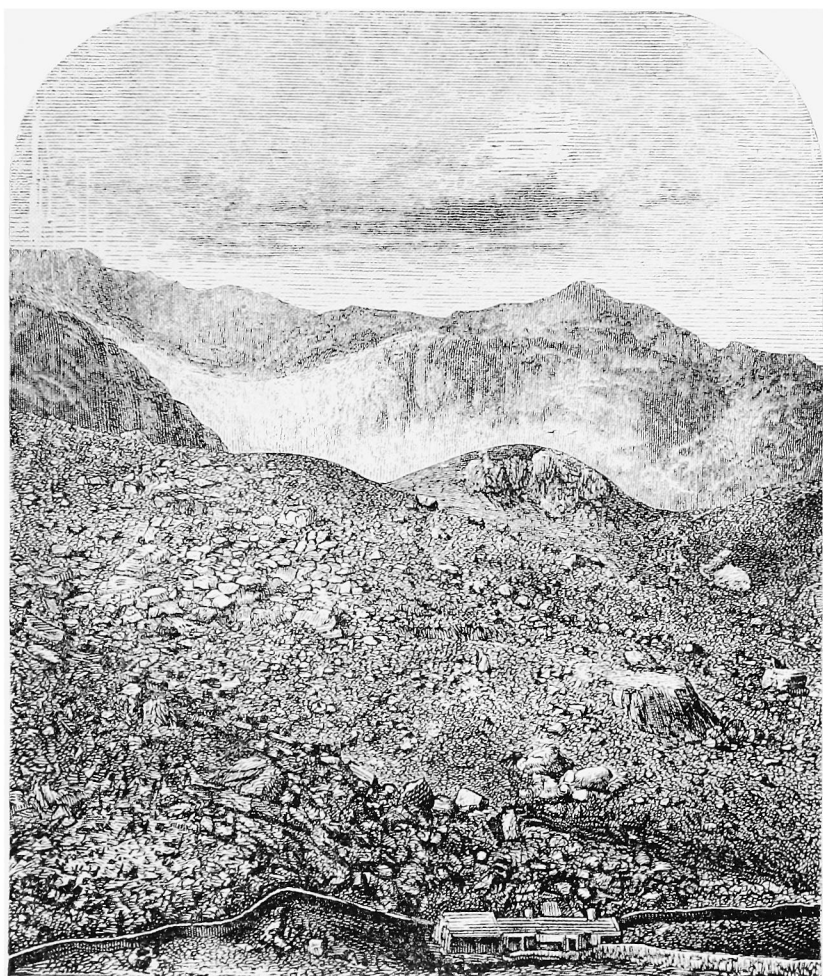
The slope though a little toilsome, is easy of ascent and beyond the rocks, there lies, in the innermost recess of the mountain, an upland valley, unmatched in Wales for wildness, and in which I never met a human being, though I have been in it more times than I can tell.

Ramsay's testimony, therefore, should be sound and it seems that whatever may have been the view held in the distant Estate Office at Port Dinorwic, the local inhabitants preferred the descriptive Welsh to the legendary corruption.

Between 1860 and 1887, when the six inch survey was made, the second and lower house was built, probably about 1875. In Vaynol Estate records dated 1869 there is a marginal addition not dated, but obviously after 1869, recording the fact that the tenancy was divided into two portions which were named respectively Blaen-y-Nant and Ynys Ettws. It was natural that the old building should retain the name by which it had been known previously in the estate records, particularly as it lay nearest to Y Gromlech, while the new and larger farmhouse should take the more comprehensive name of the area in which it was situated. This division of the tenancy and the naming of the two parts is confirmed by the six inch Ordnance map.

There remain the queries : Should the Club accept the present name ? and if there are objections to doing so, is there an acceptable alternative ?

Surely there are objections to Ynys Ettws. The first word is not very applicable, while the second, as it stands, has no significance. If Ettws is to be taken as a corruption of Hetty, then we are perpetuating a reference to a comparatively modern, and not too well authenticated legend, and we are countenancing the dropping of an aspirate. At best Hetty was a nondescript old



MORAINES AND ROCHE MOUTONNÉE AT THE MOUTH OF CWM-GLAS

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REPRODUCED FROM  
THE OLD GLACIERS OF SWITZERLAND AND NORTH WALES,  
BY  
A. C. RAMSAY, F.R.S.  
1860

Visitors to the hut, which is seen in the foreground, can spend an interesting half hour in determining, by the intersection of lines of sight, the exact point from which this view was taken





woman. Why should the Club commemorate her? Rather let us use the good Welsh name of him, through whose generosity the early rebuilding of the hut, and its equipment, is made possible. Let it be named the R. W. Lloyd Hut.

We still need to indicate its position. Ynys Ettws neither is, nor ever has been, the name of a locality or area. It should be retained to designate the Cromlech cavity as it did originally. The immediate area in which the hut is situated has long been known as Blaen-y-Nant—an admirable place-name. It conveys a picture of the surroundings of the hut, positioning it in the pass, and it is poetic and romantic. Also there can be little doubt of its antiquity, in fact it is likely that Hetty herself gave the name as the address of her summer quarters.

The full name and address would then be—The R. W. Lloyd Hut, Blaen-y-Nant, Nant Peris, Caernarvon.<sup>1</sup>

“The Head of the Glen.” What better place-name could a climber wish to have for the location of his resting place?

There are other possible solutions of the meaning of Ynys Ettws, one of which is given by the Rev. J. H. Williams, Rector of Llanberis, the parish in which the hut is located.

He writes :

The Rectory, Llanberis, 18.9.47.  
re *Ynys Ettws*

There is no mention of this place in our Parish Terrier.<sup>2</sup> There are, however, several references to it in our registers. I have scrutinised these from 1726 onwards and find that the first appearance of the name is in a “List of Inhabitants” dated 1801, and is in the form “Ynys Hetws,” the two inhabitants at the time, being “Cath. Thomas” and “Cath. Ellis.” Subsequently the form is invariably given as “Ynys Ettws.”

In this case the word “ynys” (Latin “insula”) designates an elevated tract of ground, skirted by a brook and swampy ground. The word would also be suggested by the fact that the spot is well surrounded by rocks making it a veritable “insula” among the crags.

The term “ettws” is not so easily derived, but it bears a suspicious resemblance to “bettws” (cf. Bettws-y-Coed, Bettws Garmon, etc.). One meaning for this term is a “sloping wood-land.” Even now there

<sup>1</sup> The suggested address of the hut is the result of consultations with Sir Ifor Williams in regard to spelling and use of hyphens, and with the Postmaster of Caernarvon as regards the correct postal address.

<sup>2</sup> Terrier. A book or roll in which the lands of private persons or corporations are described by site, boundaries, acreage, etc. (*New English Dictionary*.)

is sufficient vegetation round the cottage to indicate that it was once a wooded spot.

The meaning of "Ynys Ettws" would therefore appear to be "the rock-bound grove."

J. H. WILLIAMS.

These notes have served at least one useful purpose. They have interested Sir Ifor Williams, M.A., D.Litt., who was for many years, and until recently, Celtic Professor at the Bangor College of the University of Wales. After reading the foregoing, he writes :

Pontlyfni, Caernarvon, 24.2.48.

*Ynys Ettws*, *Ynys Hettws*, in my opinion means, *Hetty's holm*. *Ynys* is used commonly for "island" or "dry ground" in a marsh, etc. but in place names it can mean a riverside meadow, cf. The Oxford Dictionary on *holm* or *holme* "islet, especially in river or near mainland : flat ground by river, submerged in time of flood." cf. Joyce, *Irish Names of Places* 1875, p. 441 : "The most common word for an island is *inis*, cognate with Welsh *ynys*, Armorican *enes*, and Latin *insula*. It is also applied in all parts of Ireland to the holm, or low flat meadow along a river ; and a meadow of this kind is generally called an *inch* among the English speaking people, especially in the south." So the Welsh *ynys* and the Irish *inis* are used in both senses of holm.

As for *Hettws* (until a form like *Ynys Fetws* is found in a document) my suggestion is that we have here a pet name for Hetty. I know that Anne, Nan, has become *Nannws*—i.e. Nan with the diminutive ending *-ws* (cf. Nanny) ; for *Dick*, I've seen *Dicws* in the *Clenennau Letters and Papers*, edited by Jones Pierce, National Library of Wales Journal Supplement, Series IV, Part I (1947), page XIII, "the land of Rhys ap Dicws Foel." So *ws* can be added to a masculine or feminine name. In Anglesey, the pet names for father and mother, *tadws* and *mamws* (from *tad* "father" and *mam* "mother") are well known.

But if you think that *Ynys Hettws* is not suitable for the R. W. Lloyd Hut, I am all in favour of *Blaen-y-Nant*. *Blaen* in such a name means "source" if it precedes a river name, but the upper part of a valley if a valley name follows, e.g., *Blaen Nant Ffrancon*, above Bethesda. In a combination like *Blaen-y-Nant* you have an option ! For *Nant* has two meanings (1) river, stream, (2) valley.

*Baen-y-Nant*, *Nant Peris*, would be a sufficient address and euphonious enough, in my opinion.

IFOR WILLIAMS

We are much indebted to Sir Ifor for his contribution to the solution of our problem. He speaks with authority, and I feel that we cannot do better than leave with him the last word, so far as this article is concerned.

# LETTER FROM CHAMONIX

RICHARD MEYER

**Y**OU want to know how exactly one should proceed in order to have a season in the Alps with an unchecked sequence of classical ascents of great beauty and interest? Well, I think the recipe is simpler than you imagine. Take the Mont Blanc region and a few weeks of good weather, season the mixture with half a teaspoonful of reliable companions and beware of making any programme in advance.

It took me a long time to learn the last point. Who wants to forgo the pleasure of chewing guide-books and of planning his holidays, hour for hour, during the nine months before the departure? We even tried to plan them a full twenty months ahead, on one occasion, but it didn't help. They never came out to our complete satisfaction. Except for those few occasions when all went wrong just before the start and we had to improvise everything. That almost came to look like a necessary condition for a perfect holiday.

Arnold and myself, therefore, crossed the channel with the firm intention not to plan anything more than a day ahead, but to make ourselves a fast, reliable party and then to grasp any opportunity which the Gods might grant us. And to put this into effect we started with a day's walk in the lesser range of the Aiguilles Rouges which we enjoyed intensely. We then went to the Bossons glacier to give Arnold a chance to try his crampons. For although a prominent tiger on English rocks he was quite a fresher on snow and ice. On the advice of a guide we deferred the ascent of the Grépon and contented ourselves with the lesser climb up the South Ridge of the Moine. And seeing that it was practice in ice and snow which we needed most we accepted the advice to exchange the Mummery and Ravel needles for Les Courtes.

The route leads up a wide snow and ice couloir with a nicely calculated crescendo in inclination. I stuck to its first branch far too long and found that we had to cross the big ice slope where it is steepest and then to descend again. Any normal human being ought to have developed a hysteria on so nerve-racking a first acquaintance with snow and ice. Not so Arnold, who was even prepared to descend by the same route. But I found an excuse for continuing the traverse.

Since our first venture above 12,000 feet did not appear to have had any ill effects, we now had to decide whether we should make an attempt on the Aiguille Verte or not. The Whymper Couloir seemed too hard an ice climb for our party, but when we heard that the Moine Ridge had already been done this season we jumped for it.

Our troubles started already during the night, when we lost the tracks and tackled the marginal crevasse system in the wrong place. But I was consoled when two guided parties came along and did no better. The guides proposed to ascend the Whymper Couloir in order to save time, and I suggested following. Time is the all-important factor on a climb of this length, and I am always only too prepared to concur with the better judgment of a guide. Moreover, a bad spot is only half as terrifying if you are not the leader of the first party. But Arnold and the French friends who followed us did not like the prospect and we stuck to our original plan.

The first part of the route is marked by a deep-cut gully ; fortunately, we had already been warned off it and followed the rocks of its western bank. We had to climb a never-ending succession of cracks and ledges. If we had only ventured a few hundred feet to our left we could have scrambled up all the way. But we could not be quite sure of that as long as we were not high enough to inspect the whole of the alternative route, and we had been told that our present line was the right one. Maybe we displayed a regrettable lack of the true exploratory spirit by turning our sleepy minds back to the problem of looking straight ahead and choosing the best crack to surmount the next step, and then the following, and then the step above. . . .

On a little shoulder with a first cairn we waited for our friends. They had left one man behind, but even so they were too slow, and we soon lost sight of them again. We were now ascending

the eastern flank of our ridge. There was much snow on the rocks, and the tracks made it easy to find the route and to keep up a steady pace. But the snow was growing soft at a disturbing rate. We climbed and climbed, but the ridge appeared as high above us as ever. The snow was softening so rapidly that I gave up all hope of reaching the summit. I was just making up my mind to call a halt and discuss the question of immediate retreat when we got our first glimpse of the Whymper Couloir and saw the guides only a little higher than ourselves. They had left the bed of the gully and were slowly working up along its bank ; obviously, things did not go as smoothly as they had expected. My spirits rose. We were not the only party to descend late. The climbing grew more strenuous as we drew near the crest of the ridge and had to face more of the obstacles directly. But we kept our pace and had already topped most of the surrounding peaks when we met the guides as they came down the ridge. Eventually, the rocks gave way and a short snow ridge led us to the summit. Arnold was sorely disappointed because I started to descend almost immediately. But I knew what to expect from an interminable descent over wet snow on ice and unstable rocks.

However, I was wrong. The ground was very awkward, but Arnold walked down over it like a professional. We soon reached our friends and the guides, and as our pace dropped to their more leisurely rate of progress I suddenly noticed that the sun was shining on myself, not only on the snow, and I became aware of the bewildering fact that we had really made it.

We had reached our first objective in five days. In fact, we had gathered as good a list of ascents as we could reasonably hope to achieve in three weeks, and even Arnold could now be persuaded to make a rest day. A friend had told me that the Rochefort Ridge is one of the most beautiful climbs in the Alps, and that settled the question of our next objective. We moved up to the Refuge Chevalier in the Périades and found it in spite of the Swiss guide-book, after a three hour's search. It is a little wooden box perched nearly on top of one of these fantastic needles in a position of unique exposure and beauty. But I take it that you rather want to go there yourself than listen to my praise of a sunset the like of which I shall not see again. The Rochefort Ridge also fulfilled, and surpassed, all promises. We

added the Dent du Géant and decided, over dinner in the Torino Hut, to make a daring throw and try Moore's Brenva route on the following day.

The ascent of the Col de la Fourche de la Brenva is an expedition in its own right, and with the difficult conditions prevailing at that time it offered an opportunity to show Arnold some of the more advanced tricks of ice climbing—by day and by night, for darkness fell when we were only halfway up the ice slope to the col. In the hut we met two Italian climbers, bent upon the ascent of the Sentinel Route. The far side of the col looked steeper than I had anticipated and I readily agreed that the Italians, who had reconnoitred the descent, should start first and that we should follow as soon as they were out of the line of fall of any stones we might dislodge. I therefore appointed Arnold to poke his head out of the window periodically in order to ascertain the exact route their lantern was following while I settled down to a peaceful breakfast. After some time, a note of unrest began to creep into its tranquillity as Arnold continued to report "no progress." It grew light and there was still no progress. And when they finally got to the marginal crevasse, at 5 a.m., it was too late to attempt a climb on the Brenva face and there was nothing left for us but to return to Chamonix.

As it happened, it sounds just like a piece of bad luck. But clearly, there were deeper reasons for our failure.

After a week, I found myself again in the Torino Hut in order to meet some Swiss friends. Our original plan was foiled by bad weather, and it thus happened once more that we decided to try the Brenva route, half an hour before setting out actually to do so. But things were different, this time. Some French friends of mine had done the route during the last week; in spite of my warning it had taken them two hours to descend from the Col de la Fourche, and our last, precious half hour in the Torino Hut was therefore spent in consultation with the guardian on the best way of crossing that col. Conditions on the great ice slope of the Brenva had been so bad that it had taken the French party almost the whole day to cut steps up it, and we could not expect to fare much better. But this time, we were a really strong party, with three leaders out of four. I felt I knew the worst, and we were up to it.







We arrived on the Col de la Fourche early in the afternoon and proceeded to prepare the descent to the Brenva Glacier with the utmost care. Our labours were rewarded by a smooth passage during the night, and I soon led away at a furious pace, oblivious of all protestations from behind. I was vindicated when we found ourselves on the great ice slope competing with the sun in a race for the last minutes during which simultaneous crampon going was still possible. Victory was complete. We reached the Col de la Brenva before 9 a.m., and found time to return from the summit over Col Maudit, Mt. Blanc du Tacul, and Col du Midi to the Torino Hut.

Our next climb was the Peuterey Ridge, but I don't think I can give you much in the line of a recipe for it. It is too long an ascent for anybody to tackle it who does not know all the tricks of the game. Our main preoccupation was the danger of stone-falls ; we employed every conceivable dodge to evade it. But it was the weather that played us the last trick. We crossed the summit of Mt. Blanc late at night in a thunderstorm, and in the heavy snowfall which followed we did not manage to find the Vallot Hut and had to bivouac on the Bosses Ridge.

Most people seem to think that a bad weather bivouac at 14,000 feet must be a desperate business. Not if you have a bivouac sack.<sup>1</sup> A candle soon dispersed the gloom which lack of food and tobacco threatened to create. We even managed to brew some tea on our miniature primus without setting fire to the sack. The most lovely tea, I can assure you, which I've ever had. We made a point of swallowing it very hot. (You don't taste so much.) Eventually, the atmosphere got so cosy that I needed all my persuasive powers to convince the others that day had broken outside.

After a twenty-four hours' effort in eating and sleeping, down at Chamonix, we began to think about our next objective. The obvious, most attractive proposition was to attempt one of the great classical rock climbs, the North Face of the Dru or the Ryan-Lochmatter Ridge of the Plan. But we were a party of three now, including a girl, and it was doubtful whether we should be able to complete either in a single day. Moreover, the afternoon thunderstorm, with slight snowfall in the heights, was

<sup>1</sup> Zdarsky type. Two sheets of light impregnated fabric sewn together along three edges. A more regular inhabitant of my rucksack than the iron ration.

a regular feature of the season. We would have to carry bivouac equipment in addition to crampons and ice-axes, and the heavy loads would reduce our speed further. We were not slow to recognise the usual vicious circle which tells you that, whatever the climbing standard of the single members, the party as a whole is not really up to the climb. The ascent could be done, but it ought not to be and the time spent on it would give us away. Now, there is nothing with regard to which an alpine craftsman is more sensitive than justified reflection on his judgment. We would have to wait for another occasion to impress Chamonix with our climbing standard.

Our choice eventually fell on the traverse of the Drus and we enjoyed it very much. As on most of the big classical climbs, it is the speed of the party which matters, not the leader's ability to negotiate difficult pitches. But the traverse of the Drus is a model of that category among them where even a fast party may soon find itself benighted if it cannot solve the intricate riddle of finding the right route. You arrive at the foot of the West face of the Petit Dru, out of breath after the race up the couloir, you open the old Vallot Guide and read about the grooves to follow, the ledges to traverse and corners to turn until you come to the cracks that lead you up over the walls above them. You then look up to the big granite face that towers in front and find that it is covered by scores of ledges and grooves, hundreds of cracks and corners, walls, blocks and chimneys. Few places can have seen so many people scratch so many heads.

As it happened, I had forgotten the guide-book in the hut. But even that didn't matter, for I found later on that the actual route did not bear the slightest resemblance to the description. I am afraid we owed our success simply to the lucky coincidence that another party was also on the climb, one of whom had done the ascent before. And if we did anything to deserve that luck it was that we kept up enough speed to catch an occasional glimpse of them.

The ascent of the Grand Dru was more straightforward, but on the descent we found again that the advice to shun the most obvious route did not facilitate the choice between all the others. Since this was unknown ground to both parties we pooled our resources, exhorted each other to keep left and muddled through as best we could. I was much relieved when 300 feet of rope came

lashing down from our last abseil spike and we put our crampons on again, with more than an hour of daylight left for the crossing of the Charpoua Glacier.

For this we had only two alternatives to choose from, avoiding either the stonefalls or the crevasse tangle. The French party decided to try their luck, while we preferred to pin our faith on our ice craft. I promptly fell into a crevasse when I tried to cross a wet snow bridge of 6 feet span and 1 foot thickness. The rope came tight just when I managed to wedge myself with shoulders and crampons. Hans appeared presently at the brim of the abyss to inquire after my health. He must have thought I had been mentally affected, for my only reply was that I had kept hold of my ice-axe. A dispute ensued as to whether he should have the pleasure of pulling me out, but in the end I clambered up the opposite wall and the two others followed me. However, it took them more time than myself to get into the crevasse.

Well, I hope I have been able to answer some of your queries. As to those which are left, let's go there next summer and find out together.

# ALPINE SKYLINES

J. H. EMLYN JONES

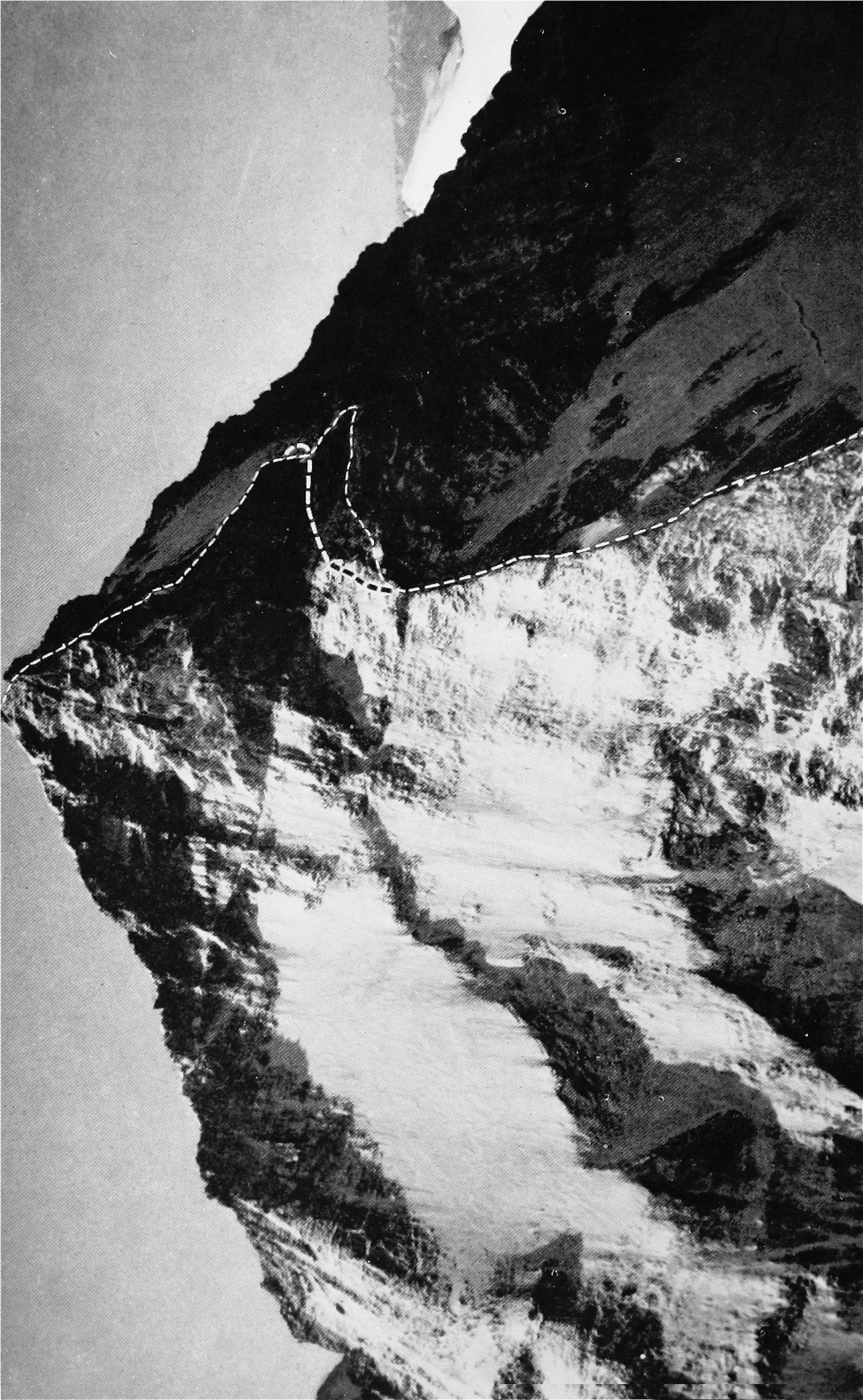
“THE last great unsolved problem of the Alps”—how many great climbs, from the Matterhorn and the Meije to the South face of the Täschhorn and the latest *face nord*, have assumed in turn this provocative title! The champions come and go, yet always to be succeeded by another, chosen in modern times often from obscurity, like a Dalai Lama, to reign a little while, and then to fall to the concentrated assaults of modern climbing ironmongery. Many of these routes soon relinquish their artificial glory; others offer a stronger challenge and remain, exercising their intrinsic charm on succeeding generations of mountaineers. Amongst these the North ridge of the Dent Blanche must surely take its place.

I first came under the spell of the North ridge many years ago from a reading of Dorothy Pilley's *Climbing Days*, when the climb which had so bewitched I. A. Richards and his wife similarly captured my imagination. Plans began to take more definite shape as Alpine experience widened, and were crystallized when I read of André Roch's ascent in 1943 and saw the vivid illustrations to his book *Images d'Escalades*.<sup>1</sup>

The Dent Blanche rises to a height of 14,318 feet on the western side of the head of the Val d'Anniviers and sends down from its rounded summit four great ridges in an almost perfect cruciform. The South ridge is long but not difficult, and provided the route by which the mountain was first climbed in 1862. The West ridge, or Ferpècle, rises in a huge humpback from the Bricolla glacier and is balanced on the east by the magnificent curling sweeps of the Viereselgrat descending to the Col de Zinal and the glacier Durand. The North face is steep and abrupt, giving to the mountain the appearance of

<sup>1</sup> Now translated into English and published under the title “*On Rock and Ice*.”





having been pushed northwards over the centuries by the clammy hand of the Föhn, the notorious south wind of the Alps. It has a well defined ridge rising in its lower section from the Col de la Dent Blanche, merging after about a thousand feet into the great band of vertical rock which spreads across the whole face seeming to make all further progress impossible. Its right-hand edge, however, forms a ridge flanking the great couloir which descends from the summit on the north side of the Ferpècle ridge, and it is by gaining this edge and following it back to the original line above the huge overhang that the face is climbed.

The early history of climbing here is obscure, although the ridge must have exercised its fascination on many an Alpine traveller. It was first descended by a Swiss party in 1926 by means of long rappels and a night on the face. This was followed in July, 1928, by the first ascent. I. A. Richards and Mrs. Richards, with Joseph Georges, *le Skieur*, and his brother Antoine left the Bricolla Alp at one a.m. and gained the summit sixteen hours later—a time which will rarely be bettered by a party of four. Later the same year a party consisting of Miss Maud Cairney with Théophile and Hilaire Theytaz followed a route from the Col de la Dent Blanche to the summit, avoiding the main difficulties on the left. This alternative, although appearing somewhat easier is exposed to considerable danger from falling stones and has not been repeated. In 1943 the original route was again followed by a strong Swiss guideless party, which included André Roch and Georges de Rham.

At Zinal in July, 1947, this was my main objective. After a training walk on the Diablons with John Watson, the weather seemed to be set fair, and it was time to talk details with our guide, Rémy Theytaz. Rémy, who lives at Ayer, came to us with strong recommendations from Swiss friends. He combines all the qualities which go to make a really first-class guide, carrying on nobly the great traditions of the giants of the past. Tall and spare of build, he shows an agility on rock that I have never seen equalled, and this quality, combined with speed, skill and care, curiously blended, makes of him a leader inspiring a complete confidence in his second. Possessing a true love of mountains and an infectious sense of humour, Rémy was to be the mainspring of all our expeditions.

NORTH FACE OF THE DENT BLANCHE FROM THE GRAND CORNIER.

- - - - - 1943 Route.

- - - - - 1947 Route.

We decided to go up to the Mountet Hut the following day and climb the Besso. From the hut I had my first near view of our ridge, and spent some time in reconnoitring our approach to the Col de la Dent Blanche, through the icefall of the Roc Noir, and the details of the face itself. Although 1947 was a very dry season, there was still a heavy sprinkling of snow on the slabs we would have to cross below the dark crags of the middle section. The rest was conjecture. At the Mountet we learned that two young Swiss climbers from Bienne were starting for the North ridge in the morning, and found that theirs was to be the third ascent. As we set off for the Besso we picked them out through glasses on the ridge just above the col. Throughout that day, the Dent Blanche hung enticingly over our shoulders, and we often wondered how the other party was faring. Returning to the hut, we heard that they had been seen crossing and recrossing the face, but had not yet reached the summit, and were by this time presumably resigned to a bivouac. It was now decided that Rémy and I should follow them the next day, John and his wife very generously offering to carry our spare sacks over to the Schönbühl Hut, via the Pointe de Zinal, and there await our arrival.

There must have been more than a hundred people in the hut that night. It was difficult to get to bed, and, once there, the continual comings and goings made it impossible to sleep. When peace finally descended, it was half-past eleven, and time to get up. As we began breakfast, the last arrivals entered, and sat down to supper. The contrast between the two parties must have been amusing. The breakfasters, full of the fluff and blear of early morning, talked in grunts and whispers, and glowered at the hearty habits of the others. They for their part were curious as to our intentions, and obviously intrigued at our non-committal answers.

At half-past twelve we started. The night air soon restored our senses, but we descended quickly in silence and crossed to the foot of the Roc Noir Glacier. Here we put on our crampons and started up the ice fall. For the next two hours we scarcely stopped, moving now to the right, now to the left but always upwards, sometimes on narrow ice crests with yawning darkness and the falling music of ice particles to mind us of the depths on either side, sometimes across ice slopes, steep as the sides of a



bell tent where our crampons bit satisfyingly into the crust. As we could rarely see more than a few yards, Rémy's lack of hesitation will always remain a mystery to me ; the great bulk of the north face of the Dent Blanche hanging over us on our left and the lighter mass of the Grand Cornier on our right, were the only aids to direction. Occasionally Rémy paused, raising his lantern and peering into the black night. As he did so, I turned and saw the twinkle of light from the Mountet, and the glow-worms moving slowly away from it as the other parties set out. The night was cool but not cold, and as we paused a mighty roar announced the fall of several hundred tons of rock from Mont Durand behind us.

We reached the col at 4 a.m. and there a cold wind met us. After a short halt under the lee, we pushed on up the ridge, very narrow at first but presenting no great difficulty. Two hours must have elapsed—although my sense of the passage of time is clouded—when a short overhang marked the end of the lower ridge and gave us our first taste of the sterner problems which lay ahead. As Rémy surmounted the difficulty by a short chimney on the right, seamed with *verglas*, I was able to turn and take in the grandeur of our situation. The Grand Cornier, opposite and still above us, was bright in the early sun and the distant crests of the Obergabelhorn, Rothorn and Weisshorn rose majestically across the valley, increasing the sense of our remoteness. From the col below us, the thin ridge rose like a cord pulled taut, and above loomed oppressively the dull brown crags of the north face, shutting us off from the sun and its warmth. For the next five hours I saw none of this, feeling only the cold, and sensing the impending wall above us. As I turned to follow Rémy, the sound of a human voice came down the face—one of the most eerie sensations I can recall, striking us as it did at a time when our sense of isolation was complete. Our party of yesterday were now above the main difficulties of the climb and preparing to continue their way to the summit. It must have been a bitter night for them, perched as they were at a height of over 13,000 feet.

I joined Rémy and was able to examine the next part of the climb. A stretch of smooth slabs, covered with patches of snow and *verglas*, swept up above us at an angle of about fifty degrees, rising for three or four hundred feet to the foot of the great

bastion of rock overhead. It appeared to be completely devoid of any stance or resting place, until a pinnacle at its upper extremity and away to the right marked the point at which the right-hand edge of the ridge above could be gained. This pinnacle forms the notch which can be seen so clearly in profile from east and west.

Rémy led out, often a full hundred feet at a time, bearing slightly to the right. I looked up and marvelled at the prehensile nature of his vibram soles—the ice jammed between the indentations seeming to possess the qualities of glue. When we had gained a point about half way up the slabs, and before starting our long traverses to the right, we were subjected to a bombardment of stones and boulders of various sizes which descended from space and struck the slabs about us with a whirring cacophony. There was no possibility of taking cover. During the first attack, which lasted about half a minute, I was climbing, and the most I could hope to do was to find two solid footholds and wait. Ten minutes later, half a dozen stray shots followed, as we were strung out on the first of our long traversing movements to the right, and I watched with admiration as Rémy coolly continued his way, whilst one burst landed a few feet away from him, missing the rope by inches.

In discussing this incident afterwards, we came to the conclusion that it in no way detracted from the greatness of the climb. The ridge above, as we found later, was in bad condition, but so, of course, were most summit ridges this year. And it will be unusual to find two parties, separated by so great a distance, climbing on the face at the same time.

As we continued our traverse, we noticed the tracks of the others on the slabs, some two hundred feet below us. They had apparently gained the right-hand edge at that level.<sup>1</sup> The last thirty feet before the pinnacle and its broad ledge, brought Rémy to a halt. An attempt, a retreat, a hesitation, a step down and across—and we were over.

It was too cold to stay long. The crux of the climb lay ahead of us, and above it and to the right lay the broad sunny flank of the Ferpèche Arête; behind us stretched the slabs across which a biting wind reminded us of the welcome that was there

<sup>1</sup> In this they had followed the route of the 1943 party; I have been unable to discover at what level the first party gained the edge in 1928.

in the event of a retreat. After a short halt, we turned to the next pitch. It consisted, on the main face, of a steep slab, about a hundred feet high, broken above but with few and sloping holds in its lower part, and overhanging at its base. Its right-hand edge was similarly shaped, overhanging at its lower end, and steep—almost vertical—above. Around the corner to the right, and out of sight, a vertical wall rose from the bed of the couloir below. There seemed to be three possibilities. The slab might be gained at its lowest left-hand corner, and climbed diagonally to the right for about fifty feet. Alternatively, a delicate traverse to the right would lead to the corner where one or two spikes of rock gave promise of a take off up the corner itself. As a third solution it might be possible to continue this traverse round the corner, and get back on to the edge from the right at a higher level. Joseph Georges had looked at all three possibilities and finally climbed the edge direct. Georges de Rham had taken the first route, with the aid of two or three pitons and a shoulder.

A brief examination of the slab turned our attention elsewhere. Its start looked depressingly awkward, the second's stance would be precarious and the only belay a piton—hardly the route for a party of two. Rémy traversed out to the corner, and looked at the edge. A block peeled away under his feet and crashed down the couloir with a train of smaller stones. He climbed a few feet, and then returned. A few minutes' exercise partially restored the feeling to our frozen fingers, and I asked him what he thought of the difficulties round the corner. He must have sensed an incipient note of despair in my voice. His reply "*S'il n'y avait pas des difficultés nous ne serions pas ici,*" was a stern corrective. I now took up position on the stance below the slab and inserted a piton. (We had used two pitons in our crossing of the slabs—having to abandon one in our path.) Rémy now climbed passed me, and disappeared round the corner. For the next quarter of an hour, the rope crept after him, slowly and sometimes almost imperceptibly, but never stationary for more than a few seconds. It climbed jerkily up the edge, and eventually passed out of sight almost above my head. Soon the cry came down: Rémy was on the ridge, and had found a stance. The sacks went bundling up to join him, and I prepared to follow. Rounding the edge to the right I

traversed along the side wall to the inner corner and found myself below a small overhang. By stepping out for about eight feet on the steep wall forming the bed of the couloir to the right, it was possible to reach a high foothold and return above the overhang. The position was not much easier. The rocks were vertical, the holds were vague, and another overhang remained to be surmounted before the ridge on the left could be reached. Encouraged by a tight rope and assurance from above that our troubles were over, I struggled up and onto the ridge like a seal, and joined Rémy twenty feet higher. The transformation dazzled me. Below everything had been cold, and dark, and doubtful, but here the sun was shining, the world was warm and the ridge was ours. I looked at my watch—it was half-past eleven. We had spent five hours on the last five hundred feet.

The rest was easy. We scrambled up a few hundred feet, dawdled over lunch for an hour, and basked in the sun, finally reaching the summit at two o'clock. There we lay and smoked, watching the snail like progress of parties coming up the Vierieselgrat, and welcoming them as guests to our summit.

\* \* \*

Monday evening of the following week found us back at the Mountet. From the Schönbühl, over the Matterhorn to Zermatt and a rest day, we had then traversed the Rothorn from the Trift. In my plans, I had thought of including a traverse of the Moming ridge, but Rémy now suggested something more. He had an engagement on Tuesday night at the Tracuit Hut—what could be more convenient than a traverse of the whole Moming ridge from the Mountet, taking in the Schallihorn and Weisshorn as well? It would mean a long day and the possibility of a bivouac. Should we go prepared for a night out, or travel light for the sake of greater speed? We decided on the latter course, and at 2-15 a.m. left the Mountet and retraced our steps of the previous evening up to the shoulder of the Rothorn.

From this point our day's march stretched out before us. The long ridge rose and fell and twisted—over the two Moming peaks and along the long crest of the Schallihorn to the Schallijoch, finally to spring upwards in an impressive sweep to the crowning summit of the Weisshorn, standing supreme. Behind, and partly out of sight, lay the North ridge and the snowy dome

of the Bieshorn, where our descent would lie. This must be one of the finest ridge climbs in the Alps, extending as it does along the east side of the Zinal Valley for most of its length, and culminating in the 2,500 foot rock ridge of the Schalligrat—in 1947 wholly free of snow. The ridge forms the language frontier between the French-speaking parts of the Valais, stretching westwards from Zinal, and the German-speaking valleys, of which Zermatt is the western outpost. As we looked down, the rising sun was dissipating the olive grey-green hues of morning, and lighting up the confused white glacier masses in the valleys on either side. We passed quickly over the South Peak, down to the Col de Moming, and reached the north summit at about half-past seven. On the descent to the next col, the Hohlicht-pass, or Oberschallijoch as it is sometimes called, we dropped down onto the eastern flank, and traversed about a hundred feet below the crest.

The pull up to the Schallihorn is short and steep. The ridge at this point broadens out and in normal years presents a snow or ice slope which can take up valuable time, especially in the descent. In crampons we mounted easily, sometimes finding it necessary to cut through the thin layer of soft snow, nicking the ice beneath. At ten we were on the summit of the Schallihorn.

The North ridge is longer and more broken. For the only time during the day we encountered bad rock, and I found this section the least enjoyable. The Schalligrat rose ever higher ahead of us as we lost height, and a party of three descending from the Schallijoch, were threading the maze of the Schalliberg Glacier down to the Weisshorn Hut. Their day was ending ; it seemed that ours was just beginning. At one point, a short rappel was necessary—a complicated manoeuvre on one rope. The neck of the ridge below was away to one side, and before I could reach it, the rope ran out. I remained, poised on one toe like Eros, until Rémy slid down to join me and so release the deflationary pressure.

We stayed three-quarters of an hour at the Schallijoch, leaving at 1-15 p.m. On the Schalligrat I climbed in rubbers, and found the rock clean, dry, and warm, and the climbing in every way delightful. In contrast to our expedition on the Dent Blanche, when we spent most of the day in the cold north shadow of the mountain, we enjoyed here the warmth of the afternoon

sun, which seemed to lift us on our way. We floated up, climbing together and continuously, and only after two hours of uninterrupted movement did Rémy relent and agree to a short halt. I have a strong suspicion that even he was deceived by our speed, for shortly after we resumed, he pointed with obvious delight to the summit rocks above us, and seemed to share my surprise.

At half-past four we sat down on our fourth summit of the day. It was my first visit to this most graceful of all Alpine peaks. The three great ridges rise to a pin point, and from this airy belvedere the climber enjoys an unbroken view of most of the Western Alps. To the north, across the deep chasm of the Rhone Valley, rose the giants of the Oberland—Jungfrau, Aletschhorn, and Finsteraarhorn. Gathered in a cirque to the east and south, the graceful summits of the Vispatal—Mischabel, Matterhorn, and Monte Rosa—seemed to form a shield, within which ran the long ridge of the Obergabelhorn—Rothorn—Schallhorn chain, and, standing a little aloof, the Dent Blanche. Away to the west, as far as the eye could see, stood range upon range of rock and ice and snow, until in the dreamy distance, the white dome of Mont Blanc cast its great bulk against the evening sky. As the evening wore on, the gradations of light and shade from these western ridges were veiled by wisps of cloud rising from the darkening valleys. The whole picture, tinged by the sun's last rays, forms a memory of unforgettable beauty.

Reluctantly we started down the North ridge, patched with snow. We passed the Grand Gendarme, almost without noticing, climbing down its well worn holds and disdaining the rope loops, threadbare relics of earlier parties. It was only in turning from below that I recognised this great tower, so prominent in photographs of this side of the Weisshorn. Our main difficulties were now behind us, symbolised by these imposing crags, and a short scramble along the ridge brought us to the snow saddle below the Bieshorn. From this point our way lay over snowfield and glacier, so that although the sun was sinking to the horizon, our hopes of reaching the Tracuit seemed bright. We swung rhythmically up to the Bieshorn—one of the easiest and most frequently climbed of all Alpine *viertausender*—and quickly down to the upper reaches of the Turtmann Glacier, as the sun set leaving us behind, it seemed, in a deserted world.

The route down the glacier was well marked—from the tracks one would have thought a hundred individualists had descended on the Tracuit that day, each choosing his own steps. We jogged down, half asleep, and strangely satisfied with our fatigue. The air was warm, the snow was soft, and there was no sign of frost. On one occasion I awoke with a start to find the snow level with my chest, and my arms and axe instinctively spread in front of me. I struggled out of the crevasse, and we continued without comment. It wasn't even amusing. A little later I had another shock—twinkling lights away to the right. I rubbed my eyes. I knew I was tired, but surely—not hallucinations. I asked Rémy what they were. "*Comment ? Quoi ? Ou ?*" I feared the worst. Then to my relief he spotted them and identified the street lights of Montana, twenty miles away across the Rhone Valley. There is something natural about a sleeping Alpine village seen at dawn from a summit ridge—it seems part of the landscape, blending with the wooded slopes and the lower pastures. But this strange sight struck a more strident note. Here was man again and his civilised world.

The world of peace and beauty, which we were leaving, was not yet done however. As we traversed the level floor of the glacier, the sky to our left grew bright, and the full moon sailed up over the shoulder of the Tête de Millon, casting our long shadows far over the snow and lighting up the crystals which trailed around our feet. It was not yet ten o'clock, and another few minutes would bring us to the hut which lay just below. We stopped and, turning, looked up at the North ridge of the Weisshorn ; while our minds traversed again the solitude of those high and lonely ridges, where so much effort had brought us this incalculable reward.

# THE SHEAF CLIMB

A. D. M. COX

“**A**RMCHAIR” used adjectivally of mountaineering is a term to which I give a wide interpretation. It implies any form of climbing in which it is not merely unnecessary, but positively out of order, for the climber to leave the ground ; and, while it can be indulged in with perhaps the greatest degree of comfort at home, it is perfectly legitimate, though rather more dangerous, to practise it elsewhere. Indeed the most realistic form of armchair mountaineering demands that the climber should be physically present at the scene of the climb, where he can trace his route, not in imagination or from a photograph, but up the actual cliff itself. Undeniably this demands care ; there is sometimes a real risk that the enjoyment of doing the climb two or three times from the ground may so disturb the judgment as to produce an attempt to translate the imaginary into the actual, and it is at this point that the sport becomes unjustifiable. So it was in the instance I am about to describe.

During the palmy days at Llanberis in 1945, described in last year's *Journal*, there were many occasions on which the near side of Llyn du'r Arddu had suggested itself as a place of repose ; and, as anyone will agree who has ever sat there for an hour or two on a sunny day, it is impossible from that magnificent viewpoint not to do a good deal of armchair work on the twin cliffs across the lake. In certain lights the climbs go very easily. We found that conditions were best soon after dawn, when we were seldom there, or just before sunset, when there was sometimes a half hour in which the various routes, old and new, went with very little difficulty. Personally I was never very happy on the girdle traverse of the East Buttress, and the face of the Pinnacle above the Green Gallery had a few feet which



were always troublesome. But there were two particular routes on the West Buttress which gave interesting climbing of no excessive severity. One of them, the Central Rib, in the following year doubtless gave Carsten and Macphee more trouble than had been experienced on earlier ascents ; the other was the most conspicuous of the long slanting slabs between Longland's Climb and the Narrow Slab, a route whose light colour caused us to christen it the White Slab.

I had indeed done this climb from the same vantage point a number of times before the war and considered it a perfectly safe armchair route, since practical experience of its left-hand neighbour had on more than one occasion given me a very high respect for that part of the cliff. But the weather of the late summer of 1945, combined with the extraordinary chance which had endowed me with powers of a commanding officer over a number of first-rate leaders, created a situation very dangerous to the armchair mountaineer. The danger was heightened by a visit, in the middle of a strong rope, to the Narrow Slab, the approach to which involved actually crossing the lower reaches of the White Slab. Curiously enough, I do not remember giving it a thought at the time, possibly because my attention was exclusively occupied with other things, but Jock Campbell's leadership on the thin bits of the Narrow Slab had the certainty of touch to give confidence to the most apprehensive ; and it was undoubtedly this which afterwards put into my mind that feeling of tremulous resolution which is the sure sign that the canons of armchair mountaineering are about to be overstepped. So it came about—no powers of command were called for—that a few days later Campbell and I started onto the Buttress to try and see whether or not there really was a route on the White Slab.

We took the start of the Bow Shaped Slab, partly because that seemed in the line of our route, partly because we did not seriously expect our route to go, in which case we hoped to be able to finish by the Bow Shaped Slab itself. Campbell's leadership of the first three pitches wasted little time. The belay which we lassoed for the rope move was discovered on arrival on the other side to be the wrong one ; mechanically sound though it must have been, it was much better at the bottom of the cliff. The big bollard beyond it was perfectly safe, but

the combination of loose rock and steepness on the long pitch which follows gave, I thought, a very difficult piece of climbing. This brought us to the point where the Narrow Slab and Bow Shaped Slab entries reunite, and to the base of the White Slab itself. It was a most impressive stretch of rock, whose obvious firmness at least contrasted favourably with the unpleasant rottenness of the lower defences of the Buttress. Its appearance, however, did not encourage any idea that it could be climbed. My recollection is that, apart from a few feet of easy climbing in the corner, not on the slab itself and leading nowhere, it gave a very strong impression to the contrary. Round to the right, however, between it and the foot of the Narrow Slab, were some rocks which looked much more amenable. They form, I suppose, another layer in the sheaf<sup>1</sup> of slabs on the left side of the West Buttress, though their structure was not so obviously slabby as that of most of the other slabs in that area. We had no great hopes that they would lead anywhere, but it was possible that they might allow us to look over onto the White Slab higher up, and perhaps afford a route onto it at a point where the chances were more encouraging.

To our surprise these rocks were perfectly straightforward, and, with two excellent stances at not very long intervals, we found ourselves making height without serious difficulty. Above the second stance Campbell moved up to the left and disappeared over an edge, and I presently joined him, tightly ensconced in a curious nook in a small chimney close beside the White Slab. This opening up of a new foreground was a noteworthy moment. Up till this point optimism as to our chances had played a most negative part, and neither of us had seriously believed that there was the least likelihood of the route developing. The unexpectedly easy progress so far was clearly too good to last, and had done nothing to dispel the feeling that it was only a matter of time before the bubble was pricked. With little expectation of success, there had been little excitement ; nor had the detail of the climbing left much definite impression. This was now altered. Although appearances from the nook certainly gave no positive assurance, they did suggest the possibility of a future to our route, even to the extent of allowing some latitude in our

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Longland's description of the structure of the West Buttress ("a series of sheaves of rock gradually overlapping from left to right") in *Oxford and Cambridge Mountaineering* 1928-9 suggested the name of the present route.

speculations as to the line it might take. The result was an exhilarating change of mood. Nothing, I suppose, could be more childish or more completely exciting than the intensifying state of suspense in which I, at least, found myself for the next couple of hours. It was not so much the difficulty of the climbing, which except for a single move was not, for a good leader, outstanding, nor the quality of the route, which impartial judges may well find less excellent than that of the other climbs on the West Buttress. Mainly it was the vivid uncertainty of whether there was a route at all, combined with the fascination of watching a favourite armchair climb of long standing gradually working itself out in practice.

The view up and down the White Slab from the neighbourhood of the nook was impressive, but what was of more immediate interest was the obvious accessibility of the thin but prominent crack running up the centre of the White Slab itself. Campbell moved across to the left into it, up it for a short distance and out again to a splendid little perch and serviceable belay on the right. On the way to join him, I looked over the outer edge of the slab, and discovered there an improbable line of ample ledges, from the last of which it looked as though one might be able to rope down to somewhere in the vicinity of Faith and Friction Slab. We took note of this as a possible emergency exit. The Slab itself at this point was discouraging. Its roughness and not impossibly steep angle gave a faint suggestion that it might be just climbable, but there was no apparent resting place for at least fifty feet, and after about fifteen feet of extremely delicate climbing Campbell decided not to persist with it. But up to the right of the perch was a possible alternative, a very pronounced black-looking corner where one facet of the slab abutted against the supporting wall of the next slab to the right. This straight and sinister groove could obviously be entered without much difficulty. If it could be climbed, it was clear that it would emerge eventually through the cannon hole in the large ledge below the final pitch of Longland's Climb ; but this was a point of purely academic interest for us, since it was equally clear that there was no chance of climbing it. Campbell, however, moved up for twenty feet as far as the groove would reasonably go, and found himself a running belay. The right wall of the groove overhung, as the right walls of the

grooves on that part of the cliff usually do, in generous measure, and I could see no likelihood of our being able to break out over it. There seemed to be some sort of ledge with handholds over the top, but the heavily undercut wall gave no foothold, and this meant that the pull-up which any such move would involve would have to be a most extraordinary contortion. This proved to be the case. So far as I remember, the position from which the manoeuvre had to be started involved placing the feet far out to the left on the slab, the hands far out to the right on the wall, and suspending the body almost horizontally between them ; an attitude ill suited for the execution of a straight arm-pull. To my surprise and undying admiration, Campbell after a brief preliminary survey made this remarkable unpleasant move without hesitation ; the landing was good, and a stance and belay immediately to hand. This was news of the first importance to me, the place being astonishingly airy and not one on which to be particular about ways and means ; I have never had less hesitation about asking for a haul at full strength. Whether or not it was a move of great technical difficulty to anyone with really strong arms I am not in a position to judge, but without them, or a good rope ahead in lieu, I had no doubts at all at the time that it would have been impossible.

We were now to some extent committed, since the move could only have been reversed by an abseil ; on the other hand the new, but limited, horizon which was opened up was not without encouraging features. The new groove immediately ahead, while it did not appear easy, was at least an unqualified improvement on the one we had just left, and the next twenty or thirty feet went well enough up the corner, partly by a sort of layback. We now found ourselves on a comfortable little grass ledge, two or three feet square, tucked in under the retaining right wall of the groove. Straight up the groove appeared to be the only possible line. For the first few feet the right wall boasted an irregularity which allowed some purchase for the feet ; thereafter it looked as if the friction of the slab would be the main support until some kind of a grass landing could be reached at about thirty-five feet. It looked extremely difficult, but not as downright hopeless as the first groove we had encountered. If it did not go, it was hard to see how the climb could be completed, and we should have to use the remaining

hour and a half of daylight to good advantage in order to get down. On the other hand, although we did not know exactly where we were, there was not much doubt that this would be the cliff's last kick before the top. At the first attempt it was obvious that it was extremely hard, even at the bottom ; Campbell returned to the ledge after a few feet. At the second attempt he made his way a good deal higher, and came down again with some difficulty. He decided to try it facing outwards so as to get better purchase against the wall, but got no further than before. Each descent was a tiring business, and on this occasion to save strength he jumped the last few inches down onto the ledge. As bad luck would have it, there was some kind of a lump concealed under the grass, and he twisted his ankle sharply in landing.

This was the point at which the suspense became quite agonising. We sat down for Campbell to rest and to examine the damage, which was clearly going to be a considerable handicap. Like the mechanically sound belay lower down, the ankle seemed only good for stresses in certain directions, and although Campbell was still hopeful that the groove could be climbed the awful possibility began to dawn on me that I might be called on to try and climb it. A drowning man clutches at a straw, and under the stimulus of the alternative prospect I was roused to make my one contribution to the day's success. The retaining wall on our right overhung, not in the uncompromising fashion of the groove we had earlier escaped from, but with a general configuration that had not suggested that there was any possibility of repeating our previous tactics and breaking out over it. In point of fact, I think there was no chance of a straight arm-pull over the wall ; but low down, at about the level at which we were sitting, far out on the edge of the wall I suddenly noticed a small foothold. It looked as though, by an enormous straddle, it might be just possible to get a foot to it from the ledge, more particularly as the stride would be made with complete protection from the immediately adjacent belay. A tentative experiment while the ankle was still undergoing treatment showed that it was indeed possible, and that the edge of the wall gave a good grip on which to swing out ; but I was not able without committing myself (which I was reluctant to do) to see where the move would lead or whether there was any landing

Campbell was reluctant to abandon the groove, and thought his ankle was good enough for one more attempt, but the injury obviously handicapped his efforts, and he came down again without attempting to force it. He then tested the ankle gingerly on the long straddle, found it good for that particular pressure, and in a moment had pulled out onto the foothold. His terse "This is it" brought a sudden end to the tension, for a single balancing move round the corner was all that was needed to land us on the easy upper rocks of the Narrow Slab, about a hundred feet below the top. It was a curiously abrupt ending to our uncertainties, and one which came as a surprise, for we had not, for some reason, realised that we had been forced over so far in that direction. Rapid scrambling brought us out on the top of the cliff with three-quarters of an hour of daylight in hand.

Nothing is harder than to form a fair appreciation of the standard and quality of a climb on which one's critical faculties have been dulled at the time by the absorption of finding the route, and by the inordinate importance one attached, for those few hours, to getting up it. It was quite clear that it needed a leader of exceptional judgment, and that it contained one move which, if only for lack of arm strength—but not only for that!—it would have been entirely beyond me to follow unassisted. Apart from this, I doubt whether the Sheaf is as difficult as the other routes on that buttress. Only the one move seemed harder than the pitches of the Bow Shaped Slab entry, and the rest very considerably easier. The route shares with Longland's Climb the enormous merit of short pitches, small but good stances and excellent belays. As regards its general character, this again, while showing the typical West Buttress qualities of good rock and exhilarating situations, seemed different from that of the other routes; and this was probably due to the fact that it is the only one of them which is forced to disregard the natural slab structure of the Buttress and on two occasions to cross the retaining walls of the grooves. This gives it a certain directness of line, for, with the Bow Shaped Slab start, it takes a roughly straight course up the cliff; but because of the slant of the rock structure it is in fact going not with the grain, but across it, and its difficult moves are mostly in, or out of, grooves, rather than up slabs. Hence it lacks the delicacy of either of its neighbours, and derives much of its interest from

surprise situations. Artistically it would have been a better climb had it been possible to finish independently of the Narrow Slab, but it may be that the climbing of the final groove will eventually give it a cleaner and much harder finish.

The White Slab itself, of course, was hardly touched except for a short stretch half way up ; so the White Slab Climb not only retains the old attraction, but has now become the most completely safe route I am ever likely to do from an armchair.

# CWM LLAFAR SURVEY

E. C. PYATT

## TOPOGRAPHICAL

CWM LLAFAR is the valley running N.W. from the heart of the Carnedd Mountains towards Bethesda and is drained by the Afon Llafar, which joins the Ogwen River at Bethesda. The highest peaks of the Carnedd Group—Yr Elen, Carnedd Llewelyn and Carnedd Dafydd are grouped at the head. Standing on the floor of the cwm it can be seen that the slopes of the E. side are precipitous without forming any crags. On the right of the head is the large and imposing crag—Ysgolion Duon (Black Ladders) with Cwm Marwddwr below. Farther right is a spur of the N.W. ridge of Carnedd Dafydd known as Crib Lem, the base of which is truncated to form the very steep and somewhat vegetated crag of Llech Ddu, which is therefore low down and faces N.E. To the right again around Cwm Glas are other lower crags, one of which has provided some climbs.

## PREJUDICES—PAST AND PRESENT

Cwm Llafar has always suffered from difficulty of access ; particularly it is remote from Helyg, the route from which up the interminable S. slopes of Carnedd Dafydd and passing near or over the summit, though it has been done, can be dismissed as a reasonable prelude to a search for new routes. A considerably better approach, recommended by George Abraham, is to descend the Nant Ffrancon to Ty Gwyn, follow the cart track which slants N. up the hillside and contour the broad N.W. ridge of Carnedd Dafydd. A similar route is from the neighbourhood of Tyn y Maes in the Nant Ffrancon by a direct line over the flat lower part of the ridge to the nearest point of the Cwm. E. W. Steeple's party, Ref. (7), stayed at Gerlan, above Bethesda and at the lower lip of the valley, but this course



is not likely to recommend itself to present day climbers desiring to spend part at least of their time on the better known crags. There is a large and sheltered bivouac place immediately below Llech Ddu among the boulders in the Cwm.

The crags in Cwm Llafar can be said to suffer from the same drawbacks as Craig yr Ysfa, described at length in Ref. (15). Here, too, there is vegetation and a certain vagueness as to routes.

## HISTORICAL

On 19th April, 1879, an Alpine Club party of thirteen on their way from Bangor to Capel Curig "ascended Carnedd Dafydd from Bethesda by the cliffs of the ridge that connects the two Carnedds. The presence of large quantities of snow and ice gave a thoroughly Alpine character to the scene and added much to the interest of the climbing." (1)

W. P. Haskett-Smith (2) describes the crags of Ysgolion Duon and an ascent of the Central Gully. He implies further that the Western Gully had been climbed at that time—"The right hand or western gully is very steep and having often quite a stream in it, is then decidedly hard and requires considerable care in winter." J. M. A. Thomson (6) claims the first ascent of it for Messrs. P. H. Cooke, T. Brushfield and H. Owen in August, 1901, while George Abraham again claimed the first ascent in 1905. This latter claim led to the famous sneer of J. M. A. Thomson—"this climb is the most difficult of those in the district, whose first ascent has been accomplished twice"; it would seem, however, in the light of Haskett-Smith that the first ascent was really accomplished three times.

J. M. A. Thomson also climbed the Eastern Gully which is comparatively insignificant and easy. By 1910, therefore, the crag held just these three gully climbs; and nothing further happened for a number of years, even though some writers made promising mention of the possibilities:—

"The buttresses between all the gullies are magnificent, and west of the Western Gully some unexplored shallow cracks cleave the great slabs from base to summit." (3)

Left of Central Gully—"Higher up there are several arêtes of the Tryfan type. These will be found to be difficult of approach from below, but no doubt there are some capital routes awaiting the advent of an ardent explorer." (3)

Left of Western Gully—"Huge, black, rocky steps rise tier on tier to the skyline, and the top of each rise is crowned by a long narrow stretch of delicately tinted vegetation, stretching apparently right across the precipice. This great ladder-like buttress with its cyclopean steps has not been climbed through-out. . . ." (4)

Attention was shifted abruptly to Llech Ddu, hitherto unclimbed, by the publication of an article by E. W. Steeple (7) in 1922, describing seven routes made on the crag during the previous ten years. Another climb was described—West End Buttress—at the extreme western end of the cirque of Ysgolion Duon. But after this outburst the Cwm was again forgotten until in 1932 Colin Kirkus inspected Llech Ddu and commented unfavourably as follows (8):—

"This cliff is steep but disappointingly grassy: there can be no continuity about the climbs. A broad band of steep grass runs practically across the cliff about half-way up. Failed to identify any of the climbs but did not try very hard. It is doubtful whether a new climb of any merit as distinct from difficulty could be found here. The only continuous line of rock, a series of conspicuous noses, seemed to bristle with impossible overhangs."

This perhaps did much to deflect interest in the Club away from the valley, while at the same time considerable new developments were taking place on much better crags, much more conveniently situated. However, A. B. Hargreaves, reviewing the current state of progress in Welsh climbing in the *Fell and Rock Journal* in 1933 (9), again mentioned Ysgolion Duon and Llech Ddu as crags to be explored. By 1934 a few parties began to visit Cwm Llafar and some new routes were at last recorded on the buttresses in the ensuing years (10), (11), (12), (13), (14). Midsummer 1938 saw a determined attack on the steep front of Llech Ddu by P. O. Work and I. ap G. Hughes, which had to be abandoned owing to excessive difficulties after three pitches. Then the war with its more difficult travel conditions began once again to confine exploration to the more accessible crags.

In 1944 a new route—Covent Garden (16)—was made by a J.M.C.S. party on a crag in the cwm on the right of Llech Ddu. On Easter Monday, 1946, while another J.M.C.S. party was

attempting unsuccessfully a further climb on the same crag, G. Dwyer and R. Morsley (J.M.C.S.) made a magnificent very severe route right up the front of Llech Ddu (17), following more or less the line of the 1938 exploration. Last year two new routes were made on the East Buttress of Ysgolion Duon by parties led by J. H. Emlyn Jones.

## THE CLIMBS

It is assumed that the journals referred to hereafter are available to readers from Club libraries and full details only are given of climbs described in the Helyg Log Book.

### YSGOLION DUON

#### EAST GULLY.

First Ascent by J. M. A. Thomson and H. Hughes, 1900.  
Refs. (3), (5) and (6). *Standard* : Moderately Difficult.

#### CENTRAL BUTTRESS.

##### (1) *Pegasus*.

First Ascent by J. H. Emlyn Jones and D. J. Watson, 1st June, 1947. On the right wall of East Gully. "The grass ledge at the top of pitch (1) of the Mare's Nest (see below) runs down towards the deep cut gully (East Gully). Its arrival is prevented by a rocky rib. Start at the continuation of the line of this ledge in the gully itself, on its right wall—looking up—at the bottom of a long thin slab, which runs up the full height of the buttress. The route follows the line of the long thin slab throughout, breaking off to right and left for stances and belays. A good steep climb with a good finish. Rock may be a little suspect in places, but should improve.

(1) 80 feet. Up the slab, steep at first to a stance and belay on its right edge—climb partly on the rib during lower section.

(2) 120 feet. Continue up same line—spike for running belay at about 40 feet. Break out on to broad ledge on left—good stance, belays, etc.

(3) 40 feet. Traverse back on to slab which is now recessed forming a chimney and up on to grass ledge on right.

(4) 60 feet. Step across slab with an airy swing on to the rib forming its left retaining wall—looking up—and continue up this rib to broad ledge—belays, etc. Finish of climb (good and steep).

*Standard* : Severe.

There are various grassy escapes to the right in the middle section, but route takes a direct line up the face."

##### (2) *Mare's Nest Climb*.

First Ascent by J. H. Emlyn Jones and B. M. Crowther, 26th May, 1947.

"Descending into Cwm Llafar from the col between the Carneddus and passing under Ysgolion Duon, the first pronounced natural feature encountered is a fairly deep-cut gully running obliquely down across the face from east to west (East Gully). At the point where the gully widens out—200 feet or so above steep, black-streaked cliffs—its (true) left side rises in a series of steep clean buttresses merging into the summit ridges. Start at the foot of the main and steepest buttress where two cube blocks have fallen on to a grass rake rising to the right.

(1) 60 feet. Climb a V-corner and step on to the rib on the left, continuing upwards to a broad grass ledge.

The main mass of the buttress now rises ahead—reminiscent of Lliwedd, Mallory's Slab.

(2) 40 feet. Straight up centre of the slabs to the Mare's Nest—good belay—the stance a bit of a delusion. The pitch is thin towards the top.

(3) 65 feet. Traverse left 15 feet and up the ribs forming left edge of the slab, returning in an arc on good holds to the centre line. Good ledge with belays.

(4) 30 feet. Climb two rock towers to rocky ledge—cairn. Good scrambling follows to summit plateau reminiscent of Terminal Arête.

A steep climb, fine situations and rock excellent throughout. May become easier with traffic.

*Standard* : Good Very Difficult. Probably Severe."

### (3) *Jacob's Ladder.*

First Ascent by F. H. Jacob, E. P. Williams, R. G. Williams and I. F. Parry, 5th August, 1935.

Ref. (11). *Standard* : Very Difficult.

### (4) *Terminal Arête.*

First Ascent by F. H. Jacob, S. M. Jacob, I. B. Williams and R. G. Williams, 2nd August, 1937.

Ref. (14). *Standard* : Very Difficult.

## CENTRAL GULLY.

First Ascent unknown—pre Ref. (2).

Refs. (3), (5) and (6). *Standard* : Moderately Difficult.

## WEST BUTTRESS.

### (1) *Roughcast Flutings.*

First Ascent by R. A. Hodgkin, A. D. M. Cox and C. Crichton-Miller, 11th January, 1937.

Refs. (8) and (13). *Standard* : Very Difficult.

### (2) *Roughcast Wall.*

First Ascent by R. A. Hodgkin and R. L. Beaumont, 19th March, 1937.

"On the main westerly buttress a new climb was made. Go up the oblique terrace, the bottom end of which is guarded by the tricky

'turnstile.' After passing one fierce slab, another slab is reached with a small pinnacle half-way up. The start of the climb is here, 30 feet before 'Roughcast Flutings.' Climb the slab in two pitches, 50 feet and 90 feet. Holds are mostly grass tufts and are unpleasant when frozen. Above and to the left are some loose blocks, 30 feet. Climb over these and back (right) and then up crack behind a small pinnacle (50 feet). This is on the same level as the detached block of 'Roughcast Flutings.' From this climb a nice scoop to a terrace with a triangular blade belay above, 30 feet. A short severe step follows before a small groove is reached which leads to a belay, 40 feet. Scramble for 100 feet to the summit of the buttress."

*Standard* : Harder than Roughcast Flutings.

### (3) *Hoyland's Route.*

First Ascent by J. D. Hoyland, J. R. Jenkins and G. Showell, 29th July, 1934.

Ref. (10). *Standard* : Difficult or Very Difficult.

### WESTERN GULLY.

First Ascent by P. H. Cooke, T. Brushfield and H. Owen, August, 1901.

Refs. (3), (5) and (6). *Standard* : Exceedingly Difficult (comparable with the Great Gully of Craig yr Ysfa).

### WEST END BUTTRESS.

First Ascent by E. W. Steeple and G. Barlow, Whitsun, 1911.

Ref. (7). No standard given.

### LLECH DDU

THE PRIMITIVE ROUTE

THE PILLAR TRAVERSE

THE CORRIDOR GULLY

THE Y CHIMNEY

THE CAVE ROUTE

THE FAR EAST CHIMNEY

THE CENTRAL SLAB ROUTE

THE CENTRAL ROUTE

First Ascent by E. W. Steeple and G. Barlow between 1912 and 1921.  
Ref. (7). No standards given.

First Ascent by G. Dwyer and R. Morsley, Easter Monday, 1946.

Ref. (17). *Standard* : Very Severe.

### CRAIG BY LLECH DDU

#### THE GULLY.

First Ascent by J. R. Jenkins, M. S. Taylor and A. A. Woodall, 21st June, 1936.

Ref. (12). *Standard* : Very Difficult.

#### COVENT GARDEN.

First Ascent by E. C. Pyatt, K. C. King, G. S. Johnstone and R. Howard, Christmas, 1944.

Ref. (16). *Standard*—2B.

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J. E. Q. BARFORD



## IN MEMORIAM

J. E. Q. BARFORD

So far as I know, John Barford started his climbing at a C.U.M.C. meet in Skye, in June, 1935. None of us had known him before, and he turned up late one evening on a bicycle, an even deeper shade of brown than the one which later became familiar, looking as though he had ridden non-stop from Cambridge. In fact, with enterprise we envied a little, he had travelled to Aberdeen by coastal steamer and cycled down the Great Glen. He confessed to having done some scrambling in Wales, but I think the Window Buttress on Sgurr Dearg must have been his first rope climb, as I recall showing him how to tie on, with all the superiority of my year or two's experience. Presumably John's scornful opinion of "C.U.M.C. belays" dates from that climb.

It was a happy-go-lucky meet, and the climbing was mostly undistinguished and carefree ; John certainly performed no notable feats. He played a more memorable part at the C.U.M.C. meet in Grindelwald later the same summer, when he lost all the party's money while cutting steps, and found it again in the evening on the lip of a bergschrund. This meet accomplished some very respectable tours, and had a sobering effect on John, he told me later ; he made a private, independent decision at every opportunity, and three times out of four it turned out to be a wrong one. He stayed away from the Alps for three years, probably deliberately, to shorten the odds before the next occasion.

Instead, he began to explore the British crags methodically and indefatigably. After he left Cambridge he worked for a time at Rugby, and spent every possible holiday and week-end at Hely or in the Lakes : one came to expect to find John at

Helyg without prior arrangement, and some of those random week-ends were the best I have ever had. John progressed only slowly, but his constant state of fitness and accumulated skill and experience soon outstripped my pedestrian performance. At first he had no regular climbing companions, and in the summer of 1936 he went to Helyg alone, resigned to exploring Wales for three weeks on his own ; he had the luck to find C. H. S. R. Palmer there in similar plight, and that three weeks of energetic climbing laid the foundations for John's cragmanship and intimate knowledge of the climbs of Wales.

The next year he had a long summer holiday in Skye, Nevis and the Lakes with A. M. Wadsworth, with whom he was now climbing a great deal. They were a business-like pair to watch, wasting no time or effort on a climb : their familiarity with each other, and, often, with the climb, usually gave the impression that they read each other's minds—both were taciturn when in action. John was usually the one who planned the campaigns, and had his own good reasons for what he recommended ; his authority was based on voracious reading, and conversation with all climbing people he met. It was probably his conversation which first brought him to the notice of the " tigers " in Wales, rather than his performance, which, though undoubtedly distinguished, was not phenomenal ; he used to advance his views with such confidence, and back them up with such sound arguments and, usually, first-hand experience that they soon became respected. His article, " Rope to play with," in the 1938 *Journal*, shows something of his acquaintanceship with all that was going on, and also of his keen interest in developments of technique.

In 1938, John felt he was ready for another trial with the Alps, and five of us had a conventional and rather disappointingly uneventful fortnight at Zermatt. Good weather, good food (John used to rise early to provide porridge and scrambled eggs for breakfast in the huts at 3 a.m.), big mountains—nothing seemed to go wrong, but it was somehow not to John's taste, and he and Wadsworth consoled themselves with the Grépon, which he described in the 1939 *Journal*. Thoroughly at home on rock, he did not have the same feeling of mastership in the *high* Alps as yet, and he remembered this experience when he planned his post-war expeditions to the Alps.

Throughout the war he lived in London, but managed to do an inordinate amount of climbing, in spite of Home Guard duties and training, which he took up with his usual wholehearted zeal. It was sometimes a surprise to those who knew how much climbing he did, to learn that he only had the usual two weeks holiday a year ; he made the fullest possible use of every bank holiday and free week-end, and, whether by luck or design, his work involved occasional visits to Carlisle or the Westmorland coast. In the early days of the war, he climbed with R. M. Hind, a climber of ferocious agility ; the guide to the Llanberis cliffs, which lay in Helyg in typescript for some years and was eventually published in the *Journal*, took shape then. Later, he worked on the Clogwyn du'r Arddu guide with Edwards, and with him concocted the ill-fated numerical classification. Many others he climbed with, too, because it seemed that no other individual partner could equal his perpetual enthusiasm. He was particularly interested in Clogwyn du'r Arddu of late, and returned there frequently ; he was bivouacking there again at Whitsun, 1947, which was, I think, his last visit to Wales.

It seems almost unnecessary to recall John's personal characteristics, so widely was he known and liked. His handsome, clean-cut features, his constant good humour and patience, made him pleasant company at all times. In huts, or on long night train trips, his habit of doing more than his fair share of the work, and his knack of extracting the maximum of comfort from the surroundings, were invaluable. But above all, his undemonstrative, but none the less infectious, enthusiasm for climbing, and the wholehearted pleasure he took in it, made him the ideal companion in the hills. We can all remember days when we were reluctant to start out, and eager to return ; when climbing seemed boring and pointless. John's company seemed always a safe insurance against such a feeling ; there never seemed to be too much talk or too little, too much hurry or dawdling, too many arguments about the route ; the end of the day seemed always to bring with it a sense of accomplishment, no less pleasant even if it were minor.

It is necessary to recall this for two different reasons ; first, to realize that John never became a bore on the subject of climbing, as he might easily have done, with his apparently all-absorbing interest in it ; and secondly, in spite of the fact that more than

most people he regarded climbing as a technique to be learned, analysed and mastered, he never lost sight of its primary purpose, which is pleasure ; he always climbed for fun, even though, like everything he went in for, he took it seriously and, if possible, combined some purpose with his pleasure. There was very little sentiment about it, and he rarely reclimbed an old climb just for old time's sake ; he was more usually keyed up for some fresh exploration, or some analysis or comparison of difficulty or technique—an attitude to be expected in one with the temperament and training of an engineer ; but he still found climbing to be tremendous fun. He did not succumb to the danger that his vested interest in his own authority and reputation might eventually carry him beyond his inclinations, and turn him into a semi-professional “ climbing machine ” ; or that he might become so pre-occupied with the “ educative ” side of climbing as to forget the pleasure he took in it.

John was really quite a phenomenon in the earnestness of his attitude towards climbing ; he was rarely flippant or cynical about anything, and least of all so about climbing. He preferred always to speak with confidence and authority, and was badly disconcerted if successfully contradicted, so he made it his business to know all the answers. This applied equally to all subjects distantly connected with climbing—Welsh and Gaelic place-names and the naming of particular crags ; the petrology and geology of mountains ; the basic architectural requirements of climbing huts—these were the sort of things to which he devoted unusually serious study. Many of these subjects were, of course, directly connected with the efficiency and comfort of climbing, but many of them were pursued mainly in the interests of sheer accuracy. He inevitably gave the impression of having no other interests outside climbing (he used to say that he could only talk on two subjects, the other being electrical engineering, and neither was of much use at polite parties) but this was not so ; he had wide interests, but in other subjects he did not usually feel he had expert knowledge enough to permit himself to speak of them more than casually.

As regards the technique of climbing, John was strictly orthodox. But this is not to say that he was in the slightest degree conservative ; he eagerly investigated novelties in the way of footwear, rope and ironmongery, if only in order to

establish their respectability as soon as possible if they deserved it. Nylon rope, for instance, was duly awarded first-class credentials in the 1945-6 *Journal* ; tough moulded rubber soles for boots had lately been under test, and had, I believe, received his approval ; Lawrie's new nails were tested to destruction on Barford boots, and were accepted as satisfactory. So rapid was his turnover in boots, that I always half expected him to turn up for a week-end with two pairs, after the manner of Wimbledon tennis stars. But unorthodoxy just for the sake of being different was quite alien to him ; his climbing clothes, for instance, were always *subfusc*.

This liking of John's for organizing and codifying things in tidy form naturally did not receive a sympathetic response from everyone ; but it stood the Club in good stead during the difficult war years, when he was almost an ideal secretary. An appreciation of his more formal contribution will be found elsewhere, but from a more personal viewpoint, that of very many individual climbers in this country, and of a substantial number of foreign exiles too, John was the focal point of English climbing during the war years. Everyone in need of information and advice turned to him, whether in search of climbing partners or loan of equipment, news of prisoners of war or entry into restricted areas. As his "Pelican" claimed, he probably knew more climbers than anyone else in the country, and he kept in close touch with all that went on in those years, recording at least all the new Welsh climbs every year in the *Journal*. When the British Mountaineering Council came to be set up, I imagine that no other alternative to John as its secretary was considered, so obvious a choice was he.

I am not competent to pass judgment on John's technical ability ; but I suppose that, as a rock-climber, he was first-rate without being brilliant. He was no spectacular prodigy, and developed relatively slowly ; he made few first ascents, though he was second on many. I should not have called him a graceful or an effortless climber, and sometimes in a difficult place he would look very bothered. But any anxiety this might induce was always misplaced, because John was the most reliable of climbers. As in everything else, he had precise knowledge of his own capabilities, and never climbed on too flimsy a trust ; he did nothing out of bravado, and to take all sensible precautions

was second nature to him. He had one serious accident, which happened while he was posing for the "roping down" sketch in his "Pelican" book; he commented: "I was careless," and left it at that, confident that there would be no lapses on a genuine climb. He had the average number of slips and tumbles for a venturesome climber, but precautions always held according to plan; I never heard him say: "I was lucky," and the last accident was certainly not due to carelessness.

It is probable that John's highest development would have been in the Alps, where stamina, experience, sound judgment and all-round ability count for more than gymnastic brilliance. His trip to the Bregaglia in 1946 was only his third time in the Alps, owing to the intervention of the war, and some Swiss and French eyebrows were raised at the performance of his party. His tour in 1947, which ended so tragically, seemed planned as a further stage in his training, which was very likely laid down for five years or more ahead, like an athlete's training schedule. I don't think there were any limits to his ambition in Alpine climbing, though he said with no great conviction that he thought he would be too old for Everest—some of his "children" would go instead. One can doubt that age would have crept on him so soon, and certainly I think John had Himalayan plans; his engineering work had of late been largely concerned with electrical equipment for India, and even if this was by accident and not design, it would still carry the prospect of business visits, and, inevitably for John, the chance of spending his leave in the Himalayas. But for the time being, he had scope enough in bringing his Alpine skill and experience up to the level of his rock-climbing, which, as far as this country was concerned, had reached its limit.

All of us who climbed with John will associate many corners of the hills with him; his lean frame and loping stride, his cheerful face and boisterous guffaw, his quick look of appraisal at the crag as his fingers almost unconsciously whipped the bowline round his waist. There was little sentiment in John's climbing, and we need waste none on his memory. He enjoyed climbing to the full, and his climbing life was fuller than that of most of us will ever be.

B. M. CROWTHER.





H. E. KRETSCHMER



## H. E. KRETSCHMER

Nully Kretschmer was just thirty years old when he was killed whilst descending the Brenva face on Mt. Blanc, with John Jenkins, last summer. He was one of those people who always managed to reach his objectives at an earlier age than most. He was only nineteen when he obtained his degree at Oxford and had already acquired much experience of mountaineering, not to mention rowing in a trial eight at Oxford and being in the running for the University skiing team. He joined the Club in 1937 and served on the Committee, first as Assistant *Journal* Editor and then as Guidebook Editor, in which capacity he recently republished all the Climbers' Club guides. He wrote the Craig yr Ysfa guide, in conjunction with David Cox, and served the Club in many unostentatious ways.

He made a number of new routes in Wales, particularly on the Carneddys, when working on the guide, but first ascents as such held no great attraction for him unless they were of a major character.

By profession he was a research chemist, spending a year at Oxford, after taking his degree, and then going on to Callenders Cable Company, for whom he did much original work.

His earlier contacts with mountains before 1934 were mostly in Bavaria, Austria and Switzerland, and though they were incidental to skiing his ability on rocks was at once apparent when he joined the O.U.M.C., although the change of emphasis did not take place till a few years later, and then only because the limitation of holidays forced the issue. There were for that matter many other competitors, for he was fond of most sports which did not impose too rigid a framework in their execution, such as sailing and riding. He read a lot and had a wide knowledge of English literature and drama.

At first rebellious, deliberately ignorant of conventions, he climbed instinctively, and there were always those at hand to crab the exuberance of youth who said he climbed recklessly. But, in fact, his natural ability, his fearlessness and his great strength were always available to confound the censorious and astonish the half-hearted, and while some of his solo climbs on Craig yr Ysfa or the clandestine ascent of the

Radcliffe Camera would have been desperate feats for most of us, they lay well within his powers.

Nevertheless, as his character matured, his climbing altered, and with ripened experience he became both one of the soundest and one of the ablest rock climbers in this country. His alpine experience was necessarily less, since the war occupied more than half his mountain years, but he had three mountaineering and four skiing expeditions in the Alps before the war and returned for two more seasons in 1946 and 1947, bent on the achievement of the classic routes, which so far he had had to be content only to read about. Perhaps his most cherished ambition was to take a year out of his career to make an expedition to one of the great mountain ranges of Asia, but any idea of personal glory or fame or of competition with others was most distasteful to him. He seldom left any record of his achievements, valuing them only for themselves, and it was usually only by casual reference that they became known. He expected the same standards from his friends, and whilst he was by nature one of the kindest and most charming of people he was utterly intolerant of those whom he considered boastful, competitive, "political," or self-indulgent mountaineers, and took no pains to disguise his feelings.

The extraordinary number and the intimate and varied nature of his friendships were knit by the common bond of mountaineering and were to a large extent a substitute for the ties and affections of family life. To many of us, the loss is something much greater than that of a more casual acquaintanceship.

Nully was one of those strongly contrasted characters who, though he could exercise the greatest charm and tact, had really little use for the conventions and trimmings of life. Many will remember the crowded floor of our flat in London, among the miscellaneous sleeping equipment always available at a moment's notice to his friends; his excellent cooking sometimes distorted by the research chemist's approach; or the fantastic sight of Nully's bedroom, as fine an example of "pleasing decay" as John Piper could wish, or even that other sanctum sanctorum where the flotsam of his many changes of home accumulated to the constant enjoyment of clouds of moths. And who, having witnessed it, could forget those occasions when the timelessness of the Kretschmer doctrine impinged on the rather

more standardised approach of the railway companies, charging through the bovine crowds at Euston like Boadicea with gigantic rucksack, ice-axe and bicycle ; or boarding the top deck of a crowded London bus with skis.

Anything which contributed to fresh experience or to rebirth of experience became valuable, and in later years his interests widened. The joy of a warm spring day and flowers, or escaping from the war-drab city by narrowly caught trains ; return to Glencoe, to Skye and finally to the Alps, as the tide of war receded were all delights savoured to the full with the heightened perception of long absence. Although the best days for him were always, I think, in the mountains, there were many good ones in the softer English countryside, sleeping rough on some downland summit, so that not a ray of sun should be lost from dawn to dusk ; very elementary feeding ; sometimes energetic, and sometimes, if a slothful mood prevailed, loitering in the sun, climbing the tallest trees in the woods, bathing or arguing.

Between, there might be periods of intense gloom and depression, of unhappiness and introspection and indecision arriving at "the meanest worm that crawls" stage, to be followed by rebirth of confidence in self and the world.

Then perhaps would come a more serious expedition, when from behind a facade of self-depreciation, casualness, and apparent concern for his physical comfort would emerge the Nully who did not hesitate, who took great care of detail in belays and equipment, who was always on the watch to lighten the burdens of the weaker members of the party, who was quite impervious to wet and cold and who could always be relied upon to keep a sense of proportion with deftly applied wit.

F. A. PULLINGER.

The friends and climbing companions who knew them best have written of John Barford and Nully Kretschmer in this *Journal* and the *Alpine Journal*. What they have written has deepened our knowledge and freshened our memories so that we share their sense of loss and are better able to realize that a Club which held two such members is a very fortunate Club.

John and Nully would both have been embarrassed by any attempt to add a postscript. John would probably tell us to get on with the job, his job of ensuring that the progress of British mountaineering is managed in an orderly and intelligent way ; and Nully : Nully would laugh at us, and tell us to go off and enjoy ourselves in the hills, and

stop trying to uncover the things he kept so carefully covered up. But a few words must be added, so that the debt which the Club owes to both of them may not go unacknowledged.

Putting it simply, their doings constitute a large part of the Club's active history over the last ten years. Without them, the life and work of the Club would have been different, and much the poorer for that difference. The bare record reminds us that John Barford was Secretary of the Club from 1939 to 1946, that he wrote the Clogwyn du'r Arddu guide, that he gave us in the *Journal* each year notes on new and interesting climbs, most of which he had led and carefully reclassified soon after the first ascents were made, and that he contributed greatly to the development of new techniques and equipment ; and that Nully Kretschmer, after an apprenticeship as Assistant *Journal* Editor, took on the general editorship of the Club's Guidebooks, himself writing part of the Craig yr Ysfa guide, and served as member of the Committee continuously for some years. The writer of the most cursory history of the Club would mention these facts, but although the record shows that John and Nully had opportunities to serve the Club, it does not measure the amount or the quality of what they gave. John Barford held the Climbers' Club together during the war years. He did far more than that : he turned its eyes outwards, away from the contemplation of its own traditions and achievements, so that the Club could bring into sharper focus its relation to the rest of the mountaineering world, and could play a much larger part than would otherwise have been possible in bringing together the organized Clubs and their members and in helping the multitudes of climbers outside the established Clubs to understand and use the lessons of a century of mountain craft. He did all this at a time when any other Club Secretary would have felt pleased with himself if he had kept his Club idling along on a closed throttle, when so many of our best members were on active service, and the hills difficult to reach, and committees and key-people elusive and hard to consult. It was John Barford's energy and clear purpose that brought the Club through the difficult years, to emerge at the end of the war stronger and better known, and therefore better fitted to take the lead and to create the shape of the post-war mountaineering world. It has been objected that John took too much on himself in running the Club, that he did things first and consulted people afterwards. The answer is that the times needed incisive leadership ; that he based his actions on a unique knowledge of the changes in the pulse of mountain opinion ; and that he saw that if the Club took the right war-time decisions it would shoulder increased post-war responsibilities all the better because of them.

These are among the reasons why Crowther's description of John as " the focal point of English climbing during the war years " is no exaggeration. With all the time and energy he put into his work as Club Secretary, he was also constantly renewing his own direct contacts with the mountains, and with a wider circle of climbing friends and acquaintances than any man since J. P. Farrar. None of his contem-

poraries climbed so continuously or kept himself so fit. His beliefs and opinions, individual though they always were, were firmly based on his detailed first-hand knowledge of climbing, and backed by correspondence and talk with the widest possible selection of mountaineers as well as by study of all the relevant books. All this may have made him a little intolerant of those who did not consult their references or try out their theories as painstakingly as John did, but it also explains the weight that was attached to his opinion and the frequency with which he was consulted. We shall never know how many climbers he helped by encouragement, expert advice and by finding them companions when he could not go with them himself. This, which would have been a useful service at any time, was particularly valuable during the war and the years immediately after, when the climbing community was dispersed and the Clubs were no longer providing their normal machinery of training and contacts. And so it came about that for many climbers of many nationalities John stood for the Climbers' Club, for the members they met through him, for the huts they were enabled to use, and for the guide-books they held in their hands.

His knowledge, his intense absorption in mountain craft, and the scientific spirit in which he approached its problems would have turned a lesser man into an unsympathetic character. But there was a warmth and generosity about John which, added to his capacity for taking trouble over them, transformed acquaintances into friends. Although strong to maintain his views, at times by arguments which had more vehemence than logic in them, as in the controversy over the numerical classification of climbs, he was not arrogant. He extended a friendly hand to the novice or the rabbit just as readily as to a brother expert. And above all he cared: he cared for the good name and the future development of mountaineering, for the success and the mutual help of other climbers, for the new climbs to be made and the old ones to be dusted and put back into circulation. Many other climbers besides myself must have found this warm devotion of his to the whole world of mountaineering infectious. Many more, who would otherwise have never made themselves into climbers, will catch something of the same infection from *Climbing in Britain*, which is John's testament to his fellow mountaineers.

Nully Kretschmer, too, has his own special claims on the gratitude of the Club. Perhaps only someone who, like myself, has tried the job and failed knows what a tiresome and thankless business the writing of climbing guide-books is, and still more their editorship, since it means humouring and keeping up to the mark other writers who naturally prefer sometimes to go and climb on another crag instead of pegging away at their detailed and boring task. We take our guide-books for granted, except when they are wrong or we get annoyed by the intrusion of the author's personality, and we seldom have much gratitude for author and editor. Nully brought out a new edition of the Club's guide-books just when they were most needed, as well as seeing through the press the new guides which were only available in back numbers of

the *Journal*. He quietly overcame great difficulties of paper shortage and printing delays, worked out the complicated finances of the concern and persuaded Committee and Treasurer that his estimates were sound ; and he was already planning the next series and finding volunteers to write them. We all, members of this Club and other clubs and climbers belonging to no club, owe him very real thanks for his work.

But it is not chiefly as guide-book editor that the Club remembers Nully. Although he would have disliked seeing it stated, few men can have inspired so much affection in his friends. It is not only that it is impossible to think of anyone disliking Nully, nor only that he gave time and thought and unselfishness to his many friendships, as that those who knew him were always conscious of a rare genuineness and spontaneity in the affection which he showed towards them. The world was a warmer and friendlier place when Nully was about, and even friends who met him at long intervals were sure that he was really glad to be in their company again, and not just simulating pleasure for the sake of good manners. On looking back, I am clear that we were grateful for our luck if we found him at Helyg, or in the same party, or even at a Committee meeting, and conscious of the gap if he failed to turn up. He had, of course, his own special friends and close companions, but it was not his manner so much as his nature that made so many of us feel that we too were admitted to that companionable circle. And what a good companion he was ! Good talk on almost any subject, a readiness to argue with a whimsical perverseness that still held an undergraduate charm without any undergraduate callowness, an unobtrusive habit of shouldering the heaviest rucksack and doing the nastiest of hut chores, and a delightful mock seriousness about himself and his habits on the rare occasions when he talked about either, which shines out reminiscently when we read again his *Journal* article, "A Hypochondriac in the Alps." With his modesty about himself, it is almost an effort to remember that he was a very strong man as well as a strongly marked character, and that his endurance was at least as remarkable as his performance as a climber. And, as Alan Pullinger points out, he infected his companions with his own vivid sense of enjoyment of the mountains, so that a day spent with him, whether easy or strenuous, was a day full of life and of active impressions of pleasure.

I think it added to our pleasure that John and Nully were such delightfully contrasted characters, even a little suspicious of each other at times, though each paid tribute to the other's qualities. Perhaps they stemmed from the two different but complementary sources from which British mountaineering has drawn much of its strength. John was the scientist-climber, a type deriving its ancestry from Tyndall and Ball and Finch, and tackling the problems of mountaineering with seriousness and objectivity and after calculation of all the facts and available information. Nully, in spite of his profession and his origins, recalls that peculiarly English type which invented most types of sport current in the world today almost casually and incidentally, which

guards itself against excess of seriousness by applying the touchstone of enjoyment to everything that is undertaken, and which nevertheless accomplishes remarkable performances because on that day or in that mood this was the method by which continuous enjoyment could best be secured.

And yet they were very alike in some ways. They both made themselves first-class leaders and mountaineers by the slow and hard way, neither being the natural athlete who comes easily to severe rock climbing and sometimes loses interest or nerve after a few dazzling first ascents. John and Nully gradually made themselves safe and highly competent climbers, and so became good to follow and good to watch at work as leaders. Both achieved a very high level of performance by perseverance, by snatching every opportunity to get to the mountains, and by maintaining their fitness over long periods. (A sociologist might be tempted to account for the amount of hard climbing and mountain walking they packed into short and busy lives by noting that they both remained bachelors, when so many of their companions were diverted into marriage, but it is difficult to imagine either John or Nully being forced by domestic preoccupations into any radical alteration of their mountain habits.) Each had an underlying strength of character as well as of physique, which perhaps accounts for the fact that they drew admiration as well as affection from those who knew them. And both had strong opinions and pleasant prejudices which kept them safely rooted at the human and fallible level which is the common meeting ground for most of us.

We need not be charged with having too good a conceit of ourselves if we hold that people like John and Nully, as fine climbers giving and receiving much in the craft whose pursuit they shared with us, do much to justify our belief in the excellence of mountaineering as a sport and as a school for comradeship and for character. We are richer for all that they shared with us, out of their own abundance of life and of friendly giving, at Helyg, among the mountains, and at the corner table at Albert's which we visit when Committee meetings are over. It is only a part of them that the mountains have taken. The rest we keep.

J. L. LONGLAND.

### R. A. ROBERTSON

We regret to report the death on 29th January, 1948, of Robert Augustus Robertson, D.L., S.S.C., one of our Past Presidents. During his long life he was intimately associated with the Alpine Club, which he joined in 1887, the Scottish Mountaineering Club, of which he was an original member and President 1895-97, and the Climbers' Club, of which he was President 1907-09. He was a well-known lawyer in Edinburgh and an active partner in the family business until his death.

In his younger days he was very active in the Scottish Highlands, in the Swiss Alps and in the Tyrol. His knowledge of the various Swiss centres was very extensive, and he seems to have climbed all the better-known peaks. He was not a rock climber in the modern sense, and generally speaking preferred the snow mountains, although he was in the party which made the first ascent of the South ridge of L'Evêque at Arolla in 1894.

In his later years he was one of the famous *côterie* of "elderly" Alpine Club men who made the Riffel Alp their summer home, and there he spent many happy days still able to explore the lower glacier regions and wander as far afield as the Bétemps Hut and the Findelen Glacier.



# NEW CLIMBS AND NOTES

## CLOGWYN DU'R ARDDU

### EAST BUTTRESS : CHIMNEY CLIMB.

Variation to Pitch (1).

First Ascent 25th May, 1947.

Party : M. P. Ward, J. E. Q. Barford.

*Standard* : Very Difficult.

Up the groove to the right of the ordinary first pitch.

### MIDDLE ROCK : BRIDGE GROOVE.

First Ascent 31st May, 1947.

Party : P. R. J. Harding, R. E. Meyer, H. A. Carsten.

*Standard* : Medium Severe. Still awkward owing to vegetation.

The route goes up the Middle Rock, between Birthday Crack and the western end of the rock.

Start : A few feet up, on a sloping triangular grass ledge.

(1) 40 feet. Straddle up a crack for about 20 feet to a small spike. A traverse is then made to the left. This is followed by nearly 20 feet up to a stance, from which a traverse can be made round the corner on the right back into the original crack. Good belay.

(2) 90 feet. Follow the groove and chimney above the belay. Outstanding, though not perhaps prominent, features are two grass ledges and a small block wedged like a bridge. The crack leads up for about 60 feet.

A further 50 feet of scrambling is required to reach a big belay on the Eastern Terrace.

## DINAS CROMLECH

### IVY SEPULCHRE.

First Ascent 30th August, 1947.

Party : P. R. J. Harding, E. Phillips.

*Standard* : Exceptionally Severe.

Start : As for Horseman's Route.

(1), (2), (3), (4). As for Horseman's Route.

(5) 110 feet. This pitch is extremely hard and vegetated, involving two minor overhangs, a fight with a holly tree and a delicate wall climb.

The crack in the corner is wide and hard to start. Progress is made by a bridging type of layback movement, good hold appearing occasionally. At 40 feet the angle relents to a small niche below

the conspicuous overhang ; no belay. The overhang is started by bridging, using handholds in the crack until a sound handjam can be made ; then a stiff pull reaches a hold on the right wall. The climbing here is fierce and strenuous, and protective pitons can be used. Above, the leader can rest on two good footholds. A short groove leads to the foot of an old holly tree, and after a struggle with this and the crack behind it, good holds can be reached on the left wall. Traverse across this, ascending slightly for about 15 feet, when it is possible to ascend the wall, on really good holds, to the Valley.

(6) Finish up the Ivy Sepulchre finish.

## CLOGWYN Y GROCHAN

### THE SPECTRE.

First Ascent 4th May, 1947.

Party : P. R. J. Harding, E. Phillips.

*Standard* : Hard Very Severe. Rubbers.

The climb goes directly up the Buttress to the left of Goats Gully, and joins Nea on its fourth pitch.

Start : At the lowest point of the buttress, 5 feet to the left of a shallow cave. A thin crack starts to the right.

(1) 35 feet. The crack is difficult to start, and leads to good holds on the right. A short wall then leads to a good grassy ledge.

(2) 30 feet. Make for a large holly bush on the right.

(3) 70 feet. Traverse right, behind the holly bush, to a grassy corner. Go up the groove with considerable difficulty to a ledge on the left, beneath an overhang. A perched block on this ledge requires careful handling. (The rest of the pitch is very difficult. A piton for a running belay can be inserted above the block.) Traverse round the bulge on the left, and then across a small slab to a heather groove. Up the groove, with a good finishing hold, onto easy slabs on the right.

(4) 30 feet. Continue up the slabs, bearing diagonally to the right, to a large flake at the foot of an obvious crack.

(5) 30 feet. Up the crack. The first part up to a small niche is very strenuous. Wedge up the niche until it is possible either to jam or to layback the last part of the crack. This leads to the top of the third pitch of Nea.

(6) 100 feet. Pitches (4), (5), (6) of Nea.

## CLOGWYN DU

### MANX WALL.

This excellent route was first climbed by a Rucksack Club party (A. J. Lowe, W. K. J. Pearson, J. G. Pearson, P. Russell) on 12th July, 1942. It has only been repeated three or four times. An account of it appeared in the *Rucksack Club Journal*, 1943-4 (Vol. X, No. 1).

*Standard* : Good Very Difficult. Very steep, and as exposed as any climb in Wales.

Start : The most prominent feature of the cliff is the Pillar, which is clearly marked in the diagram in the Glyder Fach guide. At the foot of the left-hand end of this is a large grass ledge. The climb starts at the left-hand end of this ledge, about 10 feet from the chimney proper of the Pillar Chimney route.

(1) 40 feet. Diagonally up to the left, along a rocky staircase.

(2) 25 feet. Up a corner to a very good stance and belay.

(3) 30 feet. Continue diagonally to the left to a stance about 20 feet below the extreme left of the overhang. The belay here is unsatisfactory ; it is best to use one 15 feet up.

(4) 60 feet. Up to the extreme left of the overhang, which is turned on the left by entering a rocky recess. Most people arrive here on all fours. Stand up (awkwardly), and move up the steep wall straight ahead. This is strenuous for 5 feet, but after this the pitch is easy, and lands on the summit plateau of Glyder Fawr.

N.B. The grass ledge from which this climb starts can be reached by two routes (*a*) up pitch (1) of Pillar Chimney Climb, or (*b*) up Clogwyn Du Gully to a position about 15 feet below the ledge, from which a diagonal traverse leads to the ledge.

## GRIBIN FACET

### LEFT-HAND ROUTE.

First Ascent 3rd September, 1947.

Party : A. R. Entwisle, K. B. Grant (leading through).

*Standard* : Good Very Difficult, because of the first pitch.

Start : 10 feet to the left of the start of Gully and Slab Climb is the foot of a small rib. This spot is also marked by a good spike belay.

(1) 50 feet. Up the rib for a few feet, and then round to the left to the foot of a steep crack. Ascend this crack and out onto a small slab above. Belay at top of the slab.

(2) 25 feet. Up the steep wall above, on good holds, to the foot of a large slab. Traverse left for 15 feet along the foot of the slab to a good belay.

(3) 40 feet. Ascend the slab, bearing slightly left to a belay at the top of a grassy groove and just below some large blocks.

(4) 40 feet. Directly above the blocks is a short scoop sloping upwards to the right. There are two flakes in the scoop. Ascend this, and thence left to the top of the climb.

## LATE NIGHT FINAL

First Ascent 23rd June, 1947.

Party : D. H. Haworth, M. J. Ball, K. E. Berrill.

*Standard* : Hard Severe ; possibly Very Severe.

Start : 50 feet to the right of the Home Climb is a grass ledge below an inverted V-corner 20 feet up. 10 feet up is a heathery ledge. Cairn.

(1) 10 feet. Reach the heathery ledge at its right-hand end. Small belay in crack in right-hand wall, high up.

(2) 15 feet. Climb the crack in the right wall on good holds.

(3) 30 feet. Take the obvious line up to the left to a grass ledge below the overhang. Small belay above the left end of the ledge.

(4) 75 feet. Traverse right to the top of the overhang, and then straight up on small holds to a heather ledge. Belay in crack in wall above.

(5) 25 feet. The wall above is split by a thin crack, trending right. Climb this on good holds, and then back left up a quartz-marked slab to a spike belay. There is a cairn 10 feet higher on a grass ledge.

N.B. The first two pitches can be avoided on the right.

## SUB-CNEIFION RIB

### SOUTH CLIMB.

First Ascent 9th October, 1947.

Party : J. Keaton.

*Standard* : Severe.

Start : A few feet up and to the right of the reddish slab that forms the top of pitch (7) of Sub-Cneifion Rib Climb. Cairn.

(1) 30 feet. Step onto a wide, flat step, and up beneath a small undercut nose. Bear right to a wall with a groove in the left corner.

(2) 25 feet. Stand on a small mantelshelf in the centre of the wall, and step right onto a rib edge. Climb the rib on small but good holds. Probably the most difficult pitch.

(3) From the top of the ridge traverse right on good holds and go round the corner, descending slightly, to a square recess. Good stance, but no belay.

(4) 30 feet. A delicate traverse to the right on very small holds leads to a long flat ledge. From the left end of this ledge, ascend up steep rock to a higher and smaller ledge, and from here step to a stance behind a flake.

(5) 10 feet. Climb the flake, and step off the top onto a large shelf below a spearhead-shaped block jammed in a crack above.

(6) 30 feet. Climb the crack right of the spearhead. Difficult to start.

## GLYDER FACH: MAIN CLIFF

### CORKSCREW CRACK.

First Ascent 3rd June, 1947.

Party : D. H. Haworth, K. Collins.

*Standard* : Probably Very Severe.

In the left-hand wall of Main Gully, at the base of the Final Crack on the Direct Route. The climb goes up the crack, first facing right, then left where it widens slightly, then right again about 10 feet from the top. A one-pitch climb of 60 feet.

The crack is started on small handholds with jamming of the feet for 10 feet, when a chockstone is reached. After a few more feet a hand-

hold is reached. Facing left here, one squirms up for another 15 feet, until another small handhold is reached. Now face right again and jam up, until good finishing holds can be reached.

## HOLLY TREE WALL : CONTINUATION WALL

### DIAGONAL ROUTE.

First Ascent 1st July, 1947.

Party : D. H. Haworth, K. Collins, D. Drummond.

*Standard* : Severe in rubbers. The route is slightly artificial.

Start : 30 feet to the right of "Groove Above," there are two vertical cracks leading to a small scoop. To the left, an "arrowhead" boulder. Cairn.

(1) 60 feet. From the arrowhead boulder, climb the wall till the scoop is gained with difficulty. Then move up and obliquely left over a nose to a stance and belay (also belay for Groove Above).

N.B. A slightly easier start to this pitch may be made by taking the right hand crack instead of the wall.

(2) 20 feet. Across the slab which forms the cap of the Groove Above with one balance move, then easily up a groove to a finishing stance. This finish is to the left of the Groove Above, actually crossing it.

## EAST WALL OF IDWAL SLABS

### SUICIDE GROOVE.

First Ascent 24th March, 1948.

Party : J. Lawton, D. H. Haworth.

*Standard* : Exceptionally Severe and exposed.

Start : There is a large block at the foot of an obvious groove.

(1) 55 feet. Climb up to the rusty piton above a grass patch.

(2) 20 feet. The second leads through to a stance and piton belay below the overhang.

(3) 25 feet. Up the scoop beneath the overhang ; surmount the overhang, and climb direct to a notch above, on the right wall. The pull-up move at the very end is the most difficult and strenuous of the climb.

## GALLT YR OGOF

### HOP WALL.

First Ascent 29th February, 1948.

Party : P. R. J. Harding, N. A. Horsefield.

*Standard* : Good Very Difficult.

Start : Round to the right from Black Gully there is a very short but steep wall, forming the left side of a shallow grassy gully. The climb goes up the wall from a few feet up the gully.

(1) 40 feet. Up, with no serious difficulty, to a belay below a large semi-detached block.

(2) 20 feet. Up to the left of the block there is an earthy groove. Climb this to a grassy ledge in a corner.

(3) 25 feet. Climb the slightly overhanging wall on the right on good holds, then step back into a shallow open recess. There remains a short slab and some heather to the finish.

### DRWS NEODODD

#### ROOFED CRACK.

First Ascent 25th March, 1948.

Party : D. H. Haworth.

*Standard* : Very Severe in boots.

A good climb, but still requires some gardening.

Start : The crack starts about 35 feet to the left of the Barbed Crack, and has a prominent overhang at the top. It is roughly 120 feet in height, with a constriction at about 30 feet.

The overhang at the top is surmounted on the left side by a back and foot movement and layback technique. Dry conditions preferable.

### PEN YR OLEU WEN

On the west side of Pen yr Oleu Wen, facing the Nant Ffrancon Pass, there are several pinnacles of rock. Two climbs of about 200 feet have been made by D. H. Haworth on the one situated about 500 feet above the road directly opposite Blaen-y-Nant Farm.

### CRAIG YR YSFA

#### THE GANNET.

First Ascent 24th March, 1948.

Party : P. R. J. Harding, N. L. Horsefield.

*Standard* : Very Difficult ; but most of this in vegetation.

To the left of the Grimmer are a series of grassy grooves and ribs of rock. The climb goes up these to an obvious crack at the top.

Start : Pitch (1) of D Gully.

(1) 20 feet. Up a diagonal, vegetated crack to a good stance on the right.

(2) 30 feet. Rock now, straight up. Then more grass work to a good belay.

(3) 40 feet. Traverse to the right, then a short open chimney with a fine flake leads to a block below a wide crack. The stance and belay are in the corner above the block.

(4) 30 feet. The right of the crack is a massive block : the face of this block provides a fine, steep, clean finish.

### YSGOLION DUON

Accounts of two new climbs, *Pegasus* and *Mare's Nest*, are given in E. C. Pyatt's article "Cwm Llafar Survey," in this number of the *Journal*.

### CRAIG Y TRE MARCHOG

(For the position of this crag, see *C.C.J.*, 1944, p. 311.)

## MORDRED

First Ascent 29th December, 1947.

Party : H. A. Carsten, R. E. Meyer, N. M. Blackett.

*Standard* : Very Difficult.

This route covers the right half of the steep frontal wall of Craig y Tre Marchog. It takes the line of least resistance, and harder variations can no doubt be found. There are at least three connections with Gawain, which makes its way up the left-hand side of the wall.

Start : To the right of the lowest point of the cliff is a steep slab with a cluster of dead trees some way up. A crack, filled with chockstones and flakes, begins near a grassy niche on the right.

(1) 70 feet. Ascend the crack, which slants to the left, and continue to the top of a large flake.

(2) 30 feet. Climb the wall on the left to a corner and traverse left to a large block.

(3) 30 feet. Traverse back into the corner, whence good hand-holds and a flake facilitate escape to the right. Ascend to a good ledge.

(4) Move left and back again, all on vegetation, or tackle the rocks immediately ahead. Finish by a short steep wall. Other exits are available on the left, offering little more than scrambling. N.B. Pitches (2) and (3) are probably best taken together.

## CARREG MIANOG (EAST BUTTRESS)

References to this crag, which lies on the south flank of Carnedd Dafydd, above and to the right of the farm which is approached from the road beside "Tin-y-Shanty," will be found in the *Rucksack Club Journals* of 1945 and 1946.

## BICEPS WALL.

First Ascent 16th March, 1948.

Party : D. H. Haworth, A. Horridge.

*Standard* : Very Severe and Strenuous. Rubbers.

Start : 20 feet to the left of the south corner, up the wall facing Tryfan.

(1) 40 feet. Climb 20 feet direct up the slightly overhanging wall, and layback or mantelshelf to a stance on a small cubical block. Ascend directly to a ledge with a good belay.

(2) 25 feet. From the corner on the right, ascend the overhang directly, and proceed up the slab to a prominent cannon-like belay.

(3) 40 feet. Climb up to a holly tree and through it to a ledge. Ascend the angular groove directly above the holly tree to a good belay over the top.

## TRAMLINE TRAVERSE.

First Ascent 16th March, 1948.

Party : D. H. Haworth, A. Horridge.

*Standard* : Very Difficult. Rubbers.

Start : From the top of pitch (2) of Biceps Wall.

Proceed along the broad ledge past the holly tree, behind a smaller tree, and continue along a toe traverse, finishing up at a tree near "Angle Gully."

### CLOGWYN CAERAU

This is the little crag seen from Bettws-y-Coed above Pont-y-Pair. Cross the bridge, and follow the track to the left. The best climbing appears to be on the left. Several routes have been done by a party led by P. W. Nock.

### GENERAL

The second ascent of Central Route, Llech Ddu, has been done, almost exactly two years after the first ascent. It is an excellent route, going directly up the centre of the cliff, where it is the only obvious line of weakness. It will be particularly interesting to have other opinions on this climb.

A party went to look at Esgair Felen on 28th March, 1948. They found the cliff to be very impressive, but the rock to be completely rotten. J. Lawton led a route up a rib easily identifiable by a large pinnacle, but considers it almost unjustifiable because of the bad rock.

M. G. HUGHES.

### CRIB GOCH BUTTRESS

The same party as last year made, on 1st May, 1947, another ascent of the Buttress to explore the original route. A variation was made at Pitch (3), steep rocks being climbed directly up towards a conspicuous chimney in the rampart extending across the Buttress. From the base of this chimney, the stance at the top of Pitch (3) is easily reached by a move to the left. Above the Rampart, the party crossed the "Cricket Pitch" traverse to the chimney described on the original ascent. The "bulge of rock" does not bulge inconveniently and the traverse is not hard. Instead of climbing the chimney, the party swung round the corner on the right and finished up the face. The ledge thus reached is the same as that used on Route 1. From here the Abrahams led directly up the face by means of combined tactics, the first 15 feet being devoid of holds: our party took a step to the right, and then made directly upwards and to the left—a splendidly open finish to a fine climb.

If further direct routes are discovered up this face, our opinion is that they must involve passages of great severity.

H. R. C. CARR.

### SCOTLAND AND SKYE

On 7th February, 1948, the first winter ascent of Clachaig Gully was made, in heavy rain, by D. H. Haworth, G. Parish and J. Barclay; only the leader finished the climb completely.

On 8th February the same party did the first winter ascent of the gully which divides the North face of Sgurr na Ulaidh. It gave a fairly steep snow climb with one ice pitch at the top.



The Crack on Carn Dearg, Ben Nevis, which was described in last year's *Journal*, should have been classified as Very Severe.

On Sron na Ciche, Skye, two severe routes were done on 21st May, 1947, by D. H. Haworth and L. ap G. Hughes. These climbs, which were named Crack of Double Doom and Doom Flake, lie up the wall between Crack of Doom and the Central Gully Arête.

## REVIEWS

MOUNTAINS AND MEN. By Wilfred Noyce. (Geoffrey Bles, 1947. 18/-.)

The shadow of Menlove Edwards lies long across this book. It was much more than rock technique that the present Guide Book Editor learned from the master, nor only tricks of phrase and syntactical novelties but mainly a solid realism at the base of mountain fancy. The pathetic fallacy to which we are all prone in our reaction to mountains is here always checked by "rocks and grass." Perhaps for this reason we are spared exhortation. Mr. Noyce is not worried lest his readers' citizenship should be out of the mode of modern sentiment. He boldly declares it to be "against the instincts and traditions of mountaineering that its disciples should be shepherded in under duress from the mechanic pursuits." It is not, then, surprising that *Mountains and Men* is almost a private paper, directed to climbers and not to the book-buying public; by confining himself to the converted he is able to avoid preaching.

The first two chapters give an excellent account of the Welsh beginnings of a schoolboy climbing almost at once with Colin Kirkus and Menlove Edwards. The atmosphere is authentic Helyg in an heroic age. After two happy chapters on the Alps—Oberland, Valais, Hans Brantschen, Chamonix, Armand Charlet—we come back to work on the Tryfan Guide and to Buttermere. To me these five chapters gave the keenest pleasure, probably because the background is broadly familiar. The rest is mainly Himalaya, remote, immense but (to me) unknown; the familiar sounds and smells no longer rise (for me) at the author's words. Even in the Himalaya there is a Welsh undertone; the traveller turns aside to make a direct route up a wayside slab as if it lay beside the Pig Track, and a Himalayan peak is approved as remarkably Welsh in feel.

Mr. Noyce chooses his words as carefully as Max, but not always quite so impeccably. He treats his medium as well as his mountains with proper respect. He has thought and read as well as climbed and his selection of chapter headings is altogether admirable. Readers of this *Journal* will have met before certain notes and sketches now included in the book.

Looking back one realises that many of the climbs described are quite remarkable achievements, but as it is no part of the author's purpose to stress this aspect the reader is also apt to overlook it.

For commendation I report that I have read this book three times, and that is rare.

F. H. KEENLYSIDE.

SWITZERLAND IN ENGLISH PROSE AND POETRY. By Arnold Lunn.  
(New Alpine Library No. 1, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1947. 16/-.)

THE LAKES: an Anthology of Lakeland Life and Landscape. By  
G. S. Sandilands. (Muller, 1947. 15/-.)

Anthologies are rarely completely satisfactory to anyone except their compilers and they are the easiest things in the world to criticise for sins of omission, commission and even—when half one's favourite poem is left out—circumcision. But today they should justify themselves against any charge of paper wastage by being original in their point of view. In 1913, Mr. Lunn gave us *The Englishman in the Alps*, an admirable anthology; during the war he wrote *Switzerland and the English*; and he is at pains to justify this first volume in the Alpine Library which he is editing. Certainly its scope is greater than in the earlier volumes and the emphasis is not entirely on mountaineering, for the eighteenth century travellers are represented at one end and the ski mountaineers at the other. In between there are some familiar extracts, but plenty that are new and several from authors such as Ruskin who are more rewarding in selections than taken in bulk. Personally I would have preferred to see a typical passage from John Tyndal instead of his namesake, and the substitution of A. W. Moore for St. Thomas More: more certainly most readers will think that thirty pages devoted to four different members of the Lunn family far too high in a book covering five centuries in 260 pages. It is not charitable for an anthologer to begin at home. Misprints on pages 137 and 177 can be forgiven for the quotation from Wall's *Guide* of 1819 in which he says of the Lake of Lucerne that "Notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary the navigation is not dangerous, provided the steersman and rowers be not intoxicated."

This book has much to recommend it, but those who possess the handy india paper edition of *The Englishman in the Alps* can rest content with that. We can all look forward to the future volumes in the New Alpine Library, for Mr. Lunn promises us new books by H. E. G. Tyndale, Lord Schuster and Geoffrey Winthrop Young.

The Lakes anthology is deplorable. The compiler seems to have picked at random various extracts and quotations some good, some trivial and some extremely bad. The bigger mountains and the western valleys have been virtually ignored, and the book bears all the signs of having been edited at Ambleside. No references whatsoever are given to guide the reader to the source of the quotation and even the author is doubtful on occasions: it is misleading, for instance, to give Mrs. Gaskell as the author of three letters of Charlotte Brontë, even if they did appear in her book. The high literary tone may be judged from the following:

There was once a quarryman's daughter  
Lived long ago near Elterwater.  
You may search for her bones  
Mid the shale and the stones;  
But I feel that you just didn't oughter.

Beyond showing that the compiler has read Wilberforce what exactly is the point of this entry?—

“ I never enjoyed the country more than during this visit when in the early morning I used to row out alone and find an oratory in one of the woody islands in the middle of the Lake.”

Like Mr. Lunn, but without his justification, the author treats us to five selections from his own works, first in prose :

“ The gown of this young woman is of the weft of water flags and the woof of water lilies. Through the long summer days the white cups of the lilies gleamed against the calyxes of green in which they lay. The cups shimmered like silver against the rich ultramarine of the lake water, reflecting the summer sky. The flags were like the pennants or rather the magic wands, of a host of unseen fairies . . . Johnnie always tarried by the side of Lily Tarn. He loved the place. He loved every blade of grass and every frond of bracken by its tiny shores. . . .”

Then the verse. No. The reader shall be spared this last infirmity : let us conclude with another witty limerick :

A Yank, with a heavy oak table  
Climbed up to the top of Great Gable.  
Said he, “ Wall, I guess :  
I'll play you at chess ;  
But first I must send off a cable.”

This is the sole reference to mountaineering in a book which purports to give a picture of “ Lakeland Life and Landscape.” The most charitable assumption is that it is all a joke in very bad taste.

ELLIOTT VINEY.

MOUNTAINEERING IN THE SIERRA NEVADA. By Clarence King. (A. and C. Black Ltd., 1947. 16/-.)

This work is not, as its attractively up-to-date appearance at first led me to suppose, an account of the latest exploits of the Sierra Club by one of its tigers. The frontispiece shows the author in action ; he wears a considerable beard, carries what appears to be a large bent telescope, and is about to climb a moderately difficult chimney with the aid of a fixed rope. My initial gratification at finding the Americans apparently some way behind the times in equipment and technique was soon dispelled by the discovery that the book is in fact nearly as old as *Scrambles in the Alps*.

When Clarence King began to climb in 1864, practically the whole of the Sierra Nevada was *terra incognita*, and the highest peaks were neither named nor mapped. His pen therefore enjoyed a fair degree of pioneer's licence. One gathers from the editor's introduction that for those who know the Sierras the book contains a number of unresolved topographical mysteries, and that the passage of time has dealt hardly with the high colouring of some of the narrative. Within a year of the publication of the first edition (1872), the graphic account of the conquest of Mount Whitney, the highest peak of the range, had

been shown to relate to another mountain whose summit could be reached on the back of a mule. But the average English reader, to whom the Sierras are hardly more familiar than they were to the American public of King's day, will not be troubled by the need to be critical on points of geography. King's chapters on the ascent and descent of Mount Tyndall are hardly less exciting, and certainly more readable, than an account of the scaling of the most modern Nordwand. The loads carried by the party were formidable. "Our walking-shoes were in excellent condition, the hobnails firm and new. We laid out a barometer, a compass, a pocket-level, a set of wet and dry thermometers, notebooks, with bread, cooked beans, and venison enough to last a week, rolled them all in blankets, making two knapsack-shaped packs which, by Brewer's estimate, weighed forty pounds apiece." At the crest of the first divide, where their friends left them ("there was not a dry eye in the party"), a canyon five thousand feet deep was seen to separate them from the base of their peak. The descent of this occupied the better part of two days. Over long sections of rock they lowered themselves, their packs and the barometer, severally, by means of a lasso. On the steep ice it was necessary to cut steps "with Cotter's large bowie-knife," an instrument whose edge must surely have been turned by the time they had hewed their way up long stretches of ice on the third day to reach the summit of Mount Tyndall itself. The return journey, involving another two days of varied perils and exertions, adds a second chapter to a remarkable story, remarkably told.

Exuberant and possibly inaccurate though King's narrative descriptions may have been, his mistakes were genuine mistakes and his absence of restraint no more than a legitimate method of presentation. There is, moreover, a vein of humour running through it all which is much less laboured than that of the English mountaineering classics of the period, and prevents his tendency to dramatise from ever getting out of hand. It is perfectly possible, also, that his early hazards were as great as he describes them, for he had no Alpine guides and, at the outset, no experience whatever; Tyndall was his first serious climb of any kind. Even in his maturer days he seems to have been a poor judge of the best route and to have used the most primitive equipment and methods. Yet it stands out that he was a real mountaineer, extremely bold and quite unable to resist the temptation to try any peak which caught his imagination.

From the point of view of pure climbing interest, none of the later action compares with the early *tour de force* on Mount Tyndall. Less than half the book, in fact, is concerned with actual ascents. Three chapters (described by the editor as "interludes in which the fancy has been allowed untrammelled freedom") are simply sketches of the Wild West in the receding backwash of the gold rush of 1849. A great part of the rest is pure scenic description. This is less formidable than it sounds. From the first page of the book, it is apparent that King is a master of this type of writing; one can hardly think of any mountain

writer who embarks so readily and with such success on pages at a time, sometimes whole chapters, of description of mountains in all their aspects. His opening chapters, which describe the Sierras as a whole and the forests on their flanks, combine the clarity of a scientific observer with extraordinary feeling and vividness, and the same is true of nearly all the many similar passages in the book. Again there is a tendency to overwrite, but it is overwriting of a kind which can very easily be forgiven. It is true that, partly because of this discursiveness in description, partly because it was originally a number of separate magazine articles, the book lacks structural unity, and its climax—the ascent first of the false Mount Whitney and then (in the 1873 edition) of the real one, which by then had fallen easily to other parties—is decidedly a damp firework. But these are the imperfections which a classic can carry off ; it is a fine book. The editing and production of this new edition are both excellent ; the absence of any kind of map is the only fault, but for English readers a serious one. A.D.M.C.

ALPINE ROUNDABOUT. By Anthony M. Robinson. (Chapman and Hall, 1947. 15/-.)

A delightful narrative records the seasonal pilgrimage of the modest mountaineer to many places in the Alps. It is not the usual alpine book because the author takes us not only on classical routes, but quite frequently to unfamiliar places. It is delightful because the fine scenic descriptions and the anecdotes of hut life convey one immediately into intimate association with mountain atmosphere.

A visit to the summit of the Jungfrau "entwined with ropes" developed an early loathing for popular summits, and thereafter the less frequented places are sought in order to "recapture something of that spirit of exploration with which the pioneers were imbued." The author, frequently accompanied by K. C. P. Struve, discovers that the most interesting routes and those climbed most rarely are generally to be found in the vicinity of the most popular peaks. For example, the Rotengrat ascent of the Alphubel, a peak which serves only to accentuate the majestic and popular Täschhorn, and also the Kraugberg and the Trugberg, which provide good expeditions within a stone's throw of the most popular Oberland snow trails. The Urbachtal, above Innertkirchen, and the surrounding peaks of the Eastern Oberland provide joyful days in the wilderness. In these days, when all the peaks and obvious routes have been accomplished, and one often gets the impression that a young climber is only satisfied when he has performed a feat more hair-raising than that of his colleague, it is encouraging to read that some of us can find stimulation and contentment, away from the crowds, in modest forgotten places in the Alps.

The incidents of hut life provide satisfaction, and one is sure to find something in common with one's own experience. How irritating it is to find oneself trying to sleep in heavy boots ! "My boots rolled my feet over awkwardly to one side when I tried to lie flat on my back, and it was too cold to take them off."

The book will prove useful when planning a gentle trip to the Alps ; it is provided with a good index, but lacks a map. The collection of mountain pictures is unfortunately spoilt by a poor colour frontispiece.

W. H. WARD.

BRITISH HILLS AND MOUNTAINS (Britain in Pictures Series). By Peter Bicknell. (Collins, 1947. 5/-.)

This volume of the series *Britain in Pictures* should be secured by all who have come under the spell of the mountains and are beginning to get interested in the mountaineering tradition ; for what pleasanter introduction to this subject could they find than Peter Bicknell's graceful survey of the British mountain scene, with its elegant illustrations ?

The author's approach to his subject is a personal one. After gazing on the magnificence of the Alps, he wonders whether the little hills of this island would have lost their charm for him. The answer is that they have not done so ; and the book which he has written is a vindication of their right to a special place in his affections.

An opening section sketches briefly the main topographical features of the hilly parts of this island, and contrasts the type of scenery and the climatic conditions of each region. Then follows a description of the main geological structure of the chief mountain masses, which adds interest to the preceding chapter.

Appreciation of the beauties of mountainous country did not really begin until the second half of the eighteenth century. Thereafter travellers, artists and poets each in turn began to make known the pleasures and inspiration to be derived from contemplation of the hills. In his chapter on "The Discovery of the Hills," Bicknell traces for us the history of this growth of aesthetic appreciation, and this is perhaps the most interesting part of the book, apart from the illustrations. From the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century was a period rich in talent for English landscape painting, and many of these illustrations are reproductions of drawings and paintings by the artists of that time. The author must have enjoyed selecting the illustrations. He has certainly added greatly to our pleasure, as we read his text, by including charming landscapes by such early masters as John Varley, Francis Towne, Thomas Girtin and J. M. W. Turner, to mention but a few names ; and has increased our interest by including two pictures by modern artists, one a striking oil by John Piper and the other a water colour by Eric Ravilious, not to mention the two water colour sketches of his own.

After aesthetic appreciation comes the desire for closer inspection of the rocks and summits. This was the period of the scientific explorers. These men, however, soon discovered that mountaineering was a sport which could be enjoyed for its own pleasures and excitements. Thus in his chapter on "The Climbing of the Hills," Bicknell traces the history of mountaineering as a sport from its beginnings in the 'fifties of the last century up to the present time. With increasing specialisation, rock climbing in Britain has tended to become a sport

divorced from mountaineering. It is not without justification therefore that he concludes this section with a reminder that "the walker who can find his way safely over Helvellyn or the Glyders in bad weather is far more of a mountaineer than the rock expert who can lead a party up Clogwyn du'r Arddu on a fine day," and that "those who can do both are equipped to get the fullest pleasure from the hills."

Finally, after the discovery of the hills, new and urgent problems arose which called for solution. If mountains provide pleasure for the swarms of holiday makers who now visit them they also take their toll of the inexperienced ; so one of the problems which have arisen is the prevention of those accidents which seem to be occurring with increasing frequency year by year. Another is how to obtain right of access to the hills, where these happen to be privately owned property ; whilst bound up with this is yet a third, namely, how to preserve the character of the countryside. With increasing realisation of the value of our unspoilt tracts of wild country to the health and well-being of the nation the establishment of National Parks has become an urgent need. All these problems are touched on by the author in his concluding chapter.

In conclusion it may be said that this is one of the better volumes of a series in which perhaps the standard of book production usually outshines the paucity of the text.

C. B. M. WARREN.

WALKING IN CORNWALL. By J. R. A. Hockin. (Methuen. 8/6.)

SHROPSHIRE HILLS. By H. W. Timperley. (Dent, 1947. 16/-.)

SCOTTISH HILL TRACKS. By D. G. Moir. 1—*Southern Scotland* ; 2—*Northern Scotland*. (Albyn Press. 2/6 each.)

Two at any rate of these three books are worth noticing in the *Journal*. To take the last first, Mr. Moir's little booklets give a plain but very useful list of all the main hill tracks in Scotland which would be most useful in planning a long-distance walking tour. They are purely factual and avoid the tops: the maps are adequate and the text quite straightforward—only two descriptive adjectives in a hundred pages.

Mr. Hockin's book was originally published in 1936 and was well received then, when it was one of Maclehose's famous Walking Series. Now, alas, both the author and the original publishing firm are no more and the book appears in a new edition and under a new imprint, revised by Mrs. Hockin and with a whimsy Foreword by A. L. Rowse. It is very good. The author knew his subject and loved it : he could communicate his knowledge and love in prose as springy as the turf he walked on. The knowledge is never pedantic, the love never sloppy, so, like its companion volume, Symond's *Lake District*, it is a model of a guide. Like all really sensible walkers the author boards a bus if he feels like it—usually when a purple passage is imminent. Take this to Bosigran.

After this Mr. Timperley is a sad disappointment. *Shropshire Hills*—a nostalgic title. How often, hurrying to and from Helyg along the Watling Street, one has seen them : the Wrekin, the Long Mynd,



Wenlock Edge, mighty Pontesford itself. "Some day," one says, "I must spend a week-end here and climb them"—but somehow one never does. Perhaps also it is better so—better to remain romantic, smoky-blue silhouettes, with the sun forever setting behind them, a dream world you always bypass on the way to the wet Welsh reality. After this book I shall let them be: certainly after reading its 160 pages (just under a penny a page—a stiff price) I know no more of Shropshire Hills than I did before. The prose is so vague that at times it dissolves altogether and there are pages of this sort of thing:

"Sometimes the breeze died away and the oak leaves were quiet, but all the time there was the conversation of rooks and daws, the cooing of ring-doves, the voices of the harvesters, the rattle and the squeak of the wagons, and behind all these the humming sound which is like the calm of a sun-drenched summer day made audible, that pulsation of insect wings which seems to quicken as the sun mounts, and which, when he is setting, quietens and fades with the light, so that night calms are always nearer to absolute silence than those of day."

Very fine, very Georgian: but how one longs for a bus to come along. There are a great many innocuous drawings by Albert T. Pile, which are in complete accord with the text, and only seven quotations from Housman.

ELLIOTT VINEY.

MOUNT EVEREST, 1938. By H. W. Tilman. (Cambridge University Press, 1948. 15/-.)

The long-delayed official account of the 1938 Everest expedition, a surprisingly slim volume, stands in the same relation to the massy tomes of earlier years as did the 1938 expedition itself to the earlier large scale expeditions. So good a book on a subject already well known to climbers calls for no lengthy review. It is precisely the account that might have been expected of its author; it is distinguished by lucidity of style, lightness of touch, absence of ballyhoo and a very clear exposition of views which the prejudiced might call prejudices. Lest the public should be misled into thinking that these were the views of all members of the expedition, the lively discussion which followed Tilman's paper to the R.G.S. is printed as an appendix; and in conceding space for two scientific appendices, Tilman himself contributes a third, *Anthropology or Zoology, with particular reference to the Abominable Snowman*, a creature now thought to have cut its own steps in forcing the first crossing of the Zemu Gap.

It is hardly possible to avoid the conclusion that the small expedition justified itself beyond question. As it happened, the extreme cold in April and the deep, unconsolidated powder snow which covered the mountain in May meant that no expedition, small or large, could have got farther than this one did; but had the conditions been as good as in 1924 or in 1933, it is apparent that the 1938 expedition was at least as well placed for the final climb as any of its predecessors. If the way

in which a mountain is climbed is of as much importance as the actual getting to the top, 1938 was surely a great advance ; if—on Everest—not, post-war economics will nevertheless force future expeditions to model themselves on this one.

A.D.M.C.

ON ROCK AND ICE. By André Roch. (A. and C. Black Ltd., 1947. 21/-.)

This book is simply an album of eighty superlatively good Alpine photographs, each with a short descriptive caption. One or two almost unfairly sensational pictures have been included, but on the whole I doubt if any better book of this type has yet been published. The particular interest of the collection, apart from its beauty, is that it shows, sometimes in close detail, many of the most recent of the great Alpine climbs, and not only those in the Chamonix district. The text of the captions, though informative, is occasionally unpleasing, e.g., "the North Ridge of the Weisshorn, a combination of dizzy height and the most profound precipices" ; "the climber is obliged to claw his way upward by minute holds" ; "the descent of this monolith constitutes an impressive manoeuvre." The frontispiece, otherwise one of the least sensational pictures, shows two men, unroped and without axes, standing beyond the probable line of fracture of a very large cornice.

A.D.M.C.

JOURNAL OF THE FELL AND ROCK CLIMBING CLUB, 1947.  
RUCKSACK CLUB JOURNAL, 1947.

The groaning board of the *F. and R.C.C. Journal* is so richly spread with good things—the Lake District, Skye, Arran, Ben Nevis, Apennines, Pyrenees, Kashmir, Eastern Ghats, Fishing, Fellside Farming and three poems—that I can only comment on a few of those dishes which have seemed to me particularly delicious.

Mabel Barker's "Memories of My First Leader," is a delightful portrait of Millican Dalton, "Professor of Adventure," a lovable and picturesque figure, to whom R. H. Mayson also pays tribute. His photograph of the Professor navigating a peculiarly White-Knight-like contraption on the Derwent is highly characteristic. Mary Rose FitzGibbon has unearthed in the Hon. Mrs. Murray's *Companion and Useful Guide to the Beauties of Scotland and to the Lakes, etc.*, 1799-1803, a gem amongst early hill guides. She points out that Mrs. Murray writes with the restraint and lucidity of Dorothy Wordsworth, which is in striking contrast with the romantic and sublime prose of the Mrs. Radcliffe school. Like many other readers of the *Journal*, I am now eagerly searching for a copy of Mrs. Murray. G. W. Muller's "When the timorous trout I wait," tempts even a staunch non-angler to exchange a rope for a rod next time he goes to the Lakes ; and A. P. Rossiter's "Yewbarrow Revised" reminds him that there are still good climbs to be found in unexpected places. Most of all I enjoyed

Peter Lloyd's "A Winter Weekend"—a note on a few abortive days spent in and around the Ben Nevis Hut in appallingly wintry conditions. I liked it, partly because the writing reminded me so vividly of the inexplicable joys of expeditions in frustratingly evil weather, partly because Nully Kretschmer's "rare charm of manner and originality of mind," could be discerned between every line.

Compared with the Fell and Rock Club's appetising spread, the Rucksack fare seems to lack substance and variety. Three of the six main articles are accounts of the Alps revisited. For those who have been back since the war they are an agreeable reminder of the intense pleasure of the return, and for others they will create a keen nostalgia for the snow and ice. But the non-Rucksack reader feels that he is perhaps intruding into a private world, which he was never intended to enter. The traditional "sardine tin" humour has got a new lease of life in quips about austerity.

But if some of these contributions smack a little of the school mag., there are two of the greatest general interest. Ken Tarbuck's article on "My Technique with Nylon Rope" is of real importance, and will repay the closest study by both rope reactionaries and tigers. Leaders who intend to fall off should make it compulsory reading for their seconds. Many of the recommendations, such as untying and reversing the rope between every pitch to keep it in a state of maximum flexibility, will have no great appeal for the average party. Nor is it much consolation to one who has lost his pound of flesh on a nylon rope to know that "medium" nylon which bites deeper into the clothes and flesh than "full" has a higher frictional purchase.

The high-light of the *Journal* is John Jenkins' "The Rediscovery of Arran," which breathes the joy of climbing in this "paradise for the frustrated exile from Chamonix." His final sentence—"But there is a bitter-sweet consolation in the fact that so long as the 'S' crack repels my ardent advances, it will remain as an impelling fascination to draw me back to Arran"—has indeed acquired a bitter tang.

There are good photographs in both *Journals*; but they are not remarkable, except perhaps Robin Gray's picture of Skye in the *R.C.J.*, which evokes the magic of the Western Isles in a way which is rare in photography and unknown in climbing literature.

P. BICKNELL.

AMERICAN ALPINE JOURNAL, Volume VI, No. 3, 1947.

CANADIAN ALPINE CLUB JOURNAL, Volume XXX, 1947.

MOUNTAIN CLUB OF EAST AFRICA, BULLETIN, Nos. 3, 4 and 5, 1947.

MOUNTAIN CLUB OF SOUTH AFRICA, JOURNAL, No. 49, 1946.

SIERRA CLUB BULLETIN, Volume 32, No. 5, 1947.

The three *Journals* from North America go conveniently together, partly because several expeditions are described in more than one of the *Journals*. These expeditions are mostly serious affairs involving exploration as well as mountaineering, long approach marches and operations far from base. Mt. St. Elias on the Canada-Alaska border

has been climbed by a Harvard M.C. party supported by the U.S.A.A.F.; this is described in both *A.A.ŷ.* and *S.C.B.*, and illustrated with very fine photographs. Two other mountains on or near the same international boundary, "West of the Stikine," were climbed for the first time, Kate's Needle and the Devil's Thumb, the latter falling only to a fierce siege and much ironmongery. The photographs show both mountains to be of challenging beauty; the North face of the Devil's Thumb is a nightmare, but this was not the face climbed. This expedition is recounted in both *A.A.ŷ.* and *C.A.ŷ.* Still in the Alaskan corner, a third article projects two new routes up Mt. McKinley, again with admirable photographs. Dropping to the Coast Range of British Columbia, a party has climbed Mt. Reliance and accounts appear in both *A.A.ŷ.* and *C.A.ŷ.*, but the *A.A.ŷ.* omits the terrifying moment when "Haynes' bull and thirty head" charged. In these parts you have to be ready to face charges by cattle or attacks by grizzly as well as the more usual objective dangers of mosquitoes and blisters.

In the *A.A.ŷ.*, Mr. Henderson dispels some of my gloomier illusions about the Aleutians, and Ursula Corning brings us home to the Alps (where "shabby English wandered about looking as if they had been translated to the Elysian fields") in a very pleasant little essay in the best Fell and Rock manner. Science claims contributions on posture and glaciers as well as an interesting article on experiments carried out by the Navy Department on oxygen deficiency; it appears that artificial acclimatisation in a pressure chamber is less effective than natural acclimatisation, and it is believed the hard work involved in the latter actually helps the process.

The *C.A.ŷ.* records the first ascent of Taurus, a mountain which rises "midway between the Bugaboo group and the Horsethief group and on the East-West Kootenay watershed"—names as evocative as Turner's Chimborazo, Cotopaxi. On the descent from the mountain an incident illustrated the ambiguity of a popular idiom, and this prompts me to explain (after studying the diagram) that when "the chimney was left to right," the climber had, in fact, left the chimney right on his left. The C.C.'s active Canadian outpost, Bob Hind, was with Rex Gibson on the first traverse of Mt. Kerkeslin, and also made a new route past the Great Gendarme of Bugaboo Spire (this last also in *A.A.ŷ.*); he describes this as "the most difficult pitch he has seen in the Canadian mountains, and comparable with the best of British rock climbs." Rex Gibson with F. S. Smythe made the first ascent of Mt. Bridgland. The second ascent of Sir Sandford was unfortunately marred by an accident. There are other notes on exploration in Canada and climbs in Japan.

The *S.C.B.* starts off with the climbing of the Lost Arrow, a remarkable pinnacle in the Yosemite Valley. The first attempt advanced 350 feet in twelve hours at an expense of forty pitons. Four further determined efforts pushed the limit somewhat higher. Then Mr. Salathé climbing alone got within 100 feet of the top, obviously a very considerable *tour de force*. "Placing pitons he had manufactured

especially for the smallest cracks, Salathé ran his climbing rope through carabiners hooked in several pitons . . . patiently he tried to pound pitons into the almost inadequate crack . . . holdless granite above necessitated drilling holes for two expansion bolts . . . testing each piton and using several together when one alone was not strong enough to hold his weight, he passed another overhang on rotten granite." Next week he tried again with a companion, and got within 30 feet of the top. Then four others joined the contest. To solve the top pitch they succeeded in throwing a weighted line over the summit from the neighbouring cliff. Next day two stayed by the rope at the cliff top and two went down to climb. "Direct mechanical aid is 90 per cent. of the task . . . we would like it if the previous climbers had not largely ruined the barely usable crack when they hammered out their pitons . . . eight hours to cover the 50 feet to the first ledge." Leaving ropes, etc., they descended, and the other two went down the valley to fetch more ropes. Next day the pitch was done by throwing a rope over a horn of rock and climbing it on Prusik knots. Then, reaching the original line thrown over the top they used it to bring down more substantial cordage. Tremendous ropework followed beset always with anxiety lest the whole contrivance slip sideways from the summit. Thus the top was reached on Prusik slings, and at sundown drilling and hammering went forward to establish a firm rope link to the cliff top. As moonlight left the sky, the pinnacle was evacuated by the aerial ropeway. Not our methods, but a remarkable achievement, only less remarkable perhaps than Mr. Salathé's unsuccessful attempts. It may not have been mountaineering in the classical sense, but it certainly makes good reading, and in comparison with similar work by the pre-war Munich school we must remember that there is here no taint of Führer handshake.

Having given so much space to the Lost Arrow, I must be cavalier with the rest of the *S.C.B.*, but I would draw attention to thoughtful articles on a problem that vexes even the vast spaces of North America, namely a density of tourist population too great for nature to repair the wear and tear.

Before leaving America, I must commend the very high quality of the mountain photographs, the happy international character of their book reviews and the amazing erudition with which Mr. J. Monroe Thorington lights the pages of the *C.A.Œ* and *A.A.Œ*.

Turning to Africa, the East African Mountain Club has embarked boldly on a quarterly Bulletin, recalling the ambitious days when A. W. Andrews used to produce four *C.C.Œ*'s annually. Members of the M.C. of East Africa were observed at work near Arolla last summer, but nothing of this has yet leaked into the Bulletin, though R. M. Bere writes of volcanoes on the Congo border. There is an account of the first ascent of the South face of Mt. Kenya, and a fine photograph of this face (in a subsequent number). Mt. Kenya is a relatively orthodox Alpine peak, but most other East African mountains appear to have a flavour unfamiliar to most of us ; mud gives more trouble than ice,

*Erica Arborea* and giant lobelia more labour than rock ; bees, too, are among the objective dangers, while rain is estimated to fall in Ruwenzori 360 days in the year. African, like American, mountaineering has a big element of travel, often tropical travel, and it is this, I surmise, that gives it its distinctive cachet. (I have established the last point by checking that the Himalaya are north of the Tropic of Cancer.) The Bulletins also display interest in technique, education, topography, birds, national parks, photography, showing that the Club includes all classes of mountain lovers, not only climbers strictly so-called. Alas, there is already a litter problem on Mt. Kenya.

From the *Journal* of the Mountain Club of South Africa it appears that there is a threat to build a road up Table Mountain, a threat lacking even the excuse that could be trumped up by planners for building a road over Sty Head. I hope that the Mountain Club's opposition will be effective, and can hardly believe that such a thing could be perpetrated so long as General Smuts is in power.

A recent B.B.C. feature gave me the impression that the Kaokoveld had no virtues ; D. H. Woods' article helps to correct the balance. That remarkable mountain the Great Spitzkop, in S.W. Africa, has now been climbed, and the *Journal* contains not only an account of the first ascent but a record of a previous party's assault ; this mountain obviously offers original exercises in technique. There is an interesting letter from a South African giving his first impressions of climbing in this country, a brief guide to the Klein Drakenstein group and many notes on new climbs and old. The scope for exploration and new rock routes is still great and, were I not an interested party, I would recommend this field to those who tire of trying to pick out a new line on our rocks which has escaped the attention of J. M. Edwards. (This with the warning that I'm trying to sell you a passage to South Africa.)

F. H. KEENLYSIDE.

SANDSTONE CLIMBS IN SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND. By E. C. Pyatt.  
(London Section, J.M.C.S., 1947.)

Our member, E. C. Pyatt, has done a very valuable service to dwellers around London in compiling this comprehensive guide-book to the climbing on the sandstone outcrops of Kent and Sussex. His laborious task could hardly have been better done. Cliffs of between 20 and 45 feet are not, in the first place, as easy to find as mountain faces such as Lliwedd or Scafell ; they can be, and often are, hidden away in valleys or woods or on private land. This guide, which describes in detail the seven outcrops so far explored, as well as listing all others as yet undeveloped, makes the location of each outcrop very clear, where necessary by reproduction of a section of the six-inch Ordnance Survey map. The second geographical difficulty, that of locating the climbs themselves, is overcome in each case by a plan of the whole outcrop, with every climb marked. This excellent scheme obviates the need for describing separately the start of every route, which would otherwise probably require more space than the

descriptions of the actual climbing. The routes themselves are described with an admirable economy of words, often in a single phrase or sentence ; one particularly attractive example seems worth quoting : "*Columnar Buttress* : There is one hold like a gigantic handle which is used all the way up." The author rightly thinks it unnecessary to give the lengths of climbs, except in special cases, for they can easily be judged on the spot ; nor does he attempt to give a list of the first ascents. His selection of photographs gives a good idea of the type of climbing to be found.

Those who used occasionally to climb on Harrison Rocks before the war will be astonished at the amount which has been done since then. The number of climbs described in the first guide to Harrison Rocks, published in 1934, has been multiplied, over the whole area, almost exactly by ten, and is now not far short of three hundred. The appearance of the new guide marks the fact that, within its obvious limitations, sandstone has become for the London district what gritstone has long been for the north.

The author writes as a member of the London Section of the J.M.C.S., which has published the guide, but has adopted the numerical system of classification which was being used by the Climbers' Club at the time the book was written.

A.D.M.C.

S.M.C. GUIDE TO THE WESTERN HIGHLANDS. By James A. Parker.  
(3rd edition, revised, 1947. 10/6.)

The new edition of this guide differs little from the second edition (1932). The photographs have been improved, a map omitted and one or two new climbs added—but rock climbing seems to creep in almost as a trespasser in this particular stretch of S.M.C. territory.

A.D.M.C.

1 : 25,000 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPS.

A most interesting article in the May, 1946, number of the *Geographical Journal* by Major-General Cheetham described the future plans of the Ordnance Survey in this country. In it there was a description of the new 1 : 25,000 ( $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches to the mile) maps which were then being prepared. Many of these sheets are now on the market, including those covering the Lake District, and attention should be drawn to them as they are of great interest to the mountaineer.

For years most of us have used the 1-inch map in the fourth or Popular edition issued in the early 'twenties ; in the years before the war the revised fifth edition was beginning to appear, but at present it only covers part of the south of England ; and for the future the new  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch map will probably serve the needs of climbers more effectively despite some obvious defects. The 1-inch map, though ideal for the walker, was not large enough to show crags or large rock faces accurately, whilst in hilly country the mass of contour lines swamped the other details, and, if layered colours were added as in the Lake

District and Snowdonia special maps, the result was almost illegible. In the new map the contour lines, which have been resurveyed throughout at 250 feet intervals, are extremely clear, most outcrops are shown (and named) whilst even the Mosedale Boulder is marked. As befits a Government publication the marked footpaths are committed to paper with extreme caution in contrast to the light-hearted optimism of Mr. Bartholemew.

The main criticism to be offered concerns the place names. Why a new map should not be more accurate or up to date is quite unaccountable. The New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel is marked, but the Old is not, none of the Club Huts are shown, nor any Youth Hostels. On Pillar the Rock is called Pillar Stone and the High Level path is neither marked nor named. On Scafell, although Lords Rake and Broad Stand are marked, the one is placed on top of the crag and the other about half way up the Great Eastern Route. There are many other curiosities, some puzzling, some charming, as the outcrop called Bursting Knott at the steepest part of the Sty Head path, but generally the walker and climber (who will be the only users) have obviously not been consulted: in fact the names appear to have been copied from the original survey of 1873 which is a pity, but as the whole map is (cautiously) headed "Provisional Edition" perhaps it is not too late.

ELLIOTT VINEY.

**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE. (July, 1947, cmd. 7121. Price 4/6.)**

This (the "Hobhouse") Committee was appointed by the Minister of Town and Country Planning in July, 1945, to consider the Dower Report (Cmd. 6628 of May, 1945) and to make recommendations as to which areas of England and Wales should be selected first as National Parks and to fix their boundaries; also to consider and make recommendations as to how to secure the objects of National Parks and as to the special requirements of each "Park" area.

In June, 1946, the Committee's Terms of Reference were extended to cover inquiry into the measures necessary for the preservation and maintenance of existing rights of way and the provision of new rights of way throughout the country; also the provision of access for the public to uncultivated land generally.

A Special Committee was set up to deal with these matters, and in September, 1947, it put out a very valuable Report (Cmd. 7207, price 1/3) recommending the creation of a legal right of access on uncultivated land and various amendments designed to simplify and elucidate the legal system concerning cross country footpaths.

The Hobhouse Committee was not instructed to include Scotland in its field of inquiry, and a separate Committee (which reported in 1947, Cmd. 7235, Price 2/-) was set up by the Department of Health for Scotland to consider on the measures necessary for the provision of National Parks in Scotland (including the question of access to uncultivated land).

Neither the Report of the Footpaths and Access Special Committee relating to England and Wales nor the Report of the Scottish National Parks Committee are covered by this review, but should be read by anyone desirous of getting a grasp of all aspects of the problem as affecting the whole country.



The 1945 Report was the result of a most painstaking and comprehensive survey by the late John Dower (who, incidentally, was a keen mountaineer) and was published by the Minister of Town and Country Planning in the Coalition Government "for information and as a basis for discussion."

The Hobhouse Report constitutes an admirable development of the Dower Report—sifting, and expanding or rejecting, each of its ideas and going much farther than Dower did in the way of recommending machinery for the setting up of National Parks and for the protection of adjoining areas.

There is an interesting account of the nature and purpose of National Parks as established in other countries and a short historical survey of the movement in Great Britain, which may be taken to have begun in 1929.

It is good to find that Dower's main recommendations as to the selection of National Park areas, and that the charge of these areas should be given to a National Parks Commission under the Parliamentary responsibility of the Minister of Town and Country Planning, have been adopted.

The Commission, so the Hobhouse Committee recommends, would be appointed by the Minister to draw up a code of planning appropriate for National Parks, to deal with Government departments, etc., seeking to develop or use land in such areas, and in general to form a pool of specialised knowledge, experience and enthusiasm, so that in the planning of National Parks there may be a common National standard.

The Lake District and North Wales areas are among the first four recommended as the first instalment of the scheme, but another area in which the Climbers' Club is to some extent interested—the Cornish coast—which was recommended by Dower to be made a National Park area, has been omitted for reasons which, it must be admitted, seem quite sound.

The Report contains a twenty miles to the inch map of Great Britain, showing the proposed National Parks and Conservation areas, together with a set of district maps on the ten inch to the mile scale, showing the proposed boundaries of each Park area and the uncultivated land contained therein to which reasonably free access is recommended.

The proposed Lakeland National Park, having an area of approximately 892 sq. miles, takes in all the fell country between Calder Bridge and Shap and between Caldbeck and Greenodd, and is to incorporate all the small urban areas in the centre of the district, but it excludes, of course, the West Cumberland and Furness industrial areas together with Penrith, Kendal and Grange-over-Sands. Unfortunately, of the actual coastline of S.W. Cumberland, all that is included is some two miles at the mouth of the Esk.

The North Wales area, as provisionally delimited, is of about the same size as the proposed Lakeland Park and is to be bounded by Conway, Llanrwst and Bala (all outside), Lake Vyrnwy and Dinas Mawddwy (inside), Machynlleth (outside), Aberdovey (inside),

Barmouth, Harlech, Portmadoc, Caernarvon, Llanberis and Bethesda (all outside). Thus it will include not only the Carnedd, Glyder, Snowdon and Nantlle Hills, but Cader Idris and the Rhinogs, Arenigs and Arans. The Denbigh Moors, the Clywyd Hills, the Berwyns and Plinlymmon are excluded but are scheduled as Conservation areas qualifying for less extensive protection. The Committee has come to the conclusion that the urban area of Blaenau-Ffestiniog should be excluded from the proposed National Park, and this area is to form a kind of island outside the responsibility of the National Parks Commission.

From the point of view of the climber and fell walker, all the best country in these two areas, which are of special interest to the Climbers' Club, will be protected against undesirable development by the National Parks Scheme. Ten other areas, covering nearly 4,000 sq. miles, are also recommended for treatment as National Parks and a full description of these is given in the Report.

The real difficulty faced by the Hobhouse Committee has not, however, been the selection and preliminary delimitation of the Park areas but just how to secure (to quote Dower) that in those areas, "for the nation's benefit, and by national decision and action :—

(a) The characteristic landscape beauty shall be preserved ; (b) access and facilities for public open air enjoyment shall be provided ; (c) wild life and buildings and places of architectural and historical interest shall be suitably protected, whilst (last but by no means least) (d) established farming use shall be effectively maintained."

Therefore, much the most important chapters in this Report are those dealing with the proposed Commission, its constitution and staffing, the powers and duties of its local organizations, the relations between it and the Central Planning Authority, and its powers relative to those of all the potential developers and users of land in the National Park areas.

The first "breakdown" of this problem is as between *planning*—meaning the exercise of the powers provided by the Town and Country Planning Acts for the control of the development and use of land—and *management*, meaning activities outside the ordinary range of *planning*, such as positive enhancement of landscape beauty, removal of disfigurements, increase of holiday accommodation, provision of facilities for popular enjoyment, necessary regulation of public behaviour, protection of the legitimate rights and interests of the resident population ; also power, where necessary, for some special purpose, to acquire land.

It is beyond the normal scope of a review to discuss the proposals under these two main heads in much detail, but it is clear that the Hobhouse Committee has come to the conclusion that whereas the proposed Commission should have pretty full powers in regard to management, its powers and duties in regard to planning must be more of an advisory nature. This is shown by the statement (paragraph 91) that it is not intended that the Commission should take over the

functions of the Minister of Town and Country Planning as Central Planning Authority in relation to National Park areas ; it is merely to have "an important interest" in planning these areas and it is "assumed" that it will be the practice of the Minister to "consult" the Commission on matters of planning policy affecting them. A Commission constituted with this sort of relationship to the Ministry could only be weak and subordinate. What seems to be necessary is a more independent body with power to see to it that the national policy it lays down for the planning of National Park areas is fully and effectively applied. It should also have the right to be heard at top level in necessary opposition to Departments of Government, public Corporations and statutory undertakers, whose schemes are sometimes even more of a menace than those of Local Authorities and private persons.

This is to some extent provided for in para. 116 which recommends "that a permanent Committee of the Cabinet, or of Ministers, should be set up, charged with the reconciliation of all claims to the use of land by Government departments" whenever conflicts of interest prove insoluble. BUT there is no provision for the proposed Commission to have direct access to this Committee—that right to be heard is reserved to the Minister who may, or may not, adequately appreciate the Commission's point of view, and who is not even obliged to bring the Commission into the preliminary discussions with the Department(s) whose proposals it objects to.

The Report does, however, make a most important proposal as to the creation of a new local planning organisation which will fit into the normal framework of Town and Country Planning. Local Park Committees are to be set up under the Commission to act as statutory local planning authorities for the National Park areas and be responsible for drawing up development plans and for granting or refusing planning permissions. This means that such powers will be taken out of the hands of the existing local authorities; and that will certainly be a major step in the right direction, because experience—particularly in the Lake District and the Peak District—has shown that the most important and urgent thing that is required for the preservation of these areas is a single planning authority working to a national, as distinct from local, policy. For instance, at the present time the planning of the Lake District is in the hands of three County Councils and some seven or eight smaller authorities, and there is no effective organisation for co-operation between these parties on a common policy ; a situation which, in practice, is very unsatisfactory. In North Wales the position is much the same for (although the mountain area in which this Club is most interested falls mainly within the administrative area of only one County) four counties are concerned in the proposed National Park area. The coming into force this year of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 will itself do something to relieve these unsatisfactory conditions because under that Act all planning powers are to be concentrated mainly in the hands of the County Councils, but that still does not get over the difficulty of securing rational planning in a Park

area which is the concern of two or more County Councils, who are not bound by the Act to co-operate fully.

And here again the proposals show weaknesses, because not only does it not seem to be provided that the Commission shall have power to *direct* the operations of the Park Committees, but these local committees are to be constituted in a somewhat peculiar way. Each is to consist of not more than twenty-five persons of whom the Chairman is to be appointed by the Commission, and the remainder appointed as to 50 per cent. by the County Councils, whose administrative areas fall wholly or partly within the National Park and 50 per cent. by the Commission. Para. 76 goes on to say that the representatives of the Commission "should mainly be persons resident within or near the National Park, who will combine a sympathetic understanding of its traditions and of the interests of the local community, with an appreciation of the wider purposes of National Park policy"—which is all very fine, but it is not stipulated that the representatives appointed by the County Councils shall have those qualifications. Nor does it provide against the Commission appointing as its representatives members of the Councils interested for whom seats have not been secured by those authorities. Not being convinced of the infallibility of "the elected representatives of the people" especially in matters requiring the application of national as distinct from "parish pump" policy, one is disappointed to see that those same local authorities whose planning of National Park areas has been open to criticism will still (except that some degree of co-operation is to become obligatory) be able to pursue their own sweet way. God forbid that there should be a general centralisation of all local authorities' powers—"government by Whitehall"—but there really is a strong case for effectively centralising the planning powers of the authorities concerned with the administration of National Park areas, in relation to those areas.

However, there is nothing final about this Report and it is still possible that its weaknesses may not be carried into the legislation which will be necessary to implement it. We can but hope, therefore, that if and when a National Parks Act is passed by Parliament, it will constitute a workable scheme for attainment of the objects set out in this Report and not be just a sham (like the so-called Access to Mountains Act of 1939—which in practice tends to restrict access rather than facilitate it) or an emasculated version of "Hobhouse" creating National Parks in name but not in fact.

(May, 1948)

A. B. HARGREAVES.

MOUNTAINEERING IN SCOTLAND. By W. H. Murray. (J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1947. 18/-).

Now and then a happy chance brings a book to review which has classic quality; a book which exists in its own right, owing little of its essential character to its predecessors or even to its subject matter, so that in some degree at least it is felt to be universal in its appeal, to probe more deeply than usual under the surface of things and so to

touch new and hidden springs of thought or feeling. This strikes me as being such a book.

It deals only with climbing in Scotland and each chapter but the last describes a single day's expedition, remarkable either for mountain achievement or mood, often (such is the reward of happy warriors like Murray) for both together and inseparable. Many of the climbs he has chosen to retail are of great severity, either intrinsically, or because of conditions of snow, ice or weather, or as feats of endurance, but the choice is in no way sensational. Murray holds to the catholic outlook which enjoys the hills in all their aspects : on rock or snow, in summer or winter, by day or night, in good weather or bad ; that knows mountaineering as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. He appreciates very well the deep pleasure of a fine climb going well under good conditions. His first chapter describes just such a day in the Cuillin which must have been pure delight from the misty dawn wanderings over Sgurr na Banachdich to the vast impromptu meal and mild flirtation on a tourist steamer at the end of Coruisk. But even here the spirit of adventure rode free ; this light-hearted scramble lasted by intent a full twenty-four hours.

If for the most part he has chosen to recount days of storm and stress, it is because he takes the philosopher's view of mountains, the view of one who sees that joy is a different and greater thing than enjoyment, and that pain is the price that must be paid, and in proportion, for the highest joy and the deepest experience. "For there is no chisel," he says, "more quick to shape character than storm, hunger, and hard work outfaced. In mountaineering, as in no other sport, adventures are of the mind as much as of the body. The two go hand in hand."

There is nothing forced, however, in his accounts of the climbs themselves. Evocative description of mood and scenery there is in plenty, but Murray rightly keeps philosophic reflection apart from a straightforward tale of action. He writes with enthusiasm but without affectation. He really relives and makes the reader feel the high emotion of the big moments of a great climb for he sees the expedition as a whole as part of its surroundings. In short, he writes with imagination as well as knowledge and this gives his book a ringing sincerity too often absent from the unconvincing vapourings of some of our mountain philosophers.

It is, in fact, peculiarly difficult to write convincingly about climbing in these islands. The expeditions lack the scale and therefore the high drama of a great alpine ascent. As a result, accounts of British climbs are apt either to consist of a mass of technical jargon, informative enough to the initiated but frankly boring to the general reader, or to be pitched in so preposterously melodramatic a tone as to be simply comic to the knowledgeable, however stirring they may seem to the non-climber. There are of course good isolated articles in club journals or chapters in books of wider scope, but a sustained performance such as this of Murray's is in my experience unique.

He is helped by dealing with Scottish hills. The greater scale and variety of the cliffs and scenery, the contrast between summer and winter conditions, all help to create a sense of dramatic antithesis which would be lacking were he writing of English or Welsh climbs. He is indeed acutely aware of this dramatic contrast and makes full use of it not only in his writing but also more artfully in the sequence of his chapters. These are so arranged as to present an alternation of mood, weather and season which shows each at its best by contrast with its neighbours.

In a purely mountaineering sense the main interest of the book lies in its description of winter climbing in Scotland. "I have not disguised," he says, "the truth that I prefer winter to summer mountaineering; for it is in winter that the Scottish hills excel. To the art of rock climbing there is added, firstly, the judgment and treatment of snow and ice. There is further added to summer rock-work the winter merit that no route is the same twice. Each winter ascent thus affords to the mountaineer a pleasure fully equal to the rare ascent of a new route in summer. He sets out to explore unknown difficulties amidst scenery more splendid than in summer-time, and ever new; his is the joy of a hard-fought climb, and when doubt of the issue is at last removed, the elation of winning the only true victory—the one that cannot be taken for granted."

Anyone who has set out under a lowering sky to tackle the ice-coated slabs of Buachaille Etive or has hacked his way in brilliant morning sunshine over glistening snow slopes to the frosted crags of a Nevis buttress will know that he is right. Too few mountaineers south of the border have yet realised that the night train to Scotland can bring them within easy reach of expeditions of truly alpine quality.

The excellent, but not very well reproduced, photographs in this book add conviction to his thesis.

There is also a chapter on high altitude camping, more worth while than many more elaborate dissertations because it is a record of dismal experience and failure ingeniously overcome. To sleep in tolerable comfort on the summit of Ben Nevis or Aonach Eagach in winter is no small achievement and the means by which it may be accomplished are certainly worth careful consideration and test.

But the chief interest of the book lies less in its matter, fascinating as that is, than in its style. For here, if I am not mistaken, is the best writer on mountains and mountaineering and the emotions they engender since Geoffrey Young.

Murray's touch is sometimes not yet quite sure. Now and then there are little clumsinesses—a Scottish too-meticulousness, a sniff of the lamp:

"Therefore, if any climb be free from falling stones and snow, to describe it as 'dangerous' is to make an unmeaning noise."

Then there is the matter of quotations. It has too long been a tradition that mountaineering literature shall be well larded with cracker mottos from the classics. Indeed, for some of us hopelessly

groping for the *mot juste* it is certainly the easiest, sometimes the only, way out. "Spotting the Quote" might become a stock parlour game for the mountain bookworm's winter evenings. Murray follows the tradition, even helping out the spotter (and, I suspect, salving his conscience) by listing his sources in the Index. But good wine such as his needs no bush and though his quotations are apt and often beautiful in themselves, they interrupt the flow of his writing and clash with his highly personal style. In almost every case they could be removed with advantage.

But these are merely the blemishes of modesty and inexperience. About the quality of his writing there can hardly be two opinions. Whether he writes of mountain action and sensation :

"The calm prevailed through the journey from Cairn Toul to Angel's Peak. We were just underneath the summit when as suddenly as the wind had died it returned. It came from a point more to the west, loud and shrill, buffeting the west flank and spinning streamers of snow around us. The light turned an ugly yellow and darkened to iron grey."

or of hill scenery :

"The walls and slabs of Buachaille, muffled in new snow, dazzled our eyes where the sun struck. The mountain looked like a fortress of ice, its summit diamond cut deep into a royal blue sky. It was not alone the confusion of snow-turret and bastions, nor even the ridges racing up and up, drawing in to the white blaze where the last rocks leaped against the blue ; not grace of design, nor colour, nor height that charged our minds with wonder. These beauties were indeed endless, but were brought to unity and fulfilled in that austere and remote line dividing snow from sky."

or of those deeper heart-stirrings that few of us would dare to try and put into words, in whatever he writes integrity and vision combine with poetic sensitiveness to draw out the striking word, the revealing phrase.

Finally, and it is this which gives the book the quality I have ventured to call universal, it is a record of a spiritual pilgrimage. Murray is at no pains to conceal that mountains have come to have a mystic significance for him. Not indeed in themselves alone, but as a pointer for him who will allow himself to see visions and dream dreams. From almost the first page—"here, for the first time, broke upon me the unmistakable intimation of a last reality underlying mountain beauty ; and here, for the first time, it awakened within me a faculty of comprehension that had never before been exercised"—the evolution of this spiritual outlook is the underlying theme. It reaches its climax in a remarkable penultimate chapter, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* :

"Those fairest forms of the mountain way—are they all that is spread out for us to read in the high places of the earth ? Something in that night cried out to us, not low, nor faltering, but clear, true, urgent—that this was not all : that not half the wonder had pierced the clouds of our blindness ; that the world was full of a divine splen-

dour, which must be sought within oneself before it might be found without: that our task was to see and know. From the deeps of the earth to the uttermost star above the whole creation had throbbed with a full and new life; and we knew, as surely as men know anything on earth, that the implacable hunter had drawn close."

After this the last chapter comes as an anti-climax. It could not be otherwise. It sums up the book admirably as far as mountaineering in Scotland and Murray's own attitude to it are concerned, but the essential discord is left unresolved. "I came down from the summit with the acute awareness of an imminent revelation lost; a shadow that stalked at my side ever more openly among the hills. The very skies had trembled with presentiment of the last reality: and we had not been worthy." The true final chapter of this book remains to be written. When the time comes, as it assuredly will, this will prove to be a tale of spiritual adventures no less enthralling than these mountain ones.

The title-page quotes a poem by Geoffrey Young:

"There is a land of heart's desire  
free for the hand that wills."

Murray has the hand that wills—and the eye to see and the ear to hear. It is the special merit of this book that he can and does make his land of heart's desire free for us to share with him.

G. A. DUMMETT.

MOUNTAIN LURE. By George Basterfield. (Titus Wilson and Son Ltd., Kendal, 1947. 15/-.)

This is very much a Lakeland, not to say Fell and Rock, book, and its interest will be particularly for George Basterfield's many friends.

He summarises his aim in writing the book very frankly in the Foreword:

"In the pages of this book you will find displayed little or no literary ability, nor any thought of technique or polish, all you can hope to find will be the rough raw emotions and thoughts of one who has experienced a life worth the living through the avenue of mountain worship, you may call it pantheism if you choose, call it what you may, to me it is the worship of the inscrutable, an irresistible impulse to fathom the deep and scale the heights of the back of beyond."

To what extent you enjoy the book will depend largely on how far you agree with his highly personal views.

"Why do men climb?" asks the first chapter, and it and the two following develop his answer. "Men climb because climbing is the ultimate order of progress. There is no finality in the affairs of man."

Some of the minor reasons are rather unorthodox: "I realize immediately, as soon as I address myself to the upstanding precipice, that this upright all-fours attitude is a perfect and natural adaptation of the human frame. I repeat . . . *perfect*, an all-fours attitude on the pavement would be the life of a dog with loss of horizon. . . . This "all-fours" attitude, much desired, brings the nostrils near to the



aroma of the clean earth," or : " We go to the hills because deep down in our innermost natural recesses there lurks the animal, we may not realize the crouching form, it operates an unconscious interference on our civilised desires, the animal it is that hears ' the call,' and man goes."

There follow three chapters of dialect stories which I am incapable of reviewing. They are doubtless excellent but deciphering them even with a glossary (here thoughtfully supplied) has always been for me horribly reminiscent of Caesar painfully construed. I long for a crib.

The remainder of the book is devoted to verses. Some are of frankly parochial interest :

" When H.M.K. placed M.G.G.  
In irreversible degree,  
He did not count on G.G.M."

Others, like " Fog on the Bog " are very simple narratives :

" He yelled, ' come back,' alas ! alack !

Thick in the soup we looped the loop in that short cut,  
We flogged about in utter route.

Lost Billy's ' mack ' and doused his sack this got his gut,

From out the trace of Billy's face,

Came with a choke, ' G.B. I'm broke,' I said : ' Tut, tut '."

The more ambitious are for the most part descriptions of Lakeland scenery in lush imagery like " Clouds and the Hills " :

" Swathing the green hills fabric of silent loom

Snowsilk delectable, opal enhanced.

Soft billowed lingerie, zephered creations,

Clothing the contours, raiment divine."

or expressions of Basterfield's mountain philosophy in verse.

There are several very spectacular photographs of solitary rock-climbing whose misty quality admirably reflects the tone of the book.

G. A. DUMMETT.

#### OTHER PUBLICATIONS.

The Club gratefully acknowledges receipt of the following publications of which it has not been possible to include reviews: *Sierra Club Handbook*, 1947 ; *National Trust Report*, 1946-7, and *List of Properties*, 1946-7 ; *Wierchy*, 1947 (Polish Tatra Society) ; the Bulletin of the B.M.C., *Mountaineering*, Vol. I, Nos. 1-3.

The Club is also much indebted to the Mountain Club of South Africa for presenting to the Library fifteen back numbers of its *Journal*.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

The fact that the Club has completed its first fifty years of life has been, or is to be, celebrated, in the words of the Annual Report, "in as many appropriate and ingenious ways as current austerities allow." All but one of these ways are either literary or gastronomic ; the only one which is not is the conferment of Honorary Membership on all surviving original members of the Club. These are : W. E. Corlett, Sir T. K. Rose, G. Winthrop Young, A. P. Abraham, G. D. Abraham, C. W. Barton, L. W. Clarke, R. C. Cyriax, S. B. Donkin, L. K. Pagden, A. W. Southall, W. J. Williams—of whom the first three are merely adding a Bar to existing Honorary Membership. The Jubilee Annual Dinner, held at the Connaught Rooms in London, on 21st February, was marked by two speeches in addition to the customary toasts and replies, L. S. Amery speaking on the wider development of mountaineering and G. Winthrop Young delighting us with some "verses," which are printed elsewhere in this number. Statisticians noted, incidentally, that the six speakers of the evening included two ex-Presidents of the Alpine Club, all the Presidents of the B.M.C. to date, three Honorary Members and three Presidents, past or present, of the Club. A special Welsh Dinner is also to be held at the Royal Hotel, Capel Curig, on 30th October. Of the literary tributes to the Jubilee, this *Journal* seems likely to be the first to appear ; a Jubilee *Journal* only in the sense that (so far as speeches went) the Annual Dinner was a Jubilee Dinner—its normal self (Part II) with a substantial jubilatory expansion (Part I). Of the two more specifically commemorative publications for which the Committee planned, the Jubilee volume, which had made good progress from the editorial point of view, was last reported in some danger of foundering on the rocks of production ; and the Index, on which Mr. Oughton completed his part of the work some time ago, is undergoing final revision—and incidentally awaiting the 1948 *Journal* which has to be included in it.

\* \* \*

Unfortunately it has not been possible to reproduce in facsimile two printed notices—the earliest in the Club's history—which were kindly offered by G. Winthrop Young. The second of these, dated 25th March, 1898, was in fact published in the account of the formation of the Club in the first number of the *Journal* ; the text of the first (which was printed direct onto Victorian stamped postcards) runs as follows :

At the Pen-y-Gwryd Dinner on 6th inst., Mr. Roderick Williams proposed, and Mr. Gotch seconded, that a Climbing Club should

be formed, and this proposal was unanimously approved. Mr. C. E. Mathews (ex-President of the Alpine Club) was unanimously elected President, and accepted the post.

Details were left in the hands of a provisional Committee to consider and report. Suggestions for the Committee should be addressed, before 15th January, to

G. B. BRYANT,  
2 King William Street,  
London, E.C.

16th December, 1897

It will be seen from this that the Jubilee of the Presidential office took place last year, not this ; and, although the loose ends were not tied up till an Annual General Meeting had approved the first set of rules, it would surely follow that the Club itself dates its existence from the second "Pen-y-Gwryd" Dinner held at the Café Monico, on 6th December, 1897. The account in the first *Journal* says as much : "When the meeting broke up, the much-debated project was an accomplished fact." So it seems that what we have probably been celebrating this year is the Jubilee of the first Annual Dinner, held on 28th April, 1898, and that the Welsh Jubilee Dinner, which has a logical claim to be regarded as *the* Jubilee Dinner, will need to give itself retrospective effect to 1947.

\* \* \*

To the general regret, the retiring President, Jack Longland, was prevented from attending the Annual General Meeting and Dinner, at which his term of office expired, by an operation on an old shoulder injury. This had constituted an impediment on Very Severs for the last year or two, but interfered in no other way with a most energetic discharge of the Presidential duties. The immediate post-war years raised weighty issues of Club policy : expansion or limitation ; numbers or adjectives ; earth, water or Elsanity. With all these matters the President grappled vigorously, and with effect to which the present robust state of the Club bears witness. Members of the Committee would agree that Committee meetings were almost a pleasure, and all members will have enjoyed the mastery of phrase which has distinguished recent Annual Reports—the first of which was virtually the "1945" part of the 1945-6 *Journal*. The new President, Bryan Donkin, is equally well known to the Club and to the Alpine Club, having been Hon. Treasurer of the one and Hon. Secretary of the other simultaneously all through the war. He succeeds his father, S. B. Donkin, as President after an interval of only nine years—the second occasion in the Club's history that the Presidency has been held by two generations of the same family.

\* \* \*

The time-lag of several months which has to elapse between the writing and the appearance of these notes means that by the time this number of the *Journal* is out a good deal may have happened which has not happened yet. Among the things which are fairly certain to

have happened, being billed for the beginning of June, is the completion of the Northern Committee's labours at Cwm Glas Cottage and its opening for the use of members. This acquisition, though now ancient history, was made (thanks largely to the promptitude of Geoffrey Bartrum) during the Editor's time-lag last year, and was not therefore reported in the 1947 *Journal*. Next comes the Alpine Meet at Arolla, which should materialise in August. Among the things which *may* have happened is the construction of a bridge in local stone at Ynys Ettws, which was due to be begun in April ; and first on the list of the things which we should like to have happened, but shall not believe is going to until it has, is the beginning of work on the R. W. Lloyd Hut itself, to which the building of a bridge is a necessary preliminary.

\*   \*   \*

The result of the voting on the question of limitation of membership of the Club, which was declared at the Annual General Meeting, should perhaps be recorded in the *Journal*. Those voting in favour of the general principle of limitation numbered 128 ; those against, 85. What action is to be taken as a result of the referendum is being determined.

\*   \*   \*

A. W. Andrews (who only missed original membership by three years) and E. C. Pyatt have begun work on a Climbers' Club guide-book to the Cornish Cliffs. Any members who have relevant information to offer are asked to send it to E. C. Pyatt, 126 Sixth Cross Road, Twickenham. The Tryfan, Glyder Fach and Idwal guides are about to be reprinted, and work on new Welsh guide-books has been resumed this year.

H. R. C. Carr, G. A. Lister and P. O. Work are preparing a walker's guide to Snowdon and the Beddgelert District, which they hope will be ready for publication by Christmas. They would welcome any suggestions or ideas from members, which should be sent as soon as possible to H. R. C. Carr, 9 Wheatlands Grove, Harrogate.

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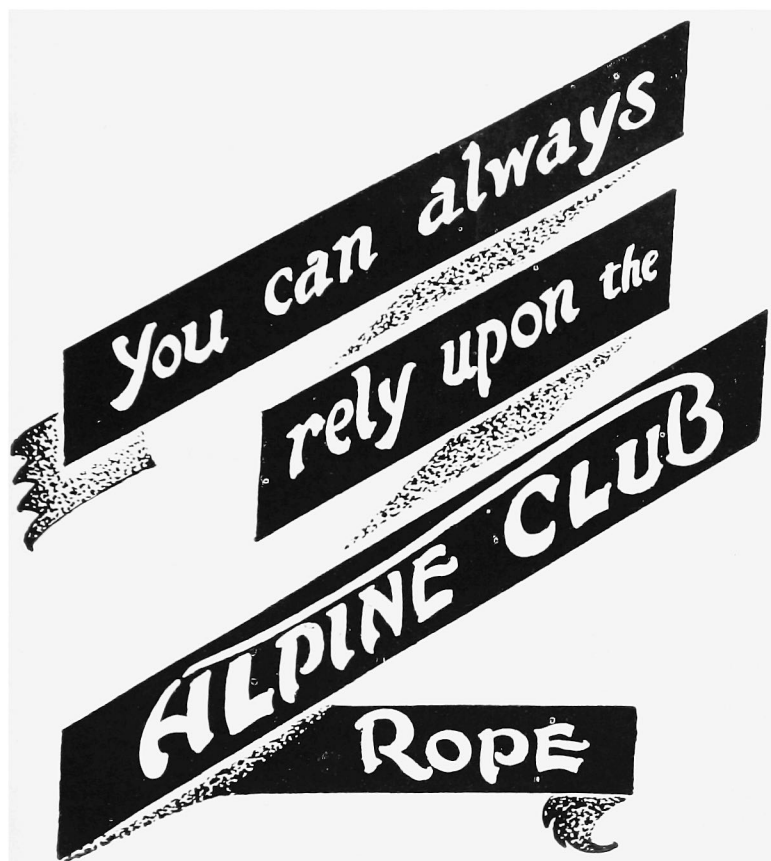
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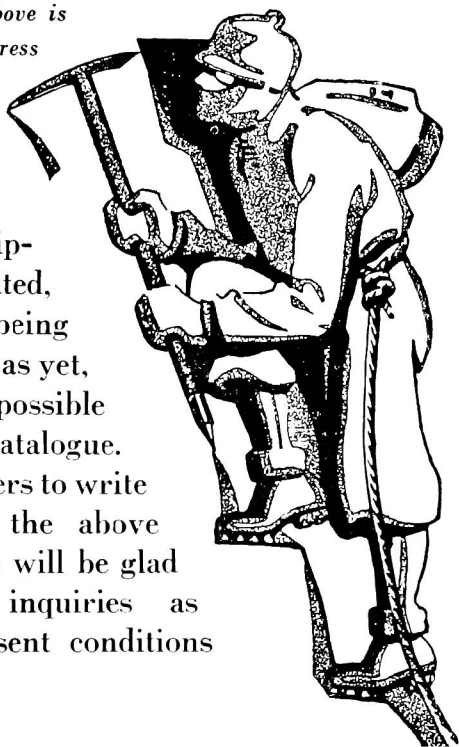
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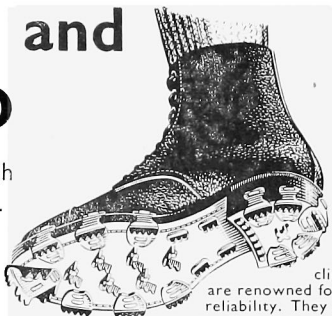
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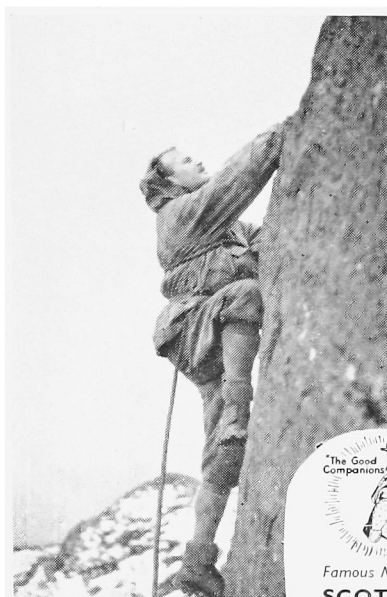
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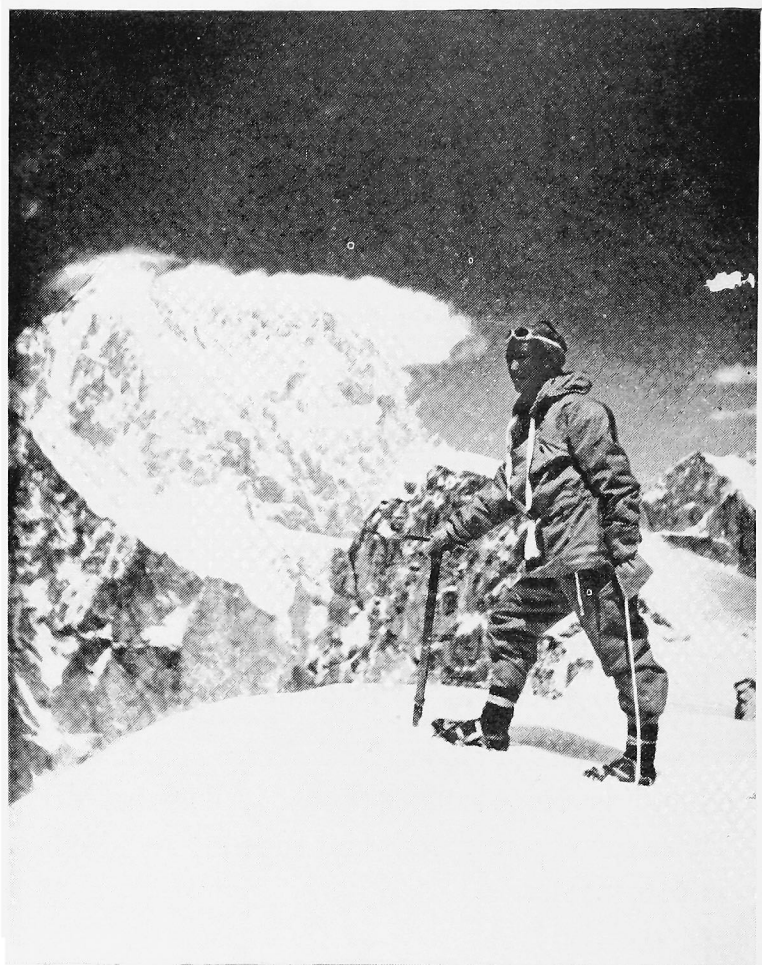
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