

THE
CLIMBERS' CLUB
JOURNAL

1968

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Edited by
NIGEL ROGERS

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THE CLIMBERS' CLUB, LONDON

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CRIB GOCH FROM LLYN MYMBIR
Ken Wilson



THE ASCENT OF THE FORTRESS

J. GREGORY

The Fortress is situated at the hub of the Cordillera del Paine, and because of its immense size and form presents an obvious challenge to mountaineers. A magnificently shaped granite monolith whose walls are smooth and sheer; a formidable proposition presenting the technical difficulties of the Alps with the remoteness of a Himalayan peak. Perhaps the area itself presents the greatest challenge and dangers on account of the tremendously powerful winds which sweep off the Patagonian Ice Cap, giving it a climate unparalleled outside the polar regions.

Of the six of us who left Swansea on the 10th November, 1967, only Ian Clough had been to Patagonia before. The rest of the expedition was from the Sheffield area and included: David Nicol, Chris Jackson, Gordon Hibberd, Niki Clough, nurse to the expedition, and myself. Although we had climbed extensively in the Alps none of us had been on an expedition and naturally we were very excited to know that at least we were on the way. It had taken two years to plan. There had been times when we thought that we would never go, mainly from financial reasons; there had been setbacks and complications by the dozen, but we were now sailing towards the equator and South America.

The three weeks on board were the laziest any of us had ever spent. It was far too hot to do any exercises and we just sunbathed, read, ate and slept. We arrived at Buenos Aires and after two hot and humid days flew down to Punta Arenas where we were met by Derek Walker. A member of the two previous British Patagonian expeditions, he is now headmaster of the British school in Punta Arenas. We stayed there for four days making our last preparations and purchases before using army transport to take us to the mountains. Two Chilean army officers had also joined us in Punta

Arenas and were to remain with us during our stay in the Paine area.

If it were not for a few sheep farms the area would be completely unpopulated; the roads are few and poorly made. We set up our base camp where the road ended at a place called Pudeto, situated on the fringe of the mountains some sixteen miles from the Fortress. From here everything had to be carried on our backs, a slow laborious task absorbing much time and energy.

Our first problem was to cross Lago Nordeskold which lay between base camp and the Fortress. For this we used a small rubber dinghy and outboard motor; unfortunately we soon lost the services of the motor as it fell overboard and was never seen again. It was four miles across the lake, four dangerous miles because the wind would suddenly spring up causing the surface to become a foaming mass of spray and waves. In such conditions a small boat could easily capsize and because the water was little above freezing the occupants would have little chance of survival. The weather which played such an important part in our success was unusually good and the lake generally calm.

We were able to move all our food and equipment to the opposite side of the valley by means of the lake thus saving ourselves a ten mile walk and a great deal of time. About a mile from the beach on the far side we set up a dump camp and five miles further up the valley advance base. This build up to the actual climbing more than made up for the idle days we had spent on the boat. Our fitness left much to be desired, every step was purgatory carrying 60lbs. loads up to the foot of the Fortress. We found that much of the time was spent carrying these heavy loads between the camps; far more time was spent doing this mundane task than actually climbing. The benefit of this work is that you soon become very fit and in good trim for the climbing ahead.

The two Chilean Army officers were far from happy carrying heavy loads and spent most of the time sitting at base camp, eating the best of our food, which caused a certain amount of bad feeling. They were really of little help and took no part in the actual climbing, their equipment being very poor and limited. After

IN THE ICE-HOSE
Ian Clough





Christmas they were away checking map references and doing a detail survey of the area for the army and we were quite happy to be on our own.

Both dump camp and advance base were situated in the woods by the side of the Rio Francis, a bubbling torrent of water fed from the womb of the glaciers higher up the valley. They were ideally placed, the surrounding trees forming a natural barrier against the fierce winds; there was an abundance of fire wood and plenty of fresh water. The first few journeys up through the woods were chaotic because we had to make our own track and we were forever stumbling through dense undergrowth and never following the same path twice. By the end of the expedition we had made a well defined track and the journey which first of all took four hours could be made in one and a half. Having established our camps and stocked them with an adequate amount of food and equipment, we were in a position to take our first look at the Fortress. We planned to have at least two people climbing on the mountain whilst the others worked in support. Dave Nicol and I took the first look at the lower reaches.

It was a two hour walk from advance base to the foot of the Fortress, and it was always pleasant to leave the almost claustrophobic atmosphere of the woods for the open spaces of the scree slopes above. Here you could see all the surrounding mountains and look back down the Francis valley across Lago Nordenskold to the distant planes of the Chilean Pampas shimmering in the heat, a complete contrast to the harsh environment in which we were living.

The first three thousand feet of climbing was in an up to 30° snow couloir, christened the Great Couloir, easy climbing but hard work. We arrived below the first of the obvious difficulties and instead of returning to advance base we dug a snow hole and spent the night there. The following day we climbed as far as the rock buttress fixing ropes as we went. It had been decided to fix rope on the whole of the difficult section of the Fortress in order to safeguard a retreat in the advent of a storm and to facilitate a fast return to the previous high point by means of prusiking. Dave and

I returned to advance base to take our turn at load carrying while Gordon and Chris went up to the snow cave and the following day climbed the first part of the Ice Hose, an ice choked chimney 300 feet high at an angle of 70°. This was the hardest ice climbing on the route and left us disillusioned and wondering if it was all going to be as hard as this.

Dave and I were back the following day to finish this section and climbed a further 400 feet up the ice gulley above, before returning to advance base in worsening weather. Advance base was now a long way from the climbing so we placed a Whillans box on the moraine at the foot of the Great Couloir. These boxes constructed of dexion and covered by an extra strong canvass were specially designed to withstand the strong winds. They had to be lashed down with ropes to boulders and were large enough to provide ample living accommodation for three people and their equipment. We also placed electron ladders in the Ice Hose so as to make it easier for carrying up heavy loads of equipment.

The deteriorating weather continued, the mountains were plastered in snow and ice and we were conveniently washed out of advance base and back down to base camp in time to celebrate Christmas. After two weeks of solid effort the break did us a world of good. It gave us a chance to relax and enjoy some of the luxuries of life, canned beer and Christmas puddings. It was Boxing Day when we returned and the weather was far from encouraging, it was raining hard, very windy and the mountains looked cold and menacing, half hidden by swirling clouds.

Niki and I went up the Great Couloir and were dismayed to find that all the ropes and ladders were covered by 6 inches of fresh snow and ice. We spent the whole day cutting them free. Conditions were terrible, powder avalanches were continually cascading down the Ice Hose, our clothes became sodden, numbing our bodies. The wind blew the snow all around us, fine particles biting into our face and stinging our eyes. It was a relief to escape from the confines of the chimney to the less brutal elements below.

We decided that we ought to have a higher camp than moraine, so we erected a second Whillans box at the snow cave. Ian and

Niki spent the night there whilst Chris, Dave and myself returned to moraine camp. It was a cold night and the next day broke fine and clear. All five of us climbed the Ice Hose and up the ice gulley above to the point Dave and I had reached before Christmas, where we contemplated the ground ahead.

Dave and Chris climbed out of the gulley up an 80 foot wall using pegs for aid and out onto an area of ground named the Terraces. They spent the rest of the day climbing the 400 foot upper slabs. The rock was compact and almost holdless giving some delicate climbing of VS standard. At the top of the slabs the holds ran out completely and Chris was forced to do a tension traverse into the ice gulley at the foot of the Big Corner. In the meantime, Niki and Ian had been re-arranging the fixed ropes and ladders in the Ice Hose while I carried up equipment to the Terraces.

The following day Chris and I continued climbing up the Big Corner. The weather was beautiful and having climbed the 200 foot section of rock which formed the barrier pitch to the Big Corner, VS-AI, we made good progress up 50° ice to the foot of the 400 foot overhanging wall at the top. In the course of climbing this section we found traces of a previous attempt and were very worried at the time in case someone had beaten us to it. Later we learnt that two leading Italian climbers had spent nine consecutive nights on the mountain before being forced to retreat in bad weather. That night everyone returned to moraine camp to rest and restock. The next day Ian and Gordon made an attempt to climb higher. In this they failed as the rock was heavily verglassed but they did manage to carry up heavy loads of ropes and pegs. Dave Nicol and I were left at the ice cave in case there was an improvement in the weather and the others went back down to advance base. This move paid off as the following day broke fine.

We left early carrying bivi gear and a three day supply of food as we felt confident of climbing the overhanging section and then up to the summit. We managed to climb to within 100 feet of the summit ridge but due to fatigue, loose rock and a distinct feeling of insecurity we retreated, returning to advance base very tired and disheartened.

Just after New Year the Italian expedition arrived and instead of going onto the Fortress as they had intended they moved past our camp and immediately began climbing the Shield to the left of the Fortress. They were very friendly and our relations with them were always good. We both intended that there should not be a repetition of the Towers of Paine when two teams were going for the same objective. A Chilean expedition from Santiago had also arrived and were trying for a 7,000 foot peak called the Cuernos.

Ian, Gordon and Chris were rested and went straight up taking with them a tent which they placed on the Terraces in order to have a high jumping off point for the summit. From the point where Dave and I had reached Ian made a daring traverse along an expanding flake to the foot of an overhanging crack. Gordon climbed this crack in four hours and belayed at the beginning of the summit ridge. Then followed a disastrous four hours.

Communications between Ian and Gordon were cut off by the wind and as he was already out of sight all contact was lost. Gordon wanted Ian to climb up and Ian wanted Gordon to sack haul, but all their shouting was to no avail. Eventually Gordon unroped and seeing the summit not far away continued up the summit ridge until he reached a point where it was too dangerous to proceed without a rope. Ian and Chris were completely demoralised sitting in cramped positions only a few feet away from the comparatively easy ground which would lead them to the summit, yet unable to do anything about it. Gordon had not appeared for a long time. Not knowing what had happened to him, and as it was late in the day Ian and Chris abseiled back down to the tent followed by Gordon an hour later. Ian and Chris frustrated with the day's events continued down to advance base meeting Dave and I who carried on up and joined Gordon on the Terraces.

The 5th January broke fine and by the time we left the tent at base the sun was already shining brightly on the hanging glaciers of the Paine Grande. We immediately began prusiking up the fixed ropes to the summit ridge. The last three rope lengths were hazardous yet most exhilarating and hanging in our prusiks com-

FINAL WALL OF THE BIG CORNER
Ian Clough



pletely free of the rock we were able to look down onto the scree slopes at the foot of the Fortress 5,000 feet below.

The first 2,000 feet of the ridge was scree which gave way to steep snow slopes where we were forced to put on crampons and rope up. The sun had now disappeared and clouds from the west were building up ominously and to save time we continued climbing together fearing that we may be caught in the storm. Visibility was soon down to a few yards and from our position it was difficult to discern which of the huge snow mushrooms towering above us constituted the actual summit. After two particularly steep gulleys we realized that the summit mushroom stood before us like a colossal snowball some 40 feet high.

We stood on the top at 12.30 p.m., the clouds had begun to disperse as quickly as they appeared and we were soon bathed in the warm rays of the sun. The view was magnificent, to the west stood the massive Patagonian ice-cap and over to the east the Pampas Lands of Chile and Argentina stretched as far as the eye could see. We could see all the mountains in the Paine Group, the Towers of Paine standing impressively, their summits pointing proudly upwards to the deep blue sky. We spent an hour admiring the view and taking photographs before descending the summit slopes and abseiling all the way back down the Fortress. At 7 p.m. we joined the rest of the expedition at advanced base where we celebrated our ascent around the camp fire.

Ian Clough and Chris Jackson hoped to make the second ascent but the day afterwards the weather broke and we were subjected to a month of sustained bad weather. During this time our ropes were ruined and it was impossible to reascend the Ice Hose as the ladders were buried under three feet of solid ice and all our ice climbing gear had been left at the Terraces. We had to abandon £500 of equipment. The Italian expedition eventually climbed the Shield in very windy conditions. On the same day, 31st January, the Chileans climbed the Cuernos. We had made a previous attempt on the Cuernos but were beaten back by the weather and on the descent Niki Clough broke her ankle and had to be evacuated, a slow and painful business.

At the beginning of February all three teams decided to pull out of the mountains and return to Punta Arenas. Despite the loss of our equipment we left the Paine happy in the thought that we had managed to make a successful and safe ascent and that the weather had been kind to us when we needed it most.



CANADIAN ALPINE CENTENNIAL EXPEDITION TO THE ST. ELIAS MOUNTAINS

D. K. MORRISON

I had not been talking to the blonde for more than half an hour—or so it seemed—before we landed in Edmonton. There had been a fleeting glimpse of Greenland en-route, looking very white and uninvitingly cold. Leaving London at 3.30 p.m., travelling some 3,000 miles and arriving at Edmonton at 4.15 p.m. the same day seemed a bit of a giggle, but three days were to pass before I felt anything like normal again.

A night out in Edmonton with some friends who were joining the Expedition and at 8.30 next morning flying on to Whitehorse in rather bumpy weather, and I remember thinking: "If we get washed out I'm going to pan for gold the remainder of the holiday."

As we flew up over the 1,000 miles of Alaskan highway, I was informed that in clear weather the highway was as good as any compass, in fact pilots of light planes often used the road as a guide, and not too long ago a plane had been discovered with both occupants dead. The subsequent enquiry came to the conclusion that the pilot had followed the road and turned off incorrectly at one of the few junctions, run out of road and fuel, and that was that!

With most of the Yukon Territory being taken up with forest, muskeg, mountains and lakes, it leaves precious little in the choice of landing sites.

As we taxied toward the Whitehorse Terminal building our C.P.A. jet dwarfed the line-up of brightly coloured light planes and helicopters, privately owned for the most part. We staggered with our gear onto the yellow school bus which was to take us

some 150 miles up the Alaskan highway for the next stage. Bowling along at a steady 50 miles per hour (in air conditioned comfort complete with toilet) we relaxed, enjoying the subdued murmur of the engine, after the five hours of noisy jets.

The highway is three lanes wide and has a dirt surface its entire length, consequently in dry weather vehicles throw up a continuous cloud of dust, just like the old cattle droves. One would see the dust-cloud long before the car was visible. Most cars kept headlights on all day.

Lunch-stop at Haines junction, a famous Gold-Rush landmark, then on to Kluane Lake (pronounced Kloo-ar-nee). There, a public campsite had been split in two to accommodate the Expedition. It was a beautiful site and later, washing at the lakeside, I looked back up the beach at a typical Canadian mountain scene, a backdrop of snow-capped peaks, a sweep of pine forest, with tents dotted amongst the trees, even the strong smell of coffee floating down from the cabin, all this and no language problem.

Early breakfast, back to the bus for another 30 miles then, Burwash Landing, still on the lakeside, though apart from a solitary cabin, there was little from which one could get a clue as to why it was so named.

We transferred our gear into the big open truck that awaited us, bodies piled on top and we were away, soon turning off the highway and heading West over a very rough road. The 'road' had been specially constructed for the Expedition. This was easy to believe as our lives were 'in his hands' for two hours and six creeks. I think the real reason for my not being sick on that journey, was the fact that it was mostly my gear in the immediate vicinity.

The road terminated abruptly in a clearing that was apparently the Helicopter Pad. A few oil drums and crates laying around, and in the trees, a large ridge tent that had been erected for night shelter if the helicopters were delayed. We off-loaded the luggage, then sat around waiting for some life to appear.

It might be a good idea at this juncture to say a few words about the nature of the expedition. Although one really doesn't need a reason, we had one for this trip.

1967 was the Centennial of Canadian Confederation and to help commemorate this, the Government of the Yukon Territory and the Alpine Club of Canada got together and decided the Icefield Ranges of the St. Elias Mountains were worth more exploration; not a hard choice, since their height and grandeur are surpassed only by the Himalayas and Central Andes. The Expedition was to provide climbers for commemorative peaks, and, to mark the coincident centenary of the Purchase of Alaska, there was to be an international ascent of an untrodden peak on the U.S. Canadian border, by a team from both countries.

For general exploration and climbing, a camp was established at the side of the Steele Glacier, at a height of 5,700 feet, with peaks in this area of up to 16,000 feet, being mostly unclimbed.

Explanations over as the buzz of an engine breaks the silence, then becomes a roar as the helicopter drops into the clearing, trees bending back in the slipstream, two 'bods' from our group climb aboard and up she goes. This helicopter is quickly followed by another, and then another—three working in rotation soon get the people away. Now it's my turn, and glad of something to do, I trot across to the waiting 'chopper' bending quite low as the blades have a way of dipping slightly if the pilot throttles back.

This was my first helicopter ride and I felt quite exposed sitting in that little bubble of perspex. After take-off the pilot amused himself at our expense, by banking very steeply into a tight turn.

We flew through the valleys just skimming the tree-tops, eventually crossing over a wide river, named the Donjek. It was about this time that the weather, which had been deteriorating rapidly, broke into a storm with heavy rain and lightning thrown in for good measure. I glanced surreptitiously around for a parachute, but alas no chutes in helicopters.

The one previous expedition to this area in 1935 was led by

Walter Wood who has a number of first ascents to his credit in the St. Elias Ranges, and is now Director of the Icefield Ranges Research Project, which is based at Kluane Lake. With a party including 38 pack and saddlehorses, he had made his way to the Donjek River, forded it and passed, with great difficulty, up the Steele Creek through successive ravines and passes, to gain, after six weeks, the meadow on the side of Steele Glacier. Here we were, after 25 minutes over the same meadow—the miracle of aviation.

The glacier, some 20 miles long, was a big surprise. Immediately over its lateral moraine, the glacier had recently reared up in its entire length, forming a mass of tottering ice pinnacles 70 to 80 feet high. This had been caused by a sudden surge in the glacier's movement, which at present amounts to 40 feet per day, a phenomenon which has brought scientists from many parts. This condition of the glacier makes it impossible to cross on foot, so we were later to be thankful for the choppers.

Although a large camp, it was fairly easy going and with not too much organisation quite agreeable; the food plentiful and good. The bell-tents were rather archaic but kept one dry, we had plenty of booze and books brought in from Whitehorse.

The day after I arrived, a small party of us set off to attempt the second ascent of Pk. 1, 10,000 feet, previously climbed by Walter Wood. It proved quite easy, kicking steps most of the way up, with a steep ice-pitch revealed by an avalanche on our return.

Monday, a rest day, and, as it happened, a moderate fall of snow. Lying in the flea bag with our 32% over proof rum, talking of the old days, it would be hard to say which was the most enjoyable, doing it or talking about it!

With about 70 active climbers in camp, some kind of organisation was necessary to prevent overcrowding on a particular peak, so a climbing committee was formed to control things. Lists of climbable peaks were posted in the tea tent, prospective climbers writing their names to the appropriate peaks, with alternative choice, the committee then arranging these into reasonable parties with competent Leaders and Seconds. The system worked quite well as it has at previous Canadian Alpine Camps.

Tuesday, a fine day, and I find myself leading a party of nine to an unclimbed peak, poking its snowy head up from behind the Rocky Range across the Steele Glacier. This meant using the helicopters. The trip took about five minutes, our pilot landing us on the first available section of level ground. The whole party was ready to move off within the hour. Climbing scree and scrub we gained the snout of a glacier, and eventually a snowfield hiding behind the Rocky Range. From here we could see our objective. It was about a mile away to the East, rising up wedge shaped with a fine snow ridge at the top. Owing to the limited time and large party, we had little choice but to try the (nearest) West face. Everyone seemed agreeable to this, so splitting into two ropes, we trekked across the snowfield.

The summit ridge was reached by mid-afternoon and apart from a couple of awkward gullies there were no problems. The snow was soft and might have been dangerous but for the 'terracing' on the face. Fine views all round from the summit, a sea of snowy peaks mostly unclimbed, to the South and West, Steele dominating the scene, although some 17 miles away. We made our descent from the peaks, which we named 'Promenade', in blue skies and setting sun, meeting with the helicopters at the pre-arranged time.

Wednesday, rest day, more rum, more rest.

Thursday, and Ron Matthews, Judy Allen and I, go out to climb Peak 3, which John Hunt and party had made the first ascent of the previous day. We tackled the peak from the opposite side by a fine limestone rock ridge. Gaining the snowy summit ridge we stepped into Hunt's tracks, following them along knife-edges and numerous crevasses for approximately a mile, to cross a final snow bridge onto the domed summit. Looking back along the ridge we were able to appreciate the route finding of the previous party.

The mountain adjacent to ours, on the West side, was of striking appearance. We picked out a possible route for the future on its North flank. A few photographs, then a hurried descent as the wind began to rise. On arriving in camp we learn that a party trying Mt. Steele are imprisoned at their high camp by bad weather.

A fascinating part of the camp was the 'two man bog'. Interesting conversations were to be had in these places of rest. With a deep pit and wood framing covered in polythene they were only for the hardened traveller. At a previous camp, a chap went out one night, rested his torch on the adjoining seat, the torch fell down the pit, and for the rest of the night visitors were greatly puzzled by light shining up from the depths . . . for more information in this vein one should read 'The Specialist' by Charles Sale.

End of the first week, and three bodies, Ron, Pete and myself are on our way to Peak 8, the one we had admired from Peak 3. After hours of hill side gouging and crossing two minor glaciers we reach the base of our peak, choosing as our line much the same route that we had worked out previously. Climbing ridge and face on indifferent rock we made reasonable progress, reaching the snow line by midday. The snow was quite soft and slow going. Some 1,000 feet below the summit, Pete stopped, declaring he was too tired to continue and urging us to go on. We decided this would not be the best thing to do, so retreated.

Getting off the mountain proved no hardship but getting back to camp was a different matter. We had reached the edge of the glacier between Peaks 8 and 3. The base of Peak 3 which we had traversed earlier in the day ran directly into the Steele glacier, forming a rubble strewn canyon, some 30 to 40 feet deep, with an icy stream running through. On the journey out everything had been normal but with the melting snow, stones were now zooming down the side of the peak at a tremendous rate, crashing into the canyon below. We decided to climb and traverse as high as possible, but after two hours were forced to abandon the idea, due to a series of sheer faced gulleys that were impossible to cross. Returning to the glacier, we were faced with the choice of running the gauntlet in the canyon, or bivouacing the night. The stone falls seemed to have abated somewhat, so, being hungry and getting cold, we decided to run for it. Running like hell after a hard day, over boulders and through water, with rucksack etc., trying at the same time to keep a weather eye open for the falling rocks, over approximately quarter of a mile, is not the perfect ending to a day.

A well earned rest day, and then the following morning another attempt on an unclimbed peak, Minus 1. That was also doomed to failure, again because of a tired party.

In actual fact the climbing season was over so conditions made the climbing that much harder and a number of peaks were lost simply because of the poor snow.

Tuesday of the second week, and I have a chance at Mt. Steele. The previous party trying to gain the ridge by an ice wall had been faced with innumerable crevasses in impossible conditions. It was generally decided that an attempt should be made lower down the ridge from the Col. between Mt. Walsh and Steele.

The helicopter dropped the six of us trying Steele at the Col. We established a camp and radio contact with Base on the first day, ready for an early start next morning when we would have in front of us 6,500 feet in ten miles of ridge. Fairly easy going one might think.

We awoke early, it was snowing but by eight o'clock it had stopped and we had fair visibility. Carrying food, fuel, etc., we hoped to cover seven miles to a point where our helicopter had dropped two tents and from which we could attack the summit block.

The snow, quite reasonable to start with, soon softened up. This was at 12,000 feet. We were placing marker-wands every 100 yards or so, more in the bad sections.

The term 'ridge' was a misnomer. It must have been 120 yards wide and fairly riddled with crevasses.

The weather which hadn't been too good at any time, became steadily worse with a strong wind blowing by midday, we couldn't see ten yards. We had no alternative but to turn about. Thank God for marker wands!—although not easy to find, the first man on the rope had usually sighted a wand before the last man on the second rope had lost sight of his. The camp on Walsh Col. was reached during the afternoon in a raging blizzard that lasted

throughout that day and the next. A lull or a couple of hours on the Thursday, allowed us to dig ourselves out, and then more snow until Saturday afternoon when the wind died and the clouds began to lift. After five days it was quite a pleasure to see the glacier valleys again. My holiday should have ended the previous day, but I was quite satisfied to radio Base on Saturday evening that it was clear enough for the helicopters to come up and collect.

A research party on Mt. Logan, 35 miles from us, had been marooned at 18,000 feet for two weeks; they were still waiting for the weather to improve when we departed. Being on the same radio wavelength, we were able to gather from their language that they were rather disappointed by their prolonged sojourn.

It was raining on arrival in camp but no one noticed, being too busy packing. The tents were to stay up for the next party, who, incidentally, had much better weather.

A very happy trip, although not particularly rewarding, it filled the void for 1967.

PENNINE EASY WAY

IVAN WALLER

The Pennine Way has become very popular, with wayfarers strung out along the route throughout the summer, and even in winter there is probably always somebody somewhere on the walk. Until recently my knowledge of the P.W. (how familiar those initials become by the time you have finished) was confined to Kenneth Oldham's book and the indications on the few 1" O.S. maps which I had, covering parts of the route. I was certainly interested and already knew the Derbyshire and the Penyghent districts, but I was not really fired until one day my wife gave me a present of "Pennine Way Companion" and then nothing could stop me.

Wainwright is a genius. He can instruct, inform, inspire and entertain all at the same time. With his "Pictorial Guides to the Lakeland Fells" he set a new and exciting standard and must have captured the imagination of almost every fell walker, but now he has gone further. I will venture to say that not only will his book inspire you, but that without it you will not walk the Pennine Way. Without it you may get to the end of the journey but you will often get lost and stray from the route, you will miss many of the gems, you will trespass, and may even get disillusioned, but Wainwright's book the 2½ inch to the mile strip maps and his wonderful sketches and captions tell you exactly where to go, what to expect, the distance mile by mile, and he even credits you with 270 miles instead of the traditional 250.

I started the walk with no very clear plan although I did not intend to miss any work as my holidays were already otherwise planned. Above all I was resolved to make it as easy as possible for myself. I do not mind carrying a heavy sack to an alpine hut, or to establish a high camp, but I rebelled at the idea of moving house from Edale to Kirk Yetholm with the lot on my back. It

may therefore be of interest to know exactly what I did carry, bearing in mind that it was June and good warm weather at that.

Very light nylon rucksack

Light weight proofed nylon anorak and overtrousers

Sweater

Spare socks

Torch

Compass

Whistle

Quilted nylon cap

Plastic drinking cup

Maps

"Pennine Way Companion"

Food

I wore a string vest, warm shirt, pants, lightweight terylene and wool trousers, thin nylon socks, thick wool socks, mountain boots with lightweight vibram soles, and zip fronted anorak. Some or all of the upper garments found their way into the sack for some or all of the time.

So it came about that on the first day of June, 1968, at quarter to two in the afternoon, reinforced by beer and sandwiches, I emerged from the Old Nag's Head at Edale into the blazing sunshine of a perfect summer day, and launched myself on to the Pennine Way. At this stage I had not learned to take Wainwright sufficiently seriously, and thinking I knew the country, I strayed three times from the route in the first afternoon. I took the right fork at the top of Grindsbrook, and missed the head of Crowden Brook, I struck the Snake road off Featherbed Moss half a mile too early, and I dropped down off Bleaklow into the head of Wildboar Clough instead of Torside, giving myself an extra mile to get back onto course. I passed under the new 4-wire Super grid at Crowden Station at 19.30 hours, and by then I was so impressionable I thought the pylon looked beautiful against the evening sky.

Across the valley I had my second snack (the first had been at the head of Hern Clough on Bleaklow), and then walked on over

Laddow Rocks, and after a short and unexpected drizzle of rain, I caught up with the darkness on top of Black Hill. I searched in vain for the trig point, and then put on my survival clothes and lay down on a bed of bilberries to sleep (Wainwright says there is nothing but peat, bless him). A searching wind woke me soon after 1 a.m. so I took a compass bearing on the red lights of the Holme Moss television mast, and moved off down the peat until I was warm again and found another patch of bilberries. After another sleep I repeated the procedure, this time reaching the A.635 for a final sleep near the old quarry, before dawn at 03.30.

White Moss, Black Moss, Standedge, White Hill, Windy Hill followed, and beyond the new Trans-Pennine Motorway cutting. I sat down at 07.45 for breakfast and yet another sleep in the lovely little couch before you climb up to Blackstone Edge.

Now the way was easier and at 11.20 I was eating my lunch on Stoodley Pike. The bluebells in Callis Wood, on the way down to the River Calder were superb, the sun shone, and as I had now done 42 miles in 23 hours, I called it a day and made tracks for home. I had been by train from Manchester to Edale after work on Saturday morning, and now after a lift to Royton I continued by bus to collect my motor cycle from Piccadilly Station, and so back to Bolton.

Each evening the following week I did a short stretch, Calder to Widdop, Widdop past "Wuthering Heights" to Ponden, Wolf Stones to Cowling, Lothersdale and Pinhaw Beacon to Thornton-in-Craven. These were four delightful walks, well equipped with pubs, and each crossing a distinctive stretch of moorland, Heptonstall, Withens Height, Ickornshaw and Elslack. The whole distance was 23 miles, an easy day's journey if walked straight through.

I had now made up my mind that the Pennine Way was a thing to get on with and not to linger over, and I started off my second weekend from Thornton with ideas of getting to Horton-in-Ribblesdale for the Saturday night. I also started off with the rain, at 19.50 on the Friday evening, and this time added my folding umbrella to my equipment and wore my waterproof overtrousers

for this was the country of fields and long very wet grass. I walked under the double arched bridge over the Liverpool Leeds canal at East Marten, and missed the pub, as I had already had my beer at Thornton-in-Craven before setting off, but at 21.35 I took in a pint or two at the little inn opposite the church in Gargrave, where they told me I might get a bed at the Friends Meeting House in Airton. This was not to be, and I finally bedded down in a hay loft near Hanlith at 23.30. On the way I had learned that those apparently harmless herds of young cattle go quite mad in the dark, and as I walked across the fields they would go into orbit around me, twenty or thirty strong. I was glad of my umbrella.

At five o'clock I was off again with it still raining and was soon in the limestone country of Malham Cove and the clints beyond. Malham Tarn was beautiful in the early morning, the sun came out and by 09.50 I was on Fountain's Fell, in sight of familiar ground. After a rest and a meal at the summit cairn, I became very optimistic—it seemed too good to be true—I should easily reach Horton for lunch with only Penyghent to cross, and this I did and enjoyed a wonderful meal at the Golden Lion washed down with the appropriate liquids. After an hour and threequarters of this luxury I put on my boots again and away, but just short of the beautiful Ling Gill I reclined on a slab of rock in the sun and the next moment it was an hour later — and it was after five in the afternoon before I finally set off on the last leg of the day's journey over Cam End and along the Roman Road to Hawes, a glorious walk but it did seem rather a long way. More luxury, a night at the White Hart where I arrived at 21.15 after the picturesque approach through the village of Gayle and along the flagged path above the stream, past the church to emerge through an archway into the main street of Hawes.

I settled up before going to bed and let myself out at five o'clock to cross the valley to Hardrow and embark on the long easy walk over Great Shunner Fell, to eat my breakfast at the cairn at 07.20. After dropping down to Thwaite, there followed one of the most beautiful parts of the walk, past Kildon, above the river Swale, to Keld. I had my lunch by Lad Gill, a pleasant place, and reached

Tan Hill Inn at 12.30 for some well earned refreshment which floated me on across the moors via Sleightholm to God's Bridge on the Scotch Corner-Carlisle road where I decided at 15.40 it was time to pack up and make my way back to my bike at Thornton. I had walked 66 miles in 44 hours, and after the rain stopped at Malham, the weather had been perfect. There were no Sunday buses, but I was lucky with lifts, and was home in Bolton well before midnight.

By now I was really warmed up to the job, but I was too far away for evening walking, so after nine consecutive days I had to break off for four days until the following Friday when I set off again at 20.10 leaving my motor bike at Pasture End, the farm above God's Bridge. This was a wonderful moorland walk, crossing Deepdale, Baldersdale and Lunedale, after which it got dark, although it was a beautiful evening, and rounding the hill near the ancient walled ring of trees of Kirkcarrion which loomed up against the night sky, the lights of Middleton-in-Teesdale came into sight far below.

Down to the Tees, I followed up the river for half a mile and settled down in another hay loft just after midnight. I was woken by the moon shining in through the window but dozed off again, and eventually set off at four in the morning, soon encountering three deer who watched me with great interest. Low Force, High Force and Cauldron Snout were all passed before nine o'clock, and in the bright sunshine it seemed an easy walk up the beautiful Maize Beck to High Cup Nick and over to Dufton where I entered to Stag Inn at 12.40. Lots of beer—it was really a scorching day by them—and a sleep on the lawn at the back of the pub, and by 14.20 I was off again up Knock Fell on my way to Cross Fell, the highest point on the walk at 2930 feet, which I reached at 18.45. It seemed a long way down to Garrigill, 38 miles from Middleton, the farthest I had ever walked in a single day, but I arrived at last, at 21.30 and had a wonderful welcome at the George and Dragon, including a hot meal.

Again I settled up before going to bed, but made a comparatively late start at 06.50 and had another glorious sunny day following

the River South Tyne, past Alston and through a number of hamlets, but not one of them had a pub. I ate and slept for an hour and a quarter at Glendue Bridge by the lovely Glendue Burn and at 14.00 set off again, now in Northumberland, through alternate moorland and farmland to reach Thirewall Castle on the Roman Wall, after a slight argument with a young bull. It was six in the evening and I had covered 69 miles in 46 hours, and once again I had to break my journey. This time I was lucky with buses and only needed a lift for the last few miles back to my motor cycle, again reaching home around midnight.

The following weekend I had to go to North Wales, so I had a break of eleven days, but now I was resolved, with only 70 miles left to cover, to finish the walk within the month of June, so I decided to take the last Friday off work. At 10.35 I set off again from Thirewall, in the rain, which persisted all along the Roman Wall to Housesteads, which I did not reach till three in the afternoon, having stopped for lunch and shelter in a hut occupied by workmen renovating the ruins at Caw Gap.

There was something very impressive about setting off to the North, leaving the tourists on the Wall behind, and heading for the apparently endless tract of moors and forests. However it all seemed much shorter, easier and more varied and interesting than I expected, the sun came out and I reached Bellingham at 20.45 and feasted on steak and kidney pies and pints and pints of beer.

The town was full, as it was the annual golf club dance, and there were no beds to be had, so I joined the Youth Hostel Association, and had a very comfortable night, my first ever in a hostel.

Saturday was to be an easy day of 16 miles so I did not start till 07.15 and first visited Hareshaw Linn, a lovely waterfall in a wooded valley, and forming a complete barrier to further progress. Having returned to the route, I was below School Crag approaching Hareshaw House, when a farmer appeared, and although I was meticulously following Wainwright's route, he insisted that this was not a right of way and that I ought to be by the fence lower to the west. However he let me go on, after we had a long friendly chat.

The succession of moorland hills beyond were beautiful, and by the giant cairn on Padon Hill I had lunch and a sleep for an hour and a quarter. I was unable to stop again, for after Rookengate, in Reedsdale Forest, the midges were quite unbearable unless you kept moving, and I arrived at the Byrness Hotel at 16.40, with plenty of time for rest and refreshment before the final lap over the Cheviot.

Starting at 03.30, what can be a desperate struggle, became a beautiful summer walk, but even so I found the route finding fairly perplexing, as the hills seem to sprawl about in all directions, and the border fence is anything but straight. At the most remote part, just beyond Windy Gyle I met a man on a horse with five dogs of assorted breeds, and a mile further another man on foot with a similar following, and I spent some time chatting with him. Soon I began to meet other Pennine Wayfarers heading South, so the place seemed quite populated, but the sense of solitude returned as I made the detour over the peat to the summit of the Cheviot.

After returning to Auchope Cairn, and dropping down the steep path, I had a memorable halt on a ledge under a small crag, looking down into Hen Hole. I then continued over the Schill, meeting more walkers, and then down to Burnhead to finish the walk along the Halter Burn lined with Sunday picnickers. Over the little road pass, I was again by myself for the last stretch down to Kirk Yetholm and I could not suppress my emotion at reaching the journey's end, and there, just as portrayed in Wainwright's book, stood the bus waiting to take me to Kelso. It was twenty past five on Sunday afternoon June 30th. I was back in Bolton not very long after midnight ready for work next morning.

I do not know whether breaking the walk as I had to, makes it easier or more difficult, but I intend to find out by taking a week's holiday next May and returning from Kirk Yetholm to Edale, sleeping strictly on the route and going right through without a break. I think it will be easier—if I survive.

A MIXED SEASON

R. JOHNSON

The Matterhorn had been getting steadily whiter for over a week but a thunderstorm finally made us leave Zermatt. It was very impressive despite our rather central location. The evening's clouds had threatened a storm, rather depressing as we hoped to do the rock route on the south face of the Ober Gabelhorn next day. The weather kept its promise, the most spectacular feature being a vast neon light linking the summits of Matterhorn and Dent d' Hérens. Nevertheless despite several hours of heavy rain our space blankets kept us dry and warm. But this and all our other modern aids didn't prevent the route getting snowed up, hence, retreat to the valley and after using a few decision-making aids, supplied by the station cafe, we opted for the pound-a-go train journey down the valley.

After evading a five year old car parking attendant we were on the road up the Rhône Valley to Andermatt, springboard for the rock climbers' gym of the Salbitschijen. Admittedly we didn't flash along, as an overloaded Morris can only climb the Furka Pass at 20 m.p.h. Our welfare was improved by the finding of five shilling cooked chickens in a supermarket in Brig. The approach down the Schollenen Gorge to Goshenen gets you in the mood for the Salbitschijen itself. The walls of the gorge are made of huge slabs of granite, magnum boulder probleming material. We easily found the start of the hut walk, accompanied by the now familiar dark clouds, and spent an optimistic ten minutes trying to get a cable hoist to work and then came to terms with the usual tedious walk out of the valley. If a climber says he enjoys hut walks beware, he might enjoy other unsavoury activities. The last part of the walk went more quickly as we were chased by a thunderstorm. The Salbit hut has everything to recommend it, including sewing equipment for those who rip their pants on rough granite. The lady

warden left after our first day (pure coincidence), so the facilities became self-service.

We didn't hang about and action started next day on the deservedly popular south ridge of the Salbitschijen. Classified as IV + and comprising over 1,200 ft. of perfect granite the route is ideal for the modern British Alpinist. The ridge is approached across the green fell side, the start is easily found and the route very difficult to lose; and just remember that if in difficulty just reach up and there is bound to be a peg despite several recent British ascents. The route keeps to the crest of the pinnacled ridge, provides technical problems of a hard severe standard and cemented chains to abseil from. The top section is soloable. For those unsatisfied on reaching the top and still not so even after signing in to the summit book there is a summit pinnacle. This is twenty-five feet with only a blunt edge to lay away against. There is a magnificent postcard in the hut with a climber on it to prove that it goes, but we consoled ourselves by thinking he must have used the inevitable peg, for aid of course! The summit is not the end of the excitement as the descent is a thousand foot glisade, snow and nerve permitting. Unless one has a very good breaking system or alternatively a tough seat, a peg hammer is an essential for a safe descent. Having reached the bottom with, one hopes, some courage left, it's only ten minutes walk to the hut.

By this time the weather had spotted us and next day it rained; at least this gave us time for our ambitions to grow. So the day after we pitted ourselves against the formidable V + of the S.E. Wall. A little harder than the classic ridge but another route for the British climber. The main difference between the routes is that on the wall there are not so many handy pegs to reach for when there are difficulties. What the route lacks in sensational exposure it makes up for in the scale and size of the rock architecture, you climb huge diedres and chimneys between vast flanges of rock. Nothing is very serious but the difficulties are of a continuously mild very severe standard. An average but fit British Party will find little problem with either route. If having sampled these two routes, the modern rock technician can't see what the shouting's

about, he is recommended to try any of the VI's on the pinnacles of the West Grat. Here, if the guide book and current editions of Les Alpes are to be believed, there is ample scope for getting scared.

Lack of food forced us to the valley and next day we were at Sass Fee, our objective being the N.E. face of the Lenzspitze, via the atrociously expensive Mischabel Hut. Rumour has it that the walk to the Rothorn hut is the worst in the area; this I dispute. The height gained from Sass is the same as from Zermatt but the way you gain it is different, comprising continuous zig-zags, the longest straight being a hundred yards. Naturally the warden said the face was out of condition, so why not join the forty odd Germans doing the Lenzspitze-Nadelhorn traverse? It was quite easy to get up as throughout the night one of our E.E.C. friends had been conducting a scissors action on me with the aid of a wooden bunk divider. Our friends showed interest in our melon breakfast but forgot us in the fight for hot water. We lost the hot water battle but soon left the hut, went up the broken rock ridge and on to firm snow following the motorway of the traverse. This we soon left and headed for the face. You can't miss it as the face takes up a quarter of the view but your morale is high as this is considerably foreshortened. There were three of us, Mark leading with Al and myself seconding simultaneously. This works as there are no holds so you can climb anywhere. The face is 1,500 ft. high but lies at a slant and the route is on the diagonal so that it's more like 3,000 ft. of ice climbing. The schrund was simple, all filled in, and so was the first four hundred feet. When you are climbing on perfect snow lying at 45°, lit by a magnificent dawn you know you are getting your money's worth, but both climb and weather changed. Clouds were building up producing with the sun some magnificent colours though we were not too keen on the green layer especially, after having read about Smyth's Green Dawn which was followed by a storm of unprecedented ferocity.

So as the ice got steeper we convinced ourselves it was not green but a sort of red. A colour slide confirmed the green. Soon we were covered by a friendly mist; this stops you seeing the exposure, one

of the most impressive features of ice climbing. You get a routine after a bit, run out thirty feet put in an ice screw, same again at sixty feet then belay at a hundred. You only know where you are by counting the rope lengths.

In places the ice was very hard as we could only get about an inch of crampon point in. The main difficulty was overcoming a small ice overlap, a thin weak crust then hard water ice underneath. Meanwhile the forty odd Germans were doing the traverse; flattering to know you have been immortalised by over forty cameras. Not so flattering when the fans start knocking down stones. There were two types, depending on their noise, jet or turboprop; we didn't fancy either. A number came quite close at one point so prompting the three of us to shout together. The multilingual abuse was effective as it echoed round the horseshoe, much to the embarrassment of those above. Not a snowflake after that. Eventually we were traversing off the left so as to avoid the steeper top section. The difficulties were mainly psychological as one pitch is like the next, unbroken 55° ice, but nowhere can the climber relax. Unlike rock, security and exposure don't alternate from stance to pitch. The rock belay was welcome after nine hours of ice screws and crampon points. The descent is down the usual rotten Alpine ridge but it leads straight to the hut. This we reached with a number of our ballistic friends.

Apart from the shock of the hut fees it was a very successful climb.

THE SOUTH BREGAGLIA

KIM MELDRUM

We meant to go to the Bernina but didn't. It wasn't really attributable to our lack of map reading ability; perhaps my descriptions of an abseil off a mushroom on the Eisnase put my companions on their guard or perhaps it was their happy or traumatic experiences on the Cassin but one minute I was eating soft icecream and absorbing the titilatingly luxurious ambience of St. Moritz and the next I was rattling, or would have been if there hadn't been so much gear packed around me, down the Maloja Pass towards Promontogno. Again for reasons which escape me we didn't get there but stopped at Vicosoprano. Oh yes, now I remember, there's a telepherique almost up to the Albigna hut — not only this but Vicosoprano has a new municipal camp site with hot showers, flush toilets, an excellent Fleischer and no English. At least there were no English when we got there. Gear spreading and a quick drink, however, provided enough time for them to get there. It would be too flattering to suggest that the arrival of Tearaway Sonuvagun and his cordées was due to the irresistible personal magnetism of Il Biondo, but as he pointed out himself, like Mary but less contrary, wherever he went the lambs were sure to go. This is rather how I felt. He had the guides, which he was reluctant to let me see, he spoke German which I didn't and La Fiamma, his dark and lovely wife, spoke Italian, which I didn't.

Three days of rain gave us or rather him, an opportunity to map out a master sport plan, to borrow the terminology of the Sonuvagun team. This plan, as is usual in these circumstances had so many alternatives that it might as well not have existed but in spite of it we did go up to the Albigna hut for a few days. Each day we watched the rain and snow, each evening we prayed for Germans and Italians to go to bed so that each night we could snatch a few prone hours on the common room floor before we started our diurnal vigil. Sometime during all this we climbed the

N.W. face of the Punta Albigna—a pleasant short day out of about grade IV. Sonuvagun did a scruffier but harder parallel route and then left the area for good. It is on the strength of this experience that he has systematically belittled our subsequent achievements in the area.

Next came the back-breaking journey over to the Allievi hut, not because we expected the climbing there to justify a four hour glacier walk with very heavy loads but in the hope that we might get a decent night's sleep there. The rain had washed away much of the track cut out of the hillside but an unavoidable waterfall provided Biondo with an involuntary but well needed shower. We arrived at the Allievi. The guardian, in explanation of the fact that there was no one else staying there, volunteered the information that this was V and VI country. We told him that we had thought it was, but clearly not satisfied with our competence he tactfully directed us to a nearby boulder problem. I don't know whether we passed or failed this test but he seemed to approve of our decision to try the only IV in the area, the South Ridge of the Punta Rasica. If we'd set our watches by Italian time we might just have avoided the ignominy of a bivouac—as it was we didn't. The guardian was quite concerned when we tottered in at 8 the following morning. In fact on our return from subsequent climbs in the area his first welcome was always 'niente bivacco' which was said with a mixture of amusement and what I thought was surprise. Having spent a day in the hut drinking Braulio and sampling such gastronomic delicacies as dessicated toadstools and equally dessicated bread we decided that this area deserved further attention.

On our return to the valley via the Albigna hut, we stopped to do our season's North Face. I had hopes of doing the Cime di Rosso as well as the Cantone and looked forward to writing an article on Fumf Eiswands but this will have to wait. The Cantone was short but it seemed long. About 1,000 ft. of 50-55° ice and snow. It wasn't in good condition when we set off and became rather worse half way up when we were caught in a blizzard. Reluctant to reverse 300 ft. of very strenuous step cutting which I'd just

finished we decided to continue but by what Biondo thought was a quick alternative. This sneaky variation off to the left was neither shorter nor quicker than the original route and was certainly more dangerous. Biondo was floundering in steep deep powder above an enormous ice cliff; I was theoretically belayed in the middle of this morasse while La Fiamma, who had the only safe belay on an ice screw was sleeping. Biondo kept shouting back that another twenty feet would see us on the ridge . . . we went on for over an hour before we got there. I have since come to realise that his time sense continuum is severely disturbed. Once on the ridge we realised, in the white out, the enormity of our error in having no map, no compass and not much idea of how to get off. Even a copy of *Safety on Mountains* wouldn't have helped us having made these blunders. Looking back it was just one of those terrible occasions when a wealth of accumulated mountaineering experience can make all the difference between making the right decision and living and making the wrong decision and dieing. We lived and rushed down to Vicosoprano to steak ourselves. The episode on the Cantone was incidental to our main purpose which was to get back to Allievi with a lot of enthusiasm and food as quickly as possible.

We drove round to Italy and up to San Martino. For visitors to the Allievi this I suppose, if anything is, is the standard route to the hut—some 6000 ft. of ascent, the first half of it through foetid jungle with sticky spiders webs clinging to sweaty faces; the second half through idyllic alpine meadows, the luxuriant pasture pierced with the bright blue eyes of gentians and the sulphurous glow of potentillas . . . but who the hell cares at this stage of a hut bash which must rank as one of the alpine epics. The measure of our fitness became apparent later when on a wet day we volunteered to repeat this journey all for the sake of a kilo of fresh bread for the guardian. Thus ingratiated we were entertained in his private kitchen for the rest of our meals at the hut.

The next item on our list of climbs was the Gervasutti route on the Punta Allievi. Biondo likened it to the Cassin on the Badile





but rather longer* and rather harder. Not only am I prepared to, but I am positively anxious to concede this point, never having done the Cassin. The route did not, however, fall without a tentativo. Starting at the wrong place we arrived back at the hut by 10 a.m. Fiorelli, the guardian asked us what the trouble had been and when we explained that we had been on *siete grado* rock he collapsed in mirth—to add to our humiliation he was joined by his wife who in between wiping away her tears tried unsuccessfully to reprimand their son Antonello whom even they refer to as *diabolezzo*. He carefully pointed out the correct start and next day we had no trouble, at least not in the ascent. The descent which was rather like the descent from the Glyders to PYG, provided some hazards. Biondo didn't want to unrope; the only explanation in retrospect seems to be that having exhausted himself by leading the whole climb he didn't want to be left behind as *La Fiamma* and I ran off down the scree.

We must have had a rest day after this but I can't remember one. The next route was the Parravicini on the East peak of the Zocca. This is an inviting line which follows an obvious *arête* dominating the whole valley. If further advertisement is required there is a very prominent cross erected to the memory of Parravicini who was killed while attempting the first ascent. Although short, about 1000 ft. of climbing, it is very continuous at V with pitches of V + The approach is long and not without objective danger from stone falls in the approach couloir but the climbing is superb. Very few pegs, not obvious route finding and the hardest pitch at the very top (see photograph). The descent is easy but again not obvious. Three abseils lead to a scramble and a wide snow gully on the south side of the mountain. Once again Biondo had some difficulty on the snow. Once again it can reasonably be attributed to nervous and physical exhaustion having led the climb. As I descended in a series of immaculate parallel turns with elegant sections of short swinging Biondo stumbled, sat and slid and eventually finished up kicking steps.

*Somewhat shorter.—Ed.

I'm sure that we must have had another rest day because our monumental stock of food was dwindling with remarkable speed and there was no clandestine nibbling under the eagle eye of La Fiamma. The final climb of the season was unique in my Alpine experience; a new route which was the result of careful planning and detailed research and not just a gross error of route finding. Biondo has described this as the S.W. Pillar of the Punta Allievi; perhaps he was influenced by other similar sounding routes. The name agreed upon at the time was the 'Via Inglesi' (see description in AGC Bull 1968). The climb was about 1200 feet, fairly continuous at IV and IV + with a pitch of V. A good inescapable route for a short day which we hope will become a classic of its type . . . in fact we are all planning to go back this year just to see what has become of it.

It was with considerable reluctance, as always, that I was persuaded to write this article, not so much because I dislike writing but rather that I selfishly wanted to preserve this retreat against the deprivations of British climbers. If Biondo had not embarked on a series of public lectures and if he had not written an interim guide to the area I doubt whether I would have put pen to paper.

SOME LAKELAND SCRAMBLES

IAN ROPER

The Lakes v. Wales controversy has been in existence for so long now that it has become something of a bad joke. Its one beneficial effect has been that many a man-year has been spent round the fires of Raw Head or Ynnys in cheerful conflict on those gloomy days when even Tremadoc and Gogarth ooze slime and grease. For those who are under the impression that Lake District climbing is in a retarded state, the following notes may prove enlightening. Although the North has nothing to offer on the scale of the West Buttress Eliminate or The Crucible, there are many routes there which do compare favourably with the shorter Snowdon climbs like Vector or Troach. Of these a few, such as Extol and Ichabod, are unique in their combination of character and difficulty and stand out as major undertakings worthy of any hard man's attention.

The present Lake District renaissance began in 1960, when a group of local climbers, headed by Austin, Brown (L.) and Oliver made several routes on Scafell and in Langdale far in advance of anything else done in the Lakes at that time with the possible exceptions of Leverage and Phoenix. Many of them are now well-known, such as the Centaur, a masterpiece of route-finding by Brown and a solution to a long-standing problem, as were both Astra and Ichabod; these have all rapidly become classics. Head and shoulders above the rest stands Extol, which must rank as one of the most serious leads in the country. Since 1960 other people have been adding their own routes, especially Crew, whose ascents of Central Pillar and Hiraeth shook the Lake District climbing fraternity to the core, and Cramm, who had made Pillar his own speciality. Bonington, on rare visits from the Alps, has solved the odd problem here and there and the whole scene is becoming more consolidated as lesser mortals make their own contributions.

My own acquaintance with the more modern Lakeland routes began in 1964. David Hall and I had ascended almost all the major pre-1960 routes and now aspired to greater things. Our first choice was the Centaur, which had a reputation for quality rather than difficulty. We made our ascent on a misty day when voices were hushed in the cloud and the chink of karabiners took on an eerie note. The climb was long and sustained and possessed a pitch at the top not mentioned in the description; this quickly yielded to subtle jamming tactics recently learnt on gritstone and all too soon we were up, feeling that some kind of barrier was down and that it was not the culmination of our ambition but the threshold beyond which lay greater things.

Some months later we returned from the Dolomites to find that Scafell had been dry for a week. That Friday we flogged up Eskdale to a bivouac on the edge of a swamp, the call of Ichabod in our minds. The night seemed endless but inevitably the sun peeped over Bowfell and we scrambled up to the foot of the East, arriving too early and too cold to think of attempting our primary objective, so first we ascended Pegasus, one of our last outstanding Dolphin routes. We descended Broad Stand just as the hut dwellers, Austin and Boysen among them, arrived from Wasdale. With such powerful teams in the vicinity we could afford to wait no longer, so ten minutes later we were sitting uncoiling the ropes at the top of the first easy pitch.

On the second pitch I had a desperate time; at the crux I considered jumping off but instead made a move on non-holds in breathless desperation to clutch a blue sling threaded in the back of the V-chimney. The pitch had taken me nearly two hours, during which time, unnoticed by me, the mists had gathered and the first drops of rain had begun to fall. By the time my companion had joined me, the rain had increased to a downpour. The situation was getting out of hand: to abseil into the mists was an appalling thought; the ropes might not reach. Our only escape lay upwards. Dave led the pitch, though how, I have no idea. It was a vertical nightmare, feet slipping, jams oozing out of cracks and slings grasped in desperation. It was shattering. At the top I sprawled

beneath a waterfall, too tired to move, while Dave, who had recovered slightly, coiled the ropes. Even Broad Stand was desperate under these conditions.

The climb had been too much of an epic to enjoy, but our success boosted our morale to new heights, so on the way back in the car we were already discussing future projects. Not surprisingly, we selected Astra, a climb which had rapidly gained a reputation after its first ascent by Austin in 1960. Despite its fierce reputation it had already achieved considerable popularity. This fact alone convinced us that it would not be too hard, so a fortnight later we went to try our luck.

Many a better man than I must have come unstuck (metaphorically speaking) on the second pitch of Hobson's Choice. I was no exception and I had to call up my reserves before the awkward bulge fell to our united onslaught. In fact this pitch gave us more trouble than the crux which immediately followed it. Dave led it very quickly despite the severity which became all too apparent on closer acquaintance. The upper part of the route was much easier, except for the greasy final groove, out of which I nearly fell when my peg hammer, stuck carelessly in my hip pocket, jammed against a small overhang.

That winter the partnership dissolved and I teamed up with Austin. He is sufficiently well-known to most C.C. members to require little description. His great bulk he attributes to the large number of sweaters which he claims he wears, and he moves up X.S. rock with the same shambling gait with which he crosses the car park to the pub in his carpet slippers. Anyone looking less like an X.S. leader is difficult to imagine, but his record proves otherwise. In 1965 our ambitions coincided, so a fortuitous partnership developed.

By then new routes of any length in the Lakes were getting hard to find, so it came as a complete surprise when Jack Soper mentioned that he had been trying a 500 foot problem "somewhere in the Lakes". No further information was available from the reticent Jack, so we bided our time until the opportunity to attempt the

route arose. In the interim I crept off to Wales to train for the project, for it promised to be a hard nut to crack.

The first Friday in July saw us installed in the Salving House. Sullivan was also in residence, so conversation was guarded if impolite. Next morning we awaited the departure of Sullivan for Dove before sneaking off in the opposite direction, over the hill to Buttermere. Only when we were halfway there did I realise we were bound for Eagle Crag, though that didn't tell me much as I'd never seen it before. Jack was waiting on a soft-looking boulder below the cliff. (He must have had the lightest sack). Breathlessly I plopped down beside him and listened to his plans until normal respiration recommenced and the stars dimmed in my eyes. Eventually P.A.'s were donned, Austin staggered up and we raced up to the start.

The first pitch was little more than a scramble. Austin led the second which was a vicious overhanging crack which finished with a layback over a bulge; this made us breathless again. The groove above looked feasible but closer inspection and a few tentative moves showed otherwise. I got back by the skin of my teeth and made a delicate traverse across a small slab to the foot of a hidden layback crack which was duly laybacked to an uncomfortable niche below some shaky-looking flakes. A piton, driven in a quarter of an inch, provided the only protection I could arrange; it fell out as I launched myself over the flakes towards a small ledge twenty feet above, which was furnished with a heaven-sent spike runner. The rest of the pitch proved relatively simple and quite soon we were re-united on a narrow grass terrace. Allan also having led the pitch, without the piton, just to keep our copybook clean. From the terrace, things went unsteadily by alternate leads, great turfs were trundled and after an hour I rejoined Allan, who had managed to wedge himself, sweaters and all, into the narrowest possible section of Central Chimney. Our hoped-for route now lay diagonally to the right across a steep little wall set in some bulges, to an undercut groove. My pitch again.

The entry onto the wall was relatively simple, but progress from the sloping ledge at its foot looked extremely dubious. Eventually,

after an hour of prevarication, I made a difficult move onto a sloping hold in the centre of the wall. Runners were conspicuous by their absence and the rope swept down to Allan in a single unbroken arc. I felt very frightened and could not get back. If it took me one hour to gain that tiny sloping ledge, it took me two to leave it. Eventually the move was made and I gained the groove where the situation eased. The whole of that fifty-five foot pitch had taken me just three hours. Both my eminent colleagues were most impressed by the pitch and, once at the top, began deciding on a name. It took us six months to come to an agreement, as first one, then another of us, vetoed the majority choice. Eventually Tin Pan Alley and The Seekers solved the problem for us and Carnival it became.

It was in 1965 also that I had my first brush with Dove Crag, where I experienced an ego-devastating failure on Dovedale Groove. New routes became an outlet for frustrated ambition as inclement weather, lack of form or companions precluded any further attempts until one weekend last June when I found myself at Raw Head in the company of Nigel Rogers. On the Saturday we spent a demoralising day on a secret crag. That evening I stalked into the pub feeling angry at having wasted a fine day, when I spied Austin, looking jubilant, holding court in a shady corner. Further enquiry revealed that he had done Hiraeth that day and found it not unreasonable. His second thought otherwise, but nevertheless next morning saw us roping up at the foot of the climb.

The first pitch was much steeper that it looked and every bit as hard as expected. Difficult moves on sloping holds were interspersed with easier climbing on very steep, dubious material which would not have been out of place on South Stack. The crux of the pitch was a move into a niche at fifty feet. When Nigel followed he faced an impressive pendule if he came off at this point, so he asked for a direct rope. Unfortunately Dove Crag bears more than a slight resemblance to Castell Cidwm in some respects and the slack rope hung far out of reach beyond my unlucky second. Fortune smiled on us that day, however, and just as I was about to have hysterics

at the thought of roping off, a chance breeze blew the rope in and he tied on to the end of the slack. Fortunately he managed to maintain contact with the crag and we assembled on our eyrie while I disentangled myself from the Gordian knot of slings and pegs which held me on the tiny stance.

Above was the groove of my many nightmares. Many gripping tales have been told about this groove. One of my friends had fallen off when his hands were on easy ground while some of the young stars of the present day had some extremely frightening moments up there. Most appalling of all was the fact that at least half a dozen reputable gentlemen had found a peg placed by one of their number (who shall remain nameless), very necessary. The peg had now gone, removed by the very hand that had committed the heinous crime, leaving scant protection until a bulge at thirty feet, and, reputedly, even less in the way of holds.

As so often happens when one gets really gripped up about a pitch, I found this one reasonable. Instead of nearly falling off at every move, as I had anticipated, I was able to progress in a chimney-cum-layback posture in relative comfort. The bulge presented me with a superb thread runner and almost before I realised it I was on easy ground. Nigel made a great deal of noise on that pitch, most of it unprintable on grounds of either decency or difficulty of translation. The sum total of his comments can be taken as being, "I'm off. . . . No, I'm not," repeated at a speed directly proportional to the inverse square of his rate of progress.

In contrast to the groove, I found the next two pitches very hard indeed. Perhaps the big effort had been made and I had relaxed psychologically. Perhaps I was more tired than I realised. Twice I nearly fell off with tufts of grass and bits of moss in my hands and I got really gripped on the final smooth slab which is far from any protection and out of sight* of one's second. Once at the top we coiled the ropes, gave a moment's thought to those heroes who fought their way up both Extol and Hiraeth in a single day, and plunged down the hillside to the pub.

* But not sound.—Ed.

ARE YOU CLOIMBIN ?

CHRIS JONES

Cheddar, everyone said, was loose: like climbing a slate roof. A Sheffield team had just retreated with epic tales of flying rock and “never again” mutterings. From previous negative weekends I recalled greasy rock and ferocious plants, damp and gloom, with sinister rooks circling overhead . . . a foreboding grey atmosphere.

Lew Brown and I had had some excellent limestone climbing in the North, and on a trip to Avon learnt that Banner’s Sceptre had at last been finished straight out, having previously avoided the issue by a sly traverse. We didn’t know where any new lines might go in the North—the locals are as tight-lipped as we are—and so Cheddar had to be revalued. It was either a look at the unknown, or the “nth” ascent of Kilnsey.

A clear morning in March found us in the gorge, the sun just catching the tops, while we looked at all that rock, and everywhere we saw new lines. A clean arête looked just right, not insignificant, yet hopefully not too gripping. The rock proved good too. We were cool in the shadow all day and saw a fine buttress across the gorge, covered in sun. The next day we climbed the route to the sun, Sentinel, and from it in turn the Sceptre cliff dominated the view. Bonington’s route, Coronation Street, would have to be repeated; it looked great. We went to the foot and started up, picking out possible routes. Graham West had attempted a direct, and some ancient pegs marked the line — straight up the centre of the wall. We saw some interesting cracks on another cliff for an early return. The possibilities were endless.

On the way back to London the various alternatives were chewed over, but with every minute the Sceptre wall was more compelling. And hadn’t the new guide said “the highest unclimbed limestone wall in the country. Perhaps it will remain so.” Somehow we sensed that it’s time must come soon, whether by our doing or not, and

made plans to try it next weekend. This had an appealing lack of logic, as neither of us had done any pegging worth mentioning, yet we proposed to attempt what was possibly one of the longest peg routes in the country.

I begged and borrowed a mass of gear from half a dozen friends. Secrecy was essential, as we knew others might be interested. I persuaded a friend in the "enemy camp" to make a bolt drive and brackets, and at our regular Thursday night pub enclave — "the hub" — explained all this activity away to Wintours Leap.

Brewing up at 5.30 a.m. next Saturday the gas stove gave out, spewed fumes everywhere, and I was promptly sick. It saved arguing about the first lead, which was just as well. I don't think Lew could have talked me up the successively worsening initial pegs that I persuaded him to use, if not to trust. The fight was really on as we joined at the first stance, where some relics of West's ironmongery remained. We passed the previous high point and reached a great bushy stance, which kindly shut off both the depths below and the long haul ahead. We made some distance above, then abseiled to the ground.

I wasn't overjoyed to see John Cleare, one of Bonington's companions on Coronation Street, as I pictured Chris leaving hot foot from Cumberland in pursuit. We had to finish it tomorrow. Some wary answers possibly assured John that the team was "almost up". We had done about half, and only had to prusik to our high point and press on. However, neither of us had ever actually got round to following the advice in various manuals; prusiking up ropes suspended from nearby trees. But that was merely a detail. Some detail.

After four hours of amazing antics, we regained our high point. We couldn't make the top now, but completed the next pitch. Now came one of those moments of wavering endeavour.

"Would you like to look at it?"

"Well, you might as well go on, you've got the gear."

"Hell, I don't know. . . . I mean, we're not going to make the top today."

Abseiling down again we were met by light rain, and shortly afterwards, surrounded by our mass of gear, the Somerset constabulary. Fixing me with a grin he said "Are you cloimbin"? I ventured a non-committal "Yes, in a manner of speaking". Just then they spotted two local lads clambering up the grassy slopes, and decided they were more likely victims, so constables and climbers left the spot with equal speed in opposite directions. Back in London we played "Wintours Leap" quickly, and hoped our route would still be intact next week.

There was a meet in Bristol and I had arranged to climb with Jerry Lovatt. I wrote in glowing terms of the route and the problem, and added "bring some Cassin spikes, and try and borrow Bob Dearman's bolt gear". Jerry had been a member of the previously mentioned Sheffield party and declined, yet excelled himself by borrowing not only Dearman's gear, but Dearman to drive it in. We had a staggering array of pegs, from crack-tacks and Bob's specials, to a huge bong-bong. Another crack of dawn start and we rapidly got to the good ledge, then established ourselves below a roof, with the final wall of the route left for the next day. Bob was all for a bivouac—we had no gear—but I had come for a dinner with the lads. Drink and sanity won him over, yet not without doubts about the ethics of the matter. That night was good, we look all set, and beer tasted better than ethics.

Somehow we began early, and by midday Bob was moving round the roof. We took several sling belays, and needed a few bolts as the crack was limed up in places, also American angles were excellent in solution holes. The situation was spectacular as we inched up the superb wall, sunlit rock, the face plummeting down, ropes arcing out beneath us. This was magnificent climbing. At dusk we emerged, tired and delighted.

FOOT AND MOUTH

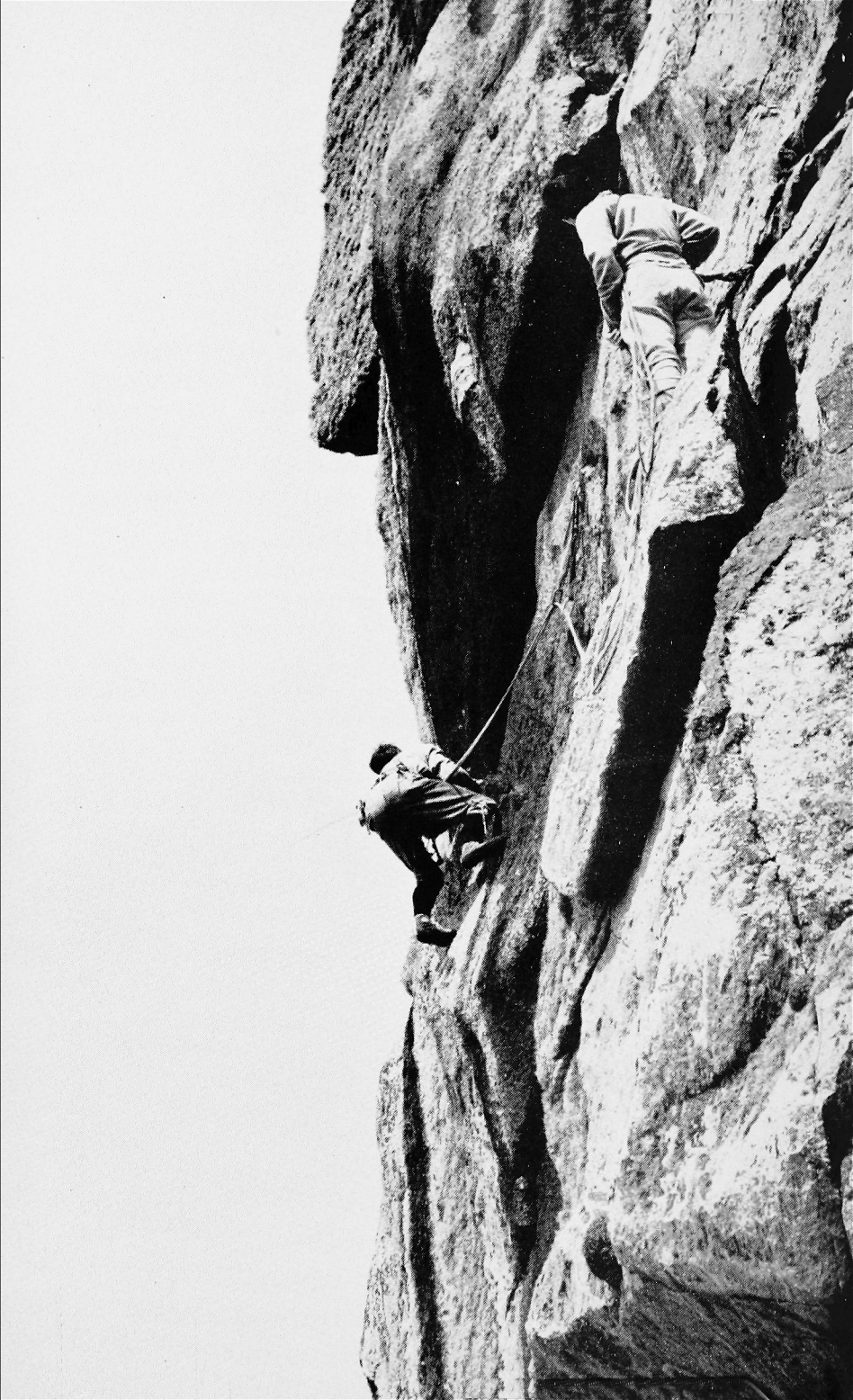
F. FITZGERALD

"Make it have it", hissed Ted, as he sat on my knees. I lay on my back on a plank supported about eighteen inches from the ground, with my feet astride it and my head projecting over the end. The bar holding the weights was on the ground where I had just put it. With shrieking muscles I vainly tried to lift it back over my head and onto my chest. .

Nineteen sixty-seven started well enough with Mike Ball and Tommy Tomlinson in Langdale. A week in Wasdale and the Eastern Fells followed, again with Mike and we both felt better. Many summer evenings climbing in Derbyshire consolidated the improvement until, as the tempo increased and I went out more and more frequently, companions from amongst my climbing contemporaries became hard to find. Just as the supply dried up I ran across Alan Wright in the Fox House Inn and the next week we went to Stoney-Middleton together with Pat Fearnough and Ted Howard of The Alpha Club. The week after, we were at Wild Cat Tor, descending in the darkness through Matlock's illuminations. Millstone, Burbage, Birchens and Froggatt Edges, all in the dark and climbing with a headlamp emphasised a completely new dimension. And then the blow fell. No climbing because of Foot and Mouth.

At first it seemed that the restrictions would soon be lifted, but when after a couple of weeks the ban remained, Alan informed me that some "training" was arranged. He was fairly non-committal, remarking only that it was held in a garage at Dronfield. Naively, I imagined that I might last a session by being in the back rank and not really exerting myself. Indeed, it was with some joy that I searched out my old rugger gear, ate a quick tea and set off for training, thinking mainly of the first beer after the exertions of the evening.





The first disillusionment occurred when I discovered that the garage was Pat's; the second when I noted that only four of us were present; the third when Ted, after eyeing surreptitiously an abdominal bulge which rugger togs served only to accentuate, enquired politely my real age; and so it went on. Ted was quickly skipping, Pat doing pull-ups and Alan working hard on the weights. There seemed nothing for me except press-ups and after twenty or so I stood up feeling well pleased. Pat immediately pointed out that the skipping rope was vacant and with aching arms I tried unsuccessfully to satisfy the exhortation to do ten jumps on each foot in turn. Pull-ups and forward rolls followed and eventually I arrived at the weights. I had been eying them with some apprehension after seeing the others doing "squats", an exercise obviously designed for the purpose of producing hernias. However squats only "creased" my thigh muscles and by the grace of God I escaped serious abdominal injury.

All I wanted to do then was to rest but we set off immediately for a run. "Easy enough" said Alan, "up the hill to the pub; turn left on the lane to the golf courses; pick up the main road and go down to the Town Hall; turn left and pass the church for home. It's about three miles." By the time this information had been given Pat and Ted were dim shapes in the darkness.

The hill up to the pub seemed steep and I was suffering from the stitch. "Lift your rib cage", suggested Alan helpfully. Surprisingly, I had found some relief from this manoeuvre when fate struck again and my thigh muscles seemed to go solid. Alan forged ahead and I eventually stopped and rested. After a short time I attempted to find my way back, but after ten minutes or so of meandering in various streets I realised that I was lost. However, elementary navigation indicated a route across some vegetable gardens and I set off. The fellow who finally found me in the middle of his cabbage patch that night, my thigh muscles rigid, my teeth chattering and clad only in a number thirteen rugger jersey, shorts and tennis shoes, was really quite tolerant. Eventually, he ran out of expletives, was persuaded not to call the police and

instead directed me back to the pub. Alan found me wandering slowly down the hill.

I didn't really enjoy the beer in the Fox House that night, but after a few nights of training I got fitter and enjoyed the exercise, snow and all. And then we began this horizontal weight lifting. . . . Slowly the weights came back over my head and I relaxed as Ted and Pat lifted them away. Now that I had "made it have it". I entered a euphoric state. But if only faintly, I distinctly heard Ted remark that I would be really fit when the ban came off. It was one of those remarks that one notes, stores away and uses to gain strength when the going is tough.

I know now of course that he was wrong. Three days after the ban was lifted we were out at Stoney Middleton. **They** seemed all right on the rock but **I** was ruined!

PUNCH-UP AT THE PADARN LAKE

HAROLD DRASDO

One weekend Dixon brought a group from London up to Wales. It was a first visit for a number of them and some had not climbed before. On the Saturday evening I was in the Padarn Lake Hotel, the clearing-house for information on recent climbing, with one of these last standing beside me when in the generalised noise and disorder I found him pulling at my elbow and whispering seriously in my ear. It was a moment before I could catch his words and a moment again before I understood them. The urgent message was: "Will there be trouble later?"

He misinterpreted those beards and ragged clothes. He thought that two parties might at any second start smashing chairs or tables upon each other's heads; and he was afraid that the whole company would exuberantly join in. I tried to allay his anxiety. These old men might look rough and talk dirty but they don't mean nobody no harm. It needed several such assurances before he was persuaded that violence was unlikely and a certain wariness showed in his sidelong glances all that night.

The punch-up did not take place but he was not to know that after some years of climbing many of us find that our activities fit more often into the realm of the Absurd than into that of the Heroic; at any rate, we have to treat our epics as comic epics. This article is about a crag which came off the secret list quite recently—the apparent irrelevance of the title and introduction, which may have misled the sensation-seeking reader, will be reverted to unless the editor's fifth reminder prevents the completion of these notes. The cliff is the quarry at Cae Coch, a mile north of Trefriw. It looks east over the Conway flood-plain and it is not seen from the road beneath, the quarry floor being flat and broad and the whole

steep hillside afforested. I saw it from the other side of the valley in 1965 and thought to walk up to it a year or so later; but I had not located it carefully enough and to my fury I spent over an hour in the trees before darkness came. A few weeks later I tried again and found a steep and well-built wall; but I did not know that I had not yet entered the main quarry. It required another visit before we discovered the incline which leads directly from the roadside to the top level and from then our quarry could elude us no longer.

The amphitheatre proved to be an interesting place. Nature was locked in isometric exercises on the floor with a mob of healthy young birches pressing an assortment of taller conifers. (An informer in the Forestry School slipped us a more prosaic note on ownership and on the surrounding hillside — "Compartment 26: planted in 1953 with beech and Japanese larch. . . .") Three sheep and a huge orange dog lay rotting in the trees and we had to steer tortuous lines through these obstacles. Later, with a correct compassion, Swallow removed the dog's collar and read the inscription aloud. I have forgotten what it said. In every sod and behind each loose flake a worm was coiled; the whole place stank of death and rebirth. Evan Roberts was astonished when I described it to him and his old head nodded. He had been working there as a quarryman when operations were abandoned just after the war and there was not a blade of grass to be seen then.

One wet week I persuaded Tony Moulam to come to look at it and so we laid hands on it at last. The first day we broke through the undergrowth and climbed the most cowardly line: Gwydir Gully, not easy in the rain to start or finish. A day or two later we got onto the slabby buttress on the right and climbed it in three pitches: Transect. (He says it happened the other way round and he's usually right.) Next I came back with Soper and Swallow. Jack did well to lead the first pitch which was a bit thin and was further defended from mid-height by a short but menacing shower. I went a fair distance up the second pitch but I could see that the finish was really dangerous so I came back and proposed Jim. Jack seconded and I went third—it seemed a characteristic situation and

I believe the words have a familiar ring; but then they made me lead the last pitch. Eventually I found an easy way out though I was told afterwards that at one point Swallow bent his head downwards and slightly sideways and called, "Speed, speed," with emphasis but without malice, so showing consideration for everyone's feelings. That route tended rightwards and we called it Tendency. Later I did a more direct route to the same finish with Holroyd: Embargo. There was more excitement in these climbs than this paragraph gives away.

This brings me to the climb we called The Nave. It is the line of the cliff. It is the junction between the main slab on the right—two hundred feet high, three hundred long, and still unclimbed—and the cracked buttress left of it, giving the routes already named. The line is evidently inescapable: diagonally left up the steep, nearly featureless slab to the corner of the big overlap; along and up beneath the overlap to get into the main fault; and up that Garden of Eden to the top.

We were a party of three. Trevor Jones, full of enthusiasm and drive, kept saying so. Mouly, quietly keen and confident, kept edging Jones on but prepared to step in if things didn't go ahead as intended. The writer, sceptical but fascinated, wanting to combine irreconcilables by climbing a desperate new route without doing anything risky.

Jones led off in fine style but came to a halt after thirty feet just above a shallow niche. Said it was impossible but would only come down if someone else would go up. Mouly went up, put a nut into its proper place, and came down. I went up, stood in the sling in the nut, cleaned out a hole to allow further progress; and came down.

Round two. Jones went up, got onto the hold, lurched upwards, knocked a peg in and came down. While he was up there he reported several times that he was buggered; but when he found himself safely back on the ground his strength and optimism were miraculously restored. A change of order then and I went up to

the peg and moved fractionally higher. It was barely fifteen feet to the overlap where a crack with vacancies for every sort of piton had been teasing us for a long time; but there was no wrinkle anywhere in that gap on which hands or feet or hopes might rest. Since no movement in the right direction was possible it was necessary to stand still or descend; since we wanted the climb very badly it was inexcusable to go down; and since standing still for a long time looks foolish I had to find something to do.

Well, what happened was this. Only eighteen inches to my right there was a projecting penny-sized tuft of grass—we wanted to go leftwards. To make the place tidier I pulled it off. And it proved to be securely attached to a perfect core of earth a foot long, revealing a bore-hole into which the shaft of a hammer slotted perfectly. It was set at just that angle to give confidence and I was surprised to notice then that the weather was magnificent. With tension from a sling round the hammer I was able to precariously lay away and with the reach gained I could inspect a hairline crack marking the back of a small flake. So I forced the blade of a second hammer into it—a degree of brutality is admitted here—and so split it as barbarously as the last infinitive. This done, a perfect hold for the archetypal steep mantelshelf was produced. It looked good. By this time Jones was extremely excited so I excused myself from a rather committing move, went down, tied him on, and had him hoisted halfway up before he realised I was taking advantage.

Well, he did the pitch. First he got to the overhang and supplied the crack with its peg. Then, with the determination of which he had spoken earlier, he slowly followed the stepped overlap upwards, removing what was temporary and leaving behind a briefly spaced series of runners on which the eye was able to rest with some satisfaction. From time to time he called out that he was finished and at times we feared this might be true. But there was little that we could do to help him and as you know it gets to the point on a long and arduous pitch like this at which going on is desolately exhausting but at which the mere thought of trying to get back without leaving your gear or honour behind drains you

completely. Your throat gets so dry. With a hundred feet out he reached a sturdy little tree with a neat little ledge underneath it and without stopping to get his breath he lashed himself hard on to every possible point of attachment. Powerful stuff, boy. We tried to encourage him along the remaining thirty feet of overlap but it is impossible to pass a stance like that after such effort.

Mouly went steadily up to join him and set out immediately on the remaining traverse. Again this proved difficult, the sort of irreducibly awkward passage that may be taken by two or three methods but no way easily. It needed cleaning and it was greasy and insecure. Mouly crossed it in his crabbed and painful but unfailingly effective style. Jones and I were both rather unhappy on it. It was a real bit of Moulamite. Coming last I allowed myself the luxury of a back rope round the little tree.

I caught up with them at the foot of the huge corner attached to two much bigger trees. These were ostensibly healthy but I suspected that their roots lay on stony ground. Everything seemed ready to peel off and I was forcibly restrained from setting a magic circle of pegs around the whole party. The corner was filled with grass and other matter for its whole distance and it was steeper than we had expected. It proved deceptive at a couple of points and we thought that not all the decoration was there to stay. You dig your fingers in, make some sort of foothold, move up, and the stuff starts to pull away before your eyes. Gripping. I will show you fear in a handful of dust. But there was no stopping now and a typically gruesome quarry exit was avoided for a pleasant nose on the left.

We were all pleased at this result. Jones, who had led the crucial pitch and had incidentally snatched first place in an eventual list of first ascents; Mouly, who had directed the ascent and had used his authority to allow no one to chicken out; the writer, who had shown the way up a good eight or nine feet of difficult rock but who was easily able to persuade himself that his contribution had been a significant one.

And now we have another communication from the editor — “a final despairing reminder!” . . . “certainly before I go to the Alps” and so on. An embarrassing thought strikes me. He asked me to write an account of how I wrote the new guide to Lliwedd. Alas, some six hundred inches of rain has wet that cliff since first I started work there; and I could still only present an Interim Report. But I comfort myself without difficulty. Only a half-dozen routes left to do. And this experience has not been of so digestible a kind as to lend itself to summary in the Climbers' Club Journal — it deserves a book; and this, I hope, will appear shortly.

A note in conclusion to set the record straight about Cae Coch. Jones' description of The Nave in the Ynys Ettws log sites it in “the quarry at Trefriw”. Certainly the quarry at Trefriw offers some remarkable lines but The Nave is not amongst them. In any case exploration in the Trefriw quarry should be discouraged since the intervals between blasting would allow only the very fastest parties to complete a climb.

THE SOFT YEARS

TREVOR JONES

Let's face it, there aren't many climbs that make Moulam swallow his false teeth. However, there is one in Borrowdale, called Praying Mantis, a steep X.S. put up in 1965 by my old Nuptse friend, Les Brown.

Just my cup of tea. Very stenuous thin cracks going vertically upwards into the unnaturally blue sky of the Lake District early one June morning. I panted on the ledge after the first pitch with the effort that had gone into inserting nuts, clogs, trolls, spuds. Down below was Moulam whose name is spattered through all the guide-book lists of first ascents since the war. He started climbing of course at the Black Rocks at Cromford when the poster-writing on the walls in the village was imploring Winston Churchill to start the second front. Twenty-five years later, still going strong. So, when it is not raining or below 40 degrees Fahrenheit (i.e. British Standard Minimum Jones conditions) we have climbed together and managed to do several dozen new routes on the granite between us.

Like the time on Llech Ddu with Pete Hatton as well, when we were trying the cracked wall to the right of John Clements' Elliw.

Everything had become rather serious. I had epaulettes of grass weighing twenty pounds each on both shoulders from vigorous gardening and was bent up in a peapod-shaped muddy crack. One perfect hold cradled by my right ear. A jug of jugs. Kicking sideways I pulled heavily on it. Alas! Once again the rock failed me as the epaulettes shot off and the little hamlet of Gerlan whirled into my upside-down view; however, the runners were superb, and righting myself, I faced Tony and Pete, beautifully suspended, and was able to enjoy for a few seconds probably the best view from any crag in Wales.

More weekends . . . then an attempt on a big line in a quarry near Trefriw with Harold Drasdo and Tony. A new crag only published within the previous few weeks. Even Soper had been there and done a climb on the left-hand side. But the weather in early summer had been typically wet and everyone groaned in Wendy's or trooped off to fill the cinemas of Bangor and Caernarvon . . . and the main overhanging line had not been done. Centrally placed, with a big sheet of slabs to start with, all leading up to a cathedral nave structure of overhangs which would probably unlock the way to a final tree-filled groove.

It was a lovely Saturday morning as we sped away from Manchester on our day off from the children and the garden. What shall we say about the climb to start with? Except that during one of Harold's attempts he pulled at a tiny piece of grass which was attached to a foot-long cylinder of earth and roots filling up a shot-hole which accepted a peg-hammer and mammoth slings and three broad smiles.

I took over and hauled up Harold's new crash hat as I had forgotten mine. It slipped as I was putting it on and fell seventy feet to the ground and I had a feeling for a few seconds that our friendship was not what it had been.

Under the overhangs, slippery and greasy with drainage water and that horrible brown stuff that always lurks in these places. So, a big peg and into a little groove full of small trees, none of which, singly or combined, would confidently support my weight; even years of twig-tugging experience at Tremadoc didn't reassure me. It was all hard, very feverish and even, I'm afraid, produced some nervous shrieking. I managed to fix a good tape runner and made the finishing moves to a good fat tree and a good belay and a shake of string vest and a cresta run of earth and stones out of trouser legs.

Tony came up and pronounced it just a normal Hard Very Severe of no great difficulty but a certain amount of merit of route and rock construction. So back for the evening to the London Tube

rush-hour congestion of the Padarn Lake bar and the voice of the prophet Ken Wilson rising above all others.

The Alps of course and this year a change. Back to the Dauphiné where I had first been twenty years ago in 1947. The hideous walk up to the hut from La Bérarde with three large bilberry tarts just eaten and whirling around inside like a Catherine Wheel on Bonfire Night. The unexpected and superb sight of the Aiguille Dibona and the distant hut at its foot.

Lots of thunderstorms this year and the lightning cracked around the Soreiller hut. Next morning Derek Wiggett and I set out for the South Face route which is only five minutes' walk from the hut. If I did it, another T.D. towards keeping me in the Alpine Climbing Group, as the retiring age of forty bears relentlessly down on me.

A nice, easy chimney and then a closing up, and out across some slabs and the camera whirring to ensure some slides for the winter lectures and pints at Oxford and drinks in the Manchester University Union.

Then the clouds rolled up and it rained and snowed and also electric stormed but as we got to the final terrace the weather improved slightly, although all the Continentals had retreated. So we turned the wheel towards the voie Boël, superb severe stuff and suddenly the sharp summit and forty-five minutes later back in the hut and opening the fifteenth packet of Knorr Soup-of-the-holiday.

We had noticed a big diedre on the left of the South Face Direct. The guardian's reply was 'Jamais', to our enquiry as to whether it had been climbed before.

So, just like home, festooned with runners and in Desmaisons, we did the first easy pitch. Then a good stance at the start of a Tensor-type pitch, but a peg, a bong and a bit of tension and 80 feet above me Derek had done it, an excellent Hard V.S. pitch. Up the groove to the overhang and after hitting the bong 88 times, it still pivoted perfectly around a bulge which could not be smashed. So I left it and there it is still. The more slabs and

camera whirring with clouds and snow in the background. To finish the diedre a wonderful roof-type pitch with fists sinking into glove-like jams at the joint of the slab and roof and only Medium V.S. The sort of pitch that we all carry on climbing for. Then we moved onto a quick set of abseils and the hut again. The guides examined our gear and we endeavoured to be modest as we described our 'diedre anglais'. Down the track and a last look at the peak and the two diedres which had given us such a pleasant two days' climbing. Back to the vino and bilberry tarts. What better year could a monosyllabic dotard ask for?

A NOTE ON COMMITMENT

JIM PERRIN

Walking into the Padarn Lake on a Saturday night and looking amongst a motley congregation, any pre-conceived pop notion of the type of 'hard man' would surely go wildly amiss in picking out this sport's most polished performers: it appears that boots and beards cluster most thickly round certain shrines—a bandy-legged, close-cropped, short and sherpa-smiling man circulates in the central area, poking callous fun at all who come his way: and close at hand, his chief member of crew, scoring with a quick inward laughter at any crass comment thrown to him: on the other edges, before delving into the brash wilderness before the bar (land of brag, boast and bombast), a long and stooping man smiles with a slow acceptance, aloof as the respect for his ability allows. Everywhere between them the crew's petty officer wanders in wild abandonment, a fierce flurry of gesture, joke and endless enthusiasm signifying the nativity of each new half-commitment, each idea as yet or ever unresolved.

There seems a new attitude abroad for which all that is 'classical' or 'romantic' in mountaineering leaves us a little unprepared; an overt competition and mistrust of commitment in personal relationships which seems to stem directly from the nature of the sport's development; an attitude even or perhaps especially noticeable amongst its top performers. We sense a paradox; the more complete one's qualities of commitment on rock, the less is one's degree of commitment in life. Even to those who know him best, Brown remains an enigma; Boysen is a man whom few know closely, fewer deeply; Crew's motives are completely his own, unquestionable through being unknown.

What qualities have the new hard routes these men are doing? Is there a new isolation, a new degree of utter commitment to certain sets of crucial moves which climbs (with a very few excep-

tions) had hitherto really lacked? I think the best way of explaining what I feel the attitude to be is to analyse my personal reactions to three routes which seem to me to be classics of the new era of climbing. I could have chosen other routes, the continuous coolness required by a route like South Stack's Red Wall, for example, or the short, sharp aggression of a hard gritstone climb, but the three I'll like to use here are Vector, Nexus and Troach, each of which I feel could be claimed with some justification to be a classic of the last ten years.

With Vector, the crux moves begin at a large and very comforting runner (an aspect shared by Nexus) — a security which once left behind is unrecapturable. The first move off the pinnacle is one which I certainly couldn't reverse, a body lean and awkward kick round into balance followed by a layaway move up onto two small footholds, then the next moves up are the crux. To someone of my height (note the subjective factor) a delicate step up with a very rounded handhold gets you to a layaway hold, step up again, a breathless change of hand, bridge, layback and you're on the Ochre slab. (Vector on a hot day, hands sweating profusely and feet agonised in the confines of P.A.'s has brought me nearer to my technical limit than any other route I'd care to mention). Having once left the pinnacle, one feels a commitment so complete that one's only choice is to carry it through, a complete simplicity (within the framework of its particular technical complexity) of action, direction and situation.

Nexus is easier, but even more committing; the full-weight thread at your feet seems to possess a peculiarly rapid quality of diminution as you move away from it. Rounded layaway for the left hand, tiny fingerhold for the right, and for the feet nothing but friction flat against the wall. A few feet above is a layback round a roof; tentatively one tries the first half-move, winding up the mind, then it's made, a sudden coolness and control of physical action, at the roof a pause, thoughts of reversal quickly put aside, laybacking with a restful detachment, talking about one's situation to the people beneath with an almost complete objectivity, resting in the layback before making the next move up the thin groove:

with a strange ease one has assumed an air of calm. Once committed, responsibility realised, there is an inevitability, no conscious effort, about carrying one's action through.

On these last two routes, one is faced with an act of commitment to a complex technical problem in a comparatively safe situation: Troach offers a similar, but slightly easier, set of moves in a completely different situation. One may not, to borrow Eliot's phrase, feel:—

“A fear like birth and death,
when we see birth and death alone,
In a void, apart.”

But one will certainly be aware that one's protection offers very little security in the event of a fall: one feels isolated, a small fly on a very large wall. To commit oneself to the crux moves is a very lonely and responsible action (the appeal of which Bentham perhaps defines to a certain extent in the following note:—

“Constantly actual end of action on the part of every individual at the moment of action; his greatest happiness according to his view of it at the moment.”).

In a situation like that below the crux of Troach, one is faced with this definition of happiness perhaps in the closest proximity to its ultimate form: the end of action is in view, its attainment demands for a few moments the total absorption in the problem of one's mental and physical faculties—a totality of commitment. In life the situation is a rare chance.

SURELY WE'RE OFF THE ROUTE : A SWAN SONG

KEVIN FITZGERALD

In the old days there were never any difficulties walking about in Wales, or, if there were, I have forgotten them. Somewhere around ten o'clock, and after a leisurely breakfast, people began revising the overnight plan to run round the Horseshoe in favour of what was called 'a quick look at the Glyders' or 'an easy half day on the Rivals' or even just 'going out'. That was best of all; 'going out'. One stayed in slippers, with some gear thrown into the back of the car for the look of the thing. On a day like that one usually went straight to Bangor or Llandudno, or maybe to Mrs. Williams' Cottage to eat bacon and eggs. It was never anyone's business to inquire into destinations or what had been done. 'Had a good day'? they asked at 'The Gwryd'. 'Wonderful' you said.

How different it all is now, what with all this actual climbing, and struggling about inside networks of ropes, and listening to people holding forth about 'the personal challenge' or 'finding out about yourself as you face the rock'. But one must try to keep up, especially in one's last decade, and that means taking to the rocks: walking is more or less 'out' for the moment, or seems to be.

Happily, the preparations are simpler now. There was a time when the talk was all of 'confidence in your boots my dear chap, that's all you need'. One never, of course, had the slightest confidence in one's boots. They were huge, bent double as the pressures came on, and always did the one thing they were supposed never to do, slip violently, and with sparks, off any and every hold. It was possible to slide without warning down fifty or sixty feet of

the Ordinary Route on 'The Slabs' if you were foolish enough to have confidence in your boots.

Things got a lot worse with the arrival of the Commando Sole. With these on your feet you could slip gracefully on boulders, wet grass, any path or mountain track, and while looking for the start of North Buttress. If, unhappily, you found that dreary start you could slip at each step up that first long groove and, once or twice, all the way down it as well. The firework display as you did this no longer occurred, which perhaps was a genuine step forward. You never hear anyone today remarking that, 'he doesn't really climb awfully well, you could read a guide in the evening by the flashes under his boots'.

All of a sudden proper things to put on climbing feet came into general use, bringing, for people like me, the appalling realisation that matters could be postponed no longer, that it was now possible to reach the top of a climb and that 'going out' was to mean in future actually doing something and no longer, as a friend of mine put it, 'fulfilling the FitzGerald role of standing at the foot of climbs, complaining'. It was a serious day for me when the shops began to stock close fitting moulded rubber kletterschue, P.A.'s, and comfortable walking boots. A decision had to be made at last, "Stay away from it all or buy something reasonable to put on your feet". And so it came about that just as my contemporaries were beginning to accept offers of board and lodging, ('You're not as spry as you were, dear'), from their grandchildren, I began a new and frightening life.

As was right and proper, and in accordance with tradition, the first 'new life' climb was that little thing of Geoffrey Winthrop Young's. You know it, of course? Climb into the heather, move across the traverse, move up the little wall at the end of that, walk along the terrace, and that's it. I had often watched my friends, ('we've only got twenty minutes and we must do something'), run along the Miner's Track, leap over the pipeline, swarm up G. W. Young's climb, run down the far side of it, run back to their cars, and hurtle off to Manchester, while I was more or less getting into

position to read in comfort while keeping an eye on events. Now I was on the ground gazing uneasily at my leader some five or six hundred feet above me. It seemed quite strange that I could hear his voice, especially as he had a bad cold and was whispering. 'Come on up' he said, using the vernacular of the cliffs. I put a tentative kletterschue on the rock and felt my whole body being pushed away by the heather and bracken. "Surely we're off the route" I said. "We'll be on it when you're on it" said my companion, who, I now realised, was just above my head. I tried again. To my horror I found myself off the ground and 'committed', as I have now learned to say. Soon, or fairly soon, I had reached the first stance and was being given a first lesson in modern rope work. This involved, as you all know, tying me, the climbing rope, the spare rope, the safety back rope, the red tape sling, the old fashioned rope sling, eight karabiners, the top of my trousers and the rock face into one vast, utterly comprehensive figure of eight. "You'll be all right there for a bit" said my leader, stepping straight out into nothing, turning in mid-air and clinging lightly to the smoother part of a polished slab. "You'll enjoy this move" he said, disappearing.

It is not an exaggeration to say that I have seen the traverse on G. W. Young's route 'done' at least a dozen times. I've seen Longland do it, Hilton Jones do it, Moulam do it, Chris Briggs do it, even Doug Verity do it. Now the others made a gentle step out, paused while they lighted pipes, took off jerseys, put away books, took the paper off sweets, and then with steps reminiscent of the Pavlova of my youth moving into her swan routine, feet practically twinkling, hands as sinuous as any priestess of Isis, they slid along the face of the cliff. But when you are there, if you're me, it isn't like that at all. Far below is the cruel ground, far away to the left and almost out of sight is your leader, and the step you have to make is into the void. They tell you, "Make the move and it all comes right". So it does actually, but at the time I thought it better to stay for a little while in my net of rope dwelling on my past life. After a bit I undid everything and leapt forward. Years before I had lost my trousers on Pulpit Route on the Milestone. This time

I arrived on the traverse with all my clothes on and it seemed that I had become a climber.

You will have read somewhere that you may be sure your Sin will find you out and quite soon I was to discover the truth of that statement. A long time ago I wrote for this Journal a piece called The Assault on Slab Recess route and now it was to catch up with me. "There's a little thing called Edge Route, just beside **your** Slab Recess" said my friend, "and now that you are climbing you ought to do it". Well, it's easy is Edge Route. The start presents no difficulty, then there is a big ledge to stroll along; in two places it must be all of three inches wide. After that all you have to do is, "to stand well out and walk up the edge to the loose block". You are not allowed to clutch the loose block when you reach it, you have to do the thing called 'skirting it'. This is by no means what you have always thought; anybody interested in the general idea of skirting anything is not to be found on or near Edge Route. No, skirting the loose block means letting go of everything and, with a gay little smile, walking round the thing. There is nothing after that except a wet holdless slab. It is half way up **that** that you hear your quavering voice moaning 'Surely we're off the route', to which comes the firm reply from your leader 'Stand out a bit more'. Perhaps it should be mentioned that if you stand out while doing the skirting operation you fall backwards over the edge.

We did Flying Buttress on the Cromlech soon after Edge Route. You can't go wrong on that one, just follow the rope, preferably with your eyes shut. As we were very short of time we had to cut short the comparatively simple operation of climbing the crag in favour of the 'easy walk off' half way up. Anyone who has ever reached that dangerous agglomeration of steep loose rock, wet grass, and unexpected chasms known as 'easier ground' knows what an easy walk off is like. Everyone relaxes, the rope is removed and coiled, hands are thrust into pockets and 'starting off down' begins. After the first couple of paces I always find myself calling out, 'Surely we're off the route' and always I get the same reply, 'Oh, anywhere you can find a way does'.

It took me a day or two to get over the descent from Flying Buttress, just long enough to prepare for Kirkus's Route in the Moelwyns. That's a walk up, really. All there is after the chimney which gets you off the ground into 'commitment' is a straddle across the abyss, a little wall or two, a well sheltered slab on Jugs, another wall, and what is called an exalted top pitch. It was on the slap that I said to my leader the standard piece about being off the route. That time his reply was, "Nice, isn't it? Just severe in wet weather, but beautiful today". I remember saying, 'But there aren't any holds where I am'. "Put your left foot out, Kevin, and trust your boots" came the reply, and my mind went back twenty years. I got up but I suppose if it had really been twenty years earlier there would have been a lot of sparks.

So here I am, a climber in spite of myself and with the delightful Great Slab in Cwm Silyn at last behind me. There cannot be very much in front. I went for a walk the other day; I like to torture myself once or twice a year on what A. D. M. Cox perfectly and unforgettably once called 'the aptly named Pig Track'. Above Bwlch Moch a stranger said "It's fine in these hills, but you must take it easy if you're not used to them, they're deceptive". We sat down and he told me about the joy of it all, the companionship, the beauty, the difficulties, the dangers. He never mentioned women or food so I knew he wasn't a climber. I got tired of it after a bit and got up. "Where are you going"? he asked me, "you must keep to the paths up here you know, you can't be too careful". As he spoke there flashed across my mind a vision of all the great ones with whom I had walked, attempted to climb, or even climbed. What a splendid sight they made, Hilton Jones, who began my ruin, Tony Moulam, Jack Longland, Alan Hargreaves, Lorrie Richardson, Maurice Guinness, Garym Thomas, Trevor Matthews, Glyn Roberts, Doug Verity, Mervyn Hughes, Ray Greenall, Alf Bridge, Joe Kretchmer, Eric Mensforth and, always in the forefront of my mind, David Cox. I pointed straight under my feet and spoke my last words to the stranger, "Down there" I said, "On to the Miners' Track". He gave me the title of this, perhaps my last climbing article, "Surely that's not a route" he said. I gave him the

kind wave which I hope summed up all I think and thought about the long happy years in Wales. "It'll do for me" I said to the sky, and I "started off down".

IF I CAN THINK OF A TITLE I'LL SEND IT ON LATER

PETER EVANS

Like many men I become generous in my cups and, I think it was at the Annual Dinner that I, in my unaccustomed Day Clothes, hired for the occasion, promised another dormouse in the same cup who thought he was the Editor a "frothy little piece" (his phrase) that I had thrown off (not over) previously. Like frothy little pieces the world over it proved not to be there when I wanted it. Soooo, *que faire?* The Editor's a nice chap and who am I to add to his burdens and, besides, we're in the same racket, the academic racket as those revolting students call it. The trouble with the climbing world, sorry, Climbing World, to a forty year old Dad, as Mac the Telli insists on calling me rot him and him thirty-nine or maybe that's his waist, the trouble is that it seems to be full of Hard Men and I'm about as hard as yesterday's ice cream. O, I could regale you with tales of Mods led in appalling conditions of bright sun without dark glasses (a grading I originally suggested for Diffs-done-with-a-hangover, known as VS-in-dark-glasses) but I feel that the place for them is in the guide book as laconic little accounts that only fool people like me with their 'move up the 30 foot vertical wall using any combination of the two available holds'. However, it's a far cry that has no echo and . . .

Well now, I have had a traumatic experience since writing the foregoing going clang. I am the proud possessor of a field in Llanberis. The definition of a field in Llanberis is, for present purposes (being seized in fee simple), a collection of other people's septic tanks entirely surrounded by hedges. Anyway, dizzy from my brash with destiny at The Great Auction (a *fête* worse than death as the Tory member said to the vicar) I went boldering with Joe the Handjam and Mac the Telli (name dropping). Trouble is I wasn't bold enough. Wasn't it Dr. Thomas Patey who said, 'in P.A.'s you

just step up on the discolourations in the rock'? He's bluddy wrong. While you heave and puff in your new P.A.'s, all feeling fled from those pedal extremities and your chewing gum arms getting visibly longer as your body sags nearer and nearer the ground, they have girdled the travesty. O Playtex! O Youthform! As impregnable a girdle as ever one came across in Grantchester meadows all those years ago; one needed the belay of a sported oak to cope with those, but I digress.

That night, up to my neck in the Padarn Lake (somboolically enough), a scheme for regaining face slowly took shape. As every dart plunked unerringly home in the scarred wood surrounding the board I didn't let the faintest flicker of a muscle in the firm line of my chin betray my emotion (well my chin sort of looks firm if I throw my head back so that it becomes less receding; trouble is I can't see very clearly what I'm doing and I get a stiff neck after a while so I have to keep rushing to the Gents to get the crick out, still it's not a thing to be noticed when you've been putting away all those halves, is it). By closing time I was pretty sure I was on to something good but just to make certain I went back and slept on it.

Next morning I said to the Herr Direktor, 'Sehr geehrter Her Direktor Professor Doktor Honoris Causa I.G.McN-D, wot abaht a climb then mate'. He fell for it. I hadn't counted on that. 'My dear Yates-Weinstube', he replied in his urbane manner, 'you can go and——'. Throwing caution to the winds, as my Mr. Banerjee used to say, I gently pointed out the implausible nature of his suggestion. His frank countenance clouded for a moment then cleared as the mists will clear suddenly from the summit of Little Tryfan showing the climber the smiling world of the Great Tops. 'Orlrite', he said, with what in anyone less lupine would be described as a wolfish grin, 'you're on'. I naturally took this to mean that I was on form and thought that perhaps my struggles with the bolder the previous evening had not gone unremarked, though personally I was wishing by then that I had struggled with the shy one instead. However, it was too late now. He should have been sporting with his family at the seaside or delving in the rich ground of his newly

acquired estate. Instead he chose to take me climbing. I was strangely touched.

'Something easy in the Pass', he muttered, an inner glow lighting his handsome equine features the while. Now I have climbed in the Pass before (that surprises you, I'll wager) and now that my blood was up (I am not insensitive) I thought that with him leading we might attempt something like Spiral Stairs. I threw my head to the ceiling hoping he would notice the firm line my chin made then and mentioned the climb through clenched teeth. Again that wolfish (?) grin. 'Just come with me', he said. I looked wildly for a way out but the Baron barred the door. 'Better go quietly', he said. 'Yes', I said, weakly, seeing that the game was up and my bluff called.

To think that I might have spent the day at Caernarvon imagining the glory of the Investiture with the Sovereign holding aloft the Young Prince to the acclaim of the assembled populace, or sitting in my field eyeing the septic tanks, planning to be worthy of their trust, instead of toiling up this weary hillside. He was well ahead of me now. I dodged as another stream of merry quips was flung over his shoulder. Perhaps I ought to put my helmet on. Slowly his boots, to which my eyes were glued, receded until they were no bigger than a man's hand. And still we trudged upwards. Then the rock. A wall rose sheer before us. He paused and I got out of the way just in time. 'That', he said, 'is better'. I knew what he meant. An unspoken something was beginning between us.

He was halfway up the first pitch and I was too diffident to tell him that I had unaccountably forgotten how to tie a bowfell. Thinking furiously I did the only thing possible. That hold looks loose, I shouted, and gave the rope a gentle tweak. He was beside me in a flash, puzzled wrinkles creasing his helmet. I said something about not jumping for holds, but he just glared at me, muttering under his breath, so I remembered how to tie it.

How will I ever forget the hours of agony that followed. The rock leaned. It nudged you gently, almost surreptitiously, off balance. It sloped out and sideways in unsporting fashion. The

rope stretched for miles into the clouds, the leader nowhere in sight. Silence save for the chink chink chink as his runners came off. 'Your runners are off', I shout, helpfully, but all I get is a torrent of invective for my pains. My turn to move. The hard traverse. Feet jerking over the misty void I edge my way on. Suddenly I see a small spike and knotting a loop in my beard with my teeth I slip it over for a moment's rest (I should explain about my beard, it's a false one that I mostly wear on campus so that the younger generation won't automatically mark me down as a square, it does so help to break down the barriers between the generations, don't you think? I usually climb in it too, warmer, and somehow "with it", don't you think?). The elastic was beginning to give over the years (next time I'll buy one from Joe's) so I had to move on, on to a tiny ledge scarcely a yard wide. I edge myself over it. The strain is beginning to tell. I tap my barometer anxiously. Thank heavens! it still functions. He's moved on again now. Hope I'll be able to untie myself this time, he does get so bad tempered if he has to come all the way back to free me from my belay.

How I overcame the crux I shall never know, but after a couple of hours I pulled myself together and cried, I **will** do it, then it was as though something tightened round me and I just ascended, as though drawn from above, to his cries of, 'You great big knit' (a strange time to notice my sweater I thought, but then he's a strange man, but alright when you've proved your worth on the rocks, I mean he very decently let me pay for the whisky later).

THE BLUNT END OF NEW ROUTES

L. R. HOLLIWELL

Having gazed at the bewildering list of existing topics covered by past C.C. Journal articles, I quickly came to the conclusion that this one was definitely 'not on' and cheerfully put pen and paper to one side. After all I haven't been on any expeditions to remote parts of the globe, soloed the Eiger north wall before breakfast or done anything that is likely to inspire or interest Journal readers. I then thought of facing the Editor with a blank sheet of paper and of the mass unemployment that I would be responsible for in the printing industry. In the light of this potential misery I reconsidered my decision and applied myself to the selection of an appropriate topic.

The mind wandered, not in itself particularly significant, but then an idea, almost a unique occurrence. Birchden Wall, a most serious and demanding ascent in the hitherto unexplored British territories referred to (with bated breath of course) as Harrison's Rocks. A move by move account of this major undertaking, with intricate details of the unique exhilaration of having only a No. 4 top-rope between me and certain death some fifteen terrible feet below on the sand-swept glacier. . . . But surely someone else has climbed Birchden Wall? I believe I saw two chaps on it the year before last, or was it two hundred the day before yesterday? Well, something like that; anyway, it wasn't a good idea.

Then I remembered that obliging chap who takes the rope up for me in Wales, the Lake District or at the Avon Gorge—come to think of it, he's always there—yes, I'll write about his new route exploits with me following on patiently reminding him to, "Get the *** rope in!" The exact term I used to describe the rope evades me but I am certain that it is not nylon or perlon; I have an un-

fortunate tendency to confuse terminology when I am preoccupied, maintaining uncertain contact with the rock. Contrary to common belief, my brothers and I do not always get along well and our intimate discussions about tactics on a route are often heard on Cloggy even when we are climbing on Llech Ddu. In spite of this he manages to tolerate me, no mean feat, and get up daunting chunks of rock, first.

Not so many years ago new routes were the exclusive domain of a handful of the most talented climbers, who developed the crags at their leisure, but now the search for virgin rock is one of the most competitive aspects of climbing—this is primarily due to the rapidly diminishing scope and the increasing number of people involved. Like most newcomers to this facet of the sport we took our first faltering steps in blissful ignorance of the frustrations and disappointments that lay ahead. We had climbed the majority of existing routes that were of immediate interest to us, so that the step towards new routes was a natural progression, almost a formality. The comparatively hospitable environment down in the lush jungles of Tremadoc, with the gnats and stout trees to provide comforting belays, was the perfect setting for our initiation.

Whilst probing about with rather vague intentions amongst some rocks on Craig y Castell, we discovered a jubilant Dave Cook and partner in the process of excavating a new route. Almost apologetically they informed us that the ill-defined objective that was to bear the brunt of our pioneering instincts was for the most part an existing climb. A disconsolate pair, we descended to begin a more purposeful scrutiny of Craig Pant Ifan, an exercise which many more capable pioneers had evidently carried out previously. The wall between Scratch and Scratch Arête appeared to offer the rock-starved climber a glimmer of hope, so we embarked upon a more detailed inspection.

Not wishing to detract from the unique nature of the experience we were about to endure, we decided to commence Itch, as it was to be called, with the second pitch, gaining access by way of Scratch. The monotony of starting almost every climb with the first

pitch is almost unbearable; such conservation must surely give way to a more enlightened approach. The pitch was executed almost without incident. Our enthusiasm was heightened by this immediate success and we were back the following weekend eager to get to grips with what promised to be the first pitch — at least it was below the other pitch and the ill-informed are certain to refer to it as the 'first' pitch even though it was climbed second. Lawrie, that is the chap I mentioned earlier, made rapid, if unprotected progress, to a nasty little bulge which refused to yield without aid from a peg positioned precariously above. A bit of a tussle with some almost impregnable undergrowth and our first new route was complete. This was by no stretch of imagination a great route but we enjoyed our moment of triumph and it provided the impetus essential to future success.

At this time it all seemed so easy — just find a piece of rock no one else had climbed and go up it. Our initial optimism suffered numerous setbacks in the weeks that followed. Scrambling up and down vegetations gullies in the pouring rain, seeing fantastic new cliffs on the horizon reduced to insignificant boulders when close at hand and inevitably, bounding excitedly up the initial pitch of what promised to be a brilliant new route only to find the tell-tale peg of an earlier ascent. We were beginning to despair and had returned to the less exasperating routine of climbing existing routes. The Crucible had attracted considerable attention and was reputed to be an excellent climb. We enjoyed the pleasant walk to Cwm Silyn. On arrival we found the rock not as dry as we would have liked but decided that it would 'go' in any case. The climbing was on clean, sound rock with pleasantly exposed situations; technically, it was not as difficult as we had been led to expect. Descending the scree below the crag we paused to trace the line of the route; this drew our attention to an area of unclimbed rock in the centre of the buttress which immediately aroused our interest. Desifinado skirted the left-hand side of the buttress, we were uncertain of its line, the exact positions of the routes on the right were also in doubt, yet we considered it worthy of further investigation and thoughtfully continued our descent.

Returning to make a more detailed appraisal of the central section of the Ogof buttress, we became increasingly depressed, peering up at one overhang jutting out above the other. Had we been so impertinent as to assume we could climb up there? Disillusioned, we dismissed the idea and decided to make the best of the day by climbing Desifinado. Lawrie may have been dispirited but his insatiable determination got the better of him and he began to deviate from the route of our choice to investigate the rock on the right, first at one level, then a little higher. By the time we had completed Desifinado he had convinced himself, but not me, of the practicability of climbing up the centre of the buttress to intersect the Crucible traverse midway. The following day we returned with the confidence essential to success and climbed Eureka. Descending the scree we encountered Ken Wilson; his extrovert enthusiasm was thrust upon us with full impact. "Hold it there!" Snap. "On a little further!" Snap. Our unexpected reception resembled a full-scale press conference with us the bewildered centre of attraction.

A few days later we were climbing the Great Corner on Llech Ddu in the company of our younger brother, when an unclimbed groove capped by an overhang caught our attention. Lawrie and I returned the following day to investigate the lower section of the cliff and concluded that the line was a distinct possibility that warranted immediate action. The initial straightforward section led to a steep, loose wall of increasing difficulty, with a short traverse right to an airy stance on the arête. The second pitch was the groove we had surveyed the previous day; it was not well protected. Lawrie had reached a point where further progress seemed in doubt and after several pressing attempts to gain height he reluctantly came to the conclusion that a peg was indispensable. Exasperated by what he considered to be momentary weakness, he swore that he would come down if further aid were necessary, and he meant it. The huge overhang loomed ahead and I had taken it for granted that aid would definitely be required to surmount this, but I kept discreetly quiet, not wishing to aggravate a delicate situation. Using the piton to gain a rib which led to the roof, he continued. Several large blocks parted company with the cliff accompanied by grunts

and muttering and I began to wonder if he would be next. After a brief rest, or perhaps 'pause' would be a more apt description, giving consideration to the situation, he bridged and pulled up over the roof, apparently without undue difficulty and continued to the top. "Well done!" I cried and relaxed, cheerfully confident that big jugs must be to hand. Having survived the ordeal that all seconds are required to face, when a sling necessarily removed from a peg has subsequently to be used for aid, I reached the roof. Confidently I pulled up until the lip of the overhang was at waist level. Alas, no jugs. Instructions from above were explicit but the mere thought of their execution repulsive. My strength was deserting me. I jammed my arm into a crack too wide for comfort and moved up—the world spun. I was now suspended beneath the overhang and gripped, the mist that had enveloped the cliff now served to enhance my unenviable position. A trail of abuse suddenly shattered the silence of the cwm. It was apparent that my dear brother was dissatisfied with my efforts and wished to encourage me to repair my deficiencies with expedition. A frantic struggle and it was all over. My derisive companion coolly enquired, "Do you think it was Extreme?" My agonised expression was apparently sufficient confirmation. I was impressed with Venom.

The new route 'bug' had really got hold of us and we were back on Llech Ddu the following weekend in far less favourable conditions, to climb Iota, a V.S. with two short vegetated pitches and a final long pitch which makes up for the shortcomings of the early section. This was really our first encounter with the very unpredictable Llech Ddu vegetation. Unlike most other areas, the existence of vegetation does not necessarily indicate easy-angled rock; quite frequently the grass overhangs and almost always conceals the best holds. If attempts are made to remove the grassy sods they clutch the rock with unbelievable tenacity, but try to climb over them and whole embankments threaten to part company with the cliff leaving nerve and temper the worse for wear. Pioneering on Llech Ddu certainly has its attractions but the effort involved is usually far greater than that expended on new routes in other areas. No doubt the mantle of greenery which adds so much to the atmosphere

of this cliff will one day be lifted as has been the case elsewhere. This is my favourite crag; it is sufficiently remote and awesome to deter the dry rock addicts, too intent upon some desperate roadside eliminate to bother with the black and mossy monster lurking at the head of some far-off cwm. I often think that Cloggy must have been a far more awe-inspiring place before the intricate web of climbers' highways raped its final secrets.

Winter was fast approaching and many weekends were spent prospecting for new rock. Driving endlessly around North Wales endeavouring to locate remote squiggles indicated on 1" Ordnance sheets and 300 foot contours that terminate abruptly at the coast, only to find vegetated little buttresses, huge scree runs or overhanging rubble heaps that seem to defy gravity and threaten total collapse should an unwary climber be overcome with enthusiasm. Once again we were faced with the frustrations and disappointments; our pioneering spirit was in danger of total evaporation. Eventually we devised a system intended to minimise the impression of futility, which was, to search only when conditions prevented us climbing. In practice this had serious disadvantages, particularly when visibility was poor. Having located a crag it was almost impossible to determine its true potential when it was shrouded in mist. Almost dutifully we persevered, without notable success, until a small quarry opposite Tremadoc was discovered.

Preliminary investigations were carried out to establish that the quarry was inoperative and determine the climbing prospects. Estimates of height varied wildly as did those for the number of routes that might be possible. The angle of the rock was deceptive and lines not easy to determine in advance. Each time we visited Moel-y-Gest we came away with a different impression, ranging from complete pessimism to cautious optimism. The ultimate yield for the quarry was eighteen routes; at its height, eleven ascents were made in two weekends. Dave Mossman, Frank Quigley, Lawrie and I were the complete assault team; we regarded this as 'our crag' and jealously guarded the secret to the point of being deliberately evasive when asked what we had been doing by our well-meaning friends. In retrospect this all seems rather silly.

Nevertheless we thoroughly enjoyed the episode; it gave us the opportunity to develop a crag from scratch, something that we are unlikely to be able to do again. The quarry is only 120 feet in height and was no great discovery. I feel sure that our more choosy predecessors had dismissed it as being not worth the effort. It is for the most part steep but unfortunately displays one major defect, typical of quarries — ledges break many of the routes into short sections, yet perhaps surprisingly in only a few instances is real escape possible; to transfer to an adjacent route usually provides an alternative of a similar standard.

The quarry was the scene of several minor epics, two of which seem worthy of mention. Lawrie was as usual on the 'sharp end'. Standing in a sling at the top of an overhanging groove, he was contemplating the next move. The ledge on which we were to belay was immediately above but access was completely blocked by an enormous heap of precarious rubble. He signalled to Dave Mossman and myself to keep to one side. Easier said than done. Carefully he began to remove one large piece of rock; at once we found ourselves in the middle of an avalanche of boulders, dust and flying debris. Guiltily I confess that I dropped the rope and deserted my post in panic. When the dust had settled Lawrie was still standing in the sling, quite unhurt and rather more composed than the ground crew, who were excitedly pointing at an array of scars on the rock which each of us claimed coincided precisely with the position he had occupied immediately prior to the moment of impact. By comparison, the actual climbing was uneventful.

On another occasion the same party were almost benighted when we decided to do a typical Moel-y-Gest quicky. In fact, Lawrie managed to complete the route before it was really dark but Dave and I were belayed in a sort of niche and had not been able to even see the final pitch. Dave was first to venture cautiously out into the unknown, leaving me in a rather eerie situation. I could hear directions being given and Dave's rather uncertain replies—"Take in," "Tight," "O.K." and so on. Then it was my turn. I climbed the first short section without too much trouble as the rope was directly above; I then reached a protection peg and dis-

engaged the rope which now disappeared diagonally into the gloom on my right. I was instructed to traverse delicately across a slab, step down carefully to a small foothold. . . . This was clearly impossible, I could hardly discern the slab, let alone any holds, but there was no alternative but to try. I bit my lip and stepped cautiously onto the slab; almost immediately I was airborne; to my dismay I remained so on completion of the pendulum. A well-meant enquiry from above was greeted with an unrepeatable reply which gained little sympathy. Dark shapes loomed all around. I hauled on the rope and groped anxiously, a piece of rock came to hand and I blundered upwards blindly following the ever-taut rope, my body now coming into contact with rather more rock than I would have liked. I struggled over the top and into the bright moonlight that had evaded us on the cliff. We joked about the possibility of doing more new routes in the dark and of devising a special grading system for night climbers. Someone suggested that torches must be regarded as cheating; we all laughed. The ropes were hurriedly coiled and we made a rapid descent, as we had the long drive back to London ahead of us and inevitably, work in the morning.

The following weekend we were able to repeat the climb in a rather more orthodox fashion.

The quarry held our interest for some weeks but as the weather improved we grew impatient to get back to the high crags. Tony Moulam had drawn our attention to a line on Llech Ddu just to the right of Central Route and we knew that it was too big and obvious to remain unnoticed for very long; so we made our way to the black cliff. A brief reconnaissance was carried out to determine the exact line, then we began.

Climbing Scarface, like the majority of new routes on Llech Ddu, was not so much an operation as an excavation. On our initial visit the first pitch was accomplished without incident, bar the fact that it did not take quite such an independent line as we had hoped. As was predicted, the second pitch was the crux. Lawrie made several attempts to ascend an overhanging groove without success;

almost in despair he turned his attention to another unlikely-looking section of steep rock on the immediate left, which he was not only able to climb but also to protect adequately. Progress was slow, due primarily to the vegetation. One unwary spectator was almost buried by a large sod and a party doing Central Route had some anxious moments as the precise direction of the missiles could not be predicted with accuracy any more than could their size and frequency. More struggling, grunting and scraping above. It was now late in the afternoon; obviously we were not going to be able to complete the route in the time available. "I'm coming down," I heard with relief. I had spent an unexciting day on a belay from where it was not possible to see the leader after the first ten feet of climbing. A familiar 'ding, ding' of stubborn steel being driven into even more stubborn rock. The peg secured, I was instructed to lower away. A rather tired, and very earthy yet jubilant Lawrie came slowly into view, swinging clear of the rock. I reached out and hauled him onto the stance. He had apparently reached a point where cleaner rock lay ahead and the angle eased somewhat.

The following weekend we returned. The second pitch was completed and the peg removed by the leader. The wind had served to blow away loose soil and debris, holds were dry and comparatively clean, adequate nut runners could also be arranged in the cracks revealed by Lawrie's earlier efforts. We were well pleased with the pitch which provided sustained and varied climbing on sound rock. The third pitch was equally vegetated but not as steep and communications were much easier. This section was about V.S. and interesting; it could well provide an alternative and perhaps better finish to Central Route more in keeping with the rest of the climb. Time was unfortunately pressing and we were forced to avoid the initial steep section of the final crack, which was blocked by vegetation, and make a short detour on the wall before stepping into the crack.

After Scarface we turned our attention to Anglesey for a while and were lucky enough to find a few tasty morsels which had been overlooked by earlier explorers.

THE HOLLIWELLS
Ken Wilson



We continue to climb new routes whenever the opportunity arises but virgin rock is becoming very scarce. The 'plums' tend to fall to the ace pioneers, leaving the less desirable stretches of rock for the lesser mortals to squabble over. It is usually necessary to travel well outside the traditional mountain areas in search of new climbing grounds and be prepared to tackle copious vegetation or loose and rotten rock, the mere sight of which would have been sufficient to deter earlier generations of pioneers. The current generation accept loose rock as part of the climb, a challenge to be met. Only the naive would dare to suggest that any new route will not get a second ascent because of the difficulties involved or inadequate protection — such a boast is likely to provoke an unpremeditated number of ascents in a very short space of time. Yesterday's great problems are tomorrow's 'trade routes' and this process is accelerating. Standards have continued to rise unabated and whilst it is always difficult to predict the next advance, it never fails to materialise. Certainly better and more subtle protection techniques have contributed to the general rise in standards, but personally I believe that a fundamental change in attitude is of far greater importance; climbers no longer regard the men who make the first ascents as suicidal lunatics or freaks. The great pioneers are now respected and revered for real achievement and ability rather than exaggerated feats of daring to which few would lay claim.

WEEKEND

R. J. ISHERWOOD

I hadn't climbed with the Kosterlitz for months. He'd been operating here and there with Dave Potts, scratching at Anglesey and the Carnedds and returning out of breath and usually unsatisfied. One day they had conquered two pitches of the Skull — the lower jaw, you might say—but they hadn't managed to return for the big pitch. It seemed that he wasn't interested in that any more, so we went up to Cloggy and thought about things.

I don't recall exactly, but I think he got the ropes that day because he was in front for a bit. I remember we were both half-naked and hideous in the pale sunshine and all the trippers moved quickly out of our way. At the Half-way House we met Howells and Whybrow, bound for Woubits.

"What's this team going to do?"

We didn't answer much—we didn't know. As we walked into the shadows we started to debate it. He'd done all I wanted to do and I'd done most of what he wanted. But you tend to forget girdles—I do, anyway. So as we walked past many an obvious unclimbed scratch on the lower reaches of the Far East, we were still arguing abstractly about Haemogoblins and West Buttress Eliminates that were sure to be still wet.

At the foot of the East Gully the obvious dawned on me. It was early—only twelve.

"What about the Pinnacle Girdle?"

"Well, we could, I suppose. It's very strenuous. Are you fit?"

"Well, no. Are you?"

"Well, no."

"We could try, though."

"I can't think of anything else."





So we trogged up the terrace and left the sack and slithered desperately down the ledges to the foot of Pinnacle Flake. By now it was one o'clock.

"I'm scared of Taurus, I'm doing this pitch."

Thus the fearless Scot. He was so quick with the ends of the rope that I couldn't really argue. I belayed to pegs and nuts and off he went. He couldn't get off the deck at first so he said it was cold. He did it at his second attempt and vanished scrabbling round the corner.

He didn't progress very quickly and it was almost an hour before he had a belay. He was right about the cold—I was frozen. Everything at the start was sloping except the very tiny things—the grain of the rock, no more — and my fingers were too cold for tinies. I tried a couple of times and retreated with screams for slack. You can do the Guinevere start instead but I've tried that—it's even worse. Hats off to C. T. Jones. So I tried the Pinnacle Flake way again with a great hopelessness and got up by the skin of my teeth to find that all his runners had floated off.

Going across the front was easy really — I don't know why he took so long—but there was a minor thrill at the end with a rope move from a peglet.

Taurus leered at me round the corner and he leered at me too. Frying pans and fires. I took all the slings and pegs and, trying to plan some excuses, I ventured out. Getting to the roof was reasonable, in a loose sort of way, and I put a nut in a little hole at the back of the great overhang. This was it—the dreaded Taurus. Unrepeated for years, loose and overhanging and unprotected and desperate. I felt to be at the centre of all the black steep rock in Wales.

Still, returning to reality, it did have holds. I fixed some nominal runners and all the previous ones fell out. A sort of slither out leftwards into a "layback on underpulls", just like the legends, and there was the peg sticking out and beckoning. I gave it a token waggle before committing body and soul to it — surprisingly it

ISHERWOOD DURING AN EARLY ATTEMPT ON THE LINE,
LATER COMPLETED AS DEYGO BY BIRTLES
Ken Wilson

didn't move.

Above the peg were more underpulls but the higher the fewer and the smaller. I went up quick and returned quicker. Little runners were fixed and many more attempts were made until I got my feet right, contorted round the little upper roof and popped my hand, blind, into the vital pocket. Over onto a stance to end all airy stances, in Wales at least, and the spare rope hung very free.

The creature came up fast despite his illnesses and frozen hands—but he did get gripped trying to take out a little nut. I had to pull him—it made my day. He leapt on upwards and instantly he was pressed again.

“Put your foot there, Mike.”

“**** off.”

He reached a ledge and his eyes gleamed, for down leftwards was a peg. Being small, he needed fantastic contortions to reach it. We later learned that it took half a day to put it in.

He swung down into a sling, up out of it, down again and out leftwards. Round the arête life was clearly easier—rope went out rapidly. He put lots of runners on—to protect me, as he told me—but before he took the rope in they were all off. I got into the sling on the peg and, like him, I tried all the wrong ways first. It was a peculiar move and it led you to a very airy spot on the Pinnacle arête, especially so when the belay was thirty runnerless sideways feet away. I arrived, shattered, to find that we were at the top of the cliff.

“Can we stop here?”

Who said that? It cannot be revealed. We both thought it, but really it was too early to give up. So he found a belay just out of Octo, a respectable three feet below the top, and I inspected the Hand Traverse.

The Hand Traverse may have inspected me too but it didn't say anything. It just sat there like a long, straight permanent grin, just wide enough for your finger ends but sadly not continuous, and

slanting upwards too. The wall below it was impressive. As a first move I climbed a bit of a jamming crack and fixed a runner so high that I was on a top rope.

Then I looked for some footholds and to my amazement there were some. For two moves. I did these and attempted to start hand-traversing. All the upping and downing on Taurus showed its effects now, as one swing was almost too much and I lurched back to the last foothold. Suddenly inspired, I tried putting my feet in the traverse line ("Perhaps nobody's thought of that.") but like many good ideas it didn't work. After a few more spasms I decided it wasn't for me so I came back to the stance and we swapped ends.

His blood was up now and he swarmed across first time. He was just as gripped as I was, but he's brave — I have to admit it. He stood in a sling and fixed lots of runners and tangled his ropes to hell and it's good that he didn't fall off because I was taking photos all the time. I came across in one big swing, half on the rope and half on hope with odd bits touching the rock.

"Let's come back tomorrow."

He said it this time. It was six o'clock, so fair enough, I thought, to the pub, but before I said so I held out for a minute.

"Let's just look at this next pitch, Mike. It might be easy."

Of course I couldn't do it but I think I scored a point for trying. We marked the spot on the top of the crag and fled.

* * *

In the pub we met a man called Brown.

"I'm surprised you thought Taurus was hard. It's sooo well protected."

I bought some more pints.

* * *

We reckoned we'd done most of it so we didn't get there any earlier on Sunday. We abseiled down the upper mossinesses of the

Hand Traverse and I tried the next pitch again. There was a ring peg on the arête and I was six inches short of it. I knew that the pitch had been climbed backwards but didn't at first realise the significance of this. Desperate lurches for five-year-old pegs are not my best line so I laced the area with runners before I tried seriously. It was still a hard move and round the corner things remained awkward for a move or two—steep and creaky.

Down and across, the pitch went now, on an amazing hanging wall, undercut and overhung, isolated from the world, straight above the lush greenery of the East Gully. Down and across was fine, but up at the end was a peculiar move and it was some minutes before I dug out a new jug and pulled up into the chimney of Gargoyle.

I belayed in a dewy hole and watched Davey Jones losing himself in the fields below the Orb and the Sceptre. Mike seemed quite impressed, especially when I pulled the wrong rope.

He went down Gargoyle, putting on lots of runners as I instructed, and belayed in the hanging gardens on the next buttress. The slings made it easy for me and I featured off onto the Croak. Up a crack to a traverse line and some hopeful moves left to a peg on a ledge in a really great position. The next bit was problematical—a very strenuous heave and mantelshelf onto a flake, or commit yourself to a bilberry bush. I chose the bush.

The belay, a few feet higher, was in a cave, full of huge potential trundles. Must go back mid-week. I found a solid spike or two and realised that my last objective was achieved—he'd got the diagonal abseil.

To my surprise he wasn't worried by this. In fact he was unusually organised. He'd been counting the pitches too, I guess. He vanished over the edge and in no time he was there. I unbelayed and came round.

“Christ.”

As I stepped round the arête the verticals suddenly went mad and I saw Alan Heppenstall on a wall which just didn't relate to

anything I understood. After a bit I adjusted, but East Gully Wall still looked pretty impressive from this viewpoint. Of course I had no film left.

I frizzled down to the half-way thread runner—getting a little old—and further down until I was barely in contact with the arête and tending to swing into space in two directions at once.

“Ya run across an’ grab this thing.”

Oh, yes. So I did as I was told and grabbed the thing which was a monumental creaky spike. I was glad I was number two.

One more pitch. Off again on the sharp end. This was mostly Shrike and therefore known country. Actually I very nearly fell off the last move.

He was very happy when he came over the top — until he realised that I’d had all the pitches that day. Then he was a bit fed up but we’d brought a huge bottle of cider and that cheered him up. We still had time to do Ghecko and he was welcome to the crux of that.

I’m glad he came. I wouldn’t have enjoyed it much on my own.

THE GREAT BOOM YEARS

KEN WILSON

Castell Helen looked superb from the sea, as did all the South Stack cliffs. The Holyhead pilot brought his boat close under the rock and we were able to get pictures of the climbers on Lighthouse arête. At first the leader didn't respond to my shouts for action but then, soothed perhaps by my companions' more polite entreaties, he obligingly looked gripped and we got our pictures. A further session followed when we returned across Gogarth Bay to the big cliff.

I couldn't help reflecting on the bizarre reason for paying £5 to hire a boat to go and photograph a few cliffs. I had shot ten films, but to what end? The pictures would be used sooner or later, published in some highly technical article extolling the virtues of these Anglesey sea cliffs. But why should anyone want to know? Four years ago I would have thought it was crazy but now the climbing community had grown and had developed an insatiable appetite for hard rock climbs and technical information. A sort of climbing Parkinson's Law seemed to have developed and the numbers and the expertise of climbers had increased at a breathtaking rate.

For me it all started in London. In 1964 I had just left college and like many photographers had made my way to the 'big city'. There I found Crew nursing several sizeable problems, birds, climbing, and a job in that order. He pounced on my file of climbing pictures and scrutinised them all night. We talked about routes, guides, articles, photos, and formed some big plans.

The first job was to complete the Llanberis South Guide. Various pictures were needed and we got all of them one September morning with an old M.P.P. plate camera. That afternoon Crew dragged Chris Boulton up to the Mot and filled in a gap that he had noticed that morning. M.P.P. stands for Micro Precision

Product which seemed to apply so he called it that. We returned to London and he had a blitz session on the guide, finishing it in three weeks. I was impressed, so this was the efficient Pete Crew I had heard so much about. The guide was duly passed over to the General Editor and eventually appeared in print eighteen months later, after several frustrating delays.

After that I applied my photography to climbing in a more direct way. The task of any reporter is to be in touch with events, both present and future, so I infiltrated the ranks of the top climbers and discovered all their secret crags. In this way I was able to photograph new crags before all the routes were done and these photographs provided vital information and speeded up development. John Clements was climbing very well at that time and with Alan Bell and Dave Potts he was putting up big routes on Cidwm and Llech Ddu. I had known John and Dave for years, but they proved to be most secretive about their plans and I was never able to get any action shots of them. John was very sensitive about the ruthless competitiveness that was around and always operated with great secrecy.

On one occasion after the pub he and Potts had joined Crew and myself for bridge. We grilled them about what they had been doing during the day and, by a process of elimination we discovered they had got halfway up what is now Great Corner on Llech Ddu. The next day they went up and completed the route in very poor conditions in case Crew decided to burn them off in the week. As Pete was at the time very unfit it was a bit of a joke but does indicate the fantastic competitiveness that he had been largely responsible for introducing.

This competition rarely produced bad feeling, however, as it always seemed to have a very clear distinction from the normal sociability of climbers. But nevertheless climbers gradually became aware that the race for new routes was intensifying, and conversations in the Padarn Lake often became like verbal chess as a result. I had a favourite trick of getting a photograph of some new and fabulous crag and letting everyone look at it, dwell on its

potential, but then deny them its location. Crag "X" was the most discussed crag in Wales in those days.

Late in January 1966 Clements and Tim Osgathorpe died after a fall in Glencoe. These occasions always cast a heavy pall across the climbing community and I began to realise how Linnell's death must have shattered his contemporaries. John Clements was such a gregarious person and so well known that his death also made a tremendous impact. The reaction of the climbing world was spontaneous and scores of his friends and relatives attended the funeral. The whole affair was very moving and one felt that somehow he personified the aspirations of Welsh climbers, aspirations which had taken a heavy blow as a result of the tragedy.

But whereas in the thirties Linnell's death marked the end of an era, Clements' death seemed to signal the start of one in 1966. By spring the development of Craig Gogarth was in full swing, with new routes being discovered at a fantastic rate, sometimes three a day. For me the crag was a godsend. I was in at the start photographing everything and everyone in sight. Crew who captured most of the early glory lent heavily on the information that the photographs provided, but it was a double edged weapon as I owed no loyalty and was soon slyly pointing out the crags' virtues to Joe Brown. Brown remained unmoved, apparently scornful of these loose sea cliffs, but the following week he put up 'Wen' and this gave me the first insight into the strategy of the master new route tactician. He has such an insatiable desire to get up new rock that no secret is ever safe with the ubiquitous Brown.

He had just settled in Llanberis and was feeling a little left behind by the young lads, but it wasn't long before he had muscled in on Gogarth and was starting to compete with Crew, Alcock, Ingle, Howells and the rest. The Rat Race was a term that not only summed up that period but was also used as a title for one of the harder routes. Geoff Birtles had tried it first then, Brown, Alcock and Howells all failed. Howells eventually got up most of the route but Crew and Brown made the complete ascent. Eight people got the credit, but really Howells and Brown did the bulk

of the work. It was clearly a far cry from the days of courtesy and Longland.

Climbing history was being made and I was in a position to record it; it was a great opportunity, and one which I appreciated, but did not altogether fulfil. Perhaps the most important event that I recorded was the first ascent of Dinosaur, with Brown and Crew burying a mythical hatchet and climbing together for the first time. Crew carried away most of the honours for that day, with Brown, hatless, cowering on his stance and Pete dislodging cascades of boulders into the sea 100 feet below. It was a chastened team that returned to Llanberis in the evening.

Crew produced his Anglesey guide with characteristic rapidity, but this time published it privately to bypass the built-in delays that the Climbers' Club has still failed to overcome. At the same time I produced news items and articles for the magazines, so that the public relations build up for the cliff was really effective. The whole experiment was highly successful, the routes received the heavy traffic that they needed to clean the loose material off, and the cliff is now second only to Cloggy in importance in Wales.

Despite all this activity on Gogarth many people preferred more conventional cliffs. Ronald Edwards was quietly working away at the West Buttress of Clogwyn D'ur Arddu and during an intensive spell of climbing produced six new routes on the cliff, more than anyone else except Brown, Kirkus and Crew. Only Mynedd and Fibrin have so far had second ascents.

Boysen, who was never very enthusiastic about Craig Gogarth, produced the "Skull" on Cyrn Las which has so far retained its extremely difficult reputation despite several very strong attempts but very few successful ascents.

One of the interesting features of the climbing community in 1966 was the emergence of a new élite of extremely competent climbers who were repeating all these new routes. It was these climbers who have produced most of the impetus since then, a list would include: Geoff Cram, Ray Evans, Adrian Liddell, Richard

Isherwood, Malcolm Howells, Geoff Birtles, Alan Harris, George Homer, Richard McHardy, Frank Cannings and of course the Holliwell brothers. I first met these two Londoners as they were making the first ascent of Eureka on Cwm Silyn. Fragments of purple cockney came floating down from the crag as Les cursed his brother for sloth, laziness, lack of poke and all the other sins a solid second can think up. Then came Les's turn and the process was reversed with Lawrie urging him on, though rather less forcefully. I didn't realise then, but the Holliwells were to become the most effective new route team in Wales since Crew and Ingle, and despite their very naive apprenticeship to climbing they rapidly grasped all its complexities and have now repeated many hard routes including the Skull, (2nd) Great Wall (4th) Dinosaur (3rd) and Winking Crack (complete). In addition they have added Park Lane, U.F.O. and Yellow Scar to Gogarth, Eureka to Cwm Silyn, developed a series of quarries at Tremadoc and most important, they have continued the development of Llech Ddu where Clements left off and have so far added nine new routes making Llech Ddu a strong contender for No. 3 Welsh Crag. (See article on page 368).

But despite considerable activity elsewhere in Snowdonia, the main centre of progress in 1966 and 1967 stayed at Anglesey. The attention swung to the crags near South Stack. At the time of the B.B.C. television spectacular on Red Wall in April '66, these crags were considered too loose for climbing. Brown was soon dispelling that myth however, and he produced Red Wall, Wendigo and Doppelganger; a superb group of routes, probably unique in character and seriousness in this country. Not content with these he also found a series of easier and more solid routes on the adjoining Castell Helen.

This left the Zawn nearest to the lighthouse, the Mousetrap Zawn. It was here that I got my biggest photographic scoop, when I caught Brown and Crew attempting a really improbable line on rock that was folded into such wild convolutions that it defied the normal analysis of difficulties in advance. For a time the issue remained in doubt, but under the combined onslaught of two such experienced new route men the cliff stood little chance. Later, even

looser routes such as Pterodactyl, Sind, Primate and Bedlem were added to the curious collection at South Stack.

The attention then reverted to the North Stack end of Gogarth. Alcock, Rogan, Brown, Crew and Birtles rapidly cleared up most of the remaining lines there. Perhaps the three most worthy of mention were Britamatis, a steep juggy wall which seems certain to become a classic when it is better known, Concrete Chimney on the left of Wen, and Armoz, a short yet extremely difficult and spectacular overhanging chimney, hidden in its own little zawn between Wen and the Hustler.

A different group of climbers were concentrating on Gogarth's upper tier. They were, Cram, the Holliwells, Drummond and Cannings, and the routes they produced included Doomsville, Park Lane, Strand, Times Square and a Girdle, all on the Central Park Buttress. Elsewhere on the upper tier other steep and desperate problems were discovered; U.F.O., Yellow Scar and the Suspender being the most important.

The big problems of Anglesey seemed to get left till last however. In the summer of 1967, Crew and Drummond climbed the line to the left of Dinosaur, naming it Mammoth.

Later Doug Scott pegged the massive overhang at North Stack and gave Wales an artificial climb as good as any in the country. Finally in May 1968 Geoff Birtles and Tom Procter solved the problem of the left hand section of Red Wall. Birtles had always been in on the Anglesey scene, but had usually been dominated by his companions. This Red Wall route was a fitting reward for his years of toil, and though Deygo, as it is called, will probably never become popular it should remain as one of the really hard and serious routes of Wales.

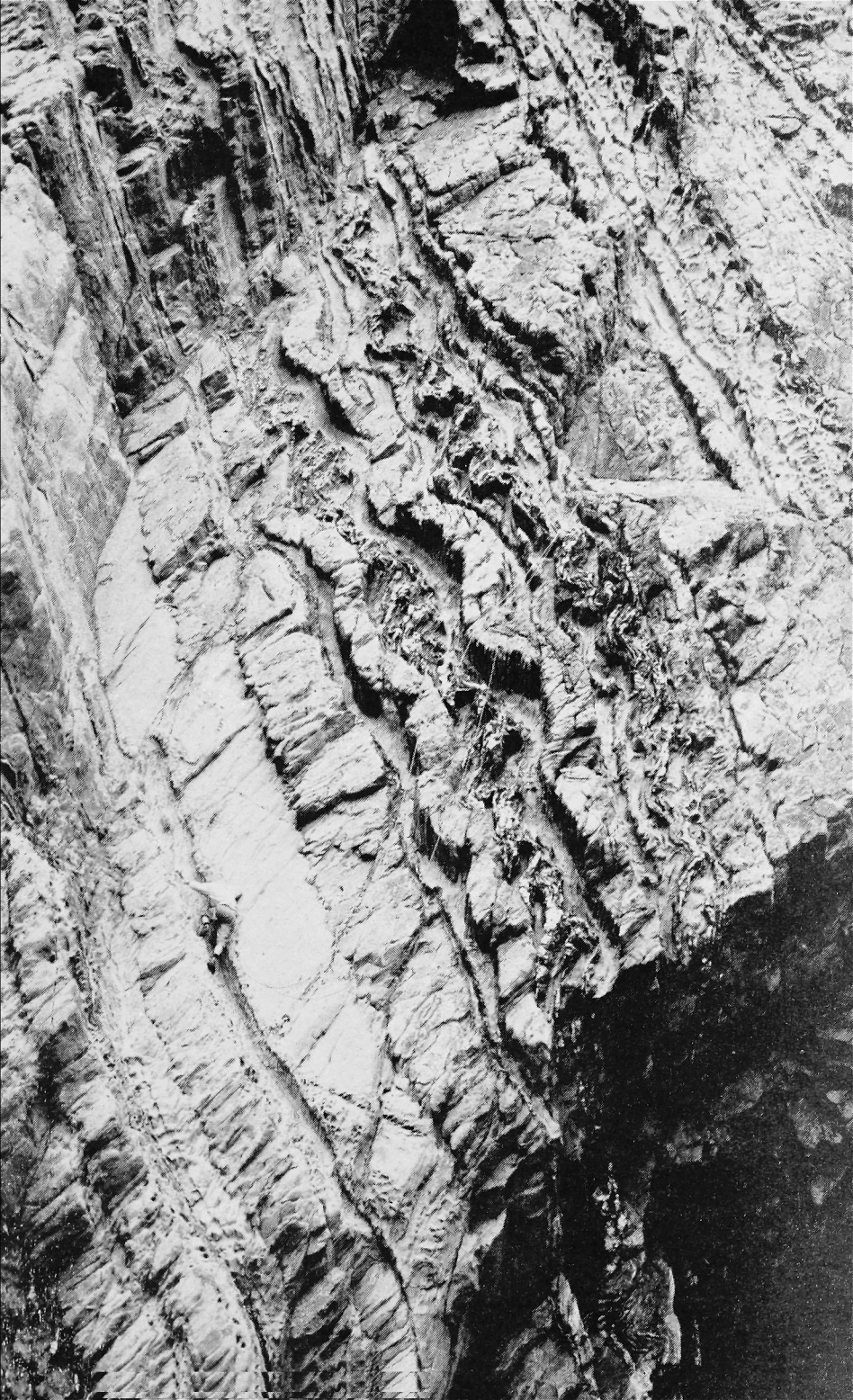
Luckily the Climbers' Club in their wisdom had premonitions of the great new route boom and in 1965 they had given Nigel Rogers the job of editing the New Climbs Bulletin.

It would be very short sighted in this summary of Welsh climbing in the past few years to ignore the importance of this bulletin.

Routes are now published quickly and come under scrutiny by the climbing world at large. The poor or inaccurate routes are soon revealed while the good climbs become popular more quickly.

Rogers has risen to the task admirably and much of the dynamism of the Welsh scene in the past few years must be as a result of his efforts. This is not to say that New Climbs has been without its troubles, however. Its very existence seems to have encouraged climbers to write up all sorts of short and trivial bits of rock, and recently a certain number of climbs that had not even received an ascent managed to find their way into its pages. But these are details when compared to the overall success of the publication. The future of the bulletin depends on a constant supply of new descriptions and there seems to be some small indications that in Wales at least this supply is starting to diminish. This year the main exploration have been on the sea cliffs on the Llyn Peninsula and the intensive development of Llech Ddu previously mentioned. Four major routes have been done at Anglesey, one on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu, one or two oddments in the Pass and that's the total in Wales. The main reason for this decline is that the amount of remaining new rock has greatly diminished and although there are still several sea cliffs awaiting development, these have so far failed to stir anyone's imagination.

Nevertheless there has been a tremendous burst of high standard climbing on the existing routes. This year climbs such as Woubits Left Hand, Great Wall, Boulder Direct, Pinnacle Girdle, Dinosaur, Wendigo, Strand and Rat Race (to name some of the hardest) have had regular ascents, while Mammoth, Naddyn Ddu, Fibrin and Mynedd have all had second ascents. Foremost amongst the young climbers doing these routes have been Pete Hinks, Cliff Phillips, Tony Willmott and Jack Firth. So perhaps the climbing world is gathering itself to produce another genius who will climb something really hard, perhaps the steep unprotected wall cracks on Gogarth or something no one has even considered, and in doing so draw back the curtain on another chapter of Welsh climbing history.





CLIMBING NOTES

I. ENGLAND & WALES

As mentioned elsewhere, descriptions of new routes in these areas are now published in the Bulletin "New Climbs". This is available to members, through the Business Manager, at a reduced price. Supplies of the '66, '67 and '68 Bulletins are still extant, but are dwindling rapidly. Members are encouraged to obtain their personal copies as speedily as possible.

II. IRELAND (1967)

Sean Rothery

Since October, 1966, progress has been made in providing stencilled guide books to two areas which have been rather neglected by climbers in recent years, Ben Corr and Luggala. It is nearly 17 years since Bill Perrott produced his guide to Luggala. This has been unobtainable for a very long time, but a new guide is now available, largely based on Bill's production but brought up to date. It is surprising how few new climbs have been done on this great crag in all those years. It is hoped that climbers will concentrate a bit more on Luggala, even if only to clean the lichen off the established routes. The Guide to Ben Corr has also been difficult to obtain in recent years, and in fact also dates back to the first couple of years of the club's existence. This has now been rectified with the production of a revised edition which adds information about outlying cliffs, such as Bencollaghduff, which has further possibilities, and Little Killary — a haven for wet days. It should be pointed out that this guide is in no way definitive, but only a collection of available data on existing climbs. Descriptions of many early routes are non-existent. Some climbs up to

1,000 ft. long were never written up at all. This seems strange in these days when anything over 25 ft. is given a name.

During the past eighteen months, almost thirty new climbs have been put up in the Mourne. A notable feat was the first completely artificial route made on the roof of the Cove cave. A second ascent of this was carried out a few months later.

A number of new climbing areas were also opened up in 1966-67. In November 1966 a party visited the area above Lough Reagh near Glencar and made a number of easy but interesting climbs on excellent slabs. New ground was again broken in June 1967 when excellent rock was discovered in the Maumtrasnas at Gowlan Coum. About eight climbs up to 300 ft. long and varying from Difficult to Hard Severe were made. The notable thing about this area is the excellence of the rock—gabbro like in quality. There is record in the 1951 I.M.C. Journal that a climb was made by Kopczinski, Wilson and Lynam. There are other areas nearby also visited in the early days of the I.M.C. which would repay new exploration.

The Spillikin Club continues its explorations of Fair Head where a number of very fine routes are reported. The Spillikin Club has also produced its first interim Climbing Guide. This is for the gritstone edge known as the "Playground," Co. Cavan and the Antrim Coast. The little crag in Co. Cavan was first climbed on by Fred Maguire and Frank Winder in 1949.

III. THE ALPS

Mont Blanc Massif

1967

Route Major . . . B. Chase and R. Roshnik.

Mont Blanc du Tacul, Gervasutti Pillar . . . N. J. Allen and H. Woodland.

Aig. du Plan, N. Face . . . M. Kosterlitz and R. Keates.

JOE BROWN ON CASTELL HELEN
Ken Wilson





Pic Sans Nom, N.W. Face; first ascent . . . M. Boysen and N. Estcourt.

Aig. du Triolet, N. Face . . . B. Chase and R. Roshnik.

1968

Sentinelles Rouge . . . A. McHardy.

Mont Blanc du Tacul, Gervasutti Pillar . . . A. McHardy.

Aig. du Triolet, N. Face . . . M. Kosterlitz and N. Estcourt;
M. Vallance and A. Edwards.

Aig. du Midi, Frendo Spur . . . M. Vallance and S. Gregory;
R. Johnson and A. Edwards.

Chardonnet, N. Face . . . C. H. Taylor and J. Brailsford;
A. McHardy.

Courte, N. Face . . . J. Wilkinson and K. Cartwright.

Pte. Lachenal, E. Face . . . J. Wilkinson and K. Cartwright.

Aig. Purtscheller, S. Ridge Integrale (1st British) . . . C. H. Taylor
and J. Brailsford.

Mont Rouge de Peuterey, S.E. Face (1st ascent) . . . J. Brown
and P. Crew.

Pennine Alps

1967

Lenzspitze, N. Face . . . M. Vallance and R. S. Johnson.

1968

Lenzspitze, N. Face . . . D. Alcock.

Oberland

1968

Schreckhorn, traverse via S.W. and S.E. Ridges . . . J. G. R.
Harding and N. J. Allen.

Engelhörner

1968

Rosenlauistock, W. Kante . . . J. G. R. Harding and N. J. Allen.

Vorderspitze, W. Kante . . . J. G. R. Harding and N. J. Allen.

ON THE SCHRECK HORN, 1968

J. G. R. Harding

Salbitshijen

1967

S.E. Ridge . . . M. Vallance, N. Longland and R. S. Johnson.

E. Wall . . . M. Vallance, N. Longland and R. S. Johnson.

Bernina

1968

Piz Morteratsch, E.N.E. Ridge . . . J. G. R. Harding and N. J. Allen.

Bregaglia

1967

Sciara di Fuori, N.W. Ridge . . . N. J. Allen and H. Woodland.

1968

Piz Cengalo, N. Ridge . . . R. C. Isherwood and M. Kosterlitz.

Sciara di Fuori, N.W. Ridge . . . R. C. Isherwood and M. Kosterlitz.

Piz Badile, N. Buttress (1st ascent) . . . R. C. Isherwood and M. Kosterlitz*.

Punta Baroni, E. Face; 'Via Senza Sole' (1st ascent) . . . I. Roper, N. A. J. Rogers and K. I. Meldrum.

Pizzo Zocca, W.S.W. Antecima, S.E. Ridge; 'Cresta della Rosa Rossa' (1st ascent) . . . I. Roper and K. I. Meldrum; N. A. J. and Mrs. Rogers.

Wetterstein

1968

Obereinthalturm, Gonda diedre . . . P. Nunn and C. Woodall.

Dolomites

1968

Crozzon di Brenta, N. Ridge . . . N. J. Allen and J. G. R. Harding.

Torre Venezia, via Tissi . . . C. H. Taylor, A. Wedgwood and J. Brailsford.

* This must be the best unintentional 1st ascent for some years.—Ed.

Cima della Madonna, Scarf Arête . . . C. H. Taylor, A. Wedgwood and J. Brailsford.

Campanile Pradidale, via Castiglione . . . C. T. Taylor, A. Wedgwood and J. Brown.

Torre Giallo, Via Solda . . . C. H. Taylor and A. Wedgwood.

IV. SPAIN

D. M. Clark, F. L. Jenkins and F. E. Smith visited the Sierra de Gredos in August 1967. From a camp at the stream below the Gredos Rifugio they climbed Almanzor (2599m.) from the col behind Cuchillar del Guetre. The next day they completed the traverse of the Circo de Gredos by following the ridge from Arroyo de las Pobas to Risco del Morezon, the Hermanitos, Alto de Casquerazo, Cuchillar de las Navajas, and reaching the Portillo Bermeja by which they had descended from Almanzor the previous day. They also visited the summit of La Mira (2341m.) from which they saw the ridge Los Galayos.

After this, they went to the Picos de Europa which they approached from the North by Puente Poncebos and explored the route into the massif via Bulnes, eventually reaching the Rifugio Delgado Obeda. This approach is not recommended when load-carrying. The party retreated, motored round to Potes and Espinama, and established a camp near the one remaining lake at Los Pozos, by taking a Land-Rover up the track beyond the Parador de Aliva. A quicker route was later discovered by the teleferico from the Parador Funte De. The Obeda Hut was reached in four hours over the Horcados Rojos, but bad weather and some difficulty in route-finding prevented an ascent of Naranjo in the limited time available. The party spent half a day climbing some indeterminate peaks and ridges to the West, and on the return to camp ascended the Torre de los Horcados Rojos. Subsequently, they traversed Pico San Carlos, and Torre de Hoyo Oscuro

(possibly making a new route) and completed the horseshoe by following the ridge running S. and S.E. above the Jou Oscuro to the Calladina de las Nieves.

V. KENYA

R. H. J. Chambers, M. S. Harris and P. Gerrard were on Mount Kenya during July, 1967. The following new routes were done on Point Peter, one of the satellite peaks.

1. E. Ridge.

This is the left-hand skyline as seen from the Kami Hut; the opposite one to 'Window Ridge', put up by Hamish Nicol and party. Start at the col below the ridge. About 450'; grade III with one pitch of IV. First ascent: R. H. J. C. and M. S. H. July, 1967.

2. N.E. Face

This follows a series of obvious groove lines slanting slightly leftwards across the yellow face, directly facing Kami hut. An abseil sling was found on it, before the crux; no signs after that. About 600'; grade IV.

First ascent (?): R. H. J. C., P. G. and M. S. H., July, 1967.

Martin Harris writes to say that Baillie's 'Southern Slabs' route (V) has now had three ascents, each of which appears to take a different line! Together with Dick Metcalfe he has done a second ascent of the N.E. Pillar route on Nelion (1966) (V and A1).

VI. GREENLAND

Jon Fleming has been on an army expedition to the Kristians Glacier in the Angmagssarack area. In spite of bad weather they climbed thirty-one new peaks, pioneered a new way in and confirmed a new route out.

EDITORIAL

With the calling away of John Longland to duties overseas, the Secretaryship once again became vacant. Harry Sales has stepped in to fill the breach and Claude Davies has taken over his former position as Hut-booking Secretary. Don Morrison is the new Custodian of the Downes hut. The former incumbent has retreated to Melbourne for a year's recuperation.

* * * *

The deaths of the following members have been reported to us this year, and obituary notices are published in the Journal: G. Barker, H. F. Gair, A. W. Osborne and H. L. Pryce. I have not yet been able to obtain obituary notices of the following members, and would very much welcome correspondence from anyone able to write on them: Dr. N. S. Finzi, M. S. Gotch and J. L. Andrews. It is worth recording here that Andrews, a member of the Club since 1914, was formerly the owner of the Count House, Bosigran.

* * * *

This year, for the first time, new route descriptions for England and Wales are not included in the Journal, but are available to members, at a favourable price, in the Bulletin, New Climbs. This innovation has been approved by the Committee on the dual grounds of increasing cost of producing the Journal, and the increasing volume of the material for this section (in the 1957 Journal, new route descriptions occupied 18 out of a total of 130 pages. By 1967 this had grown to 58 out of 160 pages!) Although, elsewhere in the Journal, Ken Wilson suggests that the recent spate of exploration may be ending, descriptions continue to flow in, in spite of the hiatus of F. & M., and the 1968 Bulletin bulged quite as impressively as its predecessor. It remains compulsory reading for a relatively small group of climbers, although their number has grown somewhat since last year, a circumstance due in part, no doubt, to the ferocious energy of our new Business Manager.

* * * *

In the Alps, 1968 was a bad season, possibly the worst since the

war. During July and August, the seaways between France and England were loud with the laments of British alpinists, returning empty-handed to learn of crags drier than for years, and water-rationing in Lakeland. Some were luckier or more persistent than others, and I have listed ascents that have come to my notice elsewhere*.

The Editor would welcome details of ascents, in the Alps or elsewhere, of whatever standard, made during the 1968 and 1969 seasons, for inclusion in the 1969 Journal; information by the middle of September 1969 please.

Further afield, Pettigrew was once again in Kulu, and lead a party on the first ascent of Papsura (21,165 feet). It is hoped to include an article on his explorations in this area in a later issue of the Journal. Boysen and Crew were in the attempt on Cerro Torre during the winter. They were defeated only 700 feet from the summit. Chris Jones has been climbing in Yosemite and Alaska. His present post in Hawaii will probably be less fruitful. Hugh Gair, who was killed in an accident on Cloggy this summer, was climbing in East Africa last year.

* * * *

With the publication of this issue of the Journal, I am handing over the Editorship to Alan Wedgwood. I would like to wish him as much enjoyment and amusement as I have had from my three years in harness. It remains for me to thank the many members who have assisted me, in particular David Baldock and, more recently, Brian Crofts as Business Managers. It is also a great pleasure to express thanks to my many contributors, for not to all has the idea to write come spontaneously, and much effort has been expended in response to my exhortations. I am grateful to the regulars who continue to write for our pleasure, and to the new or hitherto reticent members who have been persuaded to venture pen to paper. Lastly I must thank the Club for giving me the chance to enjoy myself with the Journal during the past three years.

* I must apologise for crediting Barker, in the last issue, with a better 1967 season than he actually achieved.

CORRESPONDENCE

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF ABSEILING

'Les Alpes', in an article by Dr. Louis-Alexis Gaillard, reports an accident on the Aiguille de Roc to a student while he was descending the overhanging part of the long abseil to the Brèche. He was using one of the traditional methods, in which the rope passes under the thigh or through a snap-link and then over one shoulder, the forward hand maintaining balance, while the backward hand provides the brake on the slack rope. The climber in question felt a pain above the collar bone, at the place where the rope passing over his left shoulder compressed the root of the neck. One or two seconds later, his left arm was completely paralysed. He had to be evacuated by a rescue party and the arm did not recover for several weeks.

In this case, the main nerves to the arm (brachial plexus) were severely compressed by the rope above the collar bone, at the point where they are fairly near the surface and relatively unprotected. Especially in a thin person, compression can easily produce paralysis which though not long-lasting can for a time involve the whole arm.

'Les Alpes' remarks that the possibility of this happening when abseiling in the traditional manner should be known to all climbers and especially to instructors. The region above the collar bone should be well protected, and one should think twice before embarking on a free abseil of any length without a safety rope.

FIRST ASCENT OF THE EAST PEAK OF ELBRUS

In the last issue of this Journal appeared a review of the Soviet collection 'Conquered Peaks', in which reference was made to an account of the first ascent of the East Peak of Elbrus. This review has caused some distress among Russian climbers, and in order to

put the record straight we print here a letter from Eugene Gippenreiter, originally published in the magazine Soviet Sport.

"A New Chapter in the History of Two-Peaked Elbrus."

Giving a lecture in London in 1956 on Soviet sport, E. A. Beletskii, a Distinguished Master of Sport, produced some facts, unknown abroad, which enabled him to claim that at 11 a.m. on June 10th, 1829 the Kabadinian Kilar Khashirov, a guide with the Russian expedition of General G. A. Emmanuel, became the first man in the world to reach the snowy summit of the eastern peak of Elbrus.

This news contested the priority of the well-known English researcher, the geographer and climber Sir Douglas Fairfield, who achieved an ascent of the same peak in 1868. To be frank, the statement aroused no enthusiasm in the audience, which consisted of members of the Alpine Club, the oldest in the world. Later, the lecture was published in the Alpine Journal, but the editor considered it necessary to furnish the text with a note that this claim was not generally accepted. 'The first to conquer the higher western peak in 1874 were the English F. Gardiner, F. Grove and H. Walker with the Alpine guide Knubel; the first to climb the eastern peak were D. Freshfield, A. Moore and K. Tucker accompanied by the Swiss guide F. Devoisseau and two Balkar hunters in 1868,' wrote the Journal.

Recently we received the current volume of the Journal of the Climbers' Club the second best known of British mountaineering organisations. In a criticism of the latest issue of the Soviet collection 'Conquered Peaks' the author states that in P. C. Rototaev's list of Caucasian mountain names, '. . . once again the old Soviet myth that the first ascent of the eastern peak of Elbrus was achieved in 1829 by a local hunter is trotted out . . .'

In recent years very cordial relations have been set up between climbers of our two countries, so that such a thrust sounds, to say the least, discordant. When they talk as friend to friend, people try to choose their expressions carefully, even when facts

are involved which give rise to doubts in their own minds. What are the genuine facts?

120 years after Emmanuel's expedition, following the route which members of the 1829 expedition took, Master of Sport K. D. Tolstov discovered on the slopes of the mountain at a height of 4800 metres, the situation of the bivouac from which, as the documents testify, the physicist E. H. Lenz, the Kazakh Lysenkov and others watched the ascent. At the bivouac, Tolstov found a cross carved on a slab of rock, and the date of the ascent, 1829. In the same place was found a two-pronged fork made of iron, with openings in the half-round part. This, apparently, was used as an ice-pick.

We have never contested and never doubted the great services of D. Freshfield in his research and discovery of the Caucasian peaks, including his first ascent of the 5000 metre Kazbeck, and other peaks. But the materials held in the archives of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR at Leningrad, the written account of General Emmanuel's expedition, its substantial traces and finally the recollections of the Kabardinian Akhiya (he accompanied as far as the saddle the future Academician Lenz, a member of the expedition; he also went up with D. Freshfield in 1868 onto the eastern peak of Elbrus and saw his companion put a bottle with a note in it in a pile of stones which had been erected by Kilar Khashirov himself)—all this enables us to claim that there is no doubt that K. Khashirov was the first man up the peak.

The man who appeared on the summit in the morning was clearly seen through a Dollond telescope (magnification from 8 to 24 times, whereas to see a man from that point, magnification by two is sufficient).

We would add that from the camp at the source of the river Malka, Elbrus is visible at a distance of 11 kilometres as the crow flies, and not 18 kilometres, as Freshfield and Merzbacher maintained.

The fact that a man appeared at the summit was confirmed

not only by General Emmanuel, academician A. Y. Kupfer, E. H. Lenz, but also by the Hungarian Z. de Besse, an expert on Turkey, who was a member of the expedition. Incidentally, the latter mentioned the fact of the ascent in his lectures and in a book which came out in Paris in 1838.

Mr. Rogers, editor of the Climbers' Club Journal, pointed out in a letter to the Mountaineering Federation of the USSR that the material he was publishing did not represent the official opinion of the editorial board, nor of the officers of the Club. He kindly offered space in his periodical for our answer.

Availing ourselves of this kind offer, we are addressing our answer through the newspaper, Soviet Sport."

E. GIPPENREITER.

(Master of Sport, Foreign Contacts Secretary of the USSR Mountaineering Federation).

We greatly value the good relations existing between mountaineers of our two countries and regret the offense unintentionally caused by the wording of this review.

John Neill has written to say that in light of the very interesting evidence summarised in this letter, we in the West may well have to revise our views on this matter. He would like to see a fuller article on the subject, including an account of the material described as being held in the archives of the Academy of Science of the USSR.

OBITUARY

GEOFFREY BARKER

1905 - 1967

(member from 1947)

For the Club to get Geoff Barker into perspective one has to go back to his beginnings as a mountaineer.

Born in Barrow-in-Furness he was walking on the fells by the age of 10 and rock climbing by the age of 16.

Soon he came under the wing of some of the great Lake District climbers of the 1920's, a number of whom originated in Barrow (e.g. George Basterfield, George Bower) and in due course he graduated to the companionship of A. T. Hargreaves, Maurice Linnell, Sid Cross and Bill Clegg, of his contemporaries; climbing with them practically all the 'hard routes done in the Lake District up to 1939 and taking part in several first ascents. He joined the Fell & Rock in 1934 at the time of a renaissance in that Club, and subsequently took an active part in the measuring and classifying of climbs for several of their second series Guide Books, as well as serving on Committee. He was a very good rock climber according to the standards of those days.

He had been to Wales to climb on a few occasions during 1925/1940 and after the War he came to live there, starting a business in Colwyn Bay, and before very long he was ticking off many Welsh climbs up to a fairly high standard. Then he joined this Club and the M.C.N.W. When he had got his business operating successfully and had acquired security and leisure, he began doing much useful work for the Club; at the time of his death he had been serving for four or five years both on the Main Committee and the Huts Sub-Committee.

In between his Lake District and North Wales periods he collected at least 100 "Munro's", some of them many times, in all

conditions of weather and mostly on his own. At length at the age of 50 he began to climb in the Alps and there again showed his great ability as a mountaineer.

He was a great lover of the mountains and put in most of his spare time amongst them over a period of nearly 50 years. Yet he was not just content to enjoy the mountains, but was one of those far seeing men who do everything they can to keep them preserved for enjoyment by future generations and to encourage and assist the young climber to get benefit from them. It therefore came as no surprise to those who knew him well, especially in his capacity as Secretary of the North Wales Committee of the British Mountaineering Council for a good many years, that he was the first mountaineer to be selected for an award of the Torch Trophy.

So much for the formal record, but I would pay this personal tribute to him: he was to me a Good Companion during many days, on many climbs, and hills, in all sorts of weather. He was always utterly competent, reliable and willing to fall in with other people's wishes and adjust his own ambitions to those of men of lesser capacity. I particularly remember being with him on an all night rescue operation in Scotland some three years ago when in difficult circumstances he showed the greatest unselfishness.

It gave me immense pleasure when in 1964 I was able to put Geoff together with one of my other very Good Companions, Tony Moulam, for a season in the Alps, when they greatly enjoyed each other's company, as I had felt sure they would, and did several very good expeditions despite poor weather.

Another pleasant recollection of Geoff is that being a contemporary of mine in our Lake District days he and his particular friends achieved the greatest ambition of those times, which was the Central Buttress of Scafell, soon after we had done it; and he alone of all that lot had the satisfaction of begetting a son who also led "C.B." — some 35 years later.

Geoff always kept himself in good trim—he was as lean as a greyhound—and it was a great tragedy that such a fit man should

fall victim to an illness which could not possibly be ascribed to self-indulgence. His death too soon has been a great loss to many people including many in this Club and our sympathies should go to his family and especially perhaps to our member Bill Barker, his son.

A. B. Hargreaves.

A. W. OSBORNE

Bill Osborne was one of my oldest climbing friends. I met him through my earlier acquaintance with his sister Mabel, who taught at my Preparatory school in Dorset, but we first climbed together after I had left Marlborough and was a cadet at Sandhurst, early in 1930. First impressions are often misleading, but Bill was one of those people who seemed always to be the same in any circumstances: solid, slow moving, utterly dependable, very plain spoken and with an impish sense of humour. This was how he seemed to me when I visited his mother's home at Merstham and discussed our plans for the Alps that summer; he was breaking in a new pair of climbing boots while gardening—Bill was a great gardener, with a particular love of roses. He was also a very good hockey player in the Dulwich Club.

We climbed that year in the Dauphine; it was my choice, for I had already had two seasons there. We hugely enjoyed ourselves on mountains and routes which read as very ordinary fare today: Les Ecrins, Les Bans, Pic Nord des Cavales, Pic du Vallon des Etages. But there was also a very pleasing little rock needle near Les Bans, on which we made certainly the second—and possibly a first ascent. The weather was poor and we had to give up the Ecrins at our first attempt. My diary reminds me that Bill was badly blistered by the boots which he had tried to break in, digging his rose beds. Later we were to climb in the Lakes and North Wales with a cheerful group of friends, but we never went to the Alps together again. Perhaps this mattered little, for Bill and I had struck up the kind of friendship which overflows into ordinary

daily living, and which stood the test of long spells of absence while I was serving overseas before and during the war.

Bill was Best Man at my wedding in 1936; he married his wife, Betty, the same year. He became God-father to my eldest daughter when she was born at Darjeeling two years later, and acquired a number of other God-children over the years. He would dearly have loved to have children of his own, but this was not to be. Bill was also a trustee of one of my family trust funds.

When I think now of Bill Osborne, the memories are of the kind which are cheerful. His powerful frame and rubicund countenance, his 'no-nonsense' approach to people and problems; above all, his utter lack of pomposity and his readiness to laugh at people in kindness and to have his own leg pulled—all these facets of the man added up to someone loveable and reassuring, whose qualities outlast the man.

John Hunt.

HUGH FRAZER GAIR

Hugh Gair, who was killed in July on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu was, at 39, an improving climber. He was elected to the Climbers' Club in 1965 and although he lived in Ipswich and was faced with a drive of nearly 300 miles to reach North Wales, he was a frequent weekend visitor. He did not take a serious interest in climbing until he was past 30 and had given up playing rugby and yet despite a lack of natural climbing ability and a weakness in the muscles of one leg, due to an attack of poliomyelitis when a boy, he was able by determination and hard work to continue raising his climbing standard when most of his contemporaries were dropping theirs.

I first met Hugh in 1957 during a meet of London M.C. in the Llanberis Pass. He was camping in the Ogwen Valley and each day walked over to join friends on the Meet, returning in the evening. We were very impressed. By Whitsun 1959, when we next met, he had married a member of the London M.C. and was taking a

more serious interest in climbing. From that time we climbed regularly together, frequently accompanied by his wife Diana. Initially it was usually myself who led, with Hugh continually encouraging me to try harder climbs, having coaxed me out of bed several hours too early. Our relative climbing positions changed over the years and latterly I found myself being dragged up harder and harder climbs as a protesting second.

Hugh managed to cram an incredible number of climbs into his days on the mountains and in the last two or three years he was at last able to tackle the harder climbs on his personal list—Cenotaph Corner, Cemetery Gates, Grasper and many others—all of which several years previously had seemed to him unattainable. He climbed in the Alps and Dolomites several times but was not usually at his best on longer and higher routes although in 1967 he visited East Africa with a small party and completed one of the major routes on Mount Kenya.

By profession he was a lecturer in chemistry at a technical college where he was as effective and popular teacher but his work was not allowed to intrude on his free time, all of which he used to the full. Apart from climbing with friends he spent several weeks a year as a voluntary instructor at Plas-y-Brenin. In the Winter he spent many of his weekends fishing for pike in the Fens and he applied to his fishing the same dedication and enthusiasm that he applied to his climbing. Those who have merely climbed in the Winter can know little of true discomfort until they have spent a day in a January blizzard in the Fens spinning for pike—and yet, with Hugh, one always returned for more.

Hugh was a man of great charm and good nature, his ferocious temper and unprintable language being reserved almost entirely for unco-operative inanimate objects. He was always ready to help others in the hills and made many friends, most of whom he infected with his own enthusiasm. In his closest friends he inspired a devotion which, although perhaps unfashionable, was nevertheless very real.

His death is a sad loss to the Club and to his many friends. To his wife and children the loss is incalculable.

R. Nieto.

HUGH LEWIS PRYCE

1907 - 1965

Hugh Pryce was brought up in North Wales and the love of the hills was born in him. After he left school at Clifton he went up to Balliol and there joined the Oxford University Mountaineering Club, and through the club he was introduced to rock-climbing and mountaineering and to nearly all the companions with whom he climbed in the future. His first visit to the Alps was in 1928 with the O.U.M.C. meet in the Graians, followed in 1929 with the club at huts above Maloja and in 1930 at the Punteglias hut.

In the years that followed, up to the war, he often climbed with G. F. Smith-Barry, A. M. Binnie, H. R. Herbert and myself, learning immensely by example from Smith-Barry, a mountaineer of great experience and artistry. He had good seasons in the Oberland in 1933, in the Dauphiné in 1936 and many other expeditions to the smaller mountains. He was elected to the Alpine Club in 1936. In 1947 he and I paid a brief visit to the Himalaya, making a trek in Kumaon in the mountains in the east of Trisul, where we climbed a small peak near to the southern rim of the Nanda Devi basin. He delighted in all the new experiences, in the company of two Sherpas and of the local porters, and in the camping life.

After that he returned again to the Alps many times in the summer, and also again took up ski-ing.

He was considerably below average height and was not naturally athletic, so never found rock or ice climbing as easy as some do; but he always laughed at his own difficulties, as indeed at many things, and only protested mildly if the steps were cut too far apart, or he was unable to reach across a backing-up pitch. His gnome-like features were always twinkling and his happiness and chuckles

were infectious. He was an ideal climbing companion, always ready to do more than his share of chores in the hut and never out of humour.

By profession he was an accountant, for many years with Messrs. Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co., and was laterly comptroller of the Colonial Development Corporation.

A. D. Malcolm.

This obituary notice is reprinted from the Alpine Journal by the kind permission of the Editor.

REVIEWS

European Alpine Flowers in Colour. By T. P. Barnby. Nelson, 1967. 70/-.

A professional botanist would no doubt find defects in this new volume of Alpine flora. As the author himself admits, the taxonomy is not treated as rigorously as in many other works of reference but the justification for this is that the book is essentially written for the enthusiastic amateur. Falling into this category myself (I recently joined the A.G.S. as an easy alternative to the A.C.G.) I feel that my comments may be of value to those to whom the book is principally directed. The book covers the flora of the central European Alps and is unique in its excellent illustrations. The five hundred and seventy-six colour photographs, which show the plants in their natural environment, are technically good and are so well reproduced that unequivocal identifications are possible. In a few cases, however, the background could have been selected to provide a greater contrast.

It would be presumptuous of me to criticise the content but I could not fail to notice the absence of *Dianthus Sylvestris* and *Saxifraga Squarrosa* both of which are characteristic in the central alps.

Because the book is large and lavish I would expect to find it of greater appeal to the social climber than the rock climber. Although there are more convenient and compact field guides to alpine flora none are easier to use as a reference work at home nor are more attractively presented. The book fills a gap which has been recognised by experienced and inexperienced botanists alike.

K. I. Meldrum.

The Mountain World, 1966-67 (Geo. Allen & Unwin) Price 50/-.

This is the ninth issue in this very valuable series. A brilliantly drawn and horrific literary sketch of the Eiger Direct by Dougal

Haston is followed by an impartial analysis of the techniques, rewards and dangers of such enterprises.

Three articles on expeditions to the Hindu Kush should send scores of itchy feet hurrying to the A.C. library and map-room of the R.G.S. Several other articles on the Himalaya follow, including an account of the 1965 Indian Everest expedition which succeeded in getting nine climbers, including one Sherpa, to the summit. An article on the 1966 German expedition to the Staunings Alps is accompanied by a useful historical survey of mountaineering in Greenland. In 1966 there were no less than eleven expeditions from seven countries to this area. The several articles on the Andes are accompanied by a very interesting note on the rock-climbing potentialities of the eastern seaboard of Brazil.

As we have come to expect, from this series, the volume is splendidly produced, with large numbers of excellent photographs; superb value.

N.R.

Mountaineering. By Alan Blackshaw (Kaye & Ward Ltd.)

Price 42/-.

Blackshaw's excellent textbook was reviewed in this Journal (C.C.J., 1966, XV, 117) when it appeared as a Penguin. It has now been reprinted between hard covers. This seems a more appropriate form for such a relatively bulky textbook, and the additional expense will certainly be justified for schools and libraries where frequent reference is the rule. Frequent reference to this book is of course recommended for the individual also, and the edition deserves to sell as well as its predecessor.

Little has altered in the text, but certain areas have been brought up to date, in particular matters affecting safety. The bibliography has also been updated, although I am not aware that the suppliers mentioned is a particularly good source of either our Journal or our Bulletin!

N.R.

Clogwyn du'Arddu. By H. I. Banner and P. Crew (C.C. 15/6).

The second edition of the Cloggy guide has 18 more route descriptions than the 1963 edition. It now contains descriptions of 65 routes of H.V.S. and above and 31 routes of V.S. and below. The diagrams are the same as in the earlier edition but there is an extra one of the Far East Buttress.

The book is printed by a different firm. It opens very easily and the cover is very flexible. This makes the booklet convenient to carry and use. When the plastic cover started to come away from the end papers, I wondered how long the book would last, but no doubt it can easily be glued back on. In addition pages 10 and 11 were blank. From the text it would seem that there should have been a geological diagram here. In several places the pages are not cut quite square with the print.

The 'Historical Notes' have been rewritten and slightly expanded. At the back Crew and Wilson (R.G.) have written an interesting article on their grading system in which, in brief, the technical grading of a climb is given numerically and permanently while the verbal, psychological grading is temporary. A climb which was exceptional severe and 5a in 1951 may well be hard very severe in 1970 while retaining the 5a grade. This will be because in 1951 the hardest routes were 5a while in 1970 they may well be 6b. This all seems to make sense and the writers' grade 60 of the routes pitch by pitch. This will give people something more to talk about in the Padarn Lake.

Pinnacle Flake remains at H.V.S. while The Shadow has gone up to X.S. and only one sling and the peg is allowed for aid on Shrike. On November, the 'precarious' work with slings has now become 'exciting'. There are few other changes.

Colin Taylor.

Scafell Group. By G. Oliver and L. J. Griffin. (Fell & Rock Climbing Club, 21/-).

The authors of this, the second volume of the Third series of rock-climbing guides published by the F.R.C.C., are to be con-

gratulated on producing a model of the guidewriter's art. To criticise such a masterpiece of amateur endeavour would be ungrateful, to say the least, for what more can one expect from a labour of love?

True to F.R.C.C. policy, every route and variation (with one or two exceptions) has been climbed and graded, a truly formidable task in view of Scafell's inclement weather. Also true to F.R.C.C. policy, there is little to provoke comment. The Hon. Editor makes his stand against pitons and Oliver adds a sardonic note on the doings on Esk Buttress in 1962. The descriptions are clear and concise, giving a precise indication of the start and a note on the quality of the climb, a practice which some Welsh and Scottish guide writers are slow in following. In the Historical section the authors are almost unbearably modest about their own achievements, which have been considerable. Is there not a case for an independent observer to record the doings of the modern generation?

The volume is bound, like its brothers, in plastic, this time a distinctive purple, which is (dare I say it?) appropriate for this king of crags. In my copy, however, it is insecurely attached and it seems that before many weeks elapse total separation will take place. Have the printers, squeezed dry in our economic plight, had to dilute the glue since the Langdale guide appeared?

These criticisms, however, are small and long ago it was said that one can't please all the people all the time. 'Scafell group' is one of the best guidebooks published to date. All I can hope is that the remaining six volumes in this series will be in the same class.

I. Roper.

Central Caucasus: Climbs in the Northern Bezengi Group and on the Bezengi Wall. By A. Naumov. (Moscow, Izdatel'stvo "Fizkul'tura i Sport", in Russian). Price 54 kopecks.

This is the first climbing guide to the Caucasus to have appeared since Afanasiev's pioneering effort in German in 1914, other than

Busk's skeleton MS. of which he put a copy in the A.C. library some years ago. Until now Soviet climbers have had to rely on the typewritten notes available in the various Caucasian climbing 'camps', and the descriptive articles published in the yearbook of the Mountaineering Federation of the U.S.S.R., which of course could not give complete coverage of all routes.

The region described in the present guide covers the Dykh-Tau/Koshtan-Tau Horseshoe, with its continuation ridges, and the Bezengi Wall (on which only the north face routes and the summit ridge traverses are covered), though in the latter area, while all the routes are listed, not all of them are described. The method used for each peak is to list the routes, then give detailed directions for each route, with first ascent information and a section on practical requirements for the route: recommended size of party, bivouacs, equipment needs, etc. It is noteworthy that in no case does this recommended size of party go below four men. Accompanying the descriptions are clear general diagrams of each peak, with routes marked, and inserts on a larger scale showing details of difficult or intricate sections. The grading system used is the standard Russian numerical one (up to Vb).

The main peaks of the Dykh-Tau/Koshtan-Tau Horseshoe are shown as extensively covered with routes, many of these not being known to the present writer, and a very large proportion of them having first ascents in the '60's (usually with a high grading). There does not seem to be a great deal of scope on these peaks for further major routes, though rather more on the lesser-known peaks to the north. Many of the previously nameless subsidiary peaks now have names. It seems unfortunate, in an area where the majority of peaks and other mountain features have existing native names, that, when inventing new names, Russian climbers have used their own language rather than the native ones.

The route descriptions are along the lines of those in the typewritten notes in the climbing 'camps', and they and the diagrams should be completely adequate for their purpose. British climbers lucky enough to get permission to visit the region, and armed with

this guidebook will find the tasks of deciding their climbing programme, of following the lines of existing routes, and of exploring new ones much easier than did their forerunners.

John Neill.

On My Home Ground. By Gwen Moffat. (Hodder and Stoughton Ltd). Price 35/-.

For me this is a more sympathetic book than the author's earlier, 'Space Beneath My Feet'. In her first book, Gwen Moffat told with great vitality of the growth of her enthusiasm for climbing, and of how the pursuit of this enthusiasm became one of the major motivating forces in her life. In this, her third book, we have a record of her marriage to Johnnie Lees: both highly independent, each leading lives devoted to climbing, they have nonetheless clearly arrived at a remarkably successful relationship.

Often long periods apart, always living in remote cottages or farmhouses, to which, together with their many feline occupants, Gwen Moffat becomes strongly attached, the strength of their need for each other is the main impression which emerges.

Those who enjoyed Space Beneath My Feet cannot fail to get pleasure from this book, which shows us another aspect of this dedicated bohemian. The cover picture may well enlarge the market still further.

N.R.

The Hard Years. By J. Brown. (Published by Gollancz).

I had grave doubts when I started to read this book that the real Mr. Brown may not bear comparison with the superman of climbing legend. The man who like Bonnatti was reputed to wait for the foulest weather before setting out on a new route and who in the beginning used the poorest gear on the hardest rock. I was not disappointed; the image has been sustained.

Brown who from the early fifties has dominated the English rock climbing scene has much to tell.

Starting with Manchester and gritstone and the gathering together of his band of friends he then follows with what so many others have written about: Cloggy and the 'step forward'. It was here, on reading Brown's personal account of the new routes that I gained most pleasure. Then the Alps, Expeditions, more Alps and expeditions and filming and back to Wales and perhaps some of the reasons why.

The style of the book I thought was not truly Brown and that the ghost writer had written into Brown, words and situations that were not his. Perhaps a biography rather than an autobiography would have been the way. Nevertheless this is an important addition to English climbing literature embodying as it does much that had been unwritten of the Climbing Machine.

B. A. FULLER.

The Journals

The Alpine Journal has some quite good articles on the Services Expeditions to Greenland, Alpamayo (Amatt), North Alaska (Westmacott), the Hindu Kush (with a fine panorama by Gruber), and on Akker Chioh (Schell). To climb the last mountain Schell, his wife and Goschl drove in an 8-year-old VW to the Hindu Kush, climbed their 7000 metre peak and returned to Germany, all in 7 weeks for £700. Basil Goodfellow has a note on uses of wide base stereoscopic photography in studying mountain features. Essentially the two photographs should be taken a distance apart about one hundredth that of the distance to the mountain. I found two foreign contributions particularly interesting. Vanis writes on the 9th traverse he and two companions made of the Bezingi Wall. This ridge is 17 km. long and they took 9 days, 4 of which were lost due to bad weather, to complete the whole trip in 18 days. There is a panorama photo in the November issue. Reiss writes about some of the little known faces of the Oberland which should interest the A.C.G. Several articles reflect changing attitudes and recent events in the A.C. Shipton considers modern climbing and concludes that some element of competition is inevitable, that risks

are best evaluated by those undertaking them and that what matters most are motives. The November issue begins with the recent A.C./A.C.G. merger and Busk writes relations between successive generations in climbing. Cleare's piece on making a living photographing climbers' antics is quite good.

The 1967 American Alpine Club Journal has 95 illustrations, 16 articles and 80 pages listing expeditions throughout the world. Articles range from the West Ridge of Mount Logan with 10,000 feet of fixed rope along an 18 mile route, and a sea-level first ascent of the 10,000 feet. Mount Seattle, to Chouinard and Frost's 7th ascent of the North Face Direct of Les Courtes. An ascent of Kichatna Spire involved aid climbing intermixed with rotten snow and hard ice climbing. The Vulgarians record a direct-direct on the South Face of Snowpatch in the Bugaboos. As something of an ultimate in small party versus big mountain epics, Patterson writes on his 14 day one-push ascent of the West Face of Yerupaya with the Czech Peterek to join, near the summit, their support party making the second ascent of the S.W. Ridge. In a balanced article on the Eiger Direct, Bonington gives a personal portrait of Harlin, putting into a perspective the criticisms of the methods used on the face. Lastly Chouinard and Frost give useful tips on using American pegs suggesting, in passing, that efficient aid climbing should be as satisfying as hard free climbing.

Since on page 80 of the 1968 S.M.C. Journal, the editor has quoted several favourable reviews of the last few issues, I need say no more than that this one begins as well as usual. Malcolm Slessor has an entertaining article on the 'Finger of God' at the end of which a case of whisky changes hands as consolation for a cut rope. In 'The Loosening Up' a nailed boot is eventually interred in an 'impassive pedal sarcophagus'. There is an extract from Robin Smith's article on the Fiescherwand originally printed in the E.U.M.C. Journal. This demonstrates exactly how to convey big route feelings in a few words without giving a move by move description. Robertson tells of his new route on the Torre Valgrande. There are several pages on Munro ascenders and then pages of new routes on crags I cannot pronounce.

The Rucksack Club Journal of 1967 has articles on the Afghan side of the Hindu Kush (involving motoring incidents of some magnitude en route), on hazards in Tanzanian caves, and on long winter walks under atrocious conditions.

In the L.A.C. Journal, 1967, there are articles on the Wyoming Rockies, Alps Maritime, the Bregaglia, Greenland and Mount Olympus. Best I thought the long article by Elizabeth Parry on the Peuterey Ridge in deteriorating conditions.

The Journal of the Lancashire Caving and Climbing Club makes pleasant reading with competent accounts of fairly moderate enterprises. The illustrations by Johnson are quite good and it would seem Polldubh is worth bearing in mind when the weather is bad on Nevis.

In the O.U.M.C. Journal, there are articles on N.E.B. on Nevis in winter (Miller), Boulder Ruckle (Bayman) and the Meije (Sullivan). Corfield writes on woman trouble in the club and Levick tells about how he came to be hanging 200 feet up the Main Wall at the Avon gorge from an old wedge. The reproduction process does not do much for the photographs. In the C.U.M.C. Journal the photos come over better. 1967-1968 seems to have been a good year enlivened by a few lobs. Ashburner and Pritchard write about ups and downs on a mountain called Papsura. The latter survived a 40 ft. fall down a crevasse, partial strangulation after an avalanche, and a near bivouac close to the top. I thought the short piece of Cardy good. Other articles cover a lot of ground from Carnmore (Isherwood), the Innominata (Ferguson), to Nelion (Metcalf). The Birmingham Stoats have produced their first glossy journal. There are four good Welsh photos and an interesting article on the abortive attempt to make the first modern ascent of a 500 ft. high Ethiopian prison mountain.

In Les Alps Vaucher describes the North Face Direct of the Dent Blanche which he and his wife put up in July 1966, Monnerat has some good pictures of the Brandler-Hasse on the Cime Grande and Gantenbein writes on the first winter ascent of the North Face Direct of Les Courtes. There are two articles on Greenland moun-

tains, the first by Greloz on his 1958 expedition to the Sukkertoppen range, and the second is the report of the 1966 Swiss expedition which climbed 28 new peaks near the Rasmussen Glacier. Kubiner writes about the forests of sandstone pinnacles on the German-Czech border. The grades go up to 7c and leaders use up to three ropes because of the high probability of taking falls of 60 ft. and more on the harder routes. Threads and jammed knots have been used for years. One local rule is that no peg in place may even be touched until it is at chest level for a fair ascent.

It must be very satisfactory to be able to drive off and climb 15 brand new peaks as described in the article on the Pantheon Range in the Canadian A.C. Journal. Climbing the North Face of Mount Temple seems to have been a notable achievement. Articles in the N.Z.A.C. Journal tend to be short, to the point, and well-illustrated. A lot is going on and despite last year's editorial, nuts, tapes and rurps seem to have reached the Antipodes. A section of several articles with a map amount to a guide to the Arrowsmith Range described as 'probably the most accessible peaks in New Zealand offering high class rock and ice climbing for the man on an average income'. There is an account by Edwards of the first winter ascent of Mount McKinley by its West Ridge. I thought the Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa the best laid out journal with the best reproduced photos, some in colour. There are pages and pages of new route description and comments. The journal could do with a few longer articles, it reads a little like a guidebook at present.

In the December issue of Appalachia there is a skiing guide to Mount Washington. In Ski, figures are given to show that between 1 in 10 and 1 in 18 of skiers on a fortnight's holiday suffer injuries generally to an Achilles tendon or a broken leg.

Colin Taylor.

The following Journals were gratefully received:

Alpine Club Journal, 1967

American Alpine Club Journal, 1967

A.B.M. S.A.C. Journal, 1967

Les Alps, 1967

La Cordee, Bulletin of the Monte Rosa Section of S.A.C., 1967

Monthly Bulletin of the S.A.C., 1967

O.A.V. Journal, 1967

Appalachia, 1967

Sierra Club Bulletin, 1967

Canadian Alpine Club Journal, 1967

New Zealand Alpine Club Journal, 1967

Journal of Mountain Club of South Africa, 1967

Mountain Club of Uganda Bulletin, 1967

Mountain Club of Kenya Bulletin, 1967

Thrutch, 1967

S.M.C. Journal, 1968

Ruebach Club Journal, 1967

Ladies Alpine Club Journal, 1968

O.U.M.C. Journal, 1967

C.U.M.C. Journal, 1968

Stoats, 1968

Journal of Lancashire Caving and Climbing Club

Apollo Mountaineering Club Journal, 1967

Ski

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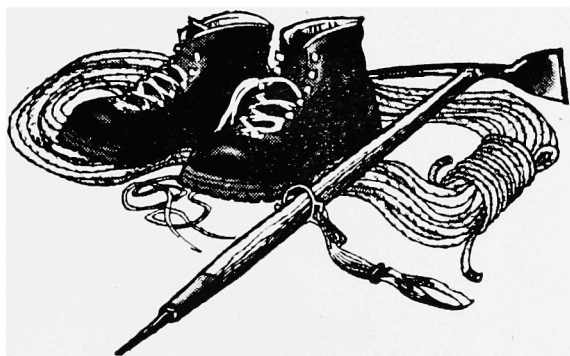
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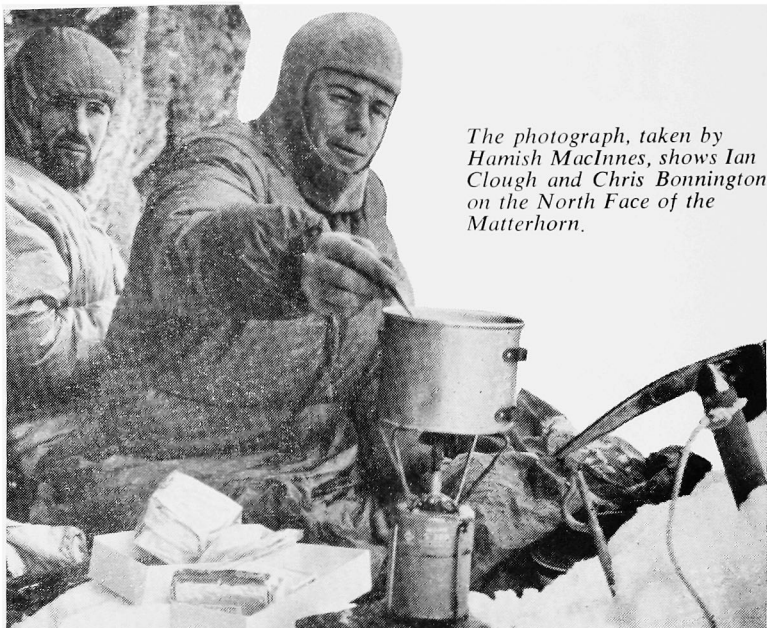
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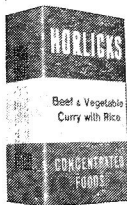
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RECENTLY ISSUED OR REVISED

Cwm Idwal (4th Edition, 1967) <i>by A. J. J. Moulam</i>	15/6
Llanberis North (Reprint, 1966) <i>by D. T. Roscoe</i>	15/6
Llanberis South (1966) <i>by P. Crew</i>	15/6
Snowdon South (2nd Edition, 1966) <i>by C. T. Jones and J. Neill</i>	15/6
Lliwedd (Reprint, 1966) <i>by C. W. F. Noyce and J. M. Edwards</i>	12/6
Cornwall vol. II, West and South Coasts of West Penwith (1966) <i>by V. N. Stevenson</i>	22/6
Tryfan & Glyder Fach (3rd Edition, 1966) <i>by A. J. J. Moulam</i>	15/6
Carneddau (2nd Edition, 1967) <i>by A. J. J. Moulam</i>	15/6
Clogwyn Du'r Arddu (2nd Edition, 1968) <i>by H. I. Banner and P. Crew</i>	15/6
New Climbs, 1966, 1967, 1968 <i>Edited by N. Rogers</i>	6/-, 7/6, 7/6

PRINTING

Cornwall vol. I, North Coast of West Penwith
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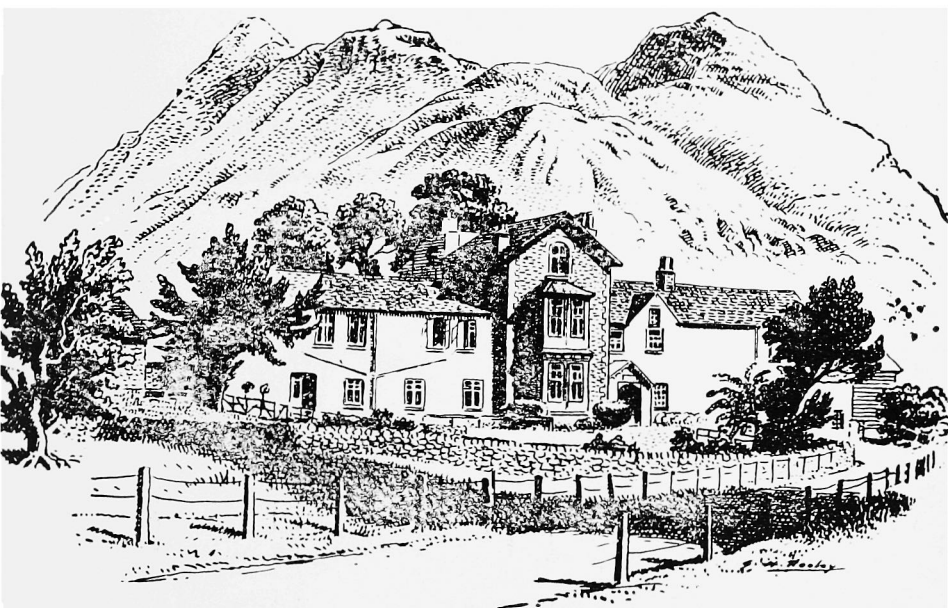
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