

THE  
CLIMBERS' CLUB  
JOURNAL

1969





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Edited by  
ALAN WEDGWOOD

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BLACK LADDERS; PARTIES APPROACHING AND IN EAST GULLY  
*Ken Wilson*





# THE INDO-BRITISH HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION 1969

MARTIN SINKER

In the spring of 1969, I left England to take part in an expedition to Chamba, a district lying to the west of Kulu in north-west India. The idea had been born some two years earlier and had gradually taken shape, partly through the good offices of Lord Hunt, as a combined expedition, with five British and five Indian members. Chamba is similar in character to Kulu, though little visited by climbers: it offered numerous unclimbed peaks at around 20,000 feet.

The British half of the expedition, an unofficial and fairly ill-knit group, had come across each other as instructors at Outward Bound schools, although only two were still working as instructors at the time of the expedition. For us in England, as indeed for our counterparts in India, there were a number of unknown factors in having a combined expedition, the most serious being that the two halves were not to meet until the expedition started. However, we did know that the Indian members had been selected by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation and we were well aware of the growing reputation of Indian mountaineers, a reputation which was boosted enormously by their successful Everest expedition in 1965.

Two years had seemed ample for our preparations but it was only towards the end of the final panic-stricken month that things began to fit into place. Money and supplies had been accumulated, my firm had agreed to release me and, more important, to take me back again three months later, a lorry had been bought but discarded, another found with only days to spare. At last we were ready and a foggy March morning saw four of us heading for Dover en route for India overland, our aged army lorry squat and heavy under more than a ton of food and equipment. David Challis, who

was the fifth member from England and joint leader of the whole expedition, was due to fly out to India to meet us and our other half a month later.

The overland journey was a major expense and the success of the whole expedition depended on it. The wintry road conditions of Europe and Turkey, together with a series of minor mechanical problems, combined to make the first half of the trip a tense affair. A complete breakdown was unthinkable, particularly so in the countries which impose penalties for failure to re-export a vehicle. The worst moment came as we ground to a halt in the desert between Teheran and Meshed, the engine spluttering and impotent. The level of the engine oil had astounded us by steadily rising over the previous hundred miles: the truth, when it dawned, was blindingly simple. Investigation confirmed our suspicion that the mechanical petrol pump had failed and was pumping into the sump instead of the carburettor; a day later, with the aid of a lilo patch, we were on our way again. As we made progress to the east the weather became warmer; we were able at times to travel lying on the roof of the truck and we began to enjoy ourselves. At last we reached the Khyber Pass and rolled down onto the green plain of the Indus. Soon the overland journey was behind us and receded to a memory of perplexed customs officers and missed opportunities for sightseeing.

The expedition assembled at a government rest-house in Chandigarh and it was not long before our doubts on the composition of the party were dispelled. We had plenty to talk about and got to know each other quickly. The Indian members had all made Himalayan ascents; the three army officers among them had also served on the Chinese border and had experience of more than mere mountaineering. For two days we sorted out food and equipment, the quantities now trebled, and made last-minute shopping forays around Chandigarh. The rickshaw drivers were on strike at the time and the Sector shopping centres are far from being as self-sufficient as Corbusier intended. We would return, dripping, with our hard-won purchases and collapse under the cold showers of the rest-house.



A two-hundred mile journey in a hired bus left us in the heart of Kulu at Manali. By the end of April we had established ourselves ten miles further on at Rahla, the roadhead at this time of year. From Rahla our mountain objectives were about sixty miles distant, a journey which would have to be made on foot and for which we required eighty porters. The first obstacle was the Rohtang Pass, 13,000 feet high and still under spring snow, indeed seven Ladakhis had died on it in a blizzard a week before our arrival. Potential porters were, understandably, reluctant to attempt the crossing and it was a week before the weather improved and enough porters could be found for an advance party to set out, the main party following three days later.

The crossing of the pass, although uneventful, was hard work in deep new snow; expedition members and porters alike were carrying loads of between fifty and eighty pounds, a shattering experience for those of us who had spent the previous month seated in the truck. Once over the pass we turned to the west and for the following five days walked down the valley of the River Chenab, covering a leisurely ten or twelve miles each day, the standard rate of progress for porters. The situation was startlingly remote, the villages primitive and the children shy but curious, obviously finding the sight of our cortège an unfamiliar and fascinating experience. As we lost height the valley became greener and ahead the mountains loomed large, at their foot is Udaipur, the village which was to be the base for our climbing.

With an active climbing strength of ten and four Sherpas, we were able to divide our forces. We hoped to make four first ascents, all of them between 20,000 and 22,000 feet in height. It was decided that two expedition members together with a Sherpa should make a reconnaissance of two of the peaks while the main party climbed the other two; then if time allowed the reconnoitred peaks would be attempted.

As one of the main party I was eager to start climbing but we were again frustrated by bad weather and it was a slow business establishing first a dump and then Base Camp on the glacier leading to our two peaks. At Base Camp we were tent-bound for several

days and lay drinking tea, reading or listening to propaganda broadcasts from China, the latter being unbelievably boring. Each evening we tuned in to our private weather forecast on All-India Radio. When at last the weather cleared, a reconnaissance was made up the glacier in deep snow for the first close-up view of our twin peaks at the head of it. Finding that they were guarded by a steep and fairly active ice-fall, we looked at possible routes up onto the flanking ridges on each side of the glacier but soon realised that the best approach to both Baihali Jot and Duphao Jot would be up the ice-fall.

At this stage the expedition divided again to make simultaneous attempts on the two peaks, both groups consisting of two Indian and two British members and a Sherpa. Moving camp up to the foot of the ice-fall, the Duphao Jot group, led by Nick Allen, found an intricate route up a rognon the north side of the ice-fall and on the following day they set up camp at the top of it at about 16,000 feet. Resting the next day after finding our own route up the south side of the ice-fall, those of us in the Baihali Jot group watched the five tiny figures work their way up across a hanging ice-field and so onto the summit ridge, when we lost sight of them until they reappeared at the same point late in the afternoon. They were still some way above their camp as darkness fell and we felt sure that they would have to spend the night out. In the faint hope that they might manage to get down in the weak moonlight, we listened every hour, as arranged, on our two-way radio set but were about to give up at nine p.m. when the silence was broken by Nick's voice. He had just reached the radio in his tent, followed shortly afterwards by the rest of his party. We heard with great excitement that they had reached the top of Duphao Jot, 20,011 feet and were all well, but shattered after their sixteen hour day.

The following day we set off early with food and two tents, taking an avalanche-prone route up the south side of the ice-fall and reaching the top of a final short ice pitch at eleven a.m. After a short descent, we crossed a hidden upper glacier and struggled our way up to the foot of a cwm on the far side in softening snow and an afternoon snow shower. Tent-spaces were stamped out in

the snow and tents pitched for our final camp at about 17,500 feet. In the evening the weather cleared enough for us to pick out a route across the cwm to a possible weak point in the bergschrund.

Awakened at four a.m. the following morning by our Sherpa, we were soon stumbling about in the cold starlight, strapping on crampons and gathering together clothing and equipment, our heads throbbing with altitude hangovers. Cramponing across the cwm on a firm crust was an unaccustomed delight but by the time we were above the bergschrund the snow was softening. The Indian leader, Major Bahuguna, led almost all the way up the 2,000 foot back wall of the cwm on steep and featureless snow. At last this gave way to ice and for 150 feet the front points on the British crampons paid off. A few feet more and the horizon suddenly exploded around us, our range of vision opening out from a few feet to a sea of Himalayan peaks. We were on top of Baihali Jot, 20,602 feet. To the north and a little below was Duphao Jot, while to the south a mile of corniced ridge swept round and up to a snow cone some 500 feet above us, unmarked on the map and unseen from below.

The summit, when it came, had somehow seemed unexpected and we sat for a while in a daze, munching chocolate and watching clouds gathering on the surrounding peaks. The descent, in soft and rotting snow, was harrowing. Tiredness and loss of concentration resulted in one of the party falling out of his steps and rolling 200 feet down the slope. He was superbly held by the Sherpa on an ice-axe belay, but the loss of his goggles subsequently caused temporary snow blindness.

Two days later the whole expedition was back in Udaipur and we enjoyed our first fresh meat for four weeks, at the expense of half a dozen local chickens. Letters were waiting for us, in fact my future wife had stretched the postal system to its limit. In addition to our success on Duphao Jot and Baihali Jot, the reconnaissance party had climbed an unnamed peak of 18,977 feet and had found feasible routes up our remaining two peaks. With ten days left we set off hot-foot to make simultaneous attempts on Menthosa, 21,140 feet, and Phabrang, 20,250 feet, only to be turned back less than

1,000 feet from the top of each. By this time the unaccustomed Indian diet was having its effect on some of the British stomachs and, with the weather bad again, the odds were against us.

The march out over the Chobia Pass, 16,400, and down to Bharmour passed in a dream and soon we were all in Delhi and ready to go our separate ways, mine being by air via Moscow to London. An hour out from Delhi the Boeing rose effortlessly over the Himalayas, putting our labours of the past three months firmly into perspective but not detracting from them.

# HINDU RAJ 1969

COLIN TAYLOR

Last summer, four of us drove to Pakistan to climb in the Hindu Raj. Dick Isherwood led the party and he will write the definitive article on the expedition for the AJ. This is an informal account of a four month holiday with a little time spent climbing. It was a splendid experience marred only by a problem in the shape of our very expensive, liaison officer. For those not well up in expedition lore, I should explain that expeditions visiting Pakistan have the choice of registering themselves as Official Expeditions or of taking a chance that they will not be turned back by the ubiquitous military. For a sensitive area, such as ours on the Kashmir border, there is no real choice to make. Although permission to climb will perhaps be forthcoming in six months or so you probably won't hear definitely one way or the other until you reach Pakistan. You are also allotted a Liaison Officer from one of the Pakistan Armed Services for whom equipment and food has to be provided. This man may make or mar your trip as he wishes. Some are an asset to their expedition — some are not.

Dick Isherwood planned to climb in the Hindu Raj with Rob Collister in the summer of 1969. Looking for a third man, Dick wrote simultaneously to Chris Wood and myself in Manchester, and then we both said we would go. I changed my job, Chris changed his job, got married and bought a house, and Dick found himself a job in Bangkok. Rob being still at Cambridge wrote begging letters. On 12th of June we left Cambridge in a brand new Ford Transit. I, for one, had spent much of the previous month being injected against T.B., Polio, Cholera, Typhoid, Smallpox, Yellow Fever, Jaundice, and probably a few other appalling diseases. We had, as yet, no permission to climb in our largely untouched range up in the north of Chitral. The only definite infor-

mation we possessed was the shape of the outline of our liaison officer's feet. He would be one Major Manowar Khan of the Pakistan Army. Our provisions included 24 bottles of whisky, 3 bottles of sherry, and about 200 cans of assorted beers. The third item was a last minute addition after Dick decided the van springs were not quite in contact with the shock absorbers.

The journey out was fairly uneventful and quite slow: down the Dalmatian coast, across to Istanbul and then through Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan to the Kyber Pass and so to Rawalpindi in Pakistan; about six thousand miles in all. By Istanbul I had developed a dreadful allergy to sun which, in those parts of the world, was unfortunate. This turned out to be Jaundice virus clashing with Cholera virus, and the trouble eventually cleared up. Just before Kabul, Dick mowed down a very tasty antelope which he and Rob cut up with the breadknife in a medieval scene (to quote our cook book). In Kabul Chris drove round in circles while Dick, the self-appointed whisky officer, haggled over the price for twenty of our bottles with two shady Indians concealed in the back of the van. Hashish may be legal and only 15/- a kilo, but the Afghan Authorities frown on strong alcohol. Finally, coming down the Kyber in the twilight, Dick uprooted an army chain-barrier which forcibly reminded us that Pakistan enjoys martial rule.

In Rawalpindi there was a letter giving us permission to climb on Thui II, a peak of 21,401 ft. in the Hindu Raj. We learnt later on Thui II a peak of 21,401 ft. in the Hindu Raj. We learnt later that this came as the result of a night's drinking by a friend of an American friend of ours with someone in authority. For the next week we were well looked after by Col. Buster Goodwin. Day by day the temperature and humidity rose, until the former was over 100°F and I swore never to complain about a little heatwave in Manchester again. Why were we not on our way into the Hindu Raj? Our liaison officer was creating problems. Major Manowar Khan is not very tall, running to fat a little, with a strong 5 o'clock shadow. He was, I think, hurt to be sent with so small and poor an expedition. He showed signs of wishing to lead the expedition. It was he who arranged schedules, ran press interviews, and issued







instructions to all. At one point he even produced a sport-plan for our ascent of the peak. I began to see there was more in this Himalayan business than just climbing virgin summits. As Manowar saw it: "Time spent in Rawalpindi is never wasted." He was in no hurry to leave. We did not share this view and were. Eventually Manowar gave the word to leave after I had driven 100 miles down to Peshawar to get a chit from Pakistan Airways saying they could not fly in our gear. The van we left outside the police post at Dir; the road over the Loweri Pass into Chitral was too steep and twisting for anything but a jeep and 76 miles took ten hours. Chris and most of the gear followed with Tim Nulty, the American friend who had got us the permission, and his brother. They had hoped to come part of the way up Chitral with us but it was now too late. In Chitral Manowar and his batman, who turned up as well, disappeared in to the Mess of the Chitral Scouts; at our expense as it turned out. Two days later a jeep arrived to take us twenty miles up the Chitral river to Maroi, leaving us ninety miles to walk up beside the river to Lasht, a small settlement north of the Shetor Glacier from which we hoped to climb Thui II. The plan was for Dick and Rob to go on ahead while Chris, Manowar, the batman, and I followed with ten donkeys in ten mile stages. They would go up to the Thui An (pass) to see whether we should try our peak from the south instead and would meet us at Wassam twenty miles downstream from Lasht. They would also avoid seeing Manowar for eight days. To keep the number of donkeys down to ten, Chris and I added several items to bring the weight of our packframes up to about 40 pounds — this effectively removed the pleasure from the walk to which I had really been looking forward. On the first day as the sun rose higher in the sky, we nearly expired in the dust, and none of Manowar's advice prevented our feet developing really gruesome blisters. The schedule allowed no rest. When after seven more days, we hobbled into Wassam, I was unable to walk at all and rode a rather aged horse. Dick had turned up on the road the day before also with blistered feet. Here Rob met us, down from the Thui An, fit and bronzed, with the news that there was nothing much to see of our peak from there. The schedule was scrapped and we decided to wait a day to recover in a rather fly-blown orchard full of goat-droppings. That evening Manowar announced

that from now on he would need a daily food allowance to supplement the good things in our twenty-four food boxes in spite of his earlier brave declaration that: "Major Manowar will eat anything." Dick remarked sourly to one of us that he wished something would eat Manowar. Manowar also showed displeasure at Rob's excursion up to the Thui An which seemed now to be a breach of security despite earlier publication of the plan in the Pakistan Times. There followed a lengthy discussion between Manowar and Dick which seemed to be leading to an agreement. Then Manowar dropped his bombshell. The expedition would have to go back. He would give no reasons, and looking back, I wonder whether he had thought of any reasons at that stage. Dick and he sent off long telegrams via long distance runners and we sat in deep depression for the next seven days while our feet festered. On the eighth day Manowar announced that we would go on to Lasht to wait for the answers to the telegrams. So, two months after leaving Manchester, I arrived, still on a horse, at the bare settlement we had decided to call base. Only one man in the party was fit to climb our peak, now only 11,000 ft. above us. We had, in theory, no longer permission to climb. All we knew of the peak was a comment in the 1968 AJ by Gerald Gruber that: "The ascent of Thui II will require a strong team and a massive outlay of equipment the most beautiful and isolated summit in the Hindu Kush or the Hindu Raj."

Rather surprisingly, Manowar expected us to climb. A few lines will be enough to describe roughly the country about our peak. Lasht is some five miles south of the Pakistan-Afghan border which runs parallel to the Wakhan or Oxus river. The Shetor glacier runs north-west for about eight miles from a gentle col on the Kashmir border, down via a ferocious icefall, to run out into a couple of miles of moraine above Lasht. From the eastern bank of this glacier rise three peaks of over 20,000 feet. At the head of the glacier, to the west, stands Thui II, 21,401 feet high. There are six ridges, of which three, the NW, NE, and SW are very long, they are all separated by steep ice faces to the north and rock faces to the south. The ridges are narrow and generally heavily corniced, they merge into a slender wedge with two summits at about 19,500 ft. The summit ridge is about 5,500 ft. above the glacier. All

in all Gruber's comments seemed apt. From Lasht our view was blocked by the 2,500 ft. icefall but it was possible to obtain a glimpse of the summit of Thui II by walking a few miles up the main valley. No one, so far as Dick had been able to discover, had even been on to the glacier. We had a copy of the 1928, four miles to the inch map, which showed the main characteristics of the area, but the details we would have to find out for ourselves.

Rob was burning for action. On the first day at Lasht, he walked up to the icefall and found a precipitous goat track running up the steep moraine west of the glacier. We were fortunate that the moraine would lead right up to the level glacier, for the more I saw of that icefall, the less I liked what I saw. The immediate problem was to find someone to go up with Rob. As Dick put it: "Someone on this expedition has got to suffer." At the time this sounded as much a command as a statement, although Dick now denies the former. As I had cunningly ridden expensive horses for the last two stages, I was in better condition than he or Chris, so on 1st August Rob led nine porters up the hill while I tagged along far in the rear in a pair of plimsolls with the backs flattened down. We stopped halfway up the icefall at a tiny grass platform, just big enough for one tent, by a trickle of water. Next day Rob was suffering from a touch of the sun so I hobbled up another 2,500 ft. onto the glacier to look around for a site for a proper base camp. If I were to fall out of my plimsolls down one of the hidden crevasses, they would probably become yet another example of unsuitable footwear in the hills. Within the next few days Rob and I made two sixty pound carries and I got one boot on. Then Dick and Chris appeared and started their share of the carry by cleverly getting porters to bring loads up to only 1,500 ft. below the level glacier. On 8th August I got the other boot on, so Rob and I set off late in the morning to climb the 17,500 ft. peak behind the tent to have a closer look at Thui II. What we saw of the NW and NE ridges appalled us. Either would be a worthy objective for a really competitive expedition. However, slightly further north, there was a worthy looking 19,500 ft. peak with a tempting north-east snow ridge. We had grossly underestimated our training peak, for the East ridge we had climbed was about AD and the North ridge which we chose to

descend was no easier. Naturally we carried neither torches or duvets. Darkness found us front-pointing down a steep snow-ice gully with six or seven pitches to go. I only had dark glasses with me but Bob rose magnificently to the occasion and found the tent at 9-30 p.m. Since getting off earlier did not seem possible, we would carry torches in future. Our next excursion, after a day of rest, was right up the Shetor glacier to the 17,500 ft. col at the head. From here we could see not only the South-east ridge of Thui II but also Thui I and Thui Zom. The South-east ridge was very long with several minor summits, the upper part looked reasonable if only we could reach a col at about 19,000 ft. below the final ridge. This ridge looked fairly gentle and not too severely corniced above a thousand-foot step of rock. To reach this col looked, from where we were, very difficult and stoneswept. After photographing every mountain in sight we returned to the tents feeling we were unlikely to get very far up the peak.

Dick and Chris had now finished their stint of load-carrying so, being full of commendable enthusiasm to climb our main peak, they resolved to go up to the col at the head of the Shetor Glacier for a couple of bivouacs to have a close look around. Rob and I were now greatly taken with the desire to climb our 19,500 ft. peak, ostensibly to look closely at the North-west Ridge of Thui II. We set up a camp at 17,500 ft. below the North-east Ridge and climbed it the next day, on the 14th August. As our view of the peak had been a greatly foreshortened one, the ridge turned out to be quite straightforward. The North-west Ridge of Thui II still looked a very considerable undertaking. Since my measurements showed our peak to be between 19,200 ft. and 19,700 ft. high we decided to name it Pachan Zom — the hidden hill — in the hopes that it would eventually prove to be just over the 'Munro' limit of 6,000 metres.

Back down at base-camp the weather, which had hitherto been uniformly good, became stormy, and it was raining quite heavily when the others returned with great news. They had found an easy way up to the col on the South-east Ridge. From the top of one of the lower summits on the ridge which they had climbed from the

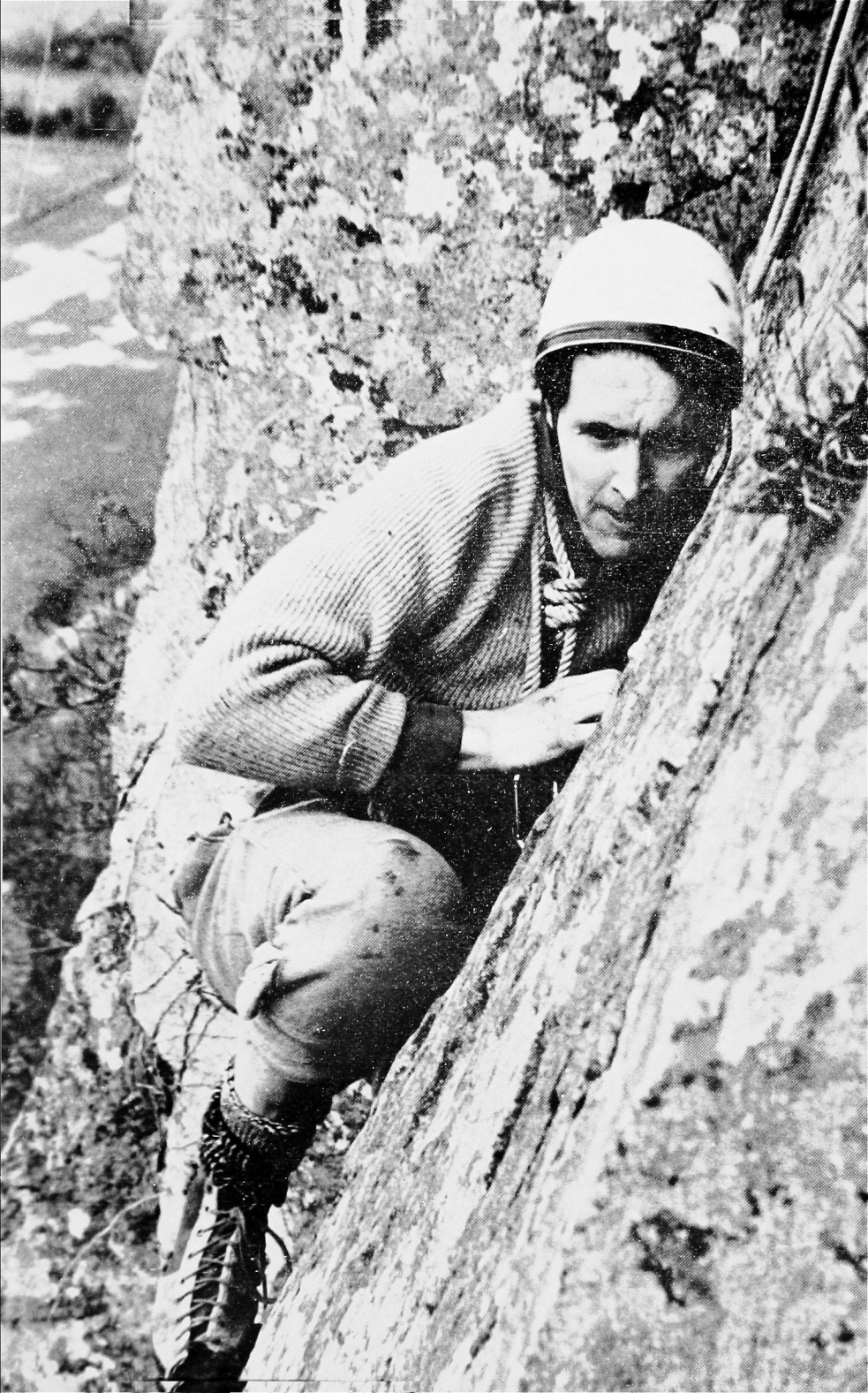
south, they had been able to see that, at the back of the cwm below the col, there was a concealed ice-fall. This in itself did not entirely solve the problem as the ice-fall was very steep indeed in its lower part. Being ingenious men, they climbed slopes to the south of the concealed icefall and then traversed into it above its steep lower section for 300 ft. in complete safety along the lower lip of an enormous bergschrund. The icefall then led to a very convenient sheltered snowbowl about five hundred feet below the col. Although the weather remained stormy, as it was to do for the rest of our time on the mountain, on 17th August we all carried sixty pound packs with food for six days up the Shetor Glacier to the col on the South-East ridge of Thui at about 18,700 ft., via an intermediate camp. The ridge now above was rock up to about 20,000 ft. where Dick and Chris had named two great pinnacles the 'Rabbits Ears'. For two days we lay in our tents as snow fell and plastered the ridge. The third day was fine so we all moved up to a bivouac at the 'Ears' hoping to attempt the summit next day. Much of the climbing was in fine position and, to the east I could see as far as Rakaposhi. One rock band which I had been thinking a lot about during the two bad days did turn out to be vertical but gave 200 ft. of superb Grade III climbing on granite flakes. Properly photographed, this was the sort of climbing to make big mountain reputations — no one would believe it less than V+. After another five or six pitches, Dick and I reached the 'Ears'. Meanwhile, an enormous storm was coming in from the south-west. We did another three pitches, just enough to see a clear way onto the broader and fairly reasonable looking upper part of the ridge and then descended to a convenient natural icehole sixteen feet deep right on the crest of the ridge close to on of the Ears. Inside we passed the night in great comfort brewing up icicles while Rob and Chris chose to sit outside in the steadily falling snow below the Ear.

The one fine day we needed we were not to be given. Next day was cold and grey; great clouds were rolling in heavy with snow, dimly and occasionally visible through the whiteout. Snow continued to fall, but we were lucky that the wind, although cold, was not very strong. Dick and I went up for one pitch before agreeing

that to continue further would be idiotic. The retreat through six inches and more of new snow was not so bad as I feared it would be. Six long abseils took us down the steep rock and on to an avalanchy snow-slope with a good run-out five hundred feet lower. I did not feel cold at any time, but as Dick and I reached the tents, I suddenly noticed I had lost any sensation in my toes. As feeling did not return in the big toes for several hours, I suppose I must have nearly got them frost-bitten without appreciating there was any chance of this happening. As Dick and I re-erected the tents which had collapsed under the weight of the snow, Chris made a direct and involuntary descent of the large bergschrund above the snow-bowl. By the time he and Rob had sorted themselves out, I was in my sleeping bag with a brew on. The following day we again continued to retreat through whiteout and falling snow back along the bergschrund lip, which had its moments of drama, down onto the Shetor glacier. Here the new snow concealed many of the crevasses and the weaker snow bridges. The visibility was often down to twenty feet and it was getting dark, Dick and I, in front in turns, were lucky not to do more than put a foot through half a dozen crevasses. Once I put my leg right through and found I could touch nothing in any direction.

At base-camp, there was a peremptory message from Manowar ordering us to return to Lasht with all our equipment as our permission to climb had now been definitely cancelled. We had, I suppose, been lucky to get 20 days at base-camp, we had climbed five new peaks in all, of which one was quite worthy, and we had come close to climbing our main peak. Failure to complete the climb of so fine a mountain rankled deeply, the immediate cause was the weather, but with less time wasted in the valley there would have been time for at least one more attempt and probably enough to have stocked a camp at the Rabbits Ears.

The rest of the saga is quickly told but took many days to unfold. In Lasht was the Colonel of the Chitral Scouts, the only officer in the valley outranking Manowar. He had just galloped 150 miles up the valley with orders to hold an enquiry into our disagreement. Unfortunately he was able to come to no useful









conclusions so his journey was probably fruitless. The walk-out was notable for the enormous quantities of food stacked away by the expedition accompanied by the various inexplicable internal disorders, and the absence of Manowar. He had ridden off on a small pony followed by a small boy carrying his sack to the outside of which were strapped a brand new axe and a pair of gleaming crampons, apparently on a secret mission — "Sometimes I shall be in front of you, and sometimes behind you." I think he wished to impress the locals in the villages we had not yet visited. At any rate, we had a message from one local official to say our leader had said we would sell him a tent cheaply. This made Dick apoplectic. Back in Rawalpindi the argument began, it all turned on whether Manowar could make us pay him £2 per day in addition to feeding him out of our food-boxes — this in a land where Chris had paid four shillings for three chickens. He accused us of everything from spying in Kashmir (Rob's trip up to the Thui An), to illegally importing equipment into Pakistan (to wit asking him to pay for the packframe he took to carry away his purchases from Chitral). The situation was out of Kafka. We offered to pay anything to anybody with no effect, as no one could produce a bill even after seven days. After fifteen days a banker friend got Dick in to see the Secretary for Defence who settled the whole matter in three hours. We would have to pay Manowar £140 but would not have to pay his Life Insurance premiums for the year. Leaders of future impecunious expeditions may well consider the advantages of being an Official Expedition.

The return to England was swift, ten days to cover 5,500 miles not counting two days spent in a cholera quarantine camp on the Persian-Afghan border. In 14,000 miles we had no punctures. The alternator seized up near Kandahar but Chris had a new dynamo made in the bazaar from bits of old ones, and there was no other mechanical troubles. This was as well for none of us is much of a mechanic.

LEG SLIP: SUCCESS

*I. Roper*

# EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOCHEMICALS

JIM PERRIN

“Walking along the track towards Gogarth, white stones sepulchre-like in the brown peat above a glinting sea, feeling choked in general with the way life is going, just want to climb and for a few moments forget:

“Be wetted by the sea, circled by the circus sands,  
With all memory and fate driven deep beneath the waves  
Let me forget about today until tomorrow.”

— Who were you with?

“Dr. Timothy Michael O’Leary Yates, the acid-tongued rock specialist, a reputable man, large and not driven to large gestures, delicate in movement and sensibility; in short a companion well-suited to share the long-drawn-out aesthetic experience of climbing.”

— What to do?

“Fail Safe, for the attraction of its name and the steepness of its structure.”

— How did you do it?

“Slowly and badly: in short I found it hard. A few feet above the ground I ground to a halt unsympathetically, and from then on progress was slow, breath fast, and both laboured.”

— Why?

“I think I found fifty ways of justifying my poor performance at the time, but it seems too much of an effort to remember them all in retrospect. Basically because I had hardly climbed for a year. Came July, I felt like a trip by the seaside. Before the trip goes the grip, then the adrenalin decomposes and you’re turned on, so here I am trying to answer why but the words are always just beyond my reach.”

— Proctu Vu?

“Yes, I think so. I think this is why no-one has ever produced a satisfactory explanation of why people climb. Reasons, suggestions, partial explanations enjoy a certain currency in your mind for a time, but beneath it all the sense that the explanation is not whole, only sufficient and for a limited time, rapidly fading, soon forgotten, or clung to as an empty dogma. Only the experience is valid.”

— To what End?

“To its own end, which is both limited and immediate. On Fail Safe my first aim was to get into the scoop where I thought the angle eased and holds sprouted like concrete mushrooms or peyotl cacti in every cranny; so I launched off on tired arms to a quivering spike and then started to wonder. (Strange that once a sling was used there and the author of the route and new guide now leaves no record of lamentation of its passing). But past it and into the scoop, where the rock leaned out and the overhangs leered and the holds closed up in the most frightening fashion.

And there weren't any runners

And there weren't any holds

Except little ones, and big rounded ones, and what use are they in a country strong with the tradition of Bovine and Shrike. Eventually and at the top of that interminable scoop I found an overhang to crawl beneath so that no longer did a vast smooth white expanse rear up above me, and I was once more safe and secure, my hands round a thread and a roof over my head. I rested there and gazed down at big Mike beneath, thought with loathing and disgust how he would just run up the bloody thing. But eventually you have to go out into this big white world again, although it's grey in these parts.

So I left the safety of my roof and runner, and groped upwards for a hold; when I got to it it felt very poor and I wanted to go back, but I might have fallen off had I tried, so I moved on feeling frightened. And then it came, the coolness and calm precision; feet went quickly where they were supposed to go, hands felt and body arched and the power flowed through them, and you up the rock to

a stance: relief and a little trembling. In the aftermood of relaxation the sound of Mike's rope at G-sharp was balm to my sensitive ears; a jealous appreciation. Equality made possible a fine camaraderie.

"Deteriorated Adrenalin . . . can produce an approximate schizophrenia."

(William Burroughs — The Naked Lunch).

"Cliff and I were going to do Wendigo. I had already done Red Wall, and not liking the descent down the ridge on the other side of the zawn we decided to abseil down Red Wall itself. We had 600 ft. of 9 mm. perlon, one 300 ft. for climbing on, one for abseiling. Cliff went first, using a descendeur and gloves, and I followed, using the sling and karabiner method: the abseil is free and 250 ft. long. Looking down it frightened me, and immediately I started my hands, wrist and shoulder began to get hot. I had a great feeling of panic and scintillating fear, tried to stop myself, but on that thickness of rope with the method I was using this proved impossible. The mental aspect of the next few minutes is fascinating. From fear, panic, and desperate struggling with the rope to complete detachment, floating down, admiring the beauty and complexity of the cliff's structure, idly wondering as to the feasibility of a route between Red Wall and Wendigo.

At another level, almost as if to another person, the nylon of my shirt was burning through, the skin of my hands blistering, tearing and rolling off, a smell of burnt flesh. I can do nothing about it and am calmly outside it. At the bottom I slung off the rope on to the ledge beside Cliff and he says "Come on, man, we'll get you to the clinic," so we climb off up Red Wall Escape route and I can see my collar bone and feel sick, but there's no point and too much shame in sitting down and crying about it. On the way up I try not to use my hands too much so the wounds don't get dirty, and they hurt and drip if I unclench them."

— Is there some psycho-chemical basis to the attitudes prevalent amongst climbers?

"Yes, but don't take that as a complete answer. Discontent is a striking characteristic of good rock-climbers, which poses an interesting philosophical problem."

— How?

“At its highest levels rock-climbing demands a great deal of effort for virtually no reward. For someone to turn to this from discontent seems an action done almost in despite: experience as essence.”

— Elaborate.

“At a tangent, there is a story, possibly apocryphal, that the last words of Jim Madsen as he slid from the end of his abseil rope near the top of El capitan were:-

“Ah, what the fuck.”

— this in the face of his certain death on the scree three thousand feet below. Immediately the character of Camus's Meursault springs to mind, accepting and returning the universal indifference when faced with his death within it.

The self-inflicted death of Gary Hemming reflects the absurd from another angle; perhaps that he could no longer accept even the pure pointlessness and futility of this activity (climbing) and so opted completely out of existence, instead of opting out of society to the greater or lesser extent which we do in climbing.”

— Provide an example.

“Dropout and I set off to do Great Buttress on Cynr Las, with minds agreeably overwhelmed by anticipation and not a little trepidation. Even the walk up was pleasant, gives you a distance and aloofness from the Passbound hordes. Getting the gear on and the scramble up to its foot drag interminably, and the first pitch is all frustration and awkward grass. And then you have him tied to a peg belay; you are free and the rock good, your body loose-limbed and strong upon it, the holds big and the arête steep, stretching your limbs in orderly strength: into the disorderly squirm of a chimney and up to an airy stance on its top; and tied on there to a great block I'm secure and happy, but for the malaise of the next pitch, above me and at the back of my mind. He comes up and ties on, lights a fag. I untie and relieve myself down the chimney but a strong updraught blows it back in his face, puts out his fag. For a few moments we're not friends. Hard words on a hard route, but I

pull a block off: it rattles down the chimney and interest in its descent relieves the situation. Traverse out, up and round to a ledge beyond the arête, concentration is exquisite and your mind devoted to it. The moves are hard, holds small, a fear and need to move your body up and out to them. Once at the ledge you relax and the wind is sweet. Arrange protection and up into a groove. Standing at its base it leans out above you, but the first moves are easy and confidently you continue to be committed and crossed up, frightened at the top of a bottomless groove. But it's not hard when you think about it, just awkward, your balance teeters but the holds are big. Stance is uncomfortable and the crack above impending, the nominal crux. Green slime and dripping water add to your discomfiture, an enormous wedge in the crack eases it. Martin is a long time joining me and I'm uncomfortable in body and mind, long to be free to get on with the next pitch. At last I can; up into the niche, awkward, tense and cramped, and I try to get the wedge; it feels exhausting but as soon as I relax I can hang there comfortably. Clip into a wedge, sit in a sling, and out from this bridging wide and your arms and hands embraced by the crack, firm and comforting and the holds above big, and the strength returned. I bring him up and think it all over, walk across to the cracked wall. And I can't see how to do it: this shouldn't be hard. The tension and anger return and I get up in the surge of it and on up big holds, hanging out, a delight in physical movement; round the corner I let my feet swing free over four hundred feet of air, joyful gesture brings me into the Grooves which seem so easy after this. Up on big holds with a strenuous ease and up to the top. I belay and up comes Martin. Pleased with ourselves. He scrambles off up to the top and I join him.

And the wind is cold now and we've done the route and arrived at the point: and now we have to go down. Up here the sky and the rock are grey and the grass windblown and darkening and nothing left of the day. The experience only has been valid and to ask why we climb is no more and as much as to say simply why?

# PYRENEAN PILGRIMAGE

HAMISH NICOL

I was on packaged tour to the shrine of Lourdes, and on the flight my companions were nearly all priests and nuns. This one on my left looked me up and down and observed: "Now you would do for a *retired* priest." I took that one between the eyes. It floored me completely. After a compulsory count of eight, I gave him the smile glassy and retreated behind my book. Privately, this encounter notched up in my mind one more reason for not climbing past a sensible retirement age of forty, and how had my careful disguise, green corduroy jacket and blue jeans, not put him off?

Round one to the clergy, I was saying to myself, as the plane began its slow dive to the low green hills round Tarbes airport. When we got to the Hotel in Lourdes I was met by Robin Prager and Jim George and whisked up to the mountains.

It had all been arranged. They had driven their cars and families out from England one week before, and had set up a camp site at Pont D'Espagne in the Val de Marcadieu which was to be our base for the week. It was an ideal place for a camp site. The drive up the valley above Cauteret was beautiful enough, all steep hillsides, fir trees and linked waterfalls. Then you come to the hotel at Pont D'Espagne after the big car park, and a signpost, inimitably French, invites you to "Ecoutez la Musique de la Montagne."

I listen. I can hear four cars revving up on the impossible cart track, one in four and big rocky zags, beyond the hotel. We joined the queue, and presently reached our tents.

The tents were in a meadow with the river running straight through the middle: Up there a glitter of last sunlight on a high alpine pasture, and behind the dark forest. Reunion, introductions, mutual congratulation . . . Gastronomically, the plan was for me to rotate between the two larger family tents rather in the fashion of

King Lear, eating here one day and there the next. It worked splendidly and I had even clinched the arrangement by lending out my big gas stove. After a splendid meal and much vin ordinaire, we turned in, with the intention of visiting the Vignemale next day. The Vignemale, 3,289 metres, is the highest summit in the French Pyrenees, though not of course in the Pyrenees as a whole. Although the main chain is the Franco-Spanish border, the highest summits are all on subsidiary Spanish chains, e.g. the Monte Perdido (3,355 metres) and the Marmolada itself (3,400 metres). However we thought it would be a good place to start, so on Saturday, at about 11 a.m., Jim, Robin and myself set off into the valley des Oulettes, and reached the Oulette hut after an easy walk of only two and a half hours. There was low mist everywhere which had even spoiled the sparkling Lac de Gaube, making it more like the grim Polish Morski-Okno, and were it not for the fact that the weather is always fine in the Pyrenees one might have thought that bad weather was a-brewing.

The Cabane des Oulettes is a modern hut with a posh restaurant sector where you can take your lemon tea with the guardian, and a scruffy winter quarters where all the actual climbers are to be found. Climbers are not all that common in the Pyrenees, and although it was August, we did not see one other English party in the huts or on the mountain during our week. We moved over to the winter quarters, and it was there whilst unpacking that I made the *awful discovery*. I had left all the petrol for our cooking stove behind. This was quite serious, and the other two were remarkably polite about it.

A large party of young Spaniards were sitting around, all seemingly studying English Lit. at Barcelona University but despite this not able to converse much in English. They seemed a cheerful lot, but the really significant thing about them was the fact that they had no fewer than six camping gas stoves in their party. Contact was essential, but it was not at first obvious how it should be made. After the first round of wine there was no problem. We were friends for life, and they very kindly allowed us the use of their stoves for the rest of our stay.

THE VIGNEMALE: MORNING MIST  
*Hamish Nicol*







On Sunday morning the weather was clear and cold, and at 3-30 a.m. I woke the others: we set off for the Vignemale at 4-15 a.m.

It is daybreak hereabouts at 6 a.m. but as we had not been able to see the glacier the day before in the mist, it seemed essential to have at least an hour and a half in hand to get from the hut to the foot of the rocks without rushing. Glaciers are small fry in the Pyrenees but this, one could see in the moonlight, would be steep at the top and even crevassed, so we were extremely glad to have brought our crampons. At 5-45 the sun was hitting the rocks of the Pointe Chausenque, just in time to illuminate the steep and rather dangerous traverses across the foot of the Couloir de Gaube — that most notorious of Pyrenean gullies — which led to the start of the North face route on the Vignemale. Everybody calls this simply the “voie classique.” In the old Groupe de la Haute Montagne guide book of 1938 it was the hardest rock climb in the Pyrenees. A lot has happened since then, but nothing to detract from its great qualities. It starts at the bottom and ends at the top of the biggest north face in the Pyrenees (850 metres) is inescapable and hard to descend because of poor belays and loose rock.

As we put on our climbing gear, had a second breakfast on the glacier and appraised the steep first few hundred feet, I began to feel very old. Two other parties joined us, one French and the other Spanish. They were cross that we had got there first. Robin set off up the vertical green streak on the rock, myself next with the rucksack, and then Jim. Route finding, as always on limestone was difficult: there was bad rock, and surely these must be grade five pitches? Yet the first 500 feet is quite ungraded. Then you get into an easier section, but by this time the French pair had passed us, so we had their stonefall to dodge. Nobody was hit seriously. One third of the distance up the face there is a vital traverse to the left, not at all obvious, which leads onto a sort of projecting buttress which delinates the main part of the climb. If we didn't find the traverse I knew it would have to be the “chimney of the Austrians”, grade VI. Presumably the Austrians had not found the ledge. I kept an anxious look out for it as our rope, moving all together at

a sickening pace over terrain too easy to require belays and too difficult for comfort, swept inexorably, it seemed to me, too far to the right: pushed over rather than swept, by the awkward lean of the cliff, by that deceptive bulge over our heads which followed us like a reflection however hard we went, always there, always preventing an escape to the left. I was frightened. My dry tongue stuck to my dry mouth and the red yellow brown rocks rushed up to the wheeling sky, and what was the good of going there? Overhangs. Robin said it would go this way, and now we were all belayed three of us round a pair of mittens thrown on a ledge, nothing else in sight.

Robin found the traverse alright, and we had a third breakfast before tackling the buttress. This was the hardest part, but it also contained the best rock. There were even two passages of IV superior on it, which when we got to them seemed all of V superior. (The climb has recently been downgraded from Très Difficile to Difficile sup. by the simple process of subtracting one from everything). Robin climbed all that was asked of him with great skill, quietly, not distracted by the clatterings behind him. After the buttress things became easier again and looser. There was a band of tricky wet slabs, a nasty place to cross in bad weather, and finally we arrived via the easier west ridge at the summit.

One of the beauties of the Pyrenees is that there is nearly always an easy way down, and on the South side of the Vignemale a slip and a slide down some easy shale and scree gets one down to the Glacier d'Ossou without much difficulty. This is one of the largest glaciers in the Pyrenees. Six kilometres long! — and from its snout you have only to cross two cols and walk some 10 miles to get back to your starting point.

It was a long way and we were all tired. The guardian had been watching us all day through binoculars, and there was a distinct change in his attitude on our return. This did not however prevent him from charging us the full tourist rate for hut dues, and it was thought essential to descend to the valley that evening. We staggered into the camp site at 8 p.m., having been on the go for 16 hours.

Even the younger members of the party seemed to have had enough after this training expedition, and Monday was spent pottering round Caunteret which in the winter is a ski resort, and in the summer a place for bracing walks and thermal springs. On our return somebody had miscalculated the time at which the road upwards from Caunteret to Pont d'Espagne closes in the afternoon ( it is undirectional downward only after 3 p.m.) so I had a free walk up past all the lovely waterfalls, whilst Jim and Rosie went off to buy the new pair of boots.

For our second expedition I had selected a fine mountain called the Balaitous (3,144 metres) which lay some miles to the West of our camp site, and it was so hot that the car boiled on the very moderate incline to the road end, just past Arrens. We then walked up the valley of the Gave to the Larribet hut (2,060 metres), Jim in sandals, as his blisters were now becoming painful. On the way, a young woman was very anxious to explain that it was a *guarded* hut now, and we needn't have brought those great sacks.

It was the most unusual guarded hut that I have visited. There are three rooms, one for the guardian, a dining room, and a small dortoir with 16 places. In the dortoir lay Bernard, with a girl in each arm passing the time of day. Bernard was of course the guardian, and after two rounds of beer he had told us his life story. He was a student on vacation, was paid nothing by the French Alpine Club, and subsisted solely on the profits he made from sales of drink and meals. As he hated cooking it was necessary for everyone to drink a lot. Those who were foolish enough to insist on a meal did not make the mistake twice. This time I had remembered the petrol, and as I got the soup going on my little Swiss Bordet stove, which was as usual spurting flames in every direction, I wondered how Tom Bourdillon and I had ever managed to survive two bivouacs on the East face of the Capucin in 1955, with this device between us.

Bernard had assured us that the only climb worth doing from his hut was the North-West ridge of the Balaitous graded Difficile, so we set off for this at 6 a.m. the following morning, having spent a comfortable night in the uncrowded apartments. This time there

was only a sliver of glacier to cross, suspended over the incredible lakes of Bratcrabère, twin icy pools in the rock cauldron of the neighbouring Mount Pallas — and how had they come by such a remarkable name? Fortunately the entire North-West ridge was in the shade, because it was by now a blistering hot day. The climbing was on excellent granite all the way, took only five hours and had one or two proper pitches of five.

On the summit: change of scene. Unroped parties in gym shoes and floppy hats who had come up from the easy Spanish side; even a guitar. We removed our crash helmets surreptitiously. There was a splendid view spoiled only by heat haze, extending from the Pic du Midi D'Ossou on the West to the Gavarnie peaks on the East. To the South — Spain, brown and dry and wrinkled, like a cast off piece of snakeskin.

The way down lay on the East side, down to the glacier de Las Neous. As we set off a French party including two boys in shorts and without any vestige of mountaineering equipment, joined us. The rocks got steeper and steeper, and anyone could have diagnosed a hundred foot vertical drop before you crossed the bergschrund onto the glacier proper. We prepared our rope to make an abseil. Panic stations for the two mini-shorts. Then they announced their intention of joining us! It was the only solution, and it was by now so hot that no one could have objected to the pleasant wait in a cave of ice inside the bergschrund as the two incompetents crashed down the rocks. Our ill-assorted convoy, with one ice-axe to the rear, now got under way on the easying glacier. The three mountaineers plodded down rather righteously perhaps, but our two friends in shorts were now much happier and were ski-ing, hoop-la, hoop-la, as they wagged their bottoms down this more familiar element.

We parted at the terminal moraine. There was not much to say. Our route turned North, towards the Lacs du Tut and a col from which an easy scramble led back to the hut. Jim and Robin stopped for a swim in a glacier pool, which they said was the best they had ever had.

Next day was the day we did not climb the Pallas. There seemed no point in doing anything. It was a lovely morning with mist hanging low in the valleys, as is so common in the Pyrenean summer. We collected our things, and walked off leisurely down the Larribet gorge at about 10 a.m. Here we could climb a short cliff, and there plunge into the river to refresh ourselves: or sit and eat blackberries on the sun-baked hillside. This is how my week of Pyrenean pilgrimage ended. We got back to the camp site in the early afternoon, and took family outings up the Val de Marcadau in the late evening.

Robin drove me down to Lourdes on the last day, where I met the other pilgrims at noon. They had been refreshed by their week, and so had I, each in our different ways. And Father O'Malley did agree that there was no better place than a mountain for saying one's prayers.

# A TRAVERSE OF THE TACHHORN & THE DOM

A. N. HUSBANDS

When I returned to the Alps in 1965 with Harry Sales and Douglas Pilling after an interval of 12 years the weather gradually remember and first Harry went home and then Douglas. I stayed on for a day or two in the hopes of some improvement and once or twice came across Hieronymus Inderbinen, one of the guides. He said the only thing which would be worth doing would be the North-East face of the Lyskamm and there would have to be some change in the weather before that could be contemplated so I also returned home.

In 1967 strikes on the railways caused me a lot of trouble and as I could not leave my business I could not make any plans. However, the position improved in August and I reckoned I could get away for a few days but there didn't seem much hope of finding anyone to climb with at short notice until I remembered Hieronymus so I got in touch with him and arranged to meet him on August 15th.

The Channel crossing was the roughest I remember. In those days the express trains from Calais were worked by steam as far as Amiens and as I very much enjoyed travelling on the footplate and had driven nearly all the most powerful types of locomotive at home, I had a word with the driver and joined him on the four cylinder compound 'Chapelon Pacific'. When we pulled out of Boulogne, having dropped the massive American-built 'Mikado' which had assisted us over the heavily graded section from Calais, it was not yet eight o'clock but the sky was as black as night and it was pouring with rain. It wasn't much better at Sierre the following morning and when Rony arrived on the first train from Zermatt he said he didn't think there was any point in going up to Zinal.







Since first seeing the Dom and the Täschhorn from the summit of the Dent Blanche in 1947 I had been impressed by this pair but as the years went by the hopes of climbing them diminished on account of the length of the climb and the distance from the Täsch hut. However, when I read that an aluminium hut had been put on the Mischabel joch in 1966, the idea again seemed feasible and my plan had been to go to Zinal and traverse the Weisshorn descending to Randa and from there going up to the Mischabel joch to traverse the Täschhorn and the Dom.

Rony suggested we should go to Saas as the weather was usually better there and we could do the traverse equally well starting from there as from Randa. This seemed a good idea and we took the train to St. Niklaus and went on the Saas-Grund, where the weather was certainly a good deal better, then up to the Weissmies hut for what Rony called a 'training climb.' The ascent of the North Ridge was very pleasant but it was snowing before we reached the summit (4,023 m.), and we were not able to see Milan Cathedral as is apparently possible in better weather according to the Guide Book. The complete traverse took nearly eleven hours and even if I had been fitter and done it in ten I would still have considered it rather long for a training climb.

I remember being woken up in the middle of the night by the sound of torrential rain but next morning it was very fine and we set off for Saas-Fee. Here it took us a long time to find anyone who could tell us what sort of fuel to take up to the hut, and having found it was alcohol à brûler, an equally long time to find a source of supply so that when we finally reached the téléphérique we found it had just stopped for lunchtime. We passed the time by having a meal but when we finally reached the Längfluh the clouds had already come down. However, we set off but after about half an hour conditions were much worse. We were in a very thick cloud and it was snowing, and Rony said he doubted very much if he could find the col in these conditions and what was more if we went on much further and then decided to go back we might not be able to see our tracks for fresh snow so there was nothing to do but to return.

Back at the Längfluh Rony said it did not matter because we could still do the traverse from there if we set off at midnight. This was, of course, precisely what I had wanted to avoid but there now seemed no alternative short of just spending the next day going up the col and doing the climb the following day. We picked up a weather report at 7-0 p.m. which was a little more favourable. Most people who stay at the Langfluh climb the Alphubel or the Strahlhorn and do not need to set off very early, and as I found on a subsequent occasion before doing the North Ridge of the Weiss-horn, most people at the Tracuit hut only go up the Bishorn so they spend most of the evening singing and we were unable to get any sleep. At midnight the clouds were still down but shortly after 2 o'clock they lifted and it was possible to see the col so we got up and were away by 2-30. To save weight I left the alcohol behind — a decision I was subsequently to regret.

After a while we came to the first problem — a deep couloir with very steep sides. After probing around with the torches for some time we found an ice bridge which was so narrow we had to cross it à cheval. It was impressive enough in the dark so I don't know what it would have been like in daylight. I thought Rony wanted to go up the right bank once we were across but instead he turned right and made for a rock wall which looked hopeless, towering above us in the dark, but we continued to make progress traversing upwards and eventually coming more into the starlight. I don't remember enjoying a rock climb more. We couldn't see where we were going but just kept on upwards and only once had to change direction somewhat to find an easier line. The rock was all firm, dry and free of snow. Occasionally a 'plane was heard overhead, probably on a night tourist flight, and once or twice there were flashes of lightning, which were more disturbing, bearing in mind the high temperature.

When we reached the top of the rocks it was nearly daylight and we put on crampons to go up the glacier and eventually came to the first bergschrund which we had examined with binoculars the previous morning. There was one small snow bridge across it but it was very shallow. The trouble was that Rony needed to stand on it

for a few minutes as the wall above was so steep he had to cut foot-holds, hand-holds and even knee-holds to get up. When he eventually succeeded he was concerned that I might fall through as I am much heavier than he is and he kept urging me to move very gently. However all went well and the second 'schrund caused no trouble, but the sun was already very hot and it proved heavy going through the soft new snow so that we did not reach the Mischabel joch till 7-30 a.m.

We took off our crampons and went into the cabin. According to the book no-one had been there for eight days. The last party had thoughtfully left a bucket full of snow but it was still exactly the same and had not thawed at all. We spent about 20 minutes putting on anoraks and having some tea and a little food. In my case it was very little because whereas the continental bacteria have usually got hold of me within a few hours, this year I was smitten with enteritis before even leaving home and had only managed to endure the three previous days with the help of a bottle of chlorodyne. With each of these bottles there was a piece of paper with extracts from medical reports, etc. which included the following:- "Edward Whymper, Esq., the celebrated mountaineer, writes on February 16th, 1897 'To J. T. Davenport — I always carry Dr. J. Collis Browne's Chlorodyne with me on my travels and have used it effectively on Mont Blanc.'" It is sad to reflect that it is now no longer obtainable having been banned recently by the Government after it was discovered that some people were drinking it by the bottle-full because it was a cheap way of taking morphia. Be that as it may I now took another good dose and with the daunting thought that it was already very late by Alpine standards, we set off up the Täschhorn.

Although it was necessary to take care on account of the rottenness of the rock, which often came away in your hand, we made good progress. When we reached the couloir we put on crampons again and we were not to take them off for another nine hours. This may give some idea of the conditions, because some years previously I had taken a photograph of this arête from the Rimpfischhorn and it was all rock apart from the couloir. However, we

eventually reached the summit at 12-30 p.m. and in doing so came into the full force of the wind.

The summit was the most perfect I have seen — just a small cone of snow — but a glance at the Matterhorn showed a huge cloud coming off the East face. It looked as if the weather was changing for the worse and as there was nowhere to sit down in comfort out of the chilly wind we finished the tea and turned towards the Dom.

Although it had taken us ten hours to climb the Täschhorn — a gain of height of only 550 ft. an hour — we had encountered no difficulty and had moved together the whole time apart from crossing the bergschrund. The slow progress had been due to fresh snow. The next five hours were not to prove so easy. Whereas on the South arête you could see roughly where the holds were and only had to brush snow away occasionally, the whole of the N.N.E. arête was plastered in snow which had been driven by the wind and filled every nook and cranny so if you tried to walk on it, one step you might sink in a few inches till your boot rested on something firm and the next a few feet as your foot went down a hole between rocks. According to the guide book the ridge is quite broad and the rocks are not difficult but we saw little enough of them and had to keep to the very edge of the ridge, which consisted of thin slabs of rock about 15 ft. - 20 ft. long and 12 ft. - 15 ft. deep and inclined in two planes, the side being at about  $65^{\circ}$ . The only way down was to grip the top edge with both hands and move the hands sideways with the crampons gripping the smooth slab as best they could. The descent was a slow business because we could only move one at a time but the wisdom of this policy was proved when one piece of slab I was going along came away in my hands and I slid down some feet until the rope started to tighten about the same time as my crampons met the ice. Lower down the arête turned to hard snow for a little which speeded things up and after two hours we reached the Domjoch (book time  $\frac{3}{4}$  -  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours). Looking back towards the Täschhorn we saw cloud forming round the summit but the Dom remained clear and looked surprisingly close and in fact it was only about 900 ft. to the top.

The line on the arête was not continuous like that on the Täscherhorn and sometimes we found a route on the West face but more often on the East. I only recall one real pitch. Rony went down to investigate and said it was very exposed and there was hardly a hold at all for a crampon. When he had a good stance I found a hold a few feet away about level with my ankle which I reached for as I let go with my feet and then after lowering myself to the full extent of my arms it was possible to let go and drop the last foot or so. It reminded me a little of the swing pitch on Lliwedd although it is a few years since I did the traverse and I believe the important hold there has gone now. Before taking off I noticed a piton in the rock. This was the only indication that anyone had been on the mountain before us. From the time we left the Längfluh to the time we reached the summit of the Dom we never saw a footmark in the snow.

Interspersed with the rock were a number of very steep snow or ice arêtes. We usually tackled these by one standing on one side whilst the other moved along the other side because the ice was usually too hard to get the axe in for a decent belay. This method proved useful because in one instance Rony was cutting some steps when he hit a particularly hard piece of ice and the axe jumped out of his hand. Fortunately it came to rest about 20 ft. lower where there was a coating of snow so I just tied my axe on to the rope and when he had pulled it in Rony cut some steps down and recovered his own.

Even on the rocks we were now having to move one at a time quite frequently because they were so steep and rotten and it was often necessary to find holds under the plastering of snow. Another factor was that I was beginning to feel very short of breath due to lack of oxygen. Nowadays one often reads of people doing such things as spending the night near the top of Everest without oxygen or a tent and it seems ridiculous to think one should notice the deficiency of oxygen at only half these heights but I had only been above 14,000 ft. contour about half-a-dozen times before and we had now spent over five hours above this height and there was no doubt it was beginning to tell.

To get more air I was beginning to breathe through the mouth which soon induced a raging thirst and I began to regret the fact that we had not brought the alcohol up to the cabin and use it to make a drink thus conserving what we had in the flasks. I think Rony was beginning to feel a bit weary too. To save breath we talked little and communicated by means of a wave or the rope. The summit never seemed to get any nearer, we kept coming up against unclimbable towers which had to be turned on the East and when we did finally stand beside the Iron Cross at 5-30 p.m. I realised Joe Brown's feelings exactly when he said than on reaching the summit of Kangchenjunga he felt only relief at not having to step up yet again.

We shook hands and I would like to express my appreciation of Rony who was a very good companion and whose optimism was very encouraging. We took off the sacks to get some first aid equipment as we had both been cut by falling stones, and whilst I dressed Rony's hand I asked him how many times he had done the traverse and somewhat to my surprise in view of the fact that he is in his mid thirties he said this was the first time. He produced a couple of prunes and suggested retaining the stone in the mouth to alleviate the feeling of thirst and then we started off down.

Apart from the fact that the snow was very soft and we sank in a lot the first  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours were easy as it was all down hill; then the track went upwards towards the Festijoch. It was hardly an inclination, perhaps about 1 in 30 but for me it was not a question of changing from top gear to third so to speak but of dropping right down to bottom. When we eventually got on the Festi Glacier it was beginning to get dark and we had some trouble in finding a way through a badly crevassed area but finally reached the moraine and took off the rope after 18 hours.

There was a bit of a path marked here and there by little cairns consisting of about three stones placed one on top of another but we lost it in the dark and just went on in what seemed the right direction. A light in the valley about 6,000' below became visible and eventually in the faint moonlight we saw something that looked rather big for a slab compared to the general nature of the rocks.



We made for this and found ourselves back on the track again and sure enough what we had seen was the roof of the Dom hut which we entered at 9.0 p.m.; my heart sank when I saw people asleep on the floor.

Although the guardian was probably used to people turning up at all hours he seemed somewhat surprised to see us and asked us where we had come from. When we told him he said: "So you have come from the Längfluh over the Täschhorn and the Dom have you? Well it is certainly a very long way and has only been done once before this year". I found out later that it was not done again. He made us some tea which was very welcome and also some soup but although I had only eaten three pieces of bread and a little jam in the previous 24 hours I didn't seem to have any feeling of hunger or desire for food. Whilst Rony had his soup I was pondering on where best to spend the next three or four hours before the people who wanted to go up the Dom the next day started to get up, but when he had finished the guardian told us to follow him and we went into a small room with a bunk plenty big enough for six people but which was only occupied by four.

The next day was fine and as we went down to Randa we had a good view of the Weisshorn across the valley. It was certainly very white with snow and Rony reckoned it would be hard work to traverse it by whatever route. For my part, although I felt perfectly fit as long as we were going down hill, the thought of climbing 10,000' to the top of the Weisshorn was appalling in any conditions and I reckoned I should need about four days to get enough oxygen back into my blood before I could attempt it. With the weather as it was it seemed quite likely that I might spend this time only to find the weather was too bad to make the attempt so I decided to return home, which was perhaps as well because it was distinctly stormy over Lac Lehmann that evening and I heard later from Rony that he never did another big climb that year on account of poor weather.

The following day I found myself out of breath just trying to walk up the escalator on the underground and it was actually a week before I could deal with ordinary flights of stairs without any difficulty.

# NEW CLIMBS ON ARRAN

A. J. MAXFIELD

It is only in recent years that a new concept of difficulty in climbing has arrived in the island of Arran.

Prior to 1960 there were few routes of any great difficulty and anyone visiting the island could quite easily find unclimbed lines waiting for his amusement. Today this is no longer the case and any route of value which still remains unclimbed will only fall to the hands of the determined and experienced.

To the uninitiated in Arran granite there will always be disappointments on first acquaintance. There are a surprisingly limited number of good easy routes and the better lines are generally harder than they appear, the climber on most occasions being forced to follow rounded cracks between large holdless walls. In spite of these limitations I have a great affection for Arran's climbing and I am convinced of its growing importance.

The first new route that I climbed in Arran was with Capt. John Peacock on the Bastion of Cioch na H-oighe. We called it Tidemark as it traversed the upper face following a line of dwindling gangways. This is the only good new route I have climbed which is below hard severe standard. We also claimed some rather scrappy climbs on Beinn Bharrain the same year.

After our easy victory with Tidemark I turned my rather over-confident thoughts to the main feature of the Bastion which was to prove to be the most serious and difficult route that I have climbed. The line of the climb is a 300 foot diedre which cuts its way through the most exposed rock on the left of the face.

In 1967 I returned to the island with Bob Wilde and made for the Bastion. It was not until we had had four separate skirmishes.





with the route that I finally emerged from the groove licking my jammers wrists and hearing Bob say, "Thank God we won't have to work on this cow again" We called the route Klepht and I am not sure that it is technically as hard as we made it seem.

Since Klepht I visited the Bastion again with Dave Price and put up a route which takes the easiest line up the slabs immediately to the right of the 1896 route. Dave Price on finishing the route said, "That is possibly the worst route I've ever climbed." Certainly a generation of ardent gardeners would greatly help the climb.

This year Bob Wilde, Duncan Overton and I put up a mild V.S. we called Ziggurat which follows the buttress on the left of Klepht. It is a pleasant climb but again suffers from a typical Arran disease called "too much vegetation"

This year and last year Bob Wilde and I have worked on a new crag in Coire nan Ceum. The first route that we climbed was the chimney on the left of the crag which we called Ardito. It was not a very good line. Fuocco was the next climb that we put up; going at about mild V.S. this is the main chimney in the middle of the face and is possibly the best line on the cliff. Dave Price joined us on this route. He is a man who stands 6 ft. 3 in. and weighs about 16 stone. His frame is certainly not built for narrow chimneys and on entering the narrowest part I could hear him groaning, "I'm like a bloody champagne cork" Bob, while lighting a cigarette, unintentionally set fire to some dry grass which was about ten feet below Dave. Bob's adventures in pyromania were far too successful and Dave was lost in a cloud of foul black smoke. A certain urgency came into his climbing and soon a black face emerged from the gloom making sounds similar, and about as beautiful as Scottish mouth music.

Since Fuocco Bob and I have climbed two more routes at Corie nan Ceum. Pompiere is the final crack on the right of the cliff and Entasis the chimney immediately left of Fuocco. Both routes are a good V.S.

So far, and I am sure that other routes are possible, the schist tower at Torr nead an Eoin has given two routes. Bob and I first

climbed a mild V.S. we called Eilethya. This climb follows the gangways left of the overhangs and then moves across an exposed face to the right.

Atrus V.S. which follows the only crack which goes through the overhangs on the front of the tower is easier than it looks but I feel that I am not really the man to say this owing to the fact that a hold broke away when I had almost finished the climb. I took a most spectacular fall. Apart from a broken rib my pride took the greatest injury. Bob has since completed the route.

After telling Bill Wallace (S.M.C.), who is at present re-writing the guide, about four new climbs on Maol Donn, I was greeted by a long Scottish face and a, "Do ye no feel it's a wee bit scrappy as a cliff?" I feel that although the routes are short, 100 feet—200 feet, they are on good rock and being able to walk to the crag in 15 minutes instead of the usual  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 hours gives the cliffs a purpose—(the voice of a lazy Englishman!)

I am afraid that this article paints a rather unattractive picture of Arran's climbing. This is far from true as although the granite is somewhat exacting technically, it has been sculpted by nature into most handsome features. This is truly an island where "peace comes dropping slow."

The routes on Moal Donn are:—

**Donn Corner.** Mild V.S. 120 feet.

**Start:** 25 feet right of the 'Diff' chimney (described in the S.M.C. Guide to Arran) there is a buttress with a wide angled corner on its left.

Follow the corner to the top of the cliff.

A. Maxfield, A. Verity.

**Oread.** Severe. 140 feet.

**Start:** About 400 feet right of Donn Corner is an isolated tower with a right angled corner with a crack in its top half. Climb the buttress for 50 feet and then the upper corner crack to the top of the tower.

A. Maxfield, Miss A. Corley and Mrs. P. Verity.

**Spelunca.** V.S. 110 feet.

**Start:** 15 feet left of the 'Diff. Chimney' is an 8 foot cave.

Climb the right wall of the cave and then follow a crack to the top of the cliff.

A. Maxfield, R. Wilde.

**The Cannon.** Severe. 210 feet.

**Start:** About 120 feet below and left of the 'Diff. Chimney'.

Climb a crack up a buttress to the grass ledge 50 feet.

Belay in a small cave under the main face.

Climb out along a spike of rock on the left of the cave to gain access to the upper face. 15 feet. Follow the buttress to the top of the cliff.

A. Maxfield, R. Wilde.

I would be most grateful to receive comments from anyone who climbs on this cliff.

# THE SOUTH PEMBROKESHIRE COAST

JIM PERRIN

The scope of this article is the coastline of the South Pembrokeshire peninsula from Tenby to Stennis Head on the Castlemartin Artillery range: as a summary of the climbing in this area it is fairly exhaustive, but it should not be thought of as anything more than a descriptive article complementary to this section of the Pembrokeshire guide which, given the grace of God and John Neill, may appear at some time in the 'seventies.

Since the distance to Pembroke from London is about thirty miles greater than that to Llanberis, the reasons for anyone troubling themselves to drive there should of necessity be good ones. And these are a line of diminutive sea-cliffs whose greatest height never exceeds 180 feet, continually ravaged by the vulgarity of summer tourists and the grandeur of winter gales, difficult of access to climbers, all too easy of access for holiday-makers, steep, often loose, invariably serious. Yet despite its summer crowds and shantytown hinterlands, in atmosphere and form this is one of the most intensely dramatic coastlines around Britain.

The first time here Colin Mortlock drove me along typical Pembroke lanes, avenues of thorns bent East before the wind "as if craving alms of the sun," out onto the Castlemartin Peninsula. We stopped at the Elegug Stacks, two limestone sea-stacks of a hundred feet, unclimbed and inaccessible, and walked along the coast to the Green Bridge of Wales: A great white flying buttress arched out from hundred and fifty foot high overhanging walls into the most impressive water I had ever seen. For a stretch of perhaps two hundred yards out from the cliffs the water was the purest imaginable white:—

"So arrogantly pure a child might think  
It could be murdered with a spot of ink,"



and the whole stretch in continual motion, surging time and again thirty or forty feet up the cliffs, though out at sea only the gentlest swell was discernible; and the sound, a continuous wild accompaniment to the essence of the scene.

The rock architecture of this coast is superb: the elemental conflict of a wind-driven sea unhindered across three thousand miles of ocean is given expression in the sculptured rock, forms of the statuesque and the resistant, grotesque writhings, pillars and slits, columns, caves, and eyes. Of climbing on them, the peaceful mood is a paradox, eyes lulled by blue sea and sky, lichen mottled yellow on white rock, flowers, the sun on water never still, the curiosity of teeming natural life; and that mood denied in the hostility of man against rock.

Three years ago, no serious climbing had been done here: the initial impetus was provided in the summer of 1967 by Colin Mortlock, and Lyn Noble, the latter one of the best and least known climbers in the country. They climbed most of the classic V.S. lines; since then the standard has gone up slightly, exploration slowed down, and now the harder lines are beginning to fall.

The climbing value of the area is difficult to assess: length for length some of the climbing here is as good as any in Britain. The cliffs themselves have a splendid atmosphere and outlook, not so long as Gogarth's main cliff, but much more graceful and intimate. Nor is the length of any route made up by undistinguished scrambling to finish: they rise vertically up from the sea to perfectly flat tops. Compared with many sea-cliffs, Gogarth included, the access to sea-level is often difficult and restricted to a greater extent by weather and tide. It cannot be too strongly re-emphasized that the sea here comes straight in from the Atlantic and is a force to be reckoned with. There are no rescue facilities, and at present not even other climbers to help in the event of an accident. All the climbing is on Carboniferous limestone, and the rock in general needs to be handled with care, occasionally with extreme caution. Protection varies greatly from route to route, but is usually adequate. Although the temptation has often been strong, none of the routes so far have required pegs for direct aid, and only in two

instances has a protection peg been placed. It is to be hoped that this situation will continue as long as possible, and that the widespread Welsh practice of cheating to get up status routes will not be introduced here: it may bring more for less effort, but it invalidates the integrity of the experience. Some lines which should go free to better climbers have been left alone, and it is hoped that they will be done by better, and not merely less scrupulous, climbers.

Going from East to West the climbing falls conveniently into three main areas: firstly, Lydstep, between the private beach and the school of Artillery. Beneath the latter the rock changes from limestone to sandstone and, apart from odd scrambles and a fine pinnacle at Freshwater East, is useless for climbing until the limestone returns at Stackpole Quay. East of Lydstep Mr. mini-Tilman Mortlock has contrived to climb one or two routes on St. Margaret's Island, off Tenby. For the approach a canoe is advisable. The next major area, perhaps the most important of the three, comprises Stackpole Head, the sharp promontory of Mowing Word, and the cliffs on the west side of the bay, of which one side is formed by the latter.

Finally, to the West again is the area bounded by St. Govan's Chapel in the East, Stennis Head to the West. There are impressive cliffs to the West of here, including the Elegug Stacks near Boshers-ton, but these are relatively inaccessible owing to their being on the firing range. Some of the cliffs hereabouts fulfil the present definition of "unclimable" as well as any I have ever seen.

### **Lydstep**

The best approach is to drive to the car park on Lydstep Headland. Climbing is described from West to East. The first buttresses, Skomar Towers, are directly beneath the school of Artillery; access is best effected by descending to Lydstep Caverns, scrambling across the inlet and along the opposite slope over a ridge to the buttresses. Several routes have been done here in the severe or V.S. category, which are good but short, eighty to a hundred feet long.

Round to the East from Lydstep Caverns a promontory juts out, and from here a steep buttress of a hundred feet can be seen to the

right. The traverse to this buttress is entertaining, easy climbing for a few hundred feet at sea level to a ledge on the edge of a deep green zawn, from whence one can lasso a block on the far side and make a tryolean traverse across. The back of the zawn is positively labyrinthine, enough to convert any well-meaning climber to hide and seek. On the front of the buttress one rather pointless route descends a terrace and climbs straight back up a shallow chimney. Severe, I believe, and no doubt good exercise for those afraid of wetting their feet. The wall facing East is much better value: three short grooves in the region of the arête have been attempted and remain unclimbed. This summer we traversed the base of the wall to the right, across a zawn and up a groove on its far side. The traverse was designed for seven foot tall swimmers but the groove is quite pleasant when you get there, V.S. and loose, and the route called Samphire.

This wall looks out across a very impressive semi-circular bay, surrounded by overhanging cliff disappearing into deep water: traversing this at any level would be a major undertaking. The next buttress, Mother Carey's Kitchen, is the best at Lydstep and at present the best developed. Descent is to the East at low tide only, by scrambling down a grass slope, reversing fifty feet of steep rock (good holds; V.diff.) on the right wall of the zawn, and traversing seaweed covered blocks to ledges at the base of the cliff. If the tide is in, abseil down Eightgauge, 120 foot abseil, belay well back.

The cliff at its highest point is about 180 feet high, its structure resolved around two huge corners with loose walls on the left and perfect parallel vertical walls on the right. Both these walls are seamed by cracks providing the substance of the present routes. On the right of the right wall are two caves: "Eightgauge" (120 feet, V.S.) takes the right hand rib of the left hand cave and the crack above. "The Cracks" (110 feet, Severe) lies up the twin cracks to the left and the seamed rock above.

To the left again the first huge corner dominates the scene. Three attempts on this have each produced splendid routes, all of which start at its base. "The Meridian" 130 feet, V.S. takes the diagonal crack leading out right to a niche, and then a wide crack going

straight up the face giving fine steep wall climbing in the "Shrike" idiom. "Gehenna" (170 feet, H.V.S.) starts up the right hand groove of the corner to an overhanging flake, climbs this for sixty feet by jamming and laybacking before traversing left to a pinnacle stance. The last pitch finishes out on the right wall. "Necropolis" 170 feet, Hard V.S. is the corner itself, starting up the left hand groove and finishing direct. Some very poor rock, and a series of strenuous and committing moves up into a layback make this quite a hard climb, but the line is perfect, the climbing very satisfying, and it should become a Pembrokeshire classic.

Further East than Mother Carey's Kitchen, a ninety foot wall, easy of access and lying back at a reasonable angle, is worth a visit. Called "The White Sheet" it is a perfect plane surface of limestone faced with calcite; completely unclimbable by natural means, to bolt it would be a pointless desecration of an object of great beauty. From here can be seen the White Tower, on which are the last two routes of any note at Lydstep, Sea Groove, a long H.V.S. of Barry Webb's, and another severe somewhere in the loose and grassy wilderness.

### **Stackpole**

Approach by car to Stackpole Quay and walk along the coastal path past Barafundle, where many will founder in the softness of sand and summerbrown bodies, and up onto Stackpole Head. Routes described from right to left facing inland. Descent by abseil from two iron spikes on top of Stackpole Grooves to ledges above sea level (about 130 feet). Coming here in rough weather is a waste of time.

The first routes are on the short South Face, between the point and a great arch to the East. The Leaning Tower (130 feet, V.S.) climbs the obvious overhanging crack in the lower wall to a niche, and awkward cracks in the wall above to the top; quite a pleasant climb with a hard start. Originally this route took the first pitch of South Face Chimney, the easy corner to the left, but since its direct start has been climbed, and the upper chimney of the latter also been done, it seems more sensible to put them in this order. South

MOTHER CAREY'S KITCHEN  
*Colin Mortlock*





Face Chimney is an enjoyable severe with an alarming finish. The next break is pitch one of Stackpole Grooves (165 feet, V.S.) which then traverses left round the arête and up the clean cut V. groove below the abseil stakes. The line of cracks up the arête has been tried, but high seas made us run away. Round the corner a steep groove with good holds and an overhanging groove without any is the direct start to Stackpole Grooves (65 feet, H.V.S.). The only other route on this section so far, The Hawk (190 feet, H.V.S.) climbs the left hand corner of the large recess to a ledge, traverses right beneath an enormous roof to Stackpole Grooves and finishes up the slabby wall to the left. To the left for some three hundred yards the cliff is completely unclimbed, overhanging and 140 feet high, with two or three outstanding lines. Access is difficult and the rock would probably be very bad. Two more routes of dubious merit have been done in the back of the bay, but the next routes of any importance are on Mowing Word, the narrow promontory to the West. Approach to the area between the black Zawn on the West face and Square Chimney is by:—(a) an easy ridge in the back of the bay, and a low tide traverse West. (b) Descending Square Chimney, very difficult but very impressive on first acquaintance. (c) an abseil from the block at the end of the West Face Terrace down to the ramp. Once on this ramp the obvious features are a small zawn and on the other side of it, Square Chimney (70 feet, V.diff.). There are some easy routes right of here.

The South Face of Mowing Word, from the chimney to the arête, is short but deceptively steep with at present only three routes. The slabby corner immediately left of the Chimney is V.S. To the West of the Zawn is a yellow overhanging groove and above it a thin bulging crack. This line is Logos (90 feet, H.V.S.) and the route finishes to the right of an unnerving amalgam of overhanging rock and mud. Farther left is an unclimbed flake crack which would not be out of place on Curbar. Above this an upper tier merges, giving the cliff extra height. At the arête, the grooves leading up on either side of the abseil block have been climbed and are both V.S. One finishes up the wall behind the block, the other up a crack to the right. The West face stretches back now, the first route here a short V.S. on the left of the left hand groove. About



two hundred feet along is a large bay with four routes so far. The corner and crack system on the right wall are classic 100 feet, mild V.S.s. In the back of the bay a great overhanging flake forms Cormorant Chimney (110 feet, V.S.) which is hard to start, a short overhanging corner providing the means of entry; once in the chimney the climbing is beautiful and airy, with a sensational swing round the capstone to finish. When this was first attempted some loose blocks in the bottom corner frightened the party off, and they climbed Razorbill, a fine steep line out on the left wall. A large overhang bars any further climbs to the left as yet, and a zawn with overhanging walls has so far defied all attempts at traversing. The next routes are on the other side of the black Zawn and are reached by abseil down the large corner, or by walking across from the Arches at very low tides and traversing at sea-level.

The first route climbs slabs on the left of the zawn to a ramp, a beautiful V.S. of 140 feet. Two V.S. crack lines have been climbed before the corner itself, which is one of the best routes of the area, a perfect line and very fine climbing at about mild V.S. for 140 feet. To the left of here the rock steepens and deteriorates and no further routes have been done on this face.

The bay with the crumbling mud pinnacle on the left is best reached by a short abseil from iron rings beneath the grass ramp to the West. How these rings came to be here is something of a mystery. They are very old, and both well concealed and well situated. The rock architecture hereabouts is splendid but the rock itself is steep and compact and as yet little has been done. One poor, though atmospheric route is worth mentioning—the Cauldron (270 feet, H.V.S.) which traverses left from beneath the abseil rings into a cave and climbs up in the back of this to a sloping ledge, from which a desperate groove leads up through a hole back onto the grassy ramp. A steep sided inlet to the left again would repay attention by the most ardent admirers of crumbling limestone, but the next major area is around St. Govan's Chapel.

### **St. Govan's**

One can drive as far as the chapel: once on the firing range it is as well to watch carefully for unexploded missiles and keep to the



paths.

The first climbing of any consequence is on a fine little forty foot outcrop a few hundred yards to the West of the chapel at the back of a wide ledge some sixty feet above the sea. The routes follow six vertical cracks on the single compact buttress. The two left hand ones are V.S. those to the right severe. To the West is a deep impressive inlet, Stennis Ford, with at least one fine crack in the back corner. As yet we have not managed to get into this place. To the West from its entrance is Stennis Head, conveniently divided into two sections by a zawn. The Eastern section has two routes, approached by descending easy-angled rock and traversing round the headland. The first is the arête, the second a chimney crack overlooking the zawn; both are severe and about two hundred feet long including traversing. The Western section is a very steep wall rising above a ramp. Again only two routes have been done, an easy crack on the left, and a pleasant wandering route up the highest section of wall. Several hard possibilities remain, but the wall is surprisingly steep, and the rock brittle hereabouts.

In conclusion, much remains to be climbed in the area. There are better sea-cliffs, but these are enjoyable ones; the climbing is often very good and usually quite serious. The climbs themselves invariably follow good free lines and there is nothing really to attract the artificial climber. It is very far removed from most centres of population and few will contemplate more than the occasional visit, but in recompense it provides solitude, freedom to feel one's own attitudes and values instead of being imposed on or offended by those of your fellow-performers in more popular areas. And the area itself, the West, its associations, the peace of mind gained from such a simple thing as the sun going down over Western seas, all these exert an attraction over even the most prosaic minds.

# STIRRING MEMORY

J. C. H. DAVIS

Each year, when the C.C. Journal arrives, the chords of memory twang like a top rope. I remember my climbing days, alas long past, before I was confined to shepherding my flock up 6 foot pinnacles in sandy Cornish coves. I think again of great successes and of courageous failures and it is one of the latter which I treasure most and which I love to tell to any brash young climber I chance to meet. It is the story of how I left my sling half way up Cenotaph after an almost successful attempt to do the second ascent.

The tale is briefly told—for which the young climbers may be grateful. It happened during my declining years as a climber when I snatched a hard earned week end from my job as an apprentice. I stayed at Cwm Glas Mawr and there met some young hopefuls. There was a tall youth, a 2nd Lt. Bonington, and a bouncy little fellow called Banner. There was also a novice, 2nd Lt. Rogers, who completed his first XS lead one day before breakfast and to whom I was pleased to tender fatherly congratulations.

The climax came on the last day with the ferocious battle in the Corner. While Banner bashed upwards, Bonington acted as ballast, but it was in vain. When we met in the evening they had to admit that they left one of my slings half way up. It was getting late and I had to rush back to my job so—like I said—I left my sling half-way up Cenotaph Corner.





# EDITORIAL

Since the actual date of publication is not recorded in the Climbers' Club Journal it is not possible to determine whether the 1969 edition is the latest ever to come out. Setting a record however, even if it is one, is no consolation to me or the several people who have already complained and I must accept at least three quarters of the blame for this and ascribe it hopefully to a reverse new broom effect. The rest of the blame I shall ascribe to, shall we say, circumstances. The fact is that the Journal has lost over the last few years two things; one is the publication of new routes which are now, quite rightly in the Bulletin; the other is the appearance of good professional journals which remove much news value from publication in the C.C.J.

Material in future is bound to be more parochial on the whole and here there is a dilemma since the Club is fast diffusing, some will say has diffused, from the 'hub' of climbing and on the other hand is not at all a clubby sort of organisation. In other words 'X' will not now record his first blindfold ascent of Tyrannosaurus Rex in the Journal, he will have bigger fish to fry, on the other hand the club will not want to read the list of participants and menu of the annual picnic. The solution to the resulting decrease in articles, if not in the use of vigorous pressure tactics by the editor, may eventually be a journal which only attempts to come out every other year.

One part of the Journal missing this year is 'Alpine Notes'. I prepared a list for publication but on analysis it turned out to be a list of climbs done by my friends and not all representative of the club, so, with apologies, I have dropped it this year. However, it is a useful part of the journal and if just a few other people would write to say what they have done in the past year I will revive the chapter. They don't all have to be first British solo winter ascents either.

# OBITUARY

## ROBERT LLOYD ROBERTS

The death of Bob Roberts on 23rd April, 1969, at the age of 55, is a sad loss to his many friends. He was elected to the Climbers Club as recently as 1964, but he had been climbing all his life and was very well known and much loved in his own territory of Snowdonia. He was born and lived throughout within sight of the Welsh mountains, and was a little exceptional for most of the local people of his generation in climbing there from his boyhood onwards. He was an immensely powerful walker, and few people knew the Welsh hills as he did, having tramped over them in all weathers all the year round. He was a first-rate rock climber, and put up many new routes, particularly in the Moelwyns where he was often an associate of Elfyn Hughes and his name appears on several of the pages of J. R. Lee's Guide. He was also expert on snow and ice. He climbed also on several occasions in the Julian Alps, Austria and Switzerland, as well as (many times) in Scotland and Skye.

Bob was a very prominent member of the Mountaineering Club of North Wales, having been for some years Honorary Secretary, member of the Committee, and for four years up to his death the Chairman of the Club. None of the members was more popular, and probably no-one did as much for the Club, to which he was devoted, and certainly no-one was kinder or more helpful to the less qualified members. He died of cancer, and bore his illness with the same patience and fortitude as he had shown throughout his life. He leaves a widow and two daughters, and his friends share with them the sense of his loss and the pride of having known such a sterling character.

JOHN POOLE.

**MAJOR BRYAN HILTON JONES, M.C.**

Most people over forty in the Climbers Club knew Bryan, and, as a Caernarvonshire man, his Commando record in the Second World War had made him a legend in Snowdonia. It was always a moving experience to hear him encouraging his beautiful wife, Edwina, up some stiff rock face, in the Northern Welsh they both spoke so fluently.

He was a formidable man, hard as nails by training inclination, a Welsh dourness underlying the English reticence imposed by his years at Rugby, a wonderful comic spirit breaking out all the time. As with the great Archer Thomson so with Bryan. It was possible to spend an entire day with him, covering endless exhausting miles, and not hear a word from his lips. On a talkative day there might be snatches of conversation at five mile intervals or during a pause for photography. He could never understand that it was possible to be frightened on a thin hold or at the contemplation of a difficult move. Nothing ever frightened him. It was at those times that he would offer his memorably funny comments on life, on the situation of the moment, on the absurdity of the human condition. Cambridge gave him more than a first in the Modern Language Tripos, it provided him with a philosophy that always seemed to owe more to Voltaire than to the ancients.

For three years he was an essential part of my life, coming to me as a junior departmental manager and, within a fortnight taking charge of me, of everything I did, and ultimately of my destiny. I grew, as so many had done with the young major, to rely upon him for everything. I never knew him to fail, in steadfastness of purpose, in ability, in loyalty, in affection, or in anything else. To my mind he was all that a man should be, always. Desperately wounded he fought his way back to life. Told that he would never do much again, or even eat the simplest meal in less than an hour, he set about climbing every severe in Snowdonia with his young brother-in-law Mervyn Hughes, until recently also a member of the Club. Characteristically he made a point of climbing, as he always walked, in the camouflaged commando overall with the five

holes through which the Sten gun bullets had entered his stomach. That overall always reminded me, as I am sure it never reminded him, that he had spent post war months locating and securing the releases of the German Medical Officer who had saved his life, and the German private soldier who had been his batman during his year in a German Field Hospital behind Caen. At the retreat they had left him to be picked up by his own troop.

He became, with his marvellous accentless foreign languages, a gifted Continental Manager for I.C.I. He had been General Manager in Switzerland before being put in charge of all I.C.I.'s numerous and complicated Spanish interests. When he was killed, with two of his daughters, outside Barcelona, he was returning from a Christmas ski-ing holiday in Andorra; his car was cut in two by a jack-knifing camion, he and Daryl being killed instantly, while little Nicola died while still unconscious. Edwina, to whom the affectionate sympathy of everyone in the Climbers Club goes out, escaped with minor injuries. Their son, and middle daughter Nerys were in a separate motor car.

No one will ever replace Bryan in the hearts of his friends. The day after he died my telephone rang all day as climbers who knew him tried to say something, to someone available, about their feeling of loss and desolation. Above me, as I type this, is the painting of Glyder Fach commissioned for me by Bryan when I retired from I.C.I. Beside me is his last letter, dater December 14th. In my pocket is the wallet he brought from Spain last summer. The room is full of him, and I can hear his voice. Something about Swiss mountains, (he was a member of the Alpine Club and the Swiss Alpine Club), comparing most unfavourably with those of Wales; something about the deplorable lack of fitness in his friends and contemporaries, the interest, but insufficiency, of golf, the growing need for slower companions on the steeper ski slopes. For me, so greatly blessed with friends, there won't be another one like Bryan. He may be resting in Barcelona but you will meet his spirit on the hills of Wales.

K. FITZGERALD.



# REVIEWS

**George Mallory.** By David Robertson (Faber and Faber 55/-).

The first thing that should be clearly understood is that this is not a climber's book nor is it written with that purpose. It is a biography of Mallory and as such the mountaineering is only episodic. Whether there is anything much else worth studying about George Mallory is open to question. The author clearly thinks so and manages to devote 279 closely printed and fully annotated pages to his subject. A large proportion of this derives from extensive quotations of Mallory's correspondence and literary output linked by rather dreary accounts of everything he did from his birth in 1886 to his disappearance on Everest in 1924. The truth of the matter is that there are probably few people today who have much sympathy for the spirit and attitudes displayed in this book. David Robertson has obviously been initiated into some form of Mallory mystique which is faintly embarrassing. He attempts no analysis of his character, no assessment of his failings nor, curiously enough, of his virtues. Perhaps this is because the latter are meant to speak for themselves, but if so there are some curious lacunae. Nothing in his past appears to account for the transformation into the legendary figure that featured on Everest. But then there are many other puzzling features about these early Everest expeditions. Why, for example, was an undergraduate with no serious mountaineering experience destined to be the man who was to meet his death with Mallory high on Everest? But these are questions that arise incidentally from the book for the great mountain and the story of others who sought to climb it are a mere background to the author's subject. Whilst some life is at last injected into the study when it eventually reaches this epic setting the author cannot leave his subject in his final moments on the world's highest mountain but must try and improve the shining hour with an epilogue full of

the inevitable quotations—Geoffrey Keynes to Ruth (Mallory's widow), George Trevelyan to Ruth, Robert Graves to Ruth, Mary O'Malley to Ruth etc., etc.

There are some who think that the spirit of the present age is to denigrate and scoff at the heroes of the past. Perhaps this book demonstrates the dangers of the opposite attitude. David Robertson might have served George Mallory better by leaving him to his legend and us to our illusions.

JOHN WILKINSON.

**Impelled Into Experience.** By J. M. Hogan. Pub. Educational Productions. Price:- 15/-.

This book is the very personal yet objective story of the Outward Bound Movement told by the first Warden of all the Outward Bound Schools, Aberdovey.

Mr. Hogan describes in detail the difficulties of interpreting the ideas and ideals of German educationalist, Kurt Hahn, into reality. It is stimulating to read of the struggles, challenges and problems of the young school master, Hogan during the wartorn early 1940's.

The clashes of personality between Hahn, Hogan and Lawrence Holt, ship owner and their first sponsor, were often highly charged. That the Outward Bound movement has developed to its present international stature is due to their unshakeable belief in the central purpose and value of their task.

The early part of the book deals with the establishment of the Aberdovey Sea School. Later Mr. Hogan details the development of their ideals and the increase in Outward Bound establishments at home and abroad. He admits some reluctance to accept changes in later years and cites part of the development work of 'young' John Lagoe at Eskdale at some length in this connexion. Since this story is concerned with educational matters this reviewer feels that there is a lesson in the portrait that emerges of the Author

himself. In 1940 he appears dynamic, open minded and inventive: As a member of the Board of Governors at Eskdale he has become a conservative, established administrator, reluctant to allow Lagoe, an image of his former self, the freedom he had cherished a generation earlier.

I was compelled to read but impelled to thought. This is a book that should be read by all involved in education.

December 7th, 1969.

JOHN BRAILSFORD.

**The World Atlas of Mountaineering.** By Wilfred Noyce and Ian McMorris (Nelson 90/-).

This large book is the first successful attempt to cover the subject of mountaineering in a truly world wide fashion. This major task started by Wilfred Noyce and finished by Ian McMorris. David Cox points out in the Foreword that McMorris saw his completion of the book as a tribute to Noyce and I think time will bear him out. Although it is expensive this will be one of Noyce's best read books.

Apart from the editor's contributions; Europe and Africa mostly, other parts are written by George Lowe, Eric Shipton, Kim Meldrum, George Bell, Wally Herbert, John Neil, Fosco Maraini and Alexander Khrguian. The photographic credits are no less impressive with Gaston Rebuffat, Ansel Adams, Bradford Washburn and Douglas Milner among the better known contributors.

For the average reader this is a book of discovery, and this is why the superb photographs are so important: On leafing through the book one is constantly being arrested by some picture and lead to the text to learn more of it. Such photographs as the E ridge of the Doldenhorn, the Kanchenjunga massif and the Sierra Nevada are particularly good but I think it is the ones from totally strange areas which are the most effective; for instance Mt. Tyree in Antarctica or Khan-Tengri in China.

It may seem inconsistent that the small climbs and mountains of Britain and even the Alps have so large a place in this book. This sort of inverse square law of interest is common to all atlases published in this country; However this is a book of mountaineering and thus mountaineering history which started here anyhow. Also rock climbing has a large place in this book and should perhaps have larger. George Bell writes of Yosemite valley: "It might be questioned whether in a discussion of mountaineering, such climbs of canyon walls deserve emphasis" and the answer should be obvious.

I have made no effort to sift the information here with a tooth-comb since that would be a work for experts. However to my mind this is more a book to be read at leisure than a reference book. Those looking for new routes can be inspired and those looking for facts can rely on the expertise of the contributors.

The publishers have done a fine job and made a handsome book, one slight worry is the arbitrary way in which the maps appear, otherwise congratulations all round.

F.A.W.

**A Woman's Reach.** By Nea Morin (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 50/-).

The autobiography of a mountaineer with as full a life as Nea Morrin's is bound to be fascinating to any climber and it was with great anticipation of pleasure that I started reading this book. I must admit however that I cannot give the critic's ultimate praise: "read it from cover to cover without putting it down" The reason is that it is too episodic and in many places too direct a transcription from a diary. I think my disappointment is due to making a direct comparison with Dorothy Pilley's book, surely the classic of female climbing autobiographies. To expect this book to compare with Pilley's and to read as easily as a novel is surely a hard criterion but necessary for the book to be popular with non climbers or an inspiration to novices as the dust jacket claims. This is a climber's review however and for them the book has great

value and can be firmly recommended to anyone who climbs in Britain and the Alps or who is interested in climbing history.

The author is preoccupied with female mountaineering so that the phrases "premier ascent en cordée feminine", "manless ascent", etc., sprinkle the text. I think it is this preoccupation which makes the style awkward and some passages read like entry qualifications to an alpine club. This may of course be a case of male hackles rising involuntarily for otherwise I find her philosophy of female climbing very acceptable. She admits that the male is stronger and can do harder routes but claims the privilege for women to prove themselves at their standard. For a generation familiar with the concept of the 'climbing game' this is logical. Her frequent frustration by well meaning men when intent on a manless climb is the same as that of a climber who is persuaded to use aid on a free climb. The parallel is not complete as there is no agency to persuade the male climber to use aid or limit his style.

Like other climbing biographies this book is fascinating for the new views of old episodes and otherwise unrecorded history particularly in this case new ascents in the chamonix Aiguilles and the tragic first expedition to Ana Dablam. Many members of the climbing establishment appear in these pages in a new light: Shipton as a gangling school boy, Moulam crashing down smart continental ski slopes in ex W.D. baggies and Emlyn Jones being sworn at by the hut guardian for planting crampons on her table.

I reread this book with a deep respect for a woman who has climbed so long and so well at the same time as devoting herself to her family after the early and tragic loss of her husband.

F.A.W.

**The Central Highlands.** By Campbell R. Steven. 38/-.

**The Cairngorms.** By Sir Henry Alexander and revised by Dr. Adam Watson. 40/-.

(Both published by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust).

To those of us who were brought up on the old fat S.M.C. guides these two new replacements will seem strange at first sight. The

thumb-nail sketches inside the cover give way to contoured maps and the general appearance is decidedly glossy. The Central Highlands area includes Glen Coe, Rannoch Moor, Ben Nevis, the Mamores and Ben Alder. The Cairngorms guide covers the Grampians extending from Glen Clova to Aviemore and from Glen Tilt to Tomintoul.

These guide books are the first major revisions since the early 1950's and were long overdue. Enormous changes are to be seen in the Highlands over recent years and the effects of the Forestry Commission, the Nature Conservancy and the skiing bonanza are fully dealt with. The background information on geology, natural history and meteorology has been brought up to date. In addition the Central Highlands guide has a translation from Gaelic of many mountain names.

All the 3,000 feet peaks and many others are dealt with from a point of view of their main features, their access and relevant folk lore. Mercifully they do not set out to provide the last word on route finding as does Poucher's "The Scottish Peaks". It is somehow refreshing after a tedious day spent toiling over peat hag and bog to find one's Munro described by the S.M.C. as "an unattractive moorland eminence"

The rock climber is less well served. The extremely rapid pace with which new routes have been climbed will be known by readers of the S.M.C. journal. During the last ten years it has been bulging with details of new cliffs boasting major new routes.

These guides sensibly make no attempt to give more than a general survey of the extent of the climbing in any particular area. Details of routes can be found in the rock climbing guides published separately by the S.M.C. The myth that Scottish winter climbs are fit only for Alpine training rather than ends in themselves is well and truly exploded. The descriptions of winter climbing on Coire Ardair of Creag Meaghaidh or Lochnagar should stir the most deeply seated mountaineer. At the time of going to press the 8,500 foot winter girdle traverse of Coire Ardair with its "Dolomitic Exposure" was still awaiting a first ascent.

RICHARD GILBERT

I am delighted to see the aura of the Scottish mountains, cultivated over many years by W. H. Murray and the S.M.C., still maintained in these guides. What names could set the pulse racing more than The Buchaille, the Man Trap or the Big Grey Man?

The photos by Tom Weir, Ben Humble and Adam Watson are in keeping with the high quality of these new editions for which the S.M.C. are to be congratulated.

### **DOW CRAG AREA** by D. MILLER (F.R.C.C.)

In the twelve years since the last edition of this guide appeared only a handful of new hard routes have been added on Dow Crag itself, and there seems scope for very little more. In contrast, the outlying crags of Coppermines Valley and the Duddon have been very thoroughly explored, and some fifty new routes appear in this edition. The area covered is a popular one with members of this Club, being easily accessible by car, and containing as it does, excellent roadside crags.

The climbs are clearly and simply described, and the diagrams by Heaton Cooper are, as always, excellent. There has been a certain amount of running together of pitches and rationalization of variations. The plastic cover seems to be of the high standard that characterises the present series of F.R.C.C. guides.

NIGEL ROGERS.

### **Dorset C.C. guide.** By R. C. White.

Someone commented recently that some guidebooks promote development while others mark the end of major exploration. This guide certainly belongs to the former class. Charles White has done a splendid job in producing a guide to what must have been one of the most awkward climbing areas to annotate, in Britain.

The main cliff of the area is Boulder Ruckle, about 120 feet high, half a mile long and almost totally devoid of any prominent features. The only notable landmark is the Marmolata Buttress,

the highest part of the cliff. Thus, all climbs on the Ruckle have been identified in terms of distance from this buttress, and 100 foot markers have been painted on the cliff. This must be an impermanent answer at best (depending on the longevity of sea-washed green paint!)—perhaps photos taken from a boat might help.

The guide covers in all over 5 miles of sea cliffs, with climbs varying from 20 to 200 feet plus several longer traverses of various standards. There are no 'extremes' here yet, though the harder problems on Subluminal Wall are quite taxing. All the climbing is very steep—slabs are a rarity—but protection tends to be good, so most of the hard climbs are exciting and very exposed yet completely safe.

As with all limestone cliffs, there is a certain amount of loose rock, but this is being cleaned off now, as classic routes emerge, and the old favourites like Tatra, Marmolata and Lightning Wall are clean.

The cliffs are important for two reasons. First, they provide the closest climbing for those living in Southern England, an area otherwise mainly bereft of cliffs, and more important, they probably have the best weather of any cliffs in the country. One can frequently be climbing in temperatures of 60° or more in mid-winter.

This is (I think) the first guide to be produced by the C.C. yet edited by a non-member, and is to my mind a great success. It follows the usual C.C. format and is the usual waterproof cover—an advantage for sea-cliff climbing. The main drawback is that, of necessity, it will be immediately out of date. However there is plenty of 'meat' in it to keep the climbing population in the area busy for some time. Many of the routes have not had second ascents, and the scope for new routes still remains vast. Let us hope that the guides still to come may attain the high standard of the present one.

KEITH CARTWRIGHT

**Great Gable, Wastdale and Eskdale.** By P. L. Fernehough.

(F.R.C.C.)

Pat Fernehoughs new yellow-covered guide includes not only



Great Gable, Green Gable, Boat owe, Yewbarrow and Blackbarrow but also the Screes and seven crags in Eskdale of which the most important is Heron Crag. 166 routes are described and W. Heaton Cooper again provides the diagrams. The arbitrary division of Eskdale into Scafell and Great Gable zones is presumably to keep both guides of similar size. Probably the next time round, as the editor of this guide surmises, Eskdale will have a guide to itself.

It is almost unnecessary to say that this guide is up to the usual high standards of F.R.C.C. guides. At the front is a useful list of suggested routes for the occasional visitor. In this list it is a little surprising that neither the Napes Needle nor the Innominate Crack are mentioned. The graded list arranges the routes in alphabetical order within the usual six grades with subdivision of all the grades except for Moderate and Extremely Severe. I think it is a pity that present FRCC policy does not permit the editor to order the climbs within their grades according to his own opinion of their difficulty. There are possible objections to this detailed grading of climbs, but I think the opinion of an expert on an area is worth having. Kern Knotts Crack, Eagles Nest Direct, Tricouni Rib, and C Gully on the Screes have been upgraded from Severe to Very Severe (Mild). It is good to see that one editor, at least, is prepared to upgrade as well as down-grade climbs.

The main addition to this guide is the section on Heron Crag. This crag has one of the finest climbs in the area in Gormenghast and two of the hardest in the Flanker and Iago. The other two extremes are the Slant and the Tomb on Gable Crag.

COLIN TAYLOR.

**The Welsh Peaks.** By W. A. Poncher (Constable, 25/-).

The fact that this is the third edition in five years testifies to the popularity of this pocket hill walking guide. There are no Munros tables or Wainwright guides to the Welsh peaks so this is the only book which covers the area for the hill walker. The method of route description uses a minimum of text and a maximum of photographs and maps which is probably the most effective and leaves the less route-bound walker the option of finding other ways.

The guide is valuable for its superb collection of photographs and I have always been disappointed by the disfigurement of these caused by badly penned route marks in white ink. Unfortunately any improvement to this in a new edition would be hopelessly expensive since new blocks would be needed and the improvement is not made in this edition. A revision which could be made in a future edition is to the equipment section which is somewhat dated: There are very few people who have nailed boots with them nowadays for instance and even fewer who carry both nails and vibrams with them.

For those interested in the technicalities of Welsh nomenclature this edition will be found a great improvement on the old. For those interested in secret crags I recommend a glance at plates 213 and 234 amongst others.

F.A.W.

**Climbers' Guide to Ben Nevis.** By J. R. Marshall, S.M.C. (West Col Productions 1969, 25/-).

As an all too infrequent visitor to the Ben I found this guide a great treat which I can recommend to anyone with the smallest intention of climbing in Scotland. The legendary climbs of the late fifties and more recent and less widely known developments are here in the traditional Scottish style which neglects pitch by pitch descriptions to give better reading and a conciseness which allows some 240 summer and 100 winter climbs to be given in one volume. Compare this with the average Snowdon guide which gives some hundred climbs whose average length is half that on Nevis.

The summer routes are given in a graded list with no grading X.S. Considerable down-grading has occurred since the last guide, the old V.S. list suffering considerably. My impression is that climbers used to Welsh grades will find some of these routes under-graded although this may be due to the length and conditions on the Ben.

A valuable addition to the guide is the introduction of the Cairngorm winter grading system of Roman numerals I to V. From

my experience of the easier routes this system is remarkably consistent as long as two factors are remembered; that the grade tells nothing about the seriousness of a climb and that snow conditions vary considerably. For instance Glover's Chimney is trivial compared to N.E.B. although the technical grades are IV and III respectively.

There are about 100 more climbs in this guide book than MacPhee's 1954 one and it is striking how many of these were done in the late fifties when Sassenach, Centurian and the Bat were put up and the supremely difficult winter routes were done. In the last decade there are only 28 new rock climbs and only two of these are graded harder than the Bat and Sassenach. Since 1960 there are only 16 new ice routes only one of which is given grade V compared to seven in the fifties. Perhaps this means that Ben Nevis is temporarily worked out and the hard men have been elsewhere. Perhaps this guide will start a new wave of winter ascents of hard summer routes.

F.A.W.

## **British Journals**

### **Mountain**

The advent of 'Mountain' at the beginning of the year has given us much food for thought. It concedes nothing to the measured academic prose of many club journals, and replaces it with the climbing press, and its implications, in new and arresting format six times a year. It is a professional publication, endeavouring to incorporate the best in mountaineering news, literature and photography, and backed by Y.H.A. ownership and an aggressive marketing approach—its novel layout and content at the same time preaching and revealing the changing moves of the climbing world.

The news sections are mostly excellent—tight, factual and up-to-date—an answer to the long-felt need for topical information, widely available. Just occasionally, however, there are irritations ("Wendy's, the spiritual home of Welsh climbing"), and not much quarter is given to amateur writers involved in unprofitable guide-book production—a job which the professionals, by definition,

would hardly wish upon themselves.

Formal articles range from very factual to successfully humorous—the former predominating in, and almost monopolising some issues, and the latter giving a lighter touch at appropriate intervals. Issues largely devoted to one area, e.g. Yosemite, provide compact and accessible information, but do tend to restrict the appeal of some numbers. This sort of imbalance would benefit from correction, if only to maintain the wider support of the modest but still literate performer. I'm not sure either where all the detail in "British Climbing since the War" gets us, except to provide the first international all-comers' graded list. More original articles (such as Lewis on Whymper), and new looks at old friends (McNaught-Davis on Harrison's) would probably be appreciated by a lot of people.

Wilson has brought a lot of new ideas on presentation and publication into the world of mountaineering. Climbers now accept professionalism as a new medium and a duty-bound supplier of fresh information. But until we are all professional climbers, a magazine must provide good entertaining reading as well. If 'Mountain' can give the right balance and a pictorial bonus, it should prosper.

### **Club Journals**

The Fell and Rock Journal, 1968 contains some varied fare, with accounts of expeditions from Mount Sinai to Norway, and some good, readable stuff on modern British climbing from Rogers and Cram. There is also an excellent selection of photographs of British crags, together with more subdued drawings by Heston Cooper, and instructions on how to produce them. The Alps and the Himalayas don't seem very popular, though.

The Wayfarers, by contrast, seem to spend a lot of time abroad, (1968 Journal), whether it be in the Dolomites, the Drakensberg, the Hindu Kush or the Honey Mountains. Jenkins pays further tribute to Clements and Osgathorpe, and the Wayfarers Tales are sobering but good entertainment. There is also an interesting article on a little known part of the Western Highlands.

In their 1968 Journal, the Rucksack Club appear thoughtful, too, and far less worried about recording the proceedings of the Club in great detail than are some. Readers are entertained and instructed. The nearest article to home is one by the late Eric Byne on Pre-war Kinder, the most reassuring is Bowker's on some modern Alpine classics: he makes it all sound straightforward.

No less active are the M.A.M. (1968-69 Journals). They advise us to go to the Lakes instead of Wales, and cajole one photogenic member into the lead in 1969 where he had been the second 'par excellence' in 1968. An enterprising spirit is obviously present within the Club — articles on Papsura in the Kuhn, Corsica and new routes in the Cuillin bear witness to it. The link with the University of Birmingham has obviously been a great asset recently.

The Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal 1969 is uncompromising towards the Coruisk bridge (the gods have since vindicated this aggression), and its members are characteristically impecunious: new routes on the Shelter Stone Crag and "a tin of cold rice to celebrate." Royal Robbins tells of a Glencoe V.Diff. in the rain which he says he enjoyed, two Scottish expeditions to the Hindu Kush (1965 and 1968) are written up, as are also visits to the Stanning Alps in Greenland and Antarctica. A healthy disregard for the hard-pressed Welsh and Lakeland scenes certainly makes for a Journal with a difference.

R. E. OWEN.

### **Alpine Journals**

With its new look the Alpine Journal (1969) has caught up with the American Alpine Journal in size scope and quality of illustration. Since its circulation among C.C. members is so large I feel no necessity to detail its contents here but simply congratulate Alan Blackshaw on the transformation. If this standard is kept up the A.J. will become the major source of mountaineering information.

Alpine Climbing (1969) is short and in the light of the previous

paragraph one might think it will become obsolete. However this issue certainly not since a guide to the Cilo Dag and Sat Dag in Turkey justifies the whole thing.

The Ladies' Alpine Journal (1969) is small and readable. Elspeth Whewell has an article on the Wedge in the Cordillera di Carabaya which she climbed with her husband; a notable first ascent. Sally Westmacott describes how to climb in Chitral without permission although it sounds almost as frustrating as climbing with.

The American Alpine Journal (1968) is up to its usual standards. Bradford Washburn gives a portfolio of his photographs titled "Challenges in Alaska and the Yukon" which should get several people sharpening their crampons. There are several articles on the McKinley south face where the Cassin route and South Buttress were repeated and a new direct South face route climbed. Chris Jones describes new routes on the North faces of Assiniboine and Edith Cavel and the late John Hudson writes on the N. face of Mt. Geikie. The latter showed promise of being a Robin Smith both as writer and climber. Evidence for the growing internationalism of these journals is shown by John Amat's article on his Sondre Trolltind route.

In the New Zealand Alpine Journal (1968) the antarctic expedition to Mt. Herschel is described and an ascent of Screwdriver and other peaks in the Carabaya. Murray Jones tells of his adventures in Wales and the Alps. Colin Taylor answers their plea for a description of recent British activity in the Alps.

The Canadian Alpine Journal 1968 is more inward looking and describes at enormous length the Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition. Planning took five years; a \$130,000 budget, two helicopters and a monoplane enabled 250 climbers to invade the Centennial Range in North Yukon Territory and bag 33 peaks. The organization chart looks like a critical path diagram for building the Concorde and includes such things as medal design and camp toilet sub-sub-committees. At this rate Canada will use up even their supply of virgin peaks and end its golden age in the next five years.

F.A.W.

The following Journals were gratefully received:

Alpine Club Journal, 1969  
American Alpine Club Journal, 1968  
Alpine Climbing (A.C.G.), 1969  
A.B.M. S.A.C. Journal, 1968  
Ladies' Alpine Club Journal, 1969  
Les Alps, 1968  
S.A.C. Monthly Bulletin, 1968  
Appalacia, June and December, 1968  
Sierra Club Bulletin, 1968  
Canadian Alpine Journal, 1968  
NewZealand Alpine Journal, 1968  
Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa, 1968  
Mountain Club of Kenya Bulletin, 1968  
S.M.C. Journal, 1968  
F.R.C.C. Journal, 1968  
M.A.M. Journal, 1968  
Rucksack Club Journal, 1968  
Irish Mountaineering, 1968  
Pinnacle Club Journal, 1968  
Wayfarers' Journal, 1968  
The British Ski Year Book, 1968  
Mountain, Nos. 1 - 6

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