

The
Climbers' Club
Journal

1973/1974 and 1975

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The Climbers' Club Journal

Edited by
J. H. Longland & H. G. Nicol

1973/1974
The Climbers' Club

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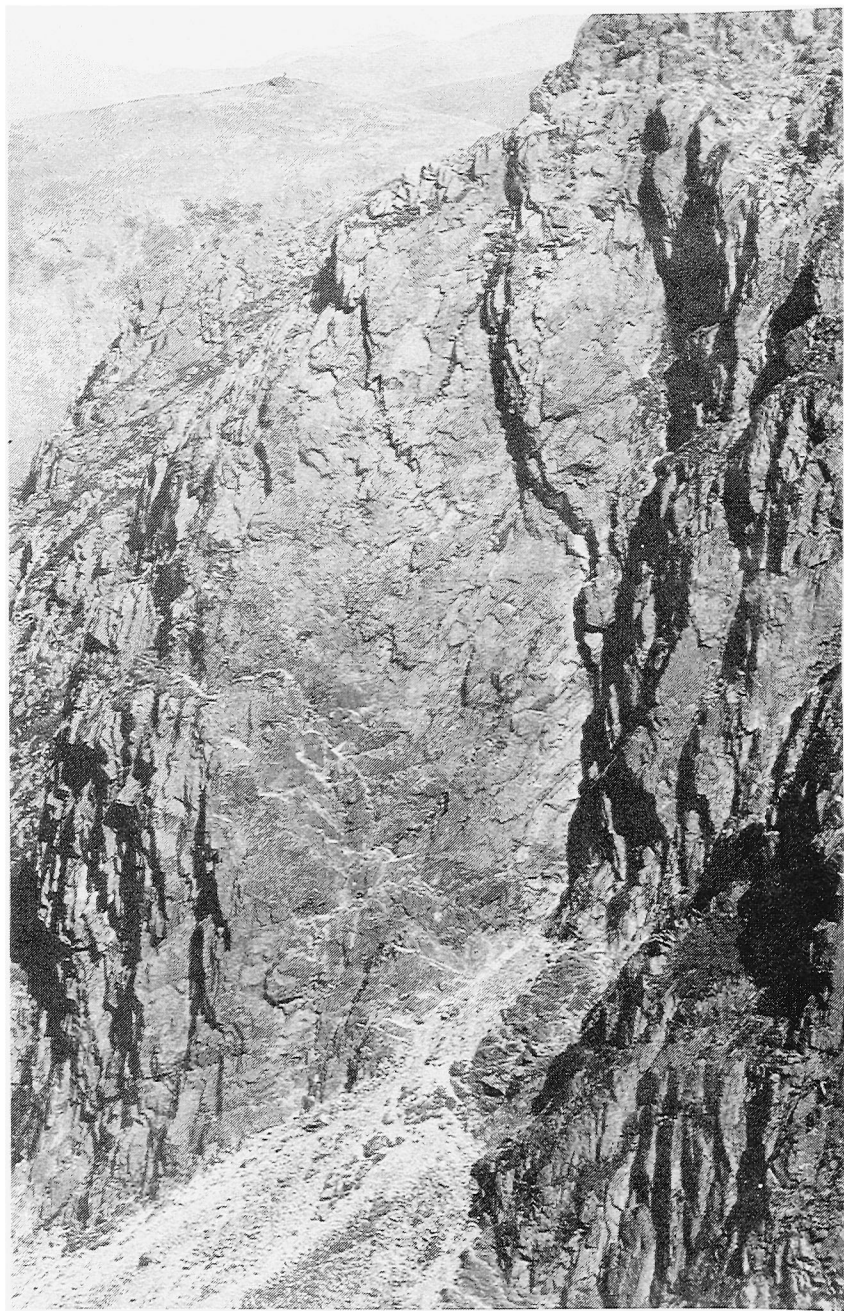
The Climbers' Club Journal

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THE GREAT SLAB
CWM SILIN

THE ARMY MOUNTAINEERING ASSOCIATION HIMACHAL PRADESH EXPEDITION 1973

by
MAJOR JON FLEMING

The Parachute Regiment

"£2,500 for Army Compo?" I uttered incredulously. "You must be joking" said I with more conviction. "It is the law" the Indian Customs Officer pointed out severely. After a week of haggling, persuading and sweating in New Delhi we got around the law and paid no customs duty at all.

The expedition was now ready to leave the hot, dusty plains with their temperatures of 115^o, for the small village of Raisan in the Kulu Valley some 250 miles north of New Delhi. We hired a special bus for this purpose while the 3 tons of food, equipment and clothing came along in 2 Mercedes lorries. Leaving the incredibly chaotic traffic conditions of Old Delhi thankfully behind us we headed north, into the hot windless night, to Chandigarh arriving there at 0300 the following morning. 5 hours and a meagre breakfast later we were on our way again scorching our way through the searing heat of the plains, which none too soon gave way to the cooler atmosphere of the foothills. Along the spectacular Pandoh to Aut road, cut into the steep cliff face high up above the mighty and turbulent Beas River, until at 0100 on the 7th May we arrived at Johnson's Orchards. 25 dusty, weary travellers tumbled out of the hot, cramped transport into the fresh cool air of Raisan. Having paid off the drivers we slept in the open amid the fragrance of the blossoming fruit trees of the orchards.

Jimmy Johnson is an Anglo-Indian owning 100 acres of fruit orchards in the spectacular Kulu Valley. He offers expeditions, especially British ones, camping facilities on his land. His generosity is impressive, his hospitality overwhelming. For the next 2 days we sorted out our food and stores into porter loads and made our own personal choices of what we should have to do without over the next ten weeks in the mountains. I went in to Kulu to draw money from the bank, and to make my formal application to take the team over the 13,050' Rohtang Pass and into the Restricted Area beyond. 7 hours later I returned with both money and permission.

The next day, 9th May, having advanced our watches by 2 hours so as to make the maximum use of sunlight, the expedition split into 2 parties. 10 members and an Indian LO left Raisan for their allocated mountains of Indrasan (20,410') and Deo Tibba (19,687'), under the leadership of Major Gerry Owens. Indrasan had been climbed by a British party under the leadership of Tony Johnson in 1971, by the West ridge. It had been described to us by Bob Pettigrew as 'an Eiger type problem' whereas Deo Tibba was considered to be 'a Sunday afternoon walk for Ladies'. In addition to climbing these two peaks the intention was also to test out our equipment, food and oxygen apparatus to evaluate our requirements for the 1976 Army expedition to Mount Everest. Having engaged some 60 porters the party went up and over the Chandrakhani Pass (10,500') up to their Base Camp in deep snow at 12,500' on 13th May. This was not done without injury, sometimes caused by sheep ticks, which on one occasion attacked a particularly sensitive part of the anatomy! Once at Base Camp the porters were dismissed and there then began the familiar soul destroying labour of back packing the stores, food etc to the higher camps. The normal form was to get up very early, while it was still dark, in temperatures of -20^oC and carry loads up to the next camp while the snow surface was still crisp and hard. Where possible work ceased at midday because usually it started to snow at this time, not clearing up until the evening. The way between Camp II (15,500') and Camp III (18,300') was barred by the 2,500' de Graff couloir. This was finally scaled on the 22nd May in atrociously dangerous snow conditions. On the descent Owens himself was caught in a powder snow avalanche and survived, fortunately without injury. Having placed fixed ropes in position in the couloir, Advance Base Camp was established on 27th May at about 18,300'

just underneath Indrasan. However it was not possible to begin stocking it until 1st June owing to constant bad weather. The next day a steep rock wall was scaled to gain a col on the east ridge of Indrasan. From here a 900' buttress involving some V.S. pitches was climbed by Day and Gunson, while Anderson and Hardie followed fixing fixed rope. All the while Advance Base Camp was being stocked by the remainder of the party, which included two Gurkha soldiers. Eventually after a good piece of route finding by Anderson a way was found round the buttress and on the 5th June an attempt was made on the summit. This unfortunately aborted when Hardie sustained a deep gash just underneath his left eye from falling rock and ice, and the party had to retreat to Advance Base. The next day, 7th June, a new party made a bid for the summit but owing to the difficulties involved were a lot slower than originally planned. They thus had to set up a bivouac camp (Camp V) at 19,800' for that night. The following day they set off up the crest of the ridge at 0600 and reached the summit at 0910. The summit slope was composed of a layer of snow on hard ice which necessitated the party climbing it pitch by pitch. Indrasan had thus been climbed by a new route. This route was repeated by another party on the 9th June. In the three weeks that remained this part of the expedition then climbed Deo Tibba (19,687') from the north, Ali Ratni Tibba (18,013') by Moss's route on the south face, Ramchukor (17,400'), Jagatsukh Peak (17,200'), Consolation Peak (17,150') and Wangyal Peak (16,400'). They returned to Raisan via the Malana Nallah on 22nd June.

Over our radio link we, the Menthosa party, heard of the success on Indrasan and Deo Tibba. Our party of 18 had left Raisan on the 10th May. Three other members of the CC, John Peacock, Tom Lynch and Terry Thompson, were in this party. Our aims were to climb Menthosa (21,120') and Baihali Jot (20,602') as well as to carry out similar tasks in respect of food, equipment and oxygen apparatus to those being conducted on Indrasan. Our approach march was a longer one than the other party's and because there were more of us so we needed more porters. Our route lay initially over the 13,050' Rohtang Pass, as yet still blocked to wheeled traffic by snow, into the restricted area of the Chandra Valley. Once in this valley, we were told, a bus or even mules, would take us and the 2 tons of stores the remaining 45 miles to Udaipur, which was to be our Base Camp. We engaged 120 porters and crossed the Pass in a day. Some of the team suffered their first bout of altitude sickness on this day. At Koksar, the first village we came to in the valley, it was quite clear that the road would be out of commission for a further 2 months. After a bit of porter trouble and eventually hiring some 50 mules we arrived at the Base Camp 9 days later. The further one went down the valley the more lush it became. The scenery was superb and more than made up for our trials and tribulations. We all got a lot fitter. The march into Menthosa took 3 days, one of which seemed to get lost in the alcoholic haze of raksi taken during a boisterous party one day out from Base. We set up Advance Base Camp above the snow line at 14,200' on the 21st May after the porters refused to carry any further. From here we got a magnificent view of the mountain, heavily caked with snow and with a feasible route up the right hand skyline (east ridge). It had been climbed twice before. Camp I was established the next day at 16,500' on a col after a technically easy, but soul destroying snow plod in indifferent snow conditions. On the descent to Advance Base Camp we were chagrined and not a little embarrassed to find that a cow had destroyed all our hard-earned footsteps! While Camp I was being stocked by the rest of the team, four leading climbers including Thompson recce'd a route to and established Camp II at 18,350'. The route lay along a tricky traverse and then up a steep 800' snow slope, giving out on to a plateau 3,000' below the summit. In due course this route was made permanent by fixed rope. The storm that affected the Indrasan party hit us from the 28th May to the 31st. The wind howled, a lot of new snow fell and the temperature dropped to -26°C. The weather at Camp I in the col was particularly boisterous. Even so we were able to snatch at least a part of most days to release the fixed ropes and to carry out some instruction on the oxygen apparatus. Thus by 2nd June the lead climbers had completed their recce of the route to Camp III (20,300'), which lay along the crest of the right hand sky-line ridge overlooking the Advance Base Camp glacier. The last bit of the route comprised a ¾ mile snow and ice arete. Its most spectacular part dropped abruptly 5,000' on one side and 2,000' on the other. Camp III was finally established on 3rd June by 4 lead climbers and a further 4 members of the expedition acting as porters. Taking advantage of the fine weather the former

wasted no time and set off for a summit bid late that same afternoon. We in Camp II were able to watch progress for a while; 4 minute black dots creeping across our front, about 2,500' above us. They soon disappeared over the lip of the plateau and then the cloud, which had been threatening all afternoon, rolled in and obliterated our view. It was not until the evening radio call at 1900 hours that we heard of their success. During the next 6 days all 18 members of the party climbed to the top of Menthosa. It had been a great mountain, offering as it did a piece of really interesting mountaineering at every stage. It was a most satisfying summit, from which could be seen a sea of peaks, many of them unclimbed because they lie in the Restricted Area to foreigners. Having withdrawn off the mountain in good order we retraced our steps down the magnificently awe-inspiring Miyar Nallah reaching Base Camp on 14th June.

Allowing a day to sort ourselves out and to rest the 16th June saw the party on its way to Arat up the Ur Gad Nallah for our tryst with Baihali Jot (20,602') and Duphao Jot (20,011') which we had decided to attempt as well. After another 3 day walk in and the customary porters' strikes, Advance Base Camp was established at 14,100', underneath a chaotic and noisy 2,500' icefall which barred any easy access to Baihali Jot. Thus while Camp I on Duphao Jot was being established at 17,400' a party of 10, including Peacock, Lynch and Fleming tried to find a way up the left hand side of the icefall and on to the glacier beyond. To our dismay we found the way barred by a huge crevasse which ran the entire width of the icefall. The next day, having had to take to the rock on the left of the icefall, this crevasse was successfully turned and Camp I was established at 16,700'. Not without mishap, however, as on the way round Lynch fell into a crevasse and was only extricated after a long and cold hour.

On the 23rd June the Duphao Jot party, including Thompson, left their Camp I very early in the morning. The snow was at last in reasonable condition. After a very long and spectacular ridge walk they came to the summit ridge. This provided some most interesting mixed climbing for about 1,000'. At about 1100 hours they were on the summit of their mountain gazing anew on the profusion of peaks below them. If they had looked to their north west they would have seen 10 little dots making their way up to Pegasus Col, some 2 miles up the glacier from our Camp I. Once on this col we began to doubt that the peak that we had always considered to be Baihali Jot, based on the A.J. Report of the 1969 Anglo-Indian Expedition, was in fact that mountain. Our map did not help at all, and we were aiming for a delicate looking snow spire which seemed to be higher than the 1969 party's Baihali Jot. After surmounting a thoroughly rotten rock buttress, Camp II was established at approx 18,500' at the bottom of the long steep snow ridge leading to the top of the snow spire. While 4 climbers, including Peacock and Lynch, camped there the load carriers returned to Camp I resolving to climb the hitherto unclimbed peak just above that camp the next day. The 24th June dawned, our last climbing day. Early the Peacock party left their Camp II for their summit. The route lay up a long, steep and exposed snow arete. It was a wonderful route and although fairly breathless they arrived at the summit in good order at about 1100 hours. It was almost certainly a first ascent, whether of Baihali Jot or of Bahuguna Peak (our suggested name in the event that it was not Baihali Jot) we do not yet know. In the meantime Fleming was leading his party up the unclimbed peak decided upon the previous day. From Pegasus Col we went up a very steep, crisp snow slope which gave out on to a steeply undulating crevasse ridden and alarmingly exposed snow ridge. It was certainly exhilarating climbing. Soon we were above the minute tents of the other party's Camp II. The ridge was very heavily corniced and we had to be careful. About 30 minutes from the summit the clouds rolled in. Sight and sound were muffled in dense clag. At 1300 hours we stood on the huge cornice which loomed some 3,000' over our Camp I. We have suggested that this peak be called Gurka Parbat after the magnificent and cheerful soldiers who accompanied us on the climb, and who will be with us on Everest. That evening 2 very happy parties drank copious mugs of tea while the rays of the setting sun clothed the ramparts of Menthosa in a blood red mantle. On the 25th June we struck Camp I and moved down to Advance Base Camp. While negotiating the most tricky part of the route a huge serac some 200' high — we called it Ronan Point — collapsed without any warning. Fortunately those underneath it at the time dived for cover and most of the debris passed harmlessly into a crevasse. By the 27th June the whole

team was back at Base in Udaipur. After killing and eating a sheep we all moved off for Raisan on the 29th June. What had taken us 9 days to march in took us only 3 days to march out. The road was now open to buses, although we still had to walk over the Rohtang Pass. On 1st July we were a reunited expedition once again, all swapping stories in the traditional way. Before leaving Delhi on the 14th July, by RAF, we were able to take in the Taj Mahal, Fatehpursikri, Udaipur and one party went to Dharamsala to seek an audience with the Dalai Lama. Peacock and Fleming went to Kathmandu to discuss Everest 1976 — our ultimate goal.

SKIS ACROSS THE ALPS 1972

by

HAMISH NICOL

It had stopped snowing an hour ago and the new snow covered everything, like an ocean. The only sound was the swish of the skis through the soft powder, the plop and squeak of the ski sticks as they thrust and twisted forwards, the soft rustle of snow under the skins. The skis themselves were invisible six inches below the surface, but the tips poked out occasionally. A man without skis here would just disappear. There must be ten feet of new snow in places.

What on earth was I, 43 years old and a poor skier, doing here anyway? I had asked myself this question once or twice in the past two months, and I did not yet know the answer.

We had left the mountain hotel, the Matraier Tauernhaus, that morning at 4.30 a.m. in a spirit of optimism bordering on madness because it was still snowing, as it had snowed continuously for five days. But the barometer had gone up two points and though the car roofs were deep in snow and the road obliterated, we set off in the blizzard past the sleeping shuttered hamlets. Could anyone live there in winter? Innergeschloss and Hintergeschloss they were well named; they could not have looked more geschlossen. Not a dog barked. They must have been empty, dead and cold for months.

We were making about 4 kilometers an hour, taking it in turn to break the track. The man in front feels very alone. It is dark of course and in the light of a head torch it is difficult to see where the road should go: it is even hard to judge the dip of a slope, and how far you would go in a fall. But suddenly dawn came, and with it a patch of blue sky. So at last the weather had changed. That was a good day, all of 20 kilometers to the Kirsinger hut in the lap of the Grossvenediger.

The start of a ski touring day is usually easy though it is wise to leave early before dawn to catch the cold firmer snow and avoid if possible the slushy porridge and avalanche danger of the late afternoon. First up the road, then the forest, then the high ravines and meadows where the summer pastures are. Then steeply up the valley side to the glacier, and finally the col. 7 hours perhaps. If there is time climb a small peak on foot, in crampons, leaving the skins behind on the ski tips to dry. Then with skis on again, down the other side. This is where the trouble starts. This is not piste skiing at all, and though it is possible to find perfect spring snow the skis making little powder puffs as they swing round, it is more likely to be nasty wet deep sludge impossible to turn in, ready to slide away down the mountainside and you with it. And then there are the rocks. Nobody who has never gone ski touring can have any conception of the treatment that these plastic skis, worth £60 a pair get as a matter of course. Over rocks, boulders, screes, mud, heather and snow they go without a second thought. It takes one minute to remove your skis and walk past an obstruction and two minutes to put them on again, and there is never that amount of time to spare.

On the downhill runs usually the last bit is the worst, the steep narrow forest path with no room to turn. Here and there are pretty little benches where the summer visitors sit to admire the view, but there are not so many visitors to these mountains in winter time. It would be nice to remove the skis and walk, but this is impossible because the snow is too deep. So you blunder and curse and scrape down somehow.

Going straight on skis either uphill or downhill is not difficult. For progress uphill it is

necessary to strap skins on the skis, or they will slip backwards. The intention of skins in the nineteen-twenties made ski touring possible. At first they were just animal skins, now they are strips of nylon fur, with the hairs all pointing backwards.

Downhill a schuss may touch 25 or 30 mph, and blow off your sun hat.

But it is unfortunately necessary to turn at times, and a thirty pound rucksack plus breakable crust will reduce all but the expert to stem christies or worse. The stem turn, no longer seen in fashionable circles, can still be spotted occasionally on the high slopes making its stiff sedate way downwards, miles behind but fantastically safe. With the stem turn the stemchristie and the invaluable side slip your coarse skier can go anywhere, and once he has left the piste he will never return. The important thing about a touring turn is that it should be safe. Nine times out of ten it won't matter, but a fall on steep hard snow which happens to overlie a cliff could be fatal. It is not for nothing that I strap a pair of crampons to the backside of my rucksack, points facing outwards of course — anything to stop an uncontrolled slide. Our equipment suppliers had even thought up reversible cagoules, sticky fur inside, waterproof nylon outside. If you got out of control you had to take them off quickly and turn them inside out.

The British Alpine ski traverse had started on Thursday 9th March 1972 from Kaprun in Austria. The idea was to go from here to somewhere near Gap in Southern France on skis, taking an interesting line over the highest cols and summits. Kaprun had been chosen as a logical starting point on the East side of the Gross Glockner massif where it was reckoned the Alps really started. It was also a good place to practice high level limbering up, as the lifts on the Kitzsteinhorn go up to 11,000 feet from the village. Not wishing however to disport myself before the T.V. cameras too early in the proceedings, I had secreted myself with my wife in the neighbouring village of Fieberbrunn, which seemed ideal from our point of view as there were no high lifts and virtually no snow. Perhaps, I must have thought subconsciously, they might just have left me quietly there to graze.

I should explain that a B.B.C. T.V. party were to accompany us on the expedition. In exchange for a generous donation to party funds they would take photographs of us en route for a T.V. film (shown on Boxing Day 1972) and ask searching questions on the physiology of dehydration and farting at high altitudes. Not only did they accompany us most of the way, but they contributed to our combined strength in more ways than they realised. For as much as we were solid and workman-like, they were gay and not too serious: their flair and our doggedness complemented each other and made for an extremely happy and strong party. Chris Ralling was the B.B.C. producer, his great charm concealing an acid determination to get exactly what he wanted as far as his film was concerned. We saw a lot too of Mick Burke, well known for his ability to drive from London to Edinburgh on Pirelli Cinturato tyres, Dougal Haston of Everest and Eiger Nord Wand, Stewart Kington cameraman, and Ginger Warburton general factotum, skier and clown.

At Fieberbrunn I had reckoned without the forcefulness of our leader Alan Blackshaw. Every day there were telephone messages. Monday March 6th — "It would be very convenient if I would come over to Kaprun today" (Mary and I had only arrived from London at 3 a.m. that morning). Tuesday March 7th — "If not arrived by Thursday would have to miss out first section of the Rudolfe Hut. This would be a bloody nuisance for everybody" On Wednesday March 8th Alan took the matter into his own hands and sent Peter Judson over in his car to extradite the unwilling doctor. It was rather unfair on Mary. Her week with me in Fieberbrunn had crumbled to a short two days. I waved her a sad farewell. Perhaps neither of us realised it would ever have come to this. Peter talked non-stop on the 40 mile journey which served only to heighten my sense of unreality, of complete disbelief. We tore into the main square at Kaprun just at the end of the official send off, the Mayor of Kaprun brass band and all on one side, on the other the Ski Traverse party. Mayor and Alan made speeches in German and English, the band played, and it was all over.

I didn't know the other members of the party at all well except for Alan Blackshaw, who had been a close friend during our days at Oxford. Michael de Pret Roos I had met briefly during a skiing holiday at Andermatt in 1967. Alan had tried to organise a private party to traverse the Alps a few years earlier but without success. A successful civil servant and a natural leader, he had been working at the idea of crossing the Alps for years and had probably committed to memory the entire 600 mile route.

When his private party fell through, the Ski Club of Great Britain took over and in 1971 an advertisement appeared in most of the important mountaineering journals. By August 1971 a team of eight and a support party of two had been selected. They were: Alan Blackshaw (leader), Michael de Pret Roos (deputy leader), Peter Cliff (technical adviser), Dan Drew (food), Peter Judson (equipment), Nicol (doctor), Lt. Colonel John Peacock (Guardian correspondent), Dick Sykes (finance). Brigadier Gerry Finch and Major David Gore manned the vital support party which followed us wherever we went in a Range Rover lent by the Rover Company. This vehicle was grossly overloaded with spare skis, mountaineering and skiing gear of all descriptions, spare clothes and food.

Michael de Pret Roos, deputy leader, was our most experienced and best skier and could walk uphill and ski downhill with a heavier pack faster than any other member of the party. Although not noted as a mountaineer or rock climber, he could also climb rocks up to very severe standard without difficulty, and without usually troubling to remove his skis. Generous and open to his friends he had no patience for fools or for idiot remarks, and those who tried him discovered the sharp edge of his tongue. Peter Cliff and Peter Judson were the two youngest members of the party, and both were ski instructors. Both found it a little strange being surrounded by so many quadragenarians. Cliff could always be relied upon to be wearing a bright red pullover in the most photogenic situations: Judson had a penchant for eating long solitary meals on glaciers, usually of tinned sardines. Dan Drew supplied all the food, and he and I cooked it in the unguarded huts where we actually had to fend for ourselves. This role puzzled my wife enormously, since at home I scarcely know where the kitchen is, let alone what goes on in it. Dan always wore a patient happy smile and round his neck an altimeter. Lt. Colonel John Peacock joined us at Davos from the rocket ranges of Benbecula. One of his many functions was to supply the weekly articles in the "Guardian", which he churned out effortlessly with a minimum period of gestation. (He had some difficulty in keeping his skis parallel too). Dick Sykes, fellow member of the Climbers' Club, had the unenviable job of group financier, perhaps because he could extract money from people more painlessly than most. A man of few words, he thought I talked too much *and* he could ski on the Fischer langlauf skis with which we were all supplied but which spent more time on the Range Rover than on our feet.

The idea of crossing the Alps on skis is not new. If two points on a map, let's say Lands End and John O'Groats are joined by a straight line or a squiggly line, people will find some way and excuse for going from one to the other. First on foot, then on foot avoiding all paths, then on roller skates, bicycles etc finally perhaps wheeling their grandmothers in front of them in a perambulator. The traverse of the Alps done on skis has arrived at an intermediate stage in such a progression. Sir Martin Conway started it off in 1894 with his classic book "The Alps from End to End" But his journey took four months and was on foot. Today the vogue is for ski traverses as being faster and possibly more complicated. There had been three successful ski traverses before ours, by Bonatti in 1956, by Denis Bertholet in 1965, and Kittl in 1971. Kittl and his team had run on langlauf skis from Vienna to Nice in 40 days, sometimes covering 80 kilometers in one day. Alan Blackshaw's idea was to be the first British party to do it on skis, but so far as is possible to do it enjoyably. When there was a ski lift going in the right direction it was not thought logical to walk uphill beside it.

On Thursday March 9th at 6 a.m. the British Alpine Ski Traverse left its posh Kaprun hotel and the Traverse had begun. We had had a late night sorting out new equipment and this set a pattern for the first three weeks — an early blast off after far too little sleep. An intriguing journey

uphill by rack railway and jeep through the tunnels of the Kaprun hydro-electricity system made time for the return of self doubts and self questionings. Having trained hard all winter writing prescriptions for tranquillizers and mist. pot. cit. in a busy N.H.S. practice while the others, four of them at least had spent the same time as ski instructors, I did not rate too highly my chances of survival. My one training walk had proved a disaster. Twenty miles of easy going on the gently grassy Malvern hills had reduced me to blistered immobility. "You don't look too well" observed our Senior Consultant Physician the next day, "when is this Alpine jaunt of yours? Next month?"

March 9th. From Kaprun up the Mooser Boden over the Kapruner Torl (2639 m.) to the Rudolfshütte in time for tea. A wet cold day. Driving snow. A short abseil from the Torl summit split the party up considerably. However the Rudolfshütte made up for everything. It was vast and welcoming, and from its kitchens emerged huge mixed grills called "Huttenplatte für zwei personen", which were just about right for one ski tourer.

March 10th. Official film start to the expedition. Alan Blackshaw and Peter Judson set off simultaneously and fell in a heap before the B.B.C. cameras. It was an epic day spent in appalling weather in the wrong valley on the wrong mountain. At 2 p.m. unanimous return to the Rudolfshütte.

March 11th. A better day, but cold sunless and misty. From the hut the obvious line was to contour round the Weissee then mount the easy Sonnblickkees to the Granatscharte (2974 m.). A difficult long descent down the Landeck Tal to the Tauern valley where there was a road, and eventually the Range Rover. Comfortable night in the Matreier Tauernhaus, a mountain inn full of comfortable Germans.

March 12th. Continuous snowfall all day. A rest day spent practicing with the new equipment, including the Skadi avalanche devices. These were little portable radio transmitters which had to be plugged into shaving sockets for at least 12 hours per week. They were the modern alternative to a St. Bernard dog, more practical and more hygienic no doubt, but soulless. Each member of the party had to wear one round his tummy when on the move, whence it emitted an audible peep peep. It was possible to locate somebody buried in a snowdrift very quickly by this means.

March 13th. Left Matreier Tauernhaus at 4.30 a.m. in continuous falling snow, nil visibility. Half way up the Vltrager Kees (Kees = Glacier in this part of Austria) the sun came out and this was the turning point of the ski traverse. In the 14 continuous days of fine weather which followed we got to Parplan in Switzerland, beyond Davos. At the top of the Kees the Untersulzbachtörl, and beyond it the ditto Kees. It didn't matter what they were called as neither could be seen from the other. It was a white out. Austrian place names get full marks for being explicit and descriptive, fewer for euphony. A bit like that Welsh station which starts off Llanfairpwllgwyn...and is still going 58 letters later. Alan pulled out and placed some marker flags, partly for our own benefit in case we might have to beat a retreat, partly for the B.B.C. party who were behind and might get lost. Finally the sun came out again and gave us a fine run down the Kirsinger Hut perched on its rock outcrop at 2,600 metres. The Kirsinger is really two huts, the summer hut large and closed, the winter hut behind it unguarded, and hence open at all times. You just lean against the front door and it opens, if there isn't too much snow jammed behind it. There is only one room with big sleeping platforms on one side, known aptly in the French huts as the bat-flanc, on the other a wooden table and chairs, and in the corner the great iron stove. On top of the stove are two large pots, left full of water by the last visitors in November, with two large soup ladles ready for use. The whole lot is of course frozen solid, and it will be two hours with the stove going full blast before the ladles can even be moved. It doesn't get much above freezing point in an unguarded hut in the winter. Wood is carried up to these places by the Austrian, and in Switzerland the Swiss Army, and chopped into sticks. In exchange for this service they are allowed to use the huts for nothing.

Bit by bit I found myself manoeuvred into the position of chief cook, with Dan Drew my culinary second-in-command. Neither of us knew anything about it of course, but fortunately hut cooking is not difficult. First collect your snow in pot fulls or ladle fulls from a good snow bank outside the hut. Remember to avoid the latrine area which is usually sited downwind.....Allow two hours or so for the water to boil, then for 14 men take 14 packets of Maggi soup, preferably all different, and tip them in, stirring gently. The sun set at 6 p.m. and it became very cold. We put on all the clothes we had including our eiderdown jackets, but with only one blanket per man it was a shivering night.

March 14th. Late start at 7 a.m. for B.B.C. filming purposes. Down the Obersulzbach Kees and over a col to the Warnsdorfer hut for lunch. Long soft afternoon ski down the Krimmler Ache to the Krimmler Tauernhaus. This was a sparser version of the earlier Matraier. It had a nice warm wood-panelled stubli with beer on tap and tremendous gemütlichkeit – we were the only guests of course – but the dormitories up in the attic were as cold and as comfortable as a hospital mortuary.

March 15th. For no particular reason this was a back breaking day. Up the road and through the steep trees to the Windbachtal was all right, but the bit up the valley side to the Zillerplatten Scharte had most of us step counting and reciting poetry or worse. Michael said chewing dry prune stones was always a great help to him, but I think he would have got to the top first anyway. An hour's halt on top was enough to collect the stragglers before the long and quite pistey descent of the Zillerback to Wirthaus in der Au. This was where the snow gave out and where Gerry Finch was waiting for us in the Range Rover. Gerry had taken the first comers down and would return for us, he said, but Dick and I hitched a lift with two fishermen who seemed more concerned with their fishing than with getting us to Mayrhofen. Eventual arrival at the Hotel Kristal at 5.30 p.m. Exhausting mayoral reception and dinner. Speeches.

March 16th. Taxi up to Hintertux and up mainly on ski lifts to the Wildlahnerscharte. Then a long steep and very fine descent right down to the Brenner Pass. The Hotel Steinacherhof where we spent the night had an indoor swimming pool complete with bar and lots of lurid magazines. At this point Walter Mann left us. His fluent German had been invaluable specially with all the arrangements at the start of the trip.

March 17th. Left Steinach at 8 a.m. by taxi bound for Rana, thence up to the Desdener Hut, another palatial establishment where an excellent Wiener Schnitzel could be bought for 45 Austrian schillings (about 75p at the time).

March 18th took us to Sölden via the top of our first mountain, the Schaufelspitze.

The next three days (March 19th, 20th and 21st) went uneventfully via the Braunschweiger Hut, the summit of the Wildspitze (3770 m.) the Vernagt Hut, the Fluchtkogel down to Serfaus. Arrived at Serfaus at 4 p.m. desperately tired.

March 22nd. This was our epic day. We got off to far too late a start from the top cable car station at 9.30 a.m., bound for the isolated ski lodge of Alp Trida. The snow got progressively worse all day, until eventually it became too soft to bear the weight of the leading track making skier plus his rucksack. It was a moment of deep gloom when we got to the top of the last col at 6 p.m. only to find that there was another col to cross and miles away. Eventually Peter Cliff sighted a light from a window in the lodge when we had navigated ourselves with map compass and altimeter and head torch to within 50 yards of it. This is the stuff of ski touring. Descend at night a snow filled unknown valley in winter, and find one point in it where there is shelter at 2,735 metres altitude. This may sound quite easy but it isn't. The huts are practically invisible, banked deep in snow, and if uninhabited have no paths leading to them. When Peter spotted the Alp Trida, the situation changed instantly from high drama to farce. They switched the hut searchlight full on

and blinded by its light, we blundered into the hut refuse midden and were obliged to pick our way through the tin cans and rubbish still wearing skis.

March 23rd. As a special concession, allowed late start at 5.30 a.m. bound for the Heidelberger hut in the Silvretta mountains. This was a very easy day mostly over the well-trodden ski area of the Ischgl ski resort.

March 24th. Left Heidelberger hut at 4 a.m., breakfasted at Jamtal hut at 7 a.m., climbed Dreiländerspitze (3,197 m.) and down to the Wiesbadener hut for tea. Scrambling unroped over the summit rocks of the Dreiländerspitze made a nice change after all that skiing.

March 25th. Climbed Piz Buin 3312 metres, and skied down the Silvretta glacier to Sardasca, a beautiful descent on powder snow. Gerry and David met us in a forest clearing with beer and orange slices and took us on to Davos. Official reception in the hotel Fluella 5.30 p.m.

To the hotel manager "Did you know that I stitched up a cut hand in one of your hotel bedrooms this afternoon, and boiled up the instruments over a primus stove?" "No sir, but there is nothing one cannot do in the Hotel Fluella Davos"

March 26th. Incredibly, the party only stopped for 12 hours in Davos. Next morning we were walking sleepily over the col to Arosa, to arrive there in time for lunch. This was to be my big day with the Fischer Europa langlauf skis. Never again. Skiing is bad enough when it is difficult to make a turn, worse when it is impossible. I gratefully accepted a lift from Gerry Finch round to Parplan by car. The pain in my left leg was getting worse and an injection of hydrocortisone into it by the expedition doctor had not made it any better.

March 27th. I awoke at 8 a.m. to find six inches of new snow and had a delicious lazy breakfast with the base party. Gerry drove us round via Chur and Thusis to the village of Scharrans where we were to await the arrival of the skiers. Enjoyed a long talk with the village school master in French, German and English, about the problems of schooling in this multi-lingual area. Meantime the climbers were having a bad day skiing on vertical grass: it had been a bad winter for snow so far. At 1 p.m. they walked in and later piled into a taxi for the drive to Hotel Bodenalp, Splügen.

March 28th. One of the problems of ski touring is that no hotel is able to comprehend fully your requirements. If you say you wish breakfast at 4 a.m. ready to leave at 5, they will say "fine", but you will wake up to find all the lights switched off, the fuse box and master switch hidden, the water turned off at the mains, the front door locked and the key unobtainable, and nobody awake. Nevertheless Alan and Michael got us away at 5 a.m. for the walk to the Zapport hut. The hut perched on its shelf on the left flank of the glacier was really concealed, but luckily Michael had reconnoitred this part of the route last Autumn, and knew exactly where it was. The Zapport was only our second unguarded hut on the traverse, but this time the cooking routine was more familiar.

March 29th. Departure in very cold conditions for the ascent of the Rinewaldhorn (3,400 m.) a rarely visited mountain, the source of the Rhine and the Italian Ticino rivers. The descent down glaciers on its west face cannot be recommended to the coarse skier:— too many cliff hanging turns are involved. Late that evening we were dropping down the steep hillside above Olivone carrying our skis on a beautiful path through the woods. Olivone is a lovely spot in the Italian speaking part of Switzerland not far from Lake Maggiore. We stayed at the Ristorante Centrale the only hotel in the village near a beautiful red church with a tall clock tower, and spent all evening eating pizzas and spaghetti.

March 30th. Off at 5 a.m. on skins to the top of the Lukmanier Pass and then half left through wild country to the Cadlimo Hut (2,150 m.) a 9½ hour day, and my longest ever hut bash.

Next day a tricky little traverse of what was supposed to be Piz Borrel, but which turned out to be something else and which included for good measure an abseil on skis, made an entertaining morning's work before the long descent to Andermatt for lunch at the Hotel Drei Konige. It was Good Friday and the town was packed with tourists, and as it soon started raining and snowing hard, there was little temptation to go outside. The party settled down comfortably in a little hotel in Realp, just west of Andermatt and here I stayed put for the full three days of the holiday.

Easter Sunday April 2nd. From a letter to my wife: "This morning you would have enjoyed Mass at Realp. It was a full sung High Mass in Latin. The choir were rich and raw and full-blooded but their tone was accurate and the congregation sang like mad. I found myself sandwiched in the middle of a platoon of local farmers all wearing identical brown suits. The ladies were all on the other side. The priest who had an excellent voice, intoned the first few bars of the Credo and then the choir with equal determination came in in a totally different key. It didn't seem to matter in the slightest"

April 3rd. Michael who is an optimist, had decided that we would spend the night in the Oberaargletscher restaurant, but he did not tell anyone beforehand that this would involve telescoping three days journey into one. Left Realp at 5 a.m. walked and skied over the Furka Pass to Gletsch. So far so good. The walk up the Grimsel Pass road in the full heat of the afternoon sun was nasty. Anyone can walk up a road of course, but in winter the actual road way is banked to an angle of 45 degrees with snow, and it is usually best to ski or walk on the top of the parapet itself which is covered with a varying amount of teetering snow. From the top of the Grimsel Pass somebody decided that the best way to the restaurant was along the continuing road. This was our only serious route finding error on the ski traverse. The road grew steeper and more dangerous and soon presented a 1,000 foot drop on the north side down to the Grimselsee, on which a fall would have been unstoppable. The five leading skiers got through, the remainder, myself included turned back and went over the shoulder of the Sidelhorn, which was longer but a lot safer. Only one small room in the Oberaargletscher restaurant was open to us and in it were two single beds, two mattresses and one small electric hot plate. Michael's friend in Andermatt who owned the place had not made this point quite clear, nor that the whole of the rest of the building was locked. It was at first sight a little difficult to see how 8 men and one girl (Susan Tuke, an expert skier and ski tourer had joined the party in Andermatt and was hitching a lift to Zermatt) could deploy themselves or sleep for that matter, in such a confined space. First we dismantled and removed the bedsteads, then placed the two mattresses on the floor. It suddenly became obvious that 4 bottoms could share one mattress if they were placed transversely across it, provided that four rucksacks could fill in as pillows for the heads. The legs got rather left out in this arrangement and trailed across the concrete floor. This accounted for 8 members of the party: Peter Judson spent a long time erecting the first aid rescue sledge outside where he slept to his complete satisfaction enmeshed in a cocoon of 7 mm perlon rope.

April 4th. Very long flog up to the Oberaarjoch, and thence to the Finsteraarhorn hut.

April 5th and 6th. Bad weather at the Finsteraarhorn hut. Our abortive attempt on the Gross Fiescherhorn ended at 3,700 m. Back to Finsteraarhorn hut for further session of poker dice. At 2 p.m. in the afternoon Alan made a snap decision to force a passage over the Grunhornlucke to the Concordia hut in spite of continuous falling snow and nil visibility.

April 7th. Left Concordia hut at 4.45 a.m. The Concordia hut is perched on a steep rock 500 feet above the Aletsch glacier, and the descent to the glacier is made by a series of steep wooden ladders. It was the sort of ladder a child might have made, the uprights lashed to the rockface anyhow, the crosspieces simply and roughly nailed. In the wind and the snow and the darkness it inspired no confidence. Alan put on his crampons and the party went down very slowly, testing each rung in turn. The Aletschfirn is long and flat and easy and we plodded up it silently within our own thoughts. It leads to the Lotschenlucke and the Hollandia hut (3,238 m.) which could

just be seen in the tempest from about 20 yards away. Three days earlier 4 skiers had not been so lucky. Looking for the Hollandia hut in a similar storm they had bivouacked within 50 yards of it, and next morning they had all frozen to death. From the Hollandia hut it was only a question of waiting for a clearance in the weather before skiing down the Lotschental to Blatten. Blatten – Visp – Zermatt. This was a north south section of the route and so could be done without loss at 7.30 p.m. that night.

April 9th. By train to the Stockhorn summit and thence to the Monte Rosa hut.

April 10th. 2 a.m. Snowing still. 3 a.m. Two tiny stars visible through the clouds. 3.45 a.m. Departure of B.A.S.T. party in gently falling snow, 45 other hut mates (all German) remaining in bed. Suddenly at 7.30 a.m. it all cleared and we had a nearly perfect day for the ascent of the Signalkuppe summit of Monte Rosa (4,556 m.) 8½ hours up, one hour 20 minutes for the descent back to the hut. Swoosh. It then became an unseemly race to catch the last train down from Rotenboden to Zermatt. Peacock, Sykes and myself lost out on this and skied on to where the snow gave out at Riffelberg.

April 11th and 12th. Filming days with the B.B.C. There are two ways of dodging the long queues at ski lifts in popular resorts like Zermatt. One is to wear a B.B.C. "freikarte" prominently. The other is to carry an empty rucksack with crampons and ice axe tied to it and just murmur quietly "B.B.C." as you pass through the ticket office. It works like a charm and costs nothing.

April 13th. Departure from Zermatt at 12 noon bound for the Schonbiel hut. A large part of this ascent can be done downhill thanks to ski lifts on the northern side of the Matterhorn.

April 14th. Set off from the Schönbiel at 3.30 a.m. for the classic section of the high level route from Zermatt to Chamonix, the traverse of the 3 cols, the Cols de Valpelline, du Mont Brule and the Col de L'Évêque. The B.B.C. party entertained us en route by chartering an aeroplane which picked them up on the first col and deposited them on the third. Ostensibly this was for filming purposes. Superb voluptuous schuss down the centre of the Otéma glacier at a steady ten to 15 m.p.h. for nine kilometres down to the Chanrion hut.

April 15th. We were supposed to take a high and difficult line over the Plateau du Couloir just south of the Grand Combin, but visibility remained about 10 yards and it took 5 hours to reach point 2,735 metres on the right bank of the Durand glacier. At this point an unexpected thing happened. There was a mutiny. Accusations were flung about. Nobody would expect a party of eight men to remain in perfect amity for 7 weeks and we did not. But perhaps the oddest thing about it was that a glacial moraine was chosen as a forum upon which to ventilate problems concerning leadership and its delegation. The argument and the bad weather effectively ruled out the Plateau du Couloir so we turned south and made for the Fenêtre Durand and Italy. The Durand col gave one of our finest descents on hard pistey snow easy to turn on, then a beautiful swinging walk with ski over shoulder down through the cliffs and pine woods to Ollomont. There we sat in a cafe and drank coffee and waited for a taxi for the journey back through the Great St. Bernard tunnel to Bourg St. Pierre.

April 16th. Left Bivouac Napoleon a large and extremely friendly roadhouse near Bourg St Pierre at 1 p.m. bound for the Great St. Bernard Monastery. Where the main road enters the tunnel a skiing area called "Super St. Bernard" has been developed and from its top station it is possible to ski down to the Monastery. The monks of the Great St. Bernard Monastery belong to the Augustinian order and hospitality to travellers is one of their specialities, so it was a memorable evening.

April 17th. After the continuous blizzard of the 16th nobody expected to get off at 5.15 a.m. as we did. Bernard Rausis Prieur of the Monastery, who happens also to be a qualified mountain

guide, had recommended a route over the hills to Courmayeur well known to the monks but not to the outside world. We were to descend the old road for a mile or so, and then turn right over 2 cols to the Col Malatra (2,950 m.) and from there to Vachey in the Val Ferret. Hitched a lift in a wood lorry to the Albergo della Funivia in La Palud.

"Madam, did you know that it is 16 years since I last sat in this room?"

"Sir, you should come here more often".

Taxi through the Mont Blanc tunnel to Chamonix.

April 18th. The only point in coming to Chamonix was to climb Mont Blanc, and the mountain was completely out of condition with one metre of fresh snow at the Grand Mulets and more higher up. This type of information does not even now, with roads and tunnels and telephones, travel well, and we had to arrive in Chamonix itself to get it.

April 19th. Alan decided to postpone the ascent of Mont Blanc to the end of the trip. Back through the tunnel to Courmayeur arriving there at 8 a.m. By ski lift to the top of the Cresta d'Arp (2,750 m.) followed by a fine descent and walk through the woods to La Thuille. Our idea had been to press on to the Margheurita hut the key of which Gerry Finch was supposed to have left with a note in some unspecified hotel in La Thuille. No note and no key. La Thuille itself seemed deserted, all the downhill skiers had left and before the lift attendants could follow them, the B.A.S.T. party forsook the Margheurita hut and the doubtful pleasure of the Rutor glacier for the certainty of a bed in Bourg St. Maurice that night. In short they boarded the 12 noon ski lift bound for Chaz Dura. I think it was my obsession with ski maps which had shown me the thin red line of piste number 7 which appeared to lead from the top of Mount Chaz Dura to the top of the Petit St. Bernard Pass. Thus we went from Chamonix to Bourg St. Maurice in one day without donning skins. (In 25 years the whole ski traverse will be done in this way, so go now).

April 20th. Long flog up from Nancroit to the Col du Palet and down to Lac de Tignes. The contrasts on this ski traverse make it so fascinating. One moment I am alone in a blizzard on the Col du Palet, the next I am in the Grande Motte restaurant drinking fizzy beer at 5 francs a half litre and surrounded by beautiful people. Lac de Tignes has everything and lacks everything. It is giant hotels joined up by puddles and mud and old wire.

April 21st. We left at 2.30 p.m. and took the Grand Motte ski lift up to point 3,016 metres. Easy descent to the Col de la Leisse and the refuge de la Leisse. Hut fees 5 francs a night plus 2 francs for camping gaz cooking.

April 22nd. 6¼ hours downhill running and walking to Termignon via the chalets of Entre deux Eaux. Taxi to Modane.

April 23rd. Ski lift up to Charmais, thence on skins to the Col de la Vallée Étroite. Snowing. Mr Maggi, warden of the Cabane de la Vallée Étroite laid on a splendid evening's entertainment laced with red wine, Genepy and La Grappa.

April 24th. Ascent of Mont Thabor (3,200 m.) then over Col de Vallon to Névache. Névache is only 17 kilometres from the metropolis of Briançon but one would never guess this from its splendid air of untouched dilapidation — one church, one pub with sawdust on the floor, one hotel, and a few scattered houses. John Peacock and I sauntered off up the valley to recce the route up to Col de Buffère for the next day, and looking back down to Névache it looked as if it had not, and could not be, changed in 100 years.

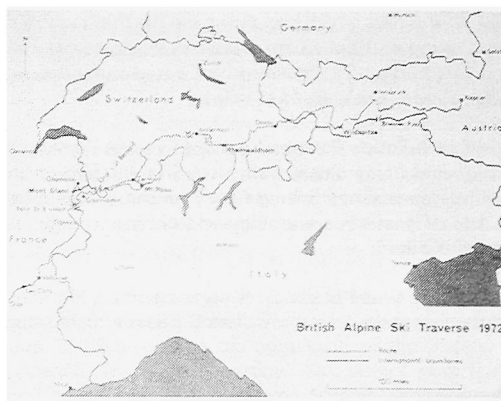
April 25th. Off at 5 a.m. for the traverse over the Col Buffère to Monétier les Bans. Monétier is on the main road between La Grave and Briançon well known to me during a number of successful and unsuccessful attempts on the North face of Monte Viso with Robin Prager in 1971 and 1970. The crossing of the insignificant Col de Frejus (2,425 m.) and over to Vallouise seemed too simple

on paper. In fact it produced one of the first real struggles of the traverse, in a gale force wind and a blizzard.

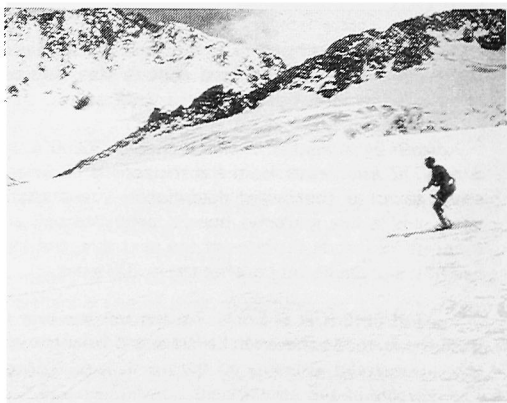
April 26th. The Pas de la Cavale between Vallouise and Gap had rarely if ever been tackled in an east to west direction, so all available pitons were mobilised for a mighty struggle which did not in fact materialise. I got out of it by developing an attack of otitis media on the 25th. Dan Drew was ordered to fill a syringe with procaine penicillin and plunge it in. "It's quite easy, it's like throwing a dart into a potato"

Base party and hill party, and what was left on the B.B.C. met that night in a hotel in Gap. Suddenly for me it was all over. The others would return and climb Mont Blanc but the attractions of a rapid return to my home and family were I thought greater. I took the night train to Paris that evening and flew to Birmingham on the 27th.

In 49 days, 8 men had crossed the Alps on skis. They could have taken a train. It was a point-less exercise in the best traditions of mountaineering. But if the interplay between man and his changing environment is one of the things which makes life interesting, then the ski traverse had all that — from snowy summits to sooty railway junctions, from hotels to hovels. I didn't realise this at the start of the journey, nor how complete and satisfying an experience it would become. There was a lot to be learned on the way, and not all of it about ski bindings.



BRITISH ALPINE SKI TRAVERSE 1972



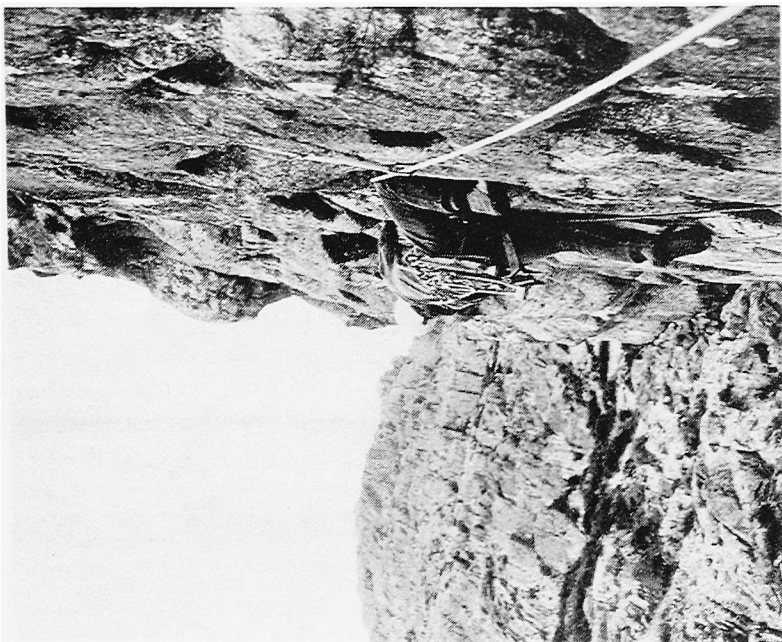
SKIS ACROSS THE ALPS 1972

HOMICIDE WALL

15

Dave Peers' Route on the side of Idwal Buttress

photos
Ian Howell



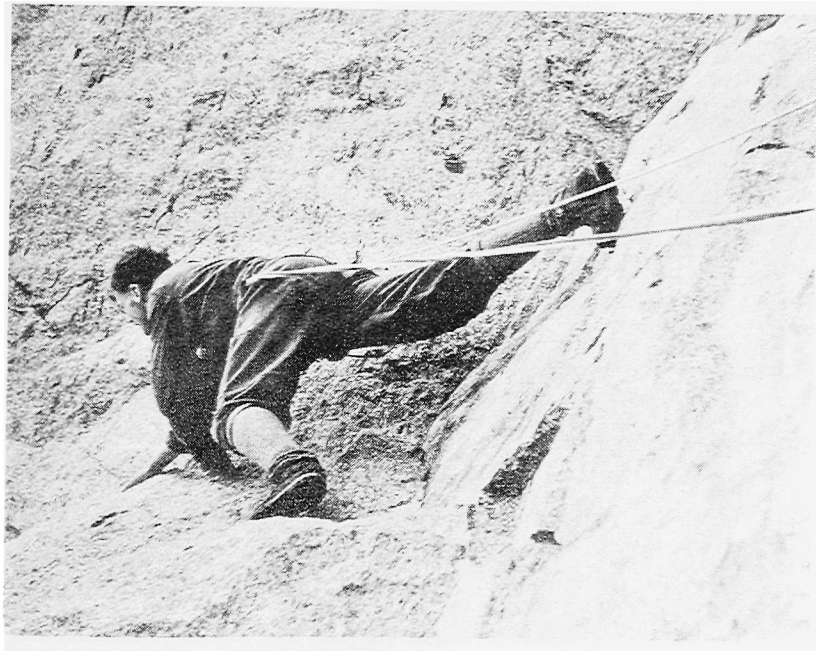
PITCH TWO

Bold moves up a steep wall lead to a withered tape hanging from a horizontal spike in a pock hole (climber at this point) further steep climbing leads to the top

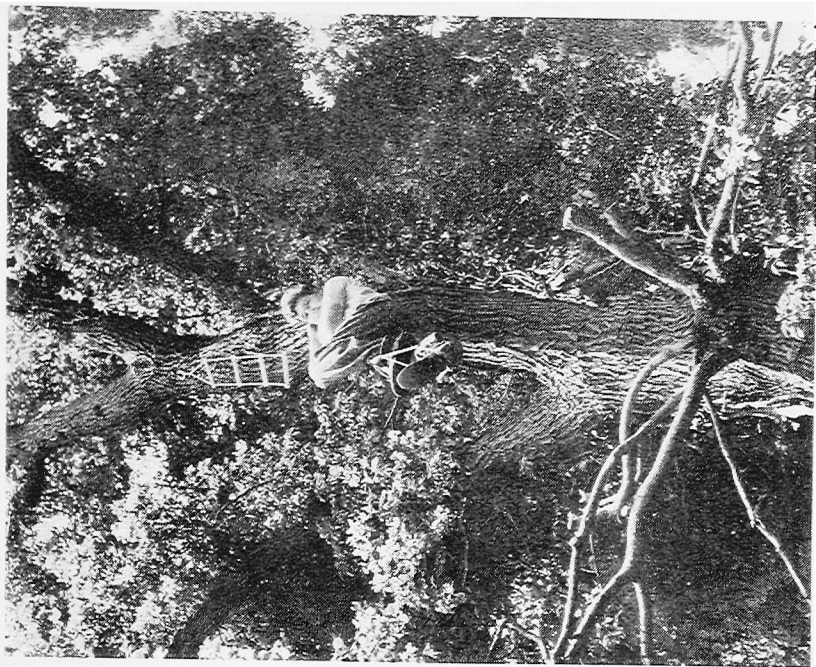


PITCH ONE

The climb follows the line of huge pockets and trends over to the right until a hard move (photo) leads across to ledges and a stance on the grass ledge on the extreme left



H. G. NICOL ON GRADE VI PITCH
Aiguille Noire de Peuterey 1955



TOM BOURDILLON ON THE PRACTICE TREE
Quainton Bucks 1954

THE EARLY FIFTIES

by

H. G. NICOL

When I arrived at Balliol in the Michaelmas term of 1949, I had already been climbing for three years or so in Scotland; at first with the members of the Edinburgh University Mountaineering Club, and later in the army, during National Service. Obviously it was necessary to make early contact with O.U.M.C. the luminaries of which club in those days were Rawlinson, Viney, Bourdillon, Holland, Tyson, Westmacott, Bull, Alex Jones and many others. At first I wondered why there was a mountaineering club at all at Oxford, so far were we from anything which could be described as a mountain. What was the point of these rather contrived meetings for which Douglas Milner, Tarbuck and others would drive down, do their party piece and show a few slides — all so far from the real thing. In Edinburgh you could get to excellent climbing rock any day of the week on a bicycle. After the meeting the President could be seen moving furtively round the gathering, a nod here, a clutched elbow there: these were the signs that the recipient had been invited to take beer with the committee, this being the ultimate accolade of social acceptance. It seems amazing and immoral nowadays to contemplate such happenings in a democratic society, but the O.U.M.C. was far from democratic in the fifties. Viney used to describe it as a benevolent oligarchy, the committee being largely self elected, elected their successors. I doubt if this has changed much in 1973.

Then there was the awful question of women. Should they be members or should they not? Bourdillon was in favour, Viney against. Passionate speeches were made, letters written. How futile it all seems now. In a mixed society I could see no point in the exclusion of women, and eventually they became full members, about 1956.

Official lectures and meetings occupied most of our time at Oxford. The term was after all only eight weeks long, nobody had a car, so escape was impossible. A visit to North Wales would not have occurred to us as feasible in mid term. However every term one bus meet was organized either to the Roaches, or to Bristol or even to Harrisons Rocks. These were invariably popular and well attended. The club averaged 80–90 members in number. No particular recruiting measures were used or thought necessary. A bound journal in letterpress came out regularly every year with proper photographs. The editor had to rewrite every article of course then, as I expect he has to do now: climbers are known to be both prolix and illiterate.

Although we were not able to reach North Wales every week-end during term as is now the practice, other outlets were available. Roof climbing in Oxford, never a legal activity, was practicable until about 1954 with only modest precautions. There were a number of classical excursions. The Tower of the Five Orders in the Bodleian Quadrangle could always be relied upon. The approach route was easy, and once inside the Quadrangle (this involved an abseil from the roof) the crux passages back and foot between the twin pillars were completely proctor proof. Nobody could possibly have spotted you there. The Radcliffe Camera, rightly called the Matterhorn of Oxford had two or three ascents per term. The great overhang was more a psychological crux than a technical one. With the lightning conductor in situ a good hand hold could be found over the top, standing tip-toe on the gargoyle's snout, and the rest was easy. We were always careful never to attract attention to ourselves. A white bow tie on the summit for the Queen's Coronation. Nothing more ostentatious. Jerry pots, and Austin seven cars were definitely out, in Oxford at least. Jim Murray, an American freshman who appeared about 1952 electrified the O.U.M.C. with his ascent of Tom Tower the following year. Like every beginner nowadays he was trained on V.S.'s. In fact I don't think he had ever climbed anything easier. I chalked it up in Oxford Mountaineering 1954

as the ascent of the South Face of Clogwyn yr Ty Eglwys (Crag of the House Church and apologies to any Welsh readers) and two weeks later received an earnest phone call from John Neill, then editor of *New Climbs and Notes* for the Climbers' Club. "Where was this new crag in Wales? Could we have a map reference?"

Roof climbing of a sort was done by every undergraduate who was obliged to climb up a drainpipe into college after hours. Nowadays hours are presumably so flexible and women so emancipated that trade routes of this sort must have fallen completely into disuse.

In 1952 Balliol astonished everybody including themselves by going head of the river during Eights Week. A bump supper was arranged and a boat was dragged into the quadrangle to be burned ceremonially. I hope it was an old one. Somebody conceived the idea of designing and erecting a sign which would flash "Bloody Trinity" in red and green during the proceedings. The sign was quite a complex affair with a clockwork motor to switch the lights on and off, and to be fully effective it would have to be placed on Trinity Tower. This is where I came in, having achieved some notoriety in the college as a rock climber. Two days before the party I decided that a recce would be necessary, so at midnight with a hundred foot rope across my shoulder I set off on to the Balliol roof and crossed over to the Trinity Tower without difficulty. It was all too easy. If I could get up with so little trouble could not Trinity men do the same and remove our handiwork? The tower was however much harder from the Trinity side and this was more hopeful. Our plan was to haul the sign up on a sort of teleferique (it was far too heavy to manhandle). An old piece of climbing rope was to be used, one end tied to a pinnacle on the Trinity tower, and the other to a stake driven into the Balliol lawn. Satisfied with my recce and on the point of abseiling down a wall back into Balliol, I suddenly spotted a door opening suspiciously from the bowels of the tower on to the high terrace selected for our purpose. This could be dangerous. Beyond the door was a winding staircase which after a few turns was blocked by a thin partition wall. There was a sound of heavy breathing nearby, almost of snoring. Before I could get away a tired and irritated voice said:—

"Oh do go away, won't you?"

So I did.

On bump supper night there was so much noise that the whole thing went splendidly, and the sign did indeed flash "Bloody Trinity" for a brief half hour before it was knocked down. Trinity men retaliated by painting "Bloody Balliol" on our lawn in weedkiller. The damages for the whole evening were of the order of £1,000, and one pound was subtracted from the battels of every Trinity and Balliol man to pay for it. Nothing more was said.

Roof climbing was however becoming yearly less popular and less acceptable to the authorities. In 1953 a solitary rowing man attempted the Camera solo after a bump supper, fell off on the overhang and was killed. This put an end to it, and from then on any undergraduate found roof climbing knew that he would be sent down immediately.

Every vacation there were at least two official O.U.M.C. meets organized, either in Wales, the Lakes, Scotland or abroad. My first meet was at the Robertson Lamb hut in Langdale in December 1949. Tom Bourdillon ran it, his idea of catering being to buy a sufficient quantity of oatmeal and jam, and to leave the rest to chance. One night it snowed hard and we awoke to find six inches on the ground. Tom announced that this was just the day to tackle Gimmer Crack. He was a great believer in "giving the mountain a chance" There was no point in his view, in doing hard climbs on dry summer days. They had to be done when there was a reasonable chance of failure. Tom and I slipped and slithered all over the first four patches of Gimmer Crack on that miserable cold day before giving up and walking and abseiling down the length of Dungeon Ghyll back to the hut.

The best meets of all were in Scotland. Every Easter eight men, the President and seven hand picked by him made their way to the Charles Inglis Clark hut on Ben Nevis. Once again there was no question of a democratic vote. The president simply selected his friends. We would leave Oxford on the last Saturday morning of the Hilary term and driving non stop through the night reach Fort William at 10 a.m. or so next morning. There were no motorways and none of the cars available to us had a top speed of more than 45 m.p.h. Michael Holland's Ford van looked so villainous that we were more than once stopped by the police who fortunately relented as soon as they saw the ice axes and ropes inside. The C.I.C. hut was the only proper mountain hut in Great Britain then as now. There was no effective form of heating, and every morning one could scoop the condensation off one's top blankets with a spoon. All the trade routes were done, Tower ridge, number 2 gulley, North East Buttress, and one memorable day Rawlinson and I set off for Zero Gully. In those days it was considered cheating to use crampons. Crampons were only for the Alps, and the proper footwear for all Scottish winter climbs was tricouni nails, and a slater's pick if your ice axe (regulation size 36 inches or longer) was too clumsy. I spent many hours cutting steps up the first two hundred feet on steep ice, until an overhang plus an avalanche sent me and Rawlinson down by the direct route to the valley, a total fall of some seven hundred feet. Michael Holland who was observing us from the hut door gave the alarm, and we ended up at 1 a.m. in the Belford hospital, Fort William: not the palatial affair of today, but a two up and two down cottage hospital presided over by the resident surgeon and genius, Mr Duff. Both of us were severely concussed. A young Glaswegian who was in the bed opposite to us is said to have remarked:

"It's no feer bringin' dead bodies into the warrd".

Anthony also had a dislocated hip, and on his way to the operating theatre to have it put back he must have recovered sufficiently to overhear night sister threatening to snip off his best pullover with a pair of scissors.

"No you don't" said Anthony, sat up, removed it himself and relapsed into a coma. Anthony was always very careful with his equipment.

I remained unconscious for five days, and can just remember the cherubic face of Herb Cahn when he and the decimated meet visited us the following Sunday.

In the Alps too, there were regular O.U.M.C. meets but they never achieved much popularity, possibly because experienced leaders were in short supply. One based at the Couvercle hut near Chamonix in 1951 was fairly typical. Nine current members of the club took part, plus one older former member called Crombie. He was so unfit from a life of pink gins in the tropics that the walk up to the hut taxed him severely, and I can remember berating him for not taking the trouble to get fit for us. Such is the arrogance of youth.

In 1950 Tom Bourdillon arranged a private party which included Dick Viney, John Saxby, and myself in two weeks at Chamonix we climbed the west face of the Aiguille Purtscheller, the Ryan Lochmatter ridge of the Plan, the Roc-Grepon traverse and the north face of the Dru. It was the most exciting fortnight that I had ever had in mountaineering. Three of these climbs were graded Tres Difficile, all of them were first British ascents. It gave a push to the slow renaissance of post war British alpinism which later flowered in the exploits of Brown, Whillans and others. The Purtscheller was an odd choice. Its west face contained one or two artificial passages on pitons and étriers and this was why it was selected. Tom and I had been practising artificial climbing on a large tree in his garden at Quainton, Bucks. We had only the haziest ideas about étrier design, none having been used in England up to that time. Ours were far too long and clumsy, but the Purtscheller succumbed nevertheless.

After this, Viney and Bourdillon, Saxby and myself in two ropes attacked the Ryan Lochmatter ridge of the Aiguille Plan. We had minor route finding difficulties on the first steep 500 feet, but

after that all was plain sailing and magnificent climbing. The foot jamming diedre which shows up so well in Andre Roch's book is a beauty. Why were we the first British ascensionists? Partly it was of course due to Bourdillon's ambition and drive but partly also to the development of new and better footwear in the shape of Vibram-soled boots. These became generally available in England only in 1949–50. All these climbs would have been much harder in the pre-1939 era when climbers wore nailed boots and carried scarpetti for the harder pitches.

Richard Meyer joined us for the Aiguille Roc-Grepon traverse. He was an expert in the modern piton methods having learned them in the U.S.A. but the most hairy part of this particular climb is the descent from the Roc summit in a free abseil of 100 or more feet.

Finally Tom and I climbed the North face of the Dru. Now that it has become a trade route (autoroute du Nord?) it is hard to comprehend the aura of impregnability with which it was then invested. We bivouacked on the rognon at the foot of the face and I was so excited and frightened that I could not sleep. Alone on this rock with the great face above and the lights of Chamonix twinkling below — it was for me a situation of unimaginable anxiety and delight. We breakfasted, and leaving our bivouac gear in a little pile to be collected later, started climbing at 5 a.m. Tom and I were now moving very fast together as a perfect team. Where were the great difficulties? The fissure Lambert was about severe and the Martinetti about the same. Apart from some verglas on the final 1,000 feet it all went very smoothly — 8½ hours from screes to the summit. We slept for an hour and a half on the top and then unfortunately it began to snow. This put the traverse over to the Great Dru out of the question. We descended the little Dru by a series of abseils and made the Charpoua hut by nightfall. Viney and Saxby gave us a tremendous welcome. I was all for polishing off another climb the next day but the others being sensible and more mature would not hear of it. We collected the gear by contouring round the Petit Dru and returned to Chamonix.

1951 and 1952 were relatively short poor seasons marred by bad weather and accidents. Dan Stewart of the Edinburgh club with whom I was climbing had the misfortune to catch his crampons in the rope as we were moving together up the steep but easy Envers des Aiguilles glacier. He fell, and by the time he reached me he was going like a train and quite impossible to stop. Fortunately I saved the situation by diving involuntarily into a deep green crevasse some thousand feet lower down the mountain side. Dan shot over the top and the rope held. I was eventually extracted and frog-marched back to the hut with a fractured jaw and a very painful spine, and three days later collected by the mountain rescue team and deposited in a hospital at Chamonix. Apart from the necessary x-rays and twice daily insertion of a thermometer into my rectum I received no treatment there whatsoever, and what was more serious, no food. With a broken jaw feeding was obviously going to be impossible, but I was reassured by the surgeon in charge that if still alive by the end of the week I would be taken to the specialist unit at Sallanches, and there the jaw would be mended and if necessary wired. Three days of this reduced me to a skeleton. I was living on Lait Mont Blanc, a sweetened condensed milk in a tube which could be forced between my teeth and which was smuggled in to the ward by the large English climbing contingent at Chamonix. Eventually they had a council of war, grouped round the foot of my bed, and I think it was Dave Thomas who decided to send me back to London by plane from Geneva. Within five hours of arriving in London the jaw was reduced and set at the Middlesex Hospital.

In 1953 I had a magnificent season mostly with Ted Wrangham, a well known Cambridge climber and personality who in those days drove round from hotel to hotel in a large Jaguar car. I usually slept on the back seat being extremely short of cash. It has always amused me to read in "The Hard Years" and other classics from the Rock and Ice of the state of abject poverty which they enjoyed in comparison with us plutocrats from the universities. Obviously some of the university climbers were well off, but most were not, and it was just as difficult to survive on a Government grant then as it is now.

Ted and I in a leisurely seven weeks bagged the South face of the Geant, the Route Major, the

Gugliermina South face (a 6th ascent) and the North West arete of the Grand Chamois. Before Ted arrived I had climbed the South ridge of the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey with Pat Vaughan, the Old Brenva route on Mont Blanc with Michael Cunningham and the Point Albert west face with Alan Blackshaw, the latter supposedly the first extremely difficult by a British party in the Western Alps. Despite the fact that the Chamois route had only had one ascent Ted was convinced that there would be no problem. In fact the last pitch, which was a steep slab poised over a great overhang, from which retreat was impossible and on which a fall would have had serious consequences, gave the most difficult rock pitch I had ever encountered in the Alps. After some correspondence with the C.A.F. it was hastily upgraded to VI sup. The entire holiday cost me £42 all in.

Tom Bourdillon returned to the British scene in 1955 and once again we met in Chamonix. This time a short three week holiday produced four routes, the North ridge of the Peigne, the East ridge of the Crocodile, the West face of the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey and the East face of the Grand Capucin, the last two being 5th ascents. The Ratti took 12 hours from glacier to summit. I had the free grade VI pitch and Tom the great artificial overhang, which in 1955 was considered to be the most distinguished artificial pitch in the Western Alps. We used a doubled 250 foot number 2 nylon rope, with a number 2 nylon rope to haul the sacks up on. Ropes twice as strong, and as heavy, would be used nowadays. Tom and I climbed fast and unencumbered. If you carry lots of bivouac gear you end up having to use it. This is not to say that we ever climbed without duvets and bivouac sacks, but we dispensed with pieds d'elephant or sleeping bags. Tom's petrol cooker, the Bordet bomb, was a highly dangerous object resembling a pen torch in size but in character more like gelignite. Food was carefully thought out. 24 hard boiled eggs for the Capucin and so on.

In 1956 I had my finals in Medicine and had little time for climbing but Tom persuaded me to come. We set off in Dick Viney's car, and slept in a field outside Lydd airport, ready for the first flight to Le Touquet the next day. Tom had suffered all summer with an acute teno-synovitis of one finger, which made one hand much weaker than the other. On top of this he dropped his glasses into the Lake of Geneva. On Friday evening the party arrived at the village of Baltschied, at the foot of the Baltschiedertal and camped on the extreme edge of a hay field. I can remember being conscious of a distinct animosity between the villagers and ourselves, perhaps because nothing at all was said. Late in the evening the farmer diverted the irrigation stream to flood our part of the field and he did this quite deliberately. We woke up at one a.m. in six inches of water. On Saturday I stayed in the valley to see Mary, my future wife on to a train at Brigue. She was going to spend her holiday with her sister and brother in Venice. Tom and Dick, with Roger Chorley and John Tyson walked up the path to the Baltschiedertal hut. I followed them the next day, but not having a map or a compass got lost and spent the night in a hay loft. It was Monday morning at about 10 a.m. before I got to the hut to find John and Roger on their own. Tom and Dick had not returned from their climb. We walked up to the glacier at the foot of the face and found them both there roped together. They were dead.

Their death ended the gold age of Oxford mountaineering in the fifties. I did not climb again myself for four years. It was an event of shattering significance for me and for all climbers. I had lost two of my best friends and who knows what their continuing influence on British mountaineering might have been if they had lived.

This has been a very personal account of the O.U.M.C. in the fifties. Big climbs were done by lots of other people from Oxford: Alan Blackshaw, Michael Westmacott and John Tyson, particularly in the Himalayas. The successful Everest expedition of 1953 had Bourdillon and Westmacott as full members and two of the four reserves. John Hartog of the Oxford club ran the brilliantly successful Mustagh Tower expedition in 1956, but I cannot speak of these events as I was not there. 1950 to 1956 may seem only a short time but for me it marked the beginning and end of an era. When I returned to climbing in 1960 it was at a much lower level of performance, so that 1960's with their jumars and siege tactics I will leave thankfully to a better pen than mine.

THE LATE FIFTIES A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

by

C. T. JONES

In the late forties in Derbyshire, the youthful Joe Brown and his friends were hardening their already considerable muscles on the overhanging Derbyshire gritstone outcrops and laid the physical foundation for the most tremendous increase in technique and élan that rock-climbing had ever known.

The Welsh exploits of the flinty-faced Manchester Sherpas who constituted the Rock and Ice Club resulted in them taking over the leadership of rock-climbing there as well as in Derbyshire. They charted ways up rock thought before their time to be quite inaccessible. It was felt it was impossible to repeat them unless the aspirant was a fully paid up superhuman union member of the Manchester building trade.

Stories were heard on the bush telegraph in the Welsh public houses of a horror-climb on the Far East Buttress (wherever that was) on which Joe Brown had forced a way. No one had been able to follow him. After overcoming its ferocious difficulty Brown had been forced to rest in a darkened bedroom with a dampened towel over his forehead for three days. The gullible general climbing public lapped up nonsense like this avidly, because there was no-one outside the Rock and Ice to question the validity of the story.

Scotland too felt the iron fist. The Rock and Ice held a meet late in every winter at Fort William to attack the appallingly steep unclimbed gullies choked with snow and ice on the North Face of Ben Nevis. Their shrewd eyes noticed an unclimbed magnificent buttress nearly a thousand feet high and almost vertical the whole way. Brown and the youthful Don Whillans climbed it by a series of magnificent overhanging cracks and chimneys, which the Scots climbers had scratched at in vain. It was the hardest climb North of the Border and just to rub it in, they christened it Sassenach, leaving the disillusioned kilted Jocks spluttering into their malt whiskies in the Fort William public bars.

Back in Wales, one of Joe's major triumphs was the ascent of one of the last great unclimbed problems in the Llanberis Pass. As the road winds and twists down the Pass towards Nant Peris the boulder-strewn hillside on the right steepens above the only bridge of Pont-y-Cromlech to the massive cliff of Dinas-y-Cromlech, symmetrically split in the middle by the beautiful great crack of Cenotaph Corner. It is bounded on either side by two vertical walls which are a smooth hundred and twenty feet high.

On one of his abortive attempts to climb it before he was successful in 1951 Joe dropped his piton hammer on to the second man's head eighty feet below. The hammer never recovered consciousness.

In 1956 Joe returned to the cliff with Don Whillans when they climbed across the vertical left and right walls to produce the girdle traverse of the cliff. As part of their route they had to go up the middle part of Cenotaph Corner as they searched for the easiest place to get on to the overhanging right-hand wall.

In 1958 I made one of the few repetitions of Cenotaph since Joe's ascent. Seven ascents in seven years did not imply it was an easy day for a lady. I was the first non-desperate man to make its

ascent and the seven leaders who had done it before were all spoken about in the Welsh public bars in hushed reverential tones.

The climb was hard, but not too desperate, in fact three quarters of the way up there had been a sloping shelf on which I was able to wedge half one cheek of a backside; with one foot bridged out at ear-level it was surprisingly restful. But apart from the one resting place it had needed a new concept in muscular tension. No move was very hard, just a tendon-sapping strain of staying to the smooth rock. For the first time there was terrible neck-ache due to the need to force my head back to plan the next sequence of moves up the relenting verticality.

Urged on by the ascent of Cenotaph which had been physically and mentally exacting, but not at the ultimate limit I decided to attempt the girdle traverse which had only been repeated once by a Scottish team led by John Cunningham the scintillating star of the Glasgow Creag Dhu who were a Scottish equivalent in many ways of the Rock and Ice.

Mike Harris of the Climbers' Club and I decided to try to make the third ascent.

Things had gone quite smoothly on the easier left-hand part of the cliff until we came up against it as we reached the edge of the great open granite book. Everything had gone quite smoothly in the couple of hours that we had been climbing. It was my turn to lead and I was half-way along the left-hand wall. I had been there some time and was clinging to a thin vertical crack with a very poor finger jam while I tried to thread a running belay round a small jammed stone. There were gravelly voices from below and looking down I recognized with a start the ultimate heavy mob, forty feet below me — Joe Brown, Don Whillans and Mortimer their gifted apprentice. A few seconds later the stone shot out of the crack as I jerked at the nylon loop. The surprise of this caused me to slip and fall about fifteen feet, gyrating slowly at the end of the rope as Mike expertly stopped me.

Broad grins from the hardmen; cigarette ash happily tapped into the heather as I spun round. "Excellent, what's yer next trick?" shouted Brown.

This was my first experience of the Joe Brown deflation phenomenon. Although he means no harm, as soon as he appears at the foot of the crag, violent vibrations affect the limbs of most of the climbers at work. They dither, fall off or retreat. If you happen to be climbing with him, this of course is worse and in nine cases out of ten a muscular paralysis sets in as you watch the Rolls-Royce climbing machine sliding effortlessly upwards. When it is their turn to follow the rest of the team gasp, struggle, stare hypnotically at the inadequate hold and often end up rotating like a turkey on Christmas Day on the end of the rope.

Later on that summer I got to know the Rock and Ice members quite well and I started going out with Barbara Bennett who lived in Manchester and who was Joe's wife's best friend. I used to travel up to Manchester to see Barbara and also took part in the climbing activities at week-ends and became a part-time Birmingham advanced rock-climbing apprentice. Winter week-ends were usually devoted to gritstone outcrops, the furnace of painful difficulty in which all the Rock and Ice members had been fired.

One particular week-end was spent at Ramshaw Rocks high on the moors near Leek in Staffordshire. These crags have a reputation for difficult cracks lined with needle-sharp millstone grit crystals. The cliff itself is of a split level formation, on the lower tier was a massive overhanging roof split with a three-inch wide crack, which seemed to grin venomously at any prospective climber. It was an obvious challenge to Joe as he tried again and again to climb over the prow of the overhang, hanging completely from painful hand-jams, but ruthless determination made Joe give one final great muscular effort and he pulled over the final bulge. He lay gasping at the top with the blood pouring from the tattered strips of flesh which before had been part of the backs of his hands. Two or three people including myself had a go but it proved to be another climb up which no-one could

follow him.

All the Manuncians showed great ability on the unrelenting, dirty painful boulders and cliffs with which the Peak District is covered.

In every sport the novice benefits from a good coach or trainer and Joe helped to train unpromising Birmingham-built muscles into a tauter Northern-type variety. I learnt the importance of looking away from a particular crack and reaching in and feeling for the best looking fit for knuckles, palms, fists or fingers which could make everything feel safe.

It became possible for me to lead hard grit routes like The Mincer and Saul's Crack at the Roaches. One of the week-ends we went to Stanage Edge, near Hathersage in Derbyshire. Don Whillans attacked the great roof of the Dangler which had of course been initiated by the Rock and Ice. There was not the slightest increase in the rate of puffing of his cigarette as Don unwound over the lip of the overhang and with a gymnastic flick of his feet moved on to the wall above. When it was my turn to follow, the only hold on the end of the overhang seemed minute. I jammed a boot into a little slot, tried to reach round, slipped and fell, hanging upside down from the wedged foot as money, car keys and half-eaten sausage butties rained out of my pockets on to the delighted watchers below.

In the evenings there were many darts marathons in the bars of the Derbyshire pubs and much drinking too to celebrate the days activities. There was an unfortunate incident one Saturday night. I was having some difficulty at that time because a kidney stone had dislodged and passed into the final channels of the urinary tract. The results were occasionally unpredictable and the resultant effect could best be described as a 'lawn-sprinkler'. One Saturday as I stood next to Joe in the Gents, a sudden attack caused Joe to be drenched. I got a very flinty-faced look. He wasn't convinced that it had not been intentional and our friendship seemed to dampen a little.

The greatest contributions to Wales by the Rock and Ice had been on Clogwyn du'r Arddu, a steep forbidding North-facing cliff on the side of Snowdon which only receives the sun early in the morning or late in the evening.

One of Whillans great innovations was Slanting Slab on the West Buttress. The major difficulty which had repelled all the pioneers from the very foot of the climb were great overhangs shaped like the inside of half the arch of a railway bridge. Loose Sword of Damocles type stalactites were wedged precariously in the trickiest part. Whillans nonchalantly climbed the enormous roof despite shifting pegs and tottering rock and got on to the superb-looking slanting slab from which the climb got its name. One of the pitches was an incredible 180 feet in length — the longest pitch at that time in the whole of the British Isles. Don's companion was Vin Betts a well-known raconteur and humourist of the period. In one place there was a nasty overhang which Vin couldn't seem to climb. He shouted to the distant Whillans who yelled to him to reach up very high for the enormous hold. Betts did as he was told, reached up as far as he could and found a nail scrape. His anguished, surprised shout at its smallness brought the wry Whillans reply that "That was it"

One week-end instead of going to gritstone Joe and I went to Wales and walked up to Cloggy to attempt to repeat the product of Whillans' masterly slab climbing.

The overhang looked absolutely awful and despite knocking in peg after peg all of which rattled in their imprecise slots and clefts Joe was unable to reach to the firmer rock on the slab above the overhang and so had to retreat. I had a go as well but could make no impression either. A very rare defeat for Joe on his old friend's climb, it enhanced the reputation of the route enormously.

All my gritstone and free Welsh week-ends were interrupted by the Ogwen Cottage traumatic sabbatical year. Back in Birmingham the atmosphere felt completely alien although it was nice to be

back with my family. Nearly everyone I climbed with either lived in Wales or in the Manchester area. I'd had enough of living in Wales for the time and as Barbara too lived in Manchester decided to move up there and so applied for a job with a large electronics firm in the research and development department. Eight jobs already and an abortive attempt at a business didn't look too good when written out on the application form. I had some difficulty in convincing the head of department that I really was going to settle down. The continuous glass windows of the interview room with the hot sunlight streaming through them made the sweat pour off my face more than had many a hard climb. Despite my unpromising background he took me on and I moved to Manchester.

I decided to join a small local group called the Cromlech club in which one or two of the Rock and Ice including Joe had joined after the demise of their club. The Cromlech lads were keen, went away every week-end and had a small hut in Nant Peris in the Llanberis Pass. It consisted of the top part of a barn attached to some farm outbuildings which nestled in one of the high pastures.

A solid Welsh slate staircase leading up to it was a wonderful sun-trap on the sunny summer days when we lazed on the steps after returning from climbing. We could see the little puffs of smoke as the Snowdon Railway train puffed away from the half-way house on the ridge leading up to Snowdon.

The atmosphere inside was very fruity due to the cows which were tethered below, but it was small and cosy with bunks at floor level. Moths, however could be a hazard. One night I was woken by an intense buzzing from inside my head. The irritation was intense and I realised with horror a moth was fluttering its wings inside the warm ear cavity. Eventually when I had awakened everybody, straw poked into my ear seemed to annoy the insect, and the pitch of the buzzing increased. Happily Barbara had a good idea and spat continually in my ear. With a few final Concorde-type buzzes the insect drowned in the froth.

The Cromlech members were very different from the Birmingham climbers with whom I had mixed. They woke late and it was unusual to get on to the cliffs before lunch-time. This was because of playing poker and liar dice until well in the early hours of the morning when eventually everyone collapsed into the bunks at the back of the table.

They used to climb a lot in Nant Gwynant one of the most beautiful valleys in North Wales. Half-way down the valley from Pen-y-Gwryd to Beddgelert the valley floor flattens out and then eventually comes the lake of Llyn Gwynant. There is a small wood on the Snowdon side of the lake and rising out of the trees is the tall, narrow light-coloured cliff of Clogwyn-y-Wenallt.

A big group of us went to examine a black overhanging wall with a black nasty unclimbed crack curving its way up it. It was a job for Brown. He quickly got to the tricky middle part and for the first time I saw his left leg in its flappy camouflaged trouser leg case tremble as his prehensile legs tried to rest on the barest scrap of a resting place. The climb seemed to ease a little above the tricky middle part. Again it took him a long time to turn the final overhang at the top. It was with the greatest difficulty that I followed. On the top as I gasped for breath it was ten minutes before I was able to speak again, — an all time personal record.

Joe had a stomach ulcer at this time but was still pioneering incredibly hard first ascents. Perhaps one of the contributing factors to his stomach complaint had been the Rock and Ice's liking for perpetual plates of fried food also Joe's liking for gulping down the odd discarded fried egg which he occasionally found in the long grass of the Llanberis climbers camp site.

But for some time I had felt that all this climbing with Joe had a detrimental effect on my climbing. If you did a new climb with him then the general climbing world assumed that the MASTER had hauled another load of dithering fools up some piece of rocky desperation.

I needed to cure myself of the Brown-Svengali syndrome which made my climbing so bad and get back to leading climbs again myself and find my own new routes.

The only consistent climber in Wales apart from the Rock and Ice was Hugh Banner who started climbing at Bristol University. Our first meeting was not auspicious. His university club had a week-end meet at Glan Dena the Midland Association of Mountaineers hut at the end of Llyn Oywen in the Nant Ffrancon Valley. I was a member of the M.A.M. at this time and I too was staying in the hut. The leader of the University Club after coming back from the pub led a large party in the pouring rain and pitch blackness up Soap Gut, thought to be one of the more difficult climbs on Tryfan at that time. I was not impressed at what I thought was foolhardiness and infuriated when I was woken up on their noisy return by beer-bottles striking the wall of my dormitory. Lying there fuming I decided to write immediately I got home to get Banner and his noisy cronies banned from using the hut again. Little did I realise a few years later he would be one of my firmest friends.

While he was in Bristol Hugh put up many new climbs in the Avon Gorge and eventually wrote the guide book to the cliff. After graduating he moved to Manchester and as we were both in the senior Welsh Club, The Climbers' Club, we both got to know each other. He had also started to do new routes in Wales just after Joe. But unlike Joe he was at the summit of a pyramid of his own friends and he alone forced the pace.

Just about the time that I decided to stop climbing with Joe, I got to know Banner quite well. I was used to the rippling power-house muscles of the Rock and Ice as they surged up the cliff. Banner was much slighter in build and moved more delicately, but his results were just as positive. He too lived in Manchester and started to climb a lot on the sandstone outcrops of Helsby which rise out of the River Mersey flood plain near Chester. No really modern climbing had been done there and nearly all the sandstone overhangs were still virgin. Banner relentlessly worked at this outcrop with the same enthusiasm that he had applied to the Avon Gorge while he was at university. The overhangs were gradually conquered as Banner forced his lithe form over the most difficult parts. Impressive names spewed forth: Gallows, Gorilla Wall, Illegitimate. Helsby had a late coming-of-age and it was nearly all due to Banner.

An impressive group of hard men developed around Hugh. They climbed nearly all but the hardest climbs without ropes including an impressive corner called Flake Crack, which had a hard finish. The first custodian of the Climbers' Club hut, — Helyg, in the Ogwen Valley had fallen fifty feet to his death from the finishing holds on to the unyielding sandstone boulders at the bottom. Later on it claimed another victim. The Helsby lads took perhaps ninety seconds to climb it and thought nothing of it. But I was then the custodian of Helyg and being superstitious never led the climb even though it was only graded Hard Severe.

In the spring we regularly went there two nights a week to train our muscles for week-ends in Wales. After a couple of hours when everyone was tired, the motor-cycles at the foot of the way would be revved up madly and the two mile race to the pub in Frodsham started. Points were awarded for achieving the 'ton' or one hundred miles an hour down the straight past Helsby Grammar School. Banner won most of them as he flattened himself horizontally over the tank of his big Vincent. A lot of motor-cycling climbers of that era had bad crashes and he formally gave up dicing after hitting one of the inflexible stone walls in the Llanberis Pass and badly fracturing his skull.

As I was part of the Helsby group who met in the week as well as going to Wales every week-end it was natural that Hugh and I should climb together a lot. On the Saturday night after I had done Cenotaph Corner I re-lived the experience for the impressed open-mouthed audience in the Everest room of the Pen-y-Gwryd. They were a little incredulous as I repeatedly told of the complete lack of any sort of holds between the start and finish of the climb.

On the Sunday I had arranged to climb with Banner's team. The following morning my head still ached from all the drink I had consumed. My throat was sore because of all the shouting of the night before.

Banner had decided to go to Clogwyn du'r Arddu and I was cosily hoping for some nice crack about three inches wide and about two hundred foot in height which would suit my style. But the other three had great ambitions. The second ascent of the Girdle Traverse of the East Buttress was unrepeated since its first ascent by Brown, Whillans and Allen five years before. But they were disinterested in my moans and the party sorted itself into two pairs. Jim O'Neill, one of the brighter jewels from Helsby's crown whose first visit it was to Cloggy, was climbing with Hugh. My partner was Mike Harris, a Climbers' Club member of great ability.

We climbed up Sunset Crack, a route up the extreme left-hand end of the cliff to a small ledge where the four of us could just stand side by side. To our right was a completely smooth piece of rocky wall where the holds were so small and awkwardly spaced that the only way to start the climb was by a diagonal rappel. This is one of the most difficult of rope acrobatics. You slide down the rope leaning away from it to get the maximum pull while the rope tries to restore itself to the perpendicular. At the end of these complications we had to ease our feet on to a tiny ledge and quickly grab a handhold before we swung off completely. I was not used to such traumatic experiences so early in the day and was glad that Hugh and Jim were in front prospecting the way, leaving Mike and me to take our time. Pitch after hard pitch, hour after hour, the exposure and difficulty seemed never ending. Eventually we came to the crunch. This was the traverse of the Great Wall – impressive even for the mighty Cloggy precipices. At the end of a tiny grass ledge was a small spike with a green slime-covered rope loop so thin it might have been left behind by a careless knitter. This had been left by Joe's team on the first ascent. They had used it in a one hundred foot abseil down and across the unclimbed wall to link up with a more possible route.

The sling had been gently flapping in the mountain breezes for five years and had rotted. But it was a fine souvenir, so Hugh took it off and put something much more substantial in its place.

Mike and I watched Hugh and Jim whirr down the rope until at their stopping point they were like little dots. After much gulping on my part we followed. More traversing, which got a bit easier, brought us to the final pitch of the Corner. It was very strenuous after six hours climbing. Eyeballs bulged too on the last few strenuous feet, then I lay down on the little pile of rotting socks again left by the Rock and Ice years before and felt the heart-beat bump-bump reaction to the finish of one of the greatest climbs in Wales.

Two extremely severe climbs in a week-end and two of the best climbs in Wales too. Twittering nerves had been re-tuned by the wonderful abilities of the rest of the team. All the Helsby Wednesday nights and motorbike frights afterwards, as well as the feeling coming back in with frozen bleeding hands after winter gritstone climbs were worthwhile to have just one week-end like that one.

On another occasion when Hugh and I were on the cliff, there was one of the very rare accidents. Although it is incredibly steep and serious Cloggy tends to deter nearly all the incompetents from going there and so happily the accident rate is lower than in other places. This time a leader had fallen off a climb called Sheaf. The running belay just below him held when the snatch came on to it. However the pulley system operated by the leader's fall caused the second man to be yanked upwards at great speed and a large rock stalactite in an overhang above stuck in his skull and fractured it badly. The leader was completely unscathed. Other people on the cliff ran down to Llanberis and alerted the mountain rescue team who came up with the stretcher. For the first time on Cloggy the Snowdon Railway was brought into use to help. It pickup up the stretcher and us just as a tremendous summer thunderstorm broke.

It was now 10 o'clock on a Saturday night and the man was safe with a large group of helpers.

The train was travelling too slowly however to get to the pubs on time. We left the train and ran down the hillside splashing through the puddles leaving the train far behind. We just got to the Royal Victoria Hotel in Llanberis in time to down two pints before closing time, standing in our own dripping puddles giggling rather hysterically.

There was an unfortunate incident on a route called The Steep Band. This is on a buttress below the western part of the cliff. Hugh and I had noticed the possibility of climbing a slab which led into a groove system. It looked hard but feasible. Hugh led the first pitch which was a slab with an awkward step in it half-way. No matter how I tried I couldn't do it, finally after an hour's dithering I gave up and Hugh had to return. I said I would come back and try it with him another time when I was in better form. Our joint arrangements never resulted in another attempt and I eventually had a go at it with Les Brown as my partner. This time I led the slab by first pitch which I had been unable to do and Les and I completed the route.

I felt very guilty afterwards, but it had been a case of a good day as opposed to a bad day. Rock-climbing is very much a matter of temperament and a one-eighth of an inch wide ledge can seem large or excessively minute depending upon the mental state of the climber on that day. A foot placed on the tiny ledge feels right and decisions automatically work out the next sequence of moves. But on other occasions the foot feels all wrong and it is wriggled about in an effort to get a better lodgement. A cold sweat of fear appears as well which refuses to evaporate with determined mental efforts. It's never actually certain on any day which sort it is going to be.

What wonderful memories it has left of new routes shared like the Hand traverse on the Pinnacles still thought to be one of the hardest technical routes on the cliff.

After his spectacular career crowned with his Cloggy triumphs, Hugh set himself the enormous personal task of trying to deflate the mystical aura that surrounded the Rock and Ice Club and its climbs. There was still plenty of uncharted rock left on the Welsh crags as the young explorers of the sixties were to prove. But the shadow of Joe Brown lay heavily across Banner's later climbing career.

He did repeat route after route of Joe's, taking all day to do some of them. But second ascents are not recorded in the backs of climbing guide books and twenty years afterwards their memory will fade. Fortunately not everything that Banner did was in the shadow of the Rock and Ice colossi.

A new climb of his to the right of Curving Crack on the East Buttress of Clogwyn du'r Arddu charted a new standard for rock climbs of the time.

The East Buttress is almost vertical and all the climbs including the new ones of Joe's had followed natural cracks or grooves. Between two of the features, Curving Crack and Pedestal Crack, was a smooth wall of rock with no obvious features on it which could be climbed. The odd ledge, a tuft of grass but nothing seeming to connect them.

Banner's solution of this improbable-looking piece of rock with very poor protection proved to be the next really great step forward after the Rock and Ice era. He called it The Troach and it still retains its very serious reputation a dozen years after it was done.

It is interesting to look back at the Rock and Ice exploits of the fifties as well. Joe had done nearly all the major exploration in Wales and gritstone. Hundreds of new routes had submitted to his twinkling feet. His perceptive eye evolved climbs of the ultimate difficulty and his immense strength had allowed him to protect the climb with running belays.

Whillans hadn't even done a tenth of the new routes that Joe had done, but his inventions – Slanting Slab, Taurus on Cloggy and Erosion Grooves direct finish in the Llanberis Pass were the

ultimate in difficulty and poorly protected as well.

Joe had failed to lead Slanting Slab when I was with him and had needed a tight rope from Don during the first ascent of Taurus.

This of course was unknown to the general climbing world at the time. They just knew of the existence of yet another overhanging impossible looking climb and that the superhuman climbing race from the Northern mists had struck again.

It was a pity that the finest partnership in British rock-climbing eventually foundered. Good luck statistically should break evenly but in the case of Joe and Don it all seemed to go Joe's way. In the Himalayas as well the same pattern was repeated. Joe triumphed in Kanchenjunga, Mustagh Tower and Pic Communism.

The Masherbrum expedition of which Don was a member was marred by the death of Bob Downes. Terrible ice conditions defeated Don and Joe Walmsley within a stone's throw of the summit. On Trivor Don was laid low by a mild attack of polio at the critical time when the summit was climbed. The polio vaccine only brought back the use of his legs some days after the successful bid for the top. Just before the Nuptse expedition he was knocked off his motor-cycle by a lorry and his knee-cap fractured.

These disappointments together with Joe's flair for commercial exploitation of his ability combined with his easy-going likeable manner contrasted with Don's abrasive Northern conversational manner which probably repelled the Southern English holders of the purse-strings.

Happily Don has now had his Himalayan reward with the conquest in 1970 of the South Face of Annapurna.



(right) JOE BROWN (centre) NAT ALLEN

WILL HE PRINT IT?

OR

CLIMBING IN THE CAROUX AND OTHER PLACES

OR

EDITORS OF MOUNTAINEERING JOURNALS I HAVE KNOWN

by

H. B. SALES

Who the bloody hell does he think he is, telling me to write something for his so and so journal? I did my whack last year, didn't I? But at least there was a journal in the end, and now the poor bugger has to do another. And he did print my Greenland article. He even says he printed my note on the Caroux, but the lie stinks in his breath. Still here's my chance to put that right. And to settle a few other scores. And to air a few prejudices.

What a chance too to do a Gray (read Rope Boy?) or a Bonnington (try Next Horizon!). Have you noticed, reading anything by the hard men (Joe's the same), that you're taken, as year succeeds year, from one continent to another as though the rest of the world didn't exist? We're all the same really. If we're in Wales, where's Derbyshire? When we're in the Alps, where's the Himalaya? So we can all do it. Speaking for myself, I can't compete in quality, but I'm alright for quantity. Pity there's no room here to ramble on at book length: as Dennis Gray says (ch. 12) "Tracing my climbing career in this book has been a fascinating experience"! But these are veritable gods I'm competing with — have you noticed how Chris. Bonnington (see Jung on the compulsiveness of names) is looking more and more like the Sutherland tapestry in Coventry Cathedral? Still, have I not pushed Joe Brown in his pram? (true he'd grown up, and it was after a rather good Welsh dinner).

So here's for the enlightenment of the climbing world. Of course, I start off with a disadvantage: I'm not a thrusting climber. There's pleasure in being where nobody else has been (provided there's a reasonable chance of getting out alive) but I'm equally happy on land or rock which has been trodden. A friend of mine says he sees no point in doing any route twice! I'm the other extreme. I'm happiest at Stone Farm rocks, where I know them all backwards. I took a Swiss Alpine guide there once and watched him develop a knee wobble four feet from the ground! There's joy for you.

This low level stuff can be fascinating. Wilf Noyce had a dozen routes on the retaining wall behind his Godalming house. I'm still trying to complete a traverse of mine: the bit above the water tub is tricky, not just because of its objective dangers (there's water in the tub and a nasty stretch for the left hand to the kitchen air vent) but because one is exposed to the taunts of neighbours from the wilds of Surrey who think one mad. But the South abounds in this sort of thing: think of all the traversable stretches of Dorset and Devon. You can go on for miles near Swanage if you're prepared to swim occasionally. If you get as far as Torbay though, take my tip and be careful of that fellow Peter Biven lurking in Exeter (John Cleare is as bad). It's fine if the sun's out and there's a lovely traverse at Anstey's Cove. But if you go west to Brixham and get lured on to the Magical Mystery Tour in poor weather, it's not so funny: I know, I've had some.

But basically, climbing should be upwards. It doesn't matter now how much upwards. My mind goes back to that three sided rock outside the farm we stayed on near Bala years ago. All of 12 feet in height it was and plastered with possible routes. A full scale guide was obviously needed. The only trouble was, I could never conquer the North face, so felt inadequate for the job.

Talking about writing guides, though, makes me feel inadequate in another way. How do the blighters manage to do it? How do they sort out all the pitches and remember all the details. It all becomes a confused muddle in my mind afterwards. They recall the past like a bridge player. My only comfort is that they could not all of them readily tell a De Stael from a Poliakoff. And can they get the same feeling of the unexpected as I do when on the same route for a second time?

Back to virgin ground: more recently I've found a sustained route which I've only shown to one or two select friends. Its up a tributary of the Avon Llinau, itself a tributary of the Dovey, and it takes you to the top of the Mynydd Cemmaes. No pitch is more than about 10 feet but the slime on the characteristic large rectangular blocks makes care essential. Certainly no one else has thought of going up that way.

What other untrod heights? There are lots more outcrops in Kent and Sussex than Harrisons. Has anyone else been to Penns House Rocks? The guide says that "permission to climb is completely out of the question" but some years ago Wilf Noyce was sitting next to a man who, half way through the dinner said "Do you climb? I've got some rocks in my garden — would you like to try them?" We climbed them: there was a weekend house party going on in the big house (Penn of Pennsylvania's) and they asked us to keep out of view. But at half time the butler brought us cider and squash. You don't get that in the North.

If you're after virgin territory you've got to take it where you can find it. Who else has climbed the M.1. underneath? There is a good route at the Watford Gap from the Grand Union Canal, just above that magnificent series of locks which start near the A.5.

But enough of Britain: it's time to get in my note about the Caroux. But where is the Caroux? That's the point. No known Englishman knows it. At least I don't know one who does. Except me. The Caroux (the 'x' is pronounced locally) lies roughly between Toulouse and Montpellier and is marked on at least one map as the "Parc Naturel de Carouy". It's an area of gorges and magnificent rock faces with climbs of all grades and a lot more to be done. The rock looks from a distance like limestone but feels like granite: I'm no geologist. It's a good place to visit if you happen to be in Toulouse and the weather clamps down in the Pyrenees. There's a scruffy C.A.F. hut, the Refuge de Verdier, with a character all of its own, at the bottom of the Gorge d'Heric. The Gorge is impressive and contains some good climbing but it's better still on the Bastion, which is some distance from the hut and approached by Le Poujol and Combes. Le Madeleine is a particularly fine route: it is in effect a large gendarme detached from the main rock face, which is still largely unclimbed. There's also a fine face on the opposite side of the valley from the Bastion with some good looking routes.

There. I've done it. Will it get in this time? Journal editors are funny folk, fawning on you one minute, then snarling like frightened wolves the next. Do you remember our revered Kevin Fitzgerald doing "Mountaineering"? "Your country needs you" he said to me! And when I responded loyally he refused to publish on the grounds of blasphemy. All I'd done was to suggest that one of our members had probably got his barony for holding down the C.C. presidency in the difficult Ken Wilson era, (an idea not unique to me in relation to Ken; see Mountain Life, June '73 p.20). But apparently one mustn't mention these Gods lightly. Why? Haven't I the greatest possible respect, admiration and what you will for both of them? Haven't I even held a rope for Ken at Harrisons? By the way, anyone willing to join my 'Come back Ken' Campaign?

If I go on like this you'll think I'm writing because I want to and not because I've been told to. That's my trouble: a bit of flannel from someone like K.F. or T.I.M. and I'm hooked.

So lets get back to the climbing scene. What's the point I'm trying to make? I know: I think it is that climbing is rather more enjoyable if you are not pushed to extremes. At least it is for me. Am I unique? I'm not at all competitive. At least I wasn't: but I must get my own back on those mad buggers F.P. and R.M. Started racing us up the Wrinkle, they did. And when I got to the top I couldn't get the rope to move from my second. Only when both their silly stupid grinning heads popped over the top did I realise that they'd tied the rope down. Ought to be drummed out of the club they should. But I'll get them.

Which somehow reminds me of another character, our venerable President, who keeps saying to me (does he do it to others?) 'You've got to give the mountains a chance, Harry'. Well I'm a

susceptible sort of chap and I've taken it a bit too literally. But never mind, I'll be back again soon.

The other point I'm making is that a bit of variety helps. If you live in the soft south of England you can only get variety by seizing your opportunities. If work, for example, takes you to Belfast, then go to the Mourne Mountains. You'll be surprised to find some outcrop climbing there and the walk round the Mourne tops is worth doing. But the best thing is the cartoons in the Bloat House (the Dunnywater Hut to the uninitiated). All those beautiful busty women, naked except for their boots, on plinths and surrounded by worshipping male climbers on their knees.

Now that reminds me of another thing. I'd gone there to climb, but on the Sunday there was a wind outside but a big fire in the hut and somebody had brought a few year's back numbers of Punch. The Irish thought me strangely antisocial when I eventually insisted on going out: they even put in their log book "At 12 the C.C. man went climbing" Its the same in Wales — all the blokes who are there every weekend stay in the hut if it rains. Us who travel 250 miles for it, insist on getting our money's worth: and we are thought to be odd. Same in the Alps too. If I've travelled that far, I'm damn well going to do something. Is the weather always as bad as they say it has been? I'm talking about the hard men. Do they do as much as us soft men? I mean in quantity not quality. Perhaps the hard men get blasé and don't seize their chances like we do. Perhaps they haven't the same need to. I once met McNaught-Davis on the plane back from Geneva. He'd been there on business and had nothing to talk about except the pleasures of the City: this in Switzerland!

Hard men, hard men, hard men: I keep talking about them: must be some complex or other. But are they really the hard men? What about that other good old fashioned type? Remember that marvellous end to the "Short Walk in the Hindu Kush"? The bit when Thesiger looks in their tent? If you don't, read it again. In the same vein a chap once offered Wilf Noyce the choice of a lilo and a camp bed to sleep on: when Wilf called him a sybarite he put one on top of the other and slept on both. And then there was (and still is somewhere in the Antipodes) that big army expedition man, Warwick Deacock, whose idea of bliss was to cross Alaska or wherever with nothing but flour for chapatis. Somebody mildly suggested dried vegetables as a supplement. "Bloody cissy" says Warwick. Those were the days.

A VALEDICTION

(Forbidding Mourning)

by

JAMES PERRIN

School ends; there are more phases to a Man's life than just one though each phase as it progresses brings a clearer realisation of its own nature, or a firmer grasp on the security it seems to offer. I have been climbing intensively now for twelve years, and I have more or less had enough. I have come to see the nature of the sport; it is not a creative act and it has little left to give me. I expect to give offence or be criticised for what I have to say, and would thus like to define the conditions which lead me to say it. I am not referring to the mountain environment or to the quiet pleasures of days in the hills, not referring to the huge range of interest encompassed in this scene, not referring to the sheer bodily and sensual pleasure of movement on rock, although all these things impinge upon the central experience about which I write. The experience to which I am referring is the intense neurotic urge to seek out the limits of subjective possibility on rock, the desire to push oneself to the extremes of endurance, adhesion, physical and mental control. I shall be making value judgements upon this experience; whether or not the reader feels intuitions of sympathy towards these is of little account. I have searched myself and found them valid to my situation.

I have heard people claim that climbing is an art form, a creative act. I have read the same statement in essays, such as Harold Drasdo's "Education and the Mountain Centres"; the people who make these statements have neither sufficiently considered the nature of a creative act, nor the nature of climbing. They are talking nonsense at a dangerously inflated level; there is an element of the mystical about climbing, but the climbers are lost not in God but in themselves.⁽¹⁾ This is not invalid at a certain stage in life, but it is a lesson which must not be allowed to harden into a habit. In a sense it represents a shaking off of the last egocentricities of childhood, and a coming-to-terms at last with the external world. The act revokes its own motivation.

Commitment to a series of extreme moves on rock is a tenuous expression of belief in one's personal omnipotence; by its very nature it is an illusion, and one bolstered so often by the mean little tricks and dishonesties of the climbing world as to lose the integrity upon which its validity must rest. No-one is omnipotent and on rock we all strive to be so. The ego and the will are the driving forces in climbing, the philosophy behind it is one of despair. Consider us and what we are: we are not well-balanced individuals, as long as we climb, because we have committed ourselves to a pure sphere of self-assertion and will.^(1a) We turn from a world of which we cannot be the centre, to an experience so intense that we cannot but see ourselves at the centre of it. Every new trip up Sisyphus' Hill hardens the ego a little by proving to us that we can do it.⁽²⁾ Ego and will by no means lead to happiness; the times when I have been best at my climbing have been the least happy times of my life. Yes, there have been moments of desperate laughter and utter relief, even some warmth of companionship from time to time from an experience shared. But this continual focussing inwards of the climber's mind, this sifting and weighing of every fine weakness of response, endless preparation for mental masturbation, the sudden explosion of the assertive will, this is a path to restraint and not freedom of response. It is a lesson to be learnt, not one always to be lived by, and its repetition becomes not only absurd, for this element was present in its nature from the beginning but also negative and destructive, and a denial of the potentialities of life.⁽³⁾ Obsessive climbing is a reprisal against nature for making self so small within it.

The toying with death (any arguments that this is not so are utterly spurious) that represents

so strong a part of the attraction of climbing adds yet another facet to the basic negativity of the sport. Each new death is a reiteration of the question "is it worth it", from the answering of which we always shy away. At Lawrie Holliwel's funeral every face was haunted by the realisation of a death that could as easily have been theirs. Is it worth it? Yes, for those who are weak, aimless, discontent, strong and directionless, childless, unhappily married, unresolved or in despair. For all who fit these categories the activity is eminently worthwhile in that it brings them close to ridding themselves of an existence that could so easily become a burden to them, and by the proximity of that negation increases the attractiveness of life.

"I balanced all, brought all to mind,
The years to come seemed waste of breath,
A waste of breath the years behind;
In balance with this life, this death". (4)

Well; all cannot be brought to mind; there is body and soul, there are feelings, intuitions of beauty and wholeness, softness, fullness, warmth. These things climbing alone cannot fulfil; the hard, cold world of intellect and will seeks to destroy the whole man.

I have learnt things from climbing; that the seemingly impossible can be achieved by precise, co-ordinated movement, by direction of energy and conservation and timed application of resources. That things are easier than they seem to be, that falling off is not the thing to do until every last possible scrap of resource has failed you, that a sufficiency of commitment will usually see one through, that a real and authentic desire is the only worthwhile spring of action. But these are lessons to be applied now to the creative act of living, in conjunction with the more warm, full and human values of love, feeling, knowledge, compassion; no longer to be squandered in the negative sphere of rock. One passes from one lesson to another, armed with a new strength of knowledge, and one should be glad that it is so.

In writing this piece I am not unaware of its emphatically one-sided nature. Some of its statements are obviously suspect and require of more careful definition to retain their validity beneath a detailed scrutiny. Despite this, they seem to me justified in their context, and I hope that those whose minds are open to the general direction of the article will see their particular application in this. I would certainly be prepared to argue any of them out at length in a fuller exposition of this view.

NOTES

- (1) This seems to me the basic reason why climbing is incapable of producing anything resembling a worthwhile literature. Whereas literature is a statement of the variousness of life, climbing works the other way and is of its nature a "turning-off" activity, to which the external world means virtually nothing.
- (1a) One notes with some alarm the penchant amongst climbing "intellectuals" for that part of Nietzsche's work which rests upon fallacy and subversion.
- (2) We cannot imagine that Sisyphus would choose his burden.
- (3) The Absurd is rescued from being a nihilistic view of life because existence is accepted in despite of its seeming meaninglessness. The Absurd is a starting-point rather than a conclusion.
- (4) W. B. Yeats: "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death".

DOUBLE ON DISGRAZIA

by

F. L. JENKINS

The weather during the second half of August 1972 in the Engadine was not good. I have a theory which seems more valid as time goes on that one pays in advancing years for good seasons in the past. From a camp at Morteratsch we started by going up to the Tschierva Hut, only to walk down again after a night of storm and snow. We moved to Maloja and it rained. We set out for the Forno Hut and it rained. We returned to Morteratsch and it snowed. My companion, John Hamilton, a sixth former in his second season, and keen, began to look oddly at me and accused me of liking my home-comforts, whereupon we managed to leave our well-found camp and the car, to mess about on the glaciation.

Eventually the weather cleared enough to permit an ascent to the Forno Hut from Maloja. From there we traversed Monte Sissone (3,330 metres) a crevassed glacier climb with a descent into Italy to the Roma traverse path, and a half-hour ascent to the bivouac hut on the Passo di Mello. Here we had to melt snow for water, and the hut had only damp mattresses and no blankets. The following day in improving weather we climbed Monte Disgrazia (3,678 metres) by the N.W. Ridge, overtaking an Italian party who failed to get from the steep snow of the Preda Rossa glacier onto the rock ridge. We forebore to ask them the purpose of a length of rope their last man dragged behind him. To return it was necessary to descend to the Roma traverse path, re-cross Monte Sissone, and descend the Forno glacier to Maloja as the Ponti Hut was reported closed for the season. This took eleven hours, the latter part in moonlight, and at 9.45 p.m. in Maloja it was impossible to obtain a hot meal, and the camp site had a padlocked chain across the entrance. There was nothing for it but to drive back through St. Moritz to our old camp site at Morteratsch, where at midnight we brewed vast quantities of "Oktober-tee". The following day was naturally an off day, but the weather had improved. We were now fit and rested. We packed up again, left the car at Maloja, and walked into Italy again, over the Muretto Pass to Chiareggio. The Pian del Lupo Locanda is recommended. After dinner guests are expected to sing, or at any rate listen to Italian singing, and on request howl like a wolf (lupo). This is encouraged by jugs of vino that appear from the kitchen. The next day the party proceeded to the Porro Hut for elevenses, then by a complicated route on the Ventina glacier to the Taveggia bivouac hut on its rock wall. To our surprise this contained blankets — after our experience on the Passo di Mello we were carrying full bivouac gear. A further hour and a half of crevassed glacier brought us to the Oggioni bivouac hut, where we spent a very comfortable night. The N.N.E. Ridge with its Corda Molla snow section next day was a splendid climb. We agreed with the guide-book recommendation and its description as "the finest mixed climb in the area, the longest in relation to interest all the way from the Porro Hut, and providing fine positions on a narrow ridge on a high glaciated mountain". The only real difficulty was getting from the steep icy couloir on to the rocks which led to the summit. It was necessary to cut handholds for the left hand into which one kicked one's cramponed boot, as one moved up with the pick of the axe jammed into the ice on one's right. The rocks when reached were very cold. However, we found a piton and, assured we were on the right route reached the summit. The return was by the N.W. Ridge which we knew, to the Roma traverse path where we bivouacked, and slept out in comfort above the great cleft of the Val Masino. In the morning we crossed Monte Sissone for the third time, and after taking photographs of the great bulk of Disgrazia towering behind us, reached Maloja in time for a splendid lunch.

The Italian side of the frontier is delightfully free of crowds — we met two parties only on these excursions, and walking into Italy from Maloja is recommended, either over Monte Sissone or by the Muretto Pass. To motor round either by the Bernina Pass or by Chiavenna is a very long way.

SUDDENLY ONE SUNDAY

by

B. E. H. MADEN

It was past midday and the paper I had stayed home to write had progressed nowhere. It was the second great outing I had missed during the winter, the first being New Year when for shame I had been too flakers to go out on Cruachan, and now it was March and sunny and everyone was on Nevis. Well if I was quick I might just manage a short walk somewhere, so I flung some gear and sandwiches together and took a hasty leave.

Glen Falloch was no distance at all from Glasgow and one of the Crianlarich peaks would have been just fine. But it was a great day for motoring too, and with never a stop the road sped on through Tyndrum and Dalmally until at well past two I drew to a halt where Cruachan ought to be.

Now Cruachan is large with seven tops and I was greedy and wanted them all. With only six hours' daylight left they'd better be close together, but it appeared that they might be so I started up the hillside in the smiling afternoon sun. At a thousand feet I breasted a spur and turned left and up and climbed while the scenery unfolded. Och man! conditions were terrific. Bright sun, no wind, fresh snow above 2,500 feet, old snow picking out lines of blue shadowy gullies which plunged from the Cruachan ridge. Over Knapdale some sultry cumuli boiled, but mostly it was sunny, and behind you could see Ben Lui, Ben More and forever. Hullo, what was that big peak ahead, beyond the main ridge of Cruachan where nothing else should be?

The spur merged into a rising plateau, and the plateau into an open summit whence all was revealed. The big peak behind what had appeared to be Cruachan was unquestionably the main top of Cruachan, and the ridge which from the road had obviously been Cruachan was not the main top at all but Stob Diamh, Cruachan's eastern spur. No, actually I hadn't looked at a map before starting. That would have been cheating wouldn't it? And in any case I didn't have the right map. So now I was out on a limb on the southern spur of the eastern spur, and with the lateness of the hour and the wrongness of the starting point it seemed unlikely that I would complete the Cruachan round to-day.

But I could just try. So I slithered down several hundred feet of nasty snow covered rubbish to the col between the limb and the main ridge of Stob Diamh. Then I went up and over all the little tops of Stob Diamh, leaving no stone unturned in case it was a Munro, until I reached the highest top of all, which is a separate mountain on the main Cruachan ridge. Here the view plunged abruptly to the remote shores of Loch Etive where already the shadows were lengthening. Leftwards the main ridge stretched towards the westering sun. To the right the ridge dropped sharply and then arched across to Sron an Isean, Cruachan's extreme northeast spur. Now there were either of two things that I could do. I could turn left and maybe finish the main ridge except for Sron an Isean, but it looked a long way and it was getting late. Or I could drop down to the right to Sron an Isean and thereby at least complete the Stob Diamh circuit and finish the day with honour. I went right. Sron an Isean turned out to be an isolated and graceful summit, the late afternoon sunlight was now yellowing, and a long gentle ridge should take me down to the car by sunset.

When sunset came it was one of those perfect ones. The last clouds had dispersed and pink sunlight glanced across the highest slopes as the shadows lengthened to infinity. At about this time I was stuck at a ridiculous little barrier of snowed-up slabs which had to be partly descended and crossed before I could climb up on to the main summit of Cruachan. Back on Sron an Isean I had looked down the gentle ridge that was going to take me down to the car by sunset, and then I had looked

back towards the main ridge which obviously stretched for miles in the wrong direction. And I had thought maybe I can still do it if I'm quick. So I had set off back over the summit of Stob Diamh again, and then down and along and up and along, but somehow I hadn't been quite as quick as I'd thought, and I certainly hadn't counted on meeting a real obstacle at this point. With time flying, sun setting, last hikers away down the corrie and no one around to say O.K. it's all right, I didn't at all like the look of that little barrier of slabs, which fell away for some distance below the point where I had to cross them. They were not to be bypassed without much back-tracking however, so I climbed down to the bad step several times, and each time after a few minutes scurried back up to the safety of the easy ground above. Finally I thought this will not do, other people have crossed here, surely that sloping slab which your left boot is pawing is a foothold, and that iced up crack where your fingers are groping is a handhold, and all you have to do is to step down and across in balance and change feet and not let go and you will be there. So I made the move and it was easy and in a few minutes I had dropped down on to the ridge and scrambled along and up the final snow and rocks on to the summit of Cruachan.

The sun had already set. Stob Diamh was pallid behind. Ahead and more to the point was the shapely point of the Tainuill peak, Cruachan's second highest, across a considerable gap. I dropped down into the gap but the pace was now telling, and on the last long pull up the Tainuill peak I was reduced to counting steps. On this last major summit it was obviously becoming dusk. But what is life if full of care we have no time to eat goodies and stare? So I stood and ate some goodies and stared from that western eminence, at darkening Lorne and Lochaber and the pallid western sea, and the Paps of Jura away to the south and Ben More on Mull against the blood red afterglow. And then I turned down to the col again and hastened to contour the scree strewn slopes of Cruachan's main peak, to a further col between it and Meall Cuanail, before darkness became complete.

It was precision timing. Twilight just held for the tricky contouring, and then it was dark on the easy ground at the col. I followed some footsteps around Meall Cuanail but they were mere touristy ones and missed out the summit. So with the dedication required of a true Monro collector I forsook the footsteps and turned up the slope and gained the summit plateau. From this final little summit I gazed awhile at the big night wild with stars. Then I turned down the snowslopes towards the corrie where the reservoir should be. At first the snowslopes were good, but soon they broke up into streaks, and the streaks into tongues, and tongues into patches. Finally even the patches faded out, and with them the last trace of visibility. Now this expedition may have appeared a shambles, but one item carried was a head torch, which worked if you knew where to hit it. So with periodic shakings and thumpings of the power supply I picked a way down the hillside, not having a clue as to my altitude, until I suddenly encountered the dirt road just above the reservoir. This led to the dam, on crossing which my big boots boomed out hollow reverberations, eerie in the darkness.

On the long walk down to the main road the thirst and the tedium were mitigated by the brilliance of the stars. Once on the main road it was not so good, however. No-one was giving lifts, and the telephones weren't working, so I couldn't ring home to say O.K. At the Loch Awe Hotel things looked up; I spied light through the darkness and they saved my life with a late night pint of orange squash. Then it was only a short step along the road to the car. It was freezing hard, but the engine sprang to life, and soon I was away down the empty road between the dark, formless masses of the southern Bens.

RUBISLAW QUARRY

by

ANDREW J. MAXFIELD

"The dread abyss that joins a thunderous sound
Of plaints innumerable. Dark and Deep
And thick with clouds o'er spread, mine eyes in vain
Explored it's bottom, nor could aught discern."

Dantes 'Hell'

Rubislaw is claimed rightly or wrongly, to be the biggest quarry in Europe and is certainly over 400' deep.

Although it is only a short distance from the centre of Aberdeen, it has an atmosphere and environment all of its own. Plants, shrubs and flowering trees from local gardens have seeded undisturbed onto the quarry walls and ledges giving a weird beauty only spoilt by the usual quarry-dumped bed-ends, tins and car tyres.

Hal Taylor and I made the first reconnoitring route. It was not the kind of climb that would make front page news of the National Press but we had been quite pleased to produce something on this unknown amphitheatre. I now felt that it was high time to try something on the major face, so ten days later I returned with a Polish friend Jerzy Dyczek, who was in Aberdeen University on a years exchange.

The route that we had in mind was a traverse of a large buttress which we called the Red Tower, followed by some open grooves to the top. Jerzy led the first pitch which brought us to the foot of two large slabs shaped like dinner plates. I crossed by use of a convenient line of small holds, belayed and waited. Jerzy's use of English is more creative than accurate and he shouted up to me, "My shoe she is not good for rock Max." He was wearing a pair of boots which would have been fine for a simple task of husbandry in the fields and was obviously supplied by Poland's Min. of Ag. "I make much difficult way." He added. In spite of Jerzy's complaints he was well in command of the situation and was soon sitting next to me.

Like many new climbs the cliff had some surprises for us.

Jerzy led the next pitch which we had expected to be the main problem but proved to be covered in large holds and he climbed to the next ledge without stopping. When I arrived on Jerzy's ledge he looked very pleased with himself and said, "I use the Scottish belay." This turned out to be a three foot metal rod stuck in an old blasting hole which must have been left by the old quarry men. The final corner which had looked to be easy 'fun-climbing' proved to be much the most difficult part of the route and I was relieved to find myself belayed at the top.

Sadly, this was to be the last time that I was to climb with Jerzy as his exchange visit was over. As I said goodbye to him a week later he made my wife giggle when he turned to her and said, "We make good climbing next summer. You must pursue your husband to the High Tatra."

Although I was pleased to have made a mark on the Red Tower, I still felt that it was really a girdle traverse which in some ways was rather unsatisfactory, as some fine rock lay untouched below.

A 'straight up from the bottom to the top' route was obviously needed.

About a month later I met Pete Smith who is from Aberdeen's Etchachan Club. I told him my story. He made mildly interested noises and a date was fixed for the climb.

After abseiling to the bottom of the quarry we fought our way past a heap of old tins and car tyres, which looked to be in a dangerous rubbish-lanche condition, finally reaching a 200' to 300' right-angled corner. This was to be our choice of line. The climbing was about Severe but was spoilt by vegetation, plus the remains of generations of pigeon roosts. I soon found myself back on the traverse I had made with Jerzy Dyczek and crossed the first of the two dinner plate slabs. A slanting line of cracks ran up to the left of the Red Tower but vanished out of sight from our belay. The first 30' of these cracks ran right through what must be the absolute centre of Aberdeen's pigeon world. The bird droppings were in some places three to four inches thick and clung to your fingers and boots like heavy engine grease. I followed the cracks until they ran out, and a final 10' wall had to be climbed to gain a grass ledge which was near the top of the Tower. As Peter climbed up to join me I listened to him letting out some rough sounds which were completely untranslatable Scottish oaths, but which I took to mean that he had lost any love he might have been harbouring for our feathered friends. We called the climb Lucre.

A week later Pete and I returned to the quarry. This time we tried a line to the right of Lucre which turned out to be the most continuously difficult climb that we have done so far and with the added top pitches of our first traverse climb, the route was well over 500' in length.

The Scottish winter soon closed in and the quarry looked a most uninviting place.

A small note in the local paper brought sadness to my heart as it claimed that the future of the quarry was puzzling the owners, but it would most likely be used as a giant cars-graveyard. A month later the same paper had full headline news on the quarry. Two million pounds are to be spent in making a hotel and shopping precinct with a restaurant overlooking the 'awesome rock sculpture of the cliffs below.' Landscape gardening and floodlights are being planned. We are all hoping that access to the cliffs for climbing will be considered.

Editor's Note: A. J. Maxfield was killed in a climbing accident on the Aberdeenshire sea-cliffs two weeks after writing this article.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND DINNER

The 75th Annual General Meeting and Dinner were held at the Maynard Arms Hotel, Grindleford on Saturday 24th February 1973. Some hundred and twenty members and guests were present to hear the following speeches:-

RALPH JONES

After the knockabout stuff this afternoon any jokes that I make are going to fall into a second rate category. In any case, Tim's taping this so I'll have to cut out all the filthy stuff. It's a unique occasion this, not for the reason that you might suppose, but it's probably the only occasion when the guests outnumber the members by about two to one. As you know there are three methods of doing this speech. The first one goes something like this, "You all know Fred Bloggs", and this is greeted with glassy stares which mean that fifty per cent don't know Fred Bloggs and the other fifty per cent wish they never had. The second method goes something like this. "The Suitcase Club is represented by Joe Soap", this means that he is totally obscure, he's probably a friend of the Secretary, or he's the only chap who can drive two hundred miles for an indifferent meal. The third method goes something like this. "I remember well many years ago" then you have a totally embarrassing reminiscence both to the audience and for the poor guest which only demonstrates that the speaker's got such a long memory. Of course, it is also used as a vehicle for personal abuse, and to demonstrate the rather unpleasant personal habits of most of the guests present. The whole thing is usually done with not more than five and not less than three, "This brings to mind a story," which is pretty fatuous because they are on the prompt sheet anyway. So, I thought perhaps that after twenty-five years of personally listening to all this and seventy-five years as a Club listening to all this, it wouldn't be a bad idea if we had a change. It seems terribly radical after all this time, but, you know, these things happen. At least you might think that they happen but you wouldn't if you had attended the meeting this afternoon. (Laughter and cries of 'Hear, hear!')

Now, I am going to have a little personal go here because I don't get often the sort of opportunity that I've got this evening. On one side, and when I say 'one side' I say that advisedly, we have got the President of the B.M.C. — the so called governing body of the sport, i.e. mountaineering — Tony Moulam, a member of our Club. Now, as you know, the B.M.C. has been the whipping boy of anyone who wanted to have a go at the Establishment or make a name for themselves as the Bernard Levin of the climbing world. I think it is true to say though that they have been under-powered, very much, in what they have done; they've had pretty ill-defined policies, and they have received the minimum support from the climbing world in general. I'm very glad to say that at long last there are now signs of a change. On the other side, as you might say, we have the Sports Council, the Chairman of which we are very pleased to have with us tonight, Dr. Roger Bannister. I am slightly in the third category here because I could start, "Many years ago" because I have known him for many years. I think that the Sports Council are having problems after they assimilated the C.C.P.R. I don't think from what we have seen so far that they have clear policies yet with regard to mountaineering and climbing. And I think that the individual's power in the Sports Council is not yet strong with regard to our sport. I think also that they are a little uncertain in their attitude to our sport because they are caught between, on one side the preservationists and on the other side the developers — I say 'developers' in the broadest sense of developing the sport, climbing. Then, of course, there's us, the general climbers, stuck somewhere in the middle of these two. Now, I would just

mention, at the risk of boring you, because I think that it is important, we do say in our constitution that we should be concerned with the wider aspects of the development of our sport, and very, very few of us are. I think that the first thing that we should be concerned about is the facilities: by that I mean access to the mountains, accommodation in the mountains and the preservation of the essential character of the mountains. From what I can see at the moment these are going to be extremely hard to maintain, let alone develop. The second area, I think, that we should concern ourselves with is development — by that I mean the safe introduction of people to the hills, evaluation of technical improvements and dissemination of information, including guidebooks, and the raising of standards of safety and ability. Now, you might say that none of this has anything to do with you, but I can assure you, all of you who are in this room, that all of you have rested on the past developments that there have been in the sport. The last area is administration and organisation. If you want the first two for the future you have got to provide for this last one. It has got to be well done so that you build confidence between the participants of the sport on one hand and the people who provide the money on the other. The next time that you are thinking about this, remember that you have to pay for it and it's as well that everybody take more interest in it because you only get what you pay for. I think that the problem in our sport is that it is being administered by middle-aged, middle class, has-beens like myself (cries of 'Hear, hear!') and old chaps like Tony. I think we have got to face the change that we have got to have highly qualified, well-paid, professionals in the future. However unpleasant some of this may seem to you I think that it has got to go this way in the future. I think that all climbers have got to realise the benefit of this for the future and for their successors. We are a pretty selfish lot on the whole and we only look at what is good for us at any particular time. But, if we don't take more interest in this for the future then I think that the sport is going to suffer, I think that the change will come very quickly when it does come. On the Sports Council side, just to have a brief word there, we would obviously like to see more money devoted to mountaineering and to the development of the sport. We would like to see more understanding of what our problems are and we would like to see higher grade people on the professional side of the sport in the administration.

So. Having ruined your digestion, and the digestion of the Chairman of the Sports Council, and that of our late President (cries of "Is he dead?" laughter.) I would like to welcome Roger Bannister and hope that he enjoys the rest of the evening. I can say that we are very pleased to have him with us. One special mention that I would like to make is that we have with us John Poole who, I think, is the only member who has more than fifty years membership present. For the rest of the official guests, they are all distinguished men, they wouldn't be here otherwise, it would be wrong to mention any of them by name, I couldn't possibly separate out such talent. I know it is generally supposed by those who have worked on the Publications Committee for the last two years that climbers can neither write, read nor understand simple instructions — so I'll just go through briefly for those who can't do any of these things. We have for the Alpine Club, Frank Solari; the Scottish Mountaineering Club, Mr. Pillinger; the Fell and Rock, Mr. Sullivan; the Wayfarers Club, Mr. Hislop; Rucksack Club, Vin Dillon; Rock and Ice Club, Joe (Morty) Smith; Yorkshire Ramblers Club, Mr. Nicholson and, of course, John Poole who I mentioned. We are all very honoured to have these guests with us and we hope that they will enjoy the rest of the evening as well. Finally, I would like to give a welcome to the unofficial guests and say that we are very glad to have them with us. So. If you would like now to toast the guests, official and unofficial. 'The Guests'.

FRED HISLOP — The Wayfarers Club

Mr. President, Gentlemen. I see that your electronics expert has very cleverly put his machine on top of my notes to make certain that this speech is extremely short! A very well married Hollywood actor on the occasion that he got married to an even more well married Hollywood actress, was heard to comment, "I know what I have to do, the problem is to make it interesting." That's my problem too. What I have to do, and I will do it right now, as I have drunk a lot of wine and may fall down at any moment, is to thank you very much for your kind hospitality on behalf of all the

guests, thank you for the very gracious toast which you proposed to us, and to say, and I think that I speak on behalf of all the guests here, that we very much appreciate and enjoy your company tonight. Do the guests agree with me on that? (Cries of 'We do, we do') Oh! Isn't that nice! It's the first time that anyone has agreed with me when I have been making a speech for years!

The fact that you're seventy-five years old and seven hundred odd strong, seems to me to be a performance which deserves a great feeling of pride. My own club, the Wayfarers, is a mere, spritely, sixty-seven year old. But, as we're both getting on a bit now we obviously have one or two things in common. It occurs to me that one of the things we have in common is that we are still, (Pause) how shall I put it, (Considerable laughter) treading as delicately as possible, shall I say monastic organisations. Every time I propose anything to the contrary at the Wayfarers I am accused of not having grown up, or worse, of being a dirty old man! Another thing that I notice that we have in common is that we both have the very civilised habit of holding our Annual General Meeting before the annual dinner. Now, we in the Wayfarers have always tried to make it a point to make these meetings as short as possible, arguing, logically I think, that though some of our members are reasonably good climbers it does not follow that they are reasonably good debaters. Nothing could be more divisive to members than to get all hung up on 'Points of order' and such mysteries, which none of us understand anyway. At the moment, our record for an Annual General Meeting is eleven minutes. (A voice, "Ours is three and a half" Prolonged laughter.) I was going to make some suggestions as to how to achieve this total, obviously not necessary now! I don't know what incentives were behind the President when on that famous occasion he achieved the eleven minute record. Nobody has been able to tell me. The nearest I got to a possible explanation came, curiously enough, from my dentist. One day, when he was brandishing one of his most fearsome drills in front of a lady patient, he suddenly said, "Madam! Do you realise that you are holding my left testicle?" And she said, quite calmly, "Yes. I know. We are not going to hurt each other are we?" (Loud laughter and applause.)

Well. Whether this particular method was applied on that occasion I don't know, but I pass it on to you as a possible incentive for future use.

I suppose, as a representative of a club of advancing years, like yourselves, I should have a message. On a slightly more serious note one has. There is no doubt that our sport is increasing immensely in popularity. Soon the favourite crags of this country will have so many ropes on them that they will look like heaped plates of spaghetti, or coarse-haired blondes! In this context, I suppose, some busybody is going to say that we need to be protected against ourselves and a government department will be set up, turnstiles placed at the foot of the crags where people can check our 'mountain leadership certificates', and probably collect money as well. There will be big government stations, with radar, plotting our progress. Ministry of Transport tests for 'rockworthiness' for elderly climbers, vibrams should have at least one millimetre of tread on them (laughter), posters on the stances saying rather coyly, 'You know it makes sense' (Laughter). I suppose that the only way we can prevent such an awful fate lies in the sense of responsibility of climbers and of clubs like yours and mine, to encourage a standard of sensible behaviour in the mountains, indeed to encourage all the things which Mr. Jones has just mentioned. He has, in fact, cut ten minutes from my speech by mentioning all these matters for which I am profoundly grateful. ("So are we", aside. Laughter.)

It does occur to me that although these ideas of what might happen in the future may seem a little far-fetched, it is surprising how near the present day truth they are. In 1971 I had the honour of being a guest at the annual camp of the Czechoslovakian Mountain Club. The scene was quite remarkable. There were over three hundred tents pitched on the mountain side, it looked more like a Pop festival than a climbers' meet. During the course of the evening, all around the enormous camp-fire, spokesmen for various groups that had been allowed out of Czechoslovakia to climb in other countries gave reports on their activities. Fortunately only one group had been allowed to the West. One of the spokesmen described their summer expedition into Russia. He told us, amidst derisive laughter, how they were obliged to get up at the crack of dawn every morning and take their official

P. T. Exercise — that itself would put me off climbing for life, incidentally — how they were all graded according to their standard, how they were allocated the various climbs which they were to be 'allowed' to go up. So. It is not so impossible as one may think that bureaucracy can come into mountaineering. I suppose that the prevention of this lies with responsible clubs like ourselves.

I have reached, I feel, the point in my speech where the President might well impose on me the sanction I mentioned earlier. So, being long-winded, I will tell you my most long-winded story and then shut up.

Once upon a time (Laughter) there was a bald-headed man with a wooden leg. He was invited to go to a fancy dress ball. He was very puzzled by the sort of fancy dress that might be appropriate for a bald-headed man with a wooden leg. He decided to write a firm of theatrical costumiers in London to seek their advice. In due course a parcel arrived. In it was a letter, "Dear bald-headed man with a wooden leg. We suggest that you go as a pirate. Enclosed please find, one pair buckled shoes, one pair silk stockings, one pair velvet breeches, a silk shirt, an embroidered waistcoat, a velvet jacket, an eye patch, a three cornered hat (with feather) and one parrot. Price £10." No, the man thought, too dear. So he wrote back and said that he couldn't afford it and had they anything a little more reasonable? In due course a parcel arrived at his door, and a letter. "Dear bald-headed man with a wooden leg, Enclosed please find one pair cotton stockings, one pair cotton breeches, one cotton shirt, one three cornered hat (no feather) and one stuffed parrot. Price £5." No, no, he thought. Still too dear. Once again he wrote back and asked them if they had anything more reasonable. And, in due course, there arrived at his door a parcel and a letter therein saying, "Dear bald-headed man with a wooden leg, Enclosed please find our economy priced pirate's costume consisting of paper stockings, paper breeches, paper shirt, no hat, no parrot. Price £2.50." No, no he thought. Won't do. So he wrote once again thanking them for all their trouble and asking them for something a little more reasonable. And, in due course a parcel arrived with a letter. In the parcel was one large tin of treacle. The letter said, "Instructions for use. Open tin of treacle. Pour it over the head. Unscrew your wooden leg. Stuff it up your backside and go as a toffee apple." (Laughter and applause).

THE PRESIDENT

I call upon Dr. Roger Bannister to propose the health of the Climbers' Club. (Applause.)

DR. ROGER BANNISTER

Mr President, members of the Climbers' Club, guests. It is a great pleasure to have your invitation to attend your seventy-fifth anniversary dinner and when the proposer of the health of the guests is giving such free advice, much of which I agree with, I know that I am a member of the family. It reminds me of the story of someone I knew at Oxford who was a Fijian. He was six feet tall and played rugby football in his bare feet. Someone asked him once, "What's your nationality?" He replied, "I'm Scottish". "Scottish?" queried the questioner. "Yes," was the reply, "I'm Scottish by absorption. My great-grandfather was a cannibal who ate a Scottish missionary. "Well, I've eaten your dinner and listened to your advice and I feel almost a member of the Climbers' Club by absorption. It's a pleasure that I am in the company of and staying with tonight Jack Longland, who is a member and has been a President of your club, and among the many hats he wears with distinction, many of them mountaineering hats, is that of vice-Chairman of the Sports Council. Somebody has already asked what we are doing for mountaineering, and I believe that there is quite a lot that we are doing. I got a letter the other day from a fourteen year old boy (Ribald laughter) and it went like this, (Louder ribaldries) "This year I ran four hundred metres in fifty-six seconds, last year I ran two hundred metres in twenty-six seconds, will you and your council tell me how fast I shall be running a mile in three years time?"

But, to mountaineering, with or without Sir Jack's influence, there has been for the first time a hundred per cent grant for professional administration in relation to the British Mountaineering Council. This is a precedent. We don't usually give one hundred per cent grants for anything, but it was felt that in this particular instance, not having a club in which thousands of people watch you falling off mountains, not having 'pay as you climb systems', it was necessary for this level of grant to be introduced. I am very glad that it was, and I would like to say that the Council is concerned with developing every sport, but sports have to help themselves. They have to look to the needs within their sport, they have to see where the problems of access are. It's a two way exchange in which we are only too happy to play our part and to try and get as much money as we can towards the professional administration which we are sure that is necessary now to develop sports, such as mountaineering, with the very many problems that they raise. This afternoon you have been discussing the problem of women. I heard of a town recently where there was a sports goods outfitter who wanted to lend a little cultural tone to his establishment, so he put over the door 'Mens sana in corpore sano'. There was another establishment, sports goods outfitter, who wasn't going to be outdone, he put over his door, 'Mens and womens sana in corpore sano'. Maybe there's a message in that. The other variant of that tag is that, "On Corps day, the sane people go to the san." But that's just another variation.

Well, it's your seventy-fifth anniversary, I was at a centenary dinner recently where the Chairman regaled us with a year by year account of his club's activities over the hundred years and, do you know, I never thought I'd be so glad of the four year respite of the First World War. (Laughter.) My own attitude to running grew very much out of childhood visits and climbs in mountains, and when I was sick of the artificiality of track running, I through friends — Chris Brasher, and Ralph and Dave Thomas, who's here — I managed to get away to the mountains. I can remember very vividly at Glencoe, Dave having stripped off to climb up a water spout, up which we then followed him, and as I had an engagement on the running track in Oxford three days later I was kindly lent people's sweaters so that I shouldn't catch pneumonia. I was very grateful for that kind thought. But, certainly, it is something which I treasure as a memory in relation to my own running days and I've now had, with your President, to move on to orienteering which, like climbing, is, I believe, a 'think' sport. I was introduced recently to the most diabolical variant of this which is mid-night orienteering. You plunge around in the mud with a miner's lamp on your head and you have a compass and a map, which you can't read. I had been doing this, got back at three o'clock in the morning, and a pile of muddy clothes were in the corner of the kitchen. My wife next day was trying to explain to our cheerful cockney home-help what I had been doing. She went through it all and eventually Elsie held up her hand and said, knowing that I was a brain specialist, "He examines other people's heads, he ought to have his own examined"

Well. I've always had a little doubt about the fitness of climbers. I had a chance of putting Ed. Hillary on a treadmill in Oxford once, just after he'd climbed Everest. I was really very disappointed by his performance, but he told me that he had been training, but that he had been on a diet of champagne and receptions ever since his successful exploit and perhaps that was the explanation.

Well now. (Loud cough from public address system. Laughter.) Announcement for 'the owner of car No'. Loud laughter, cries of 'we're bugged'. chaos.)

There's a bug in the works somewhere!

(Further coughing and a repeat announcement. Silence from the system.)

Well. I think that the British mountaineering Council has achieved a great deal in the last two or three years and I am sure that it is going on to achieve a great deal more. It has taken over the Mountain Leadership Training Board, and since the introduction in sixty four this has become one of the fastest growing mountain coaching schemes with some two hundred mountain training centres. This is a great tribute to their success. I think that we all know what leadership means in the

mountaineering field, it's not like the leader of whom it was said that, if people did follow him it was only out of an intense curiosity as to where he might lead them. It needs powers of decision too. Not like the situation of a man who was driving in Wales and he got to a level crossing, one gate was open and the other was closed. So he said to the gatekeeper, "Now then, what's going on?" and the man said, "It's alright, you can drive on through." The driver asked, "Well, why is one gate closed?" The keeper replied, "Well, it's like this, I'm half expecting a train from Caernarvon."

Well, I think that the new arrangement where there is a full time administrative officer will serve mountaineering well. Fred Briscoe has been the liaison officer for some time, but it doesn't mean that there won't be a very close liaison with the Sports Council in all the forward looking plans which I am sure that you have in mind. As far as the Plas y Brenin mountaineering centre is concerned, there have been meetings there recently to make sure that the courses held are really tailored to the needs of mountaineers with week-ends for club members. Of course, the big expedition is still the showpiece of mountaineering, and I'm very glad, and very impressed by the fact, that on every Everest expedition there have always been several members of the Climbers Club. This, I imagine is an accolade and an indication that this club, although it is the second oldest, is second to none in the standard of its climbing. I am sure that this is something which this club is very proud of. Mountaineering is a personal competition, I suppose, a man against a mountain. Apart from the achievement of Everest this is something which is an opportunity to test equipment, training and expertise at the highest level. This is the reason why the Sports Council would support an expedition of this kind with more money, if we had more money available. (Laughter.) Chris Bonington (Laughter) when he got back, and this is a suspicion shared by many fathers, said that after returning from an excursion with his children he was sure that going on a camping trip with kids is infinitely tougher, infinitely rougher and infinitely more nerve-racking than any mountaineering expedition. I am very glad to know that. I think that we are worried about safety in the mountains, and I think that everyone feels that it is really too easy for unskilled and unqualified people to take children into mountains, dangerous mountains, and possibly hazard life without adequate preliminary training. We don't allow our teachers to take our children swimming without first passing the Royal Life Saving Society's Certificate; we don't allow teachers to use the high equipment in gymnastics unless they are specially trained, and, it seems to me wrong that nothing like this applies when it comes to hill climbing. I think that there is a very strong case for regulations to ensure (Cries of "bureaucracy!") that no adult could take children and expose them to risks of this kind. I think that the minimum would be the Mountain Leadership Training Board's Certificate of Mountain Leadership. (Cries of 'Hear, hear' and 'Rubbish')

I would like to say how glad I was to come tonight, I would like to congratulate the Climbers' Club on its last seventy-five years and to say that I feel sure that you will be responding to the needs of many climbers who are now wanting to get access to mountains and will make sure that their skills are increased to the high level which is necessary to cope with the special problems that mountains do give. I hope that you will go on helping all those concerned with mountaineering. Thank you very much indeed. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT — Dr. H. G. Nicol

Dr. Roger Bannister, honoured guests, members of the Climbers' Club. Its rather fun to have the 'B.B.C.' actually competing with us tonight. It is my pleasure to respond to the extremely eloquent toasts that you have heard tonight. And, from what you have heard, it is obviously not essential to speak the speech trippingly on the tongue — which luckily leaves me out. It is a great pleasure this speech. I have to follow a galaxy of gifted speeches; it is also an awkward speech in that I actually have something to say. It is always much easier to make a speech, in my opinion, when you have nothing whatever to say. Speeches are rather like rucksacks: more bearable when there is nothing in them, only padding. (Laughter) I am reminded of a cry that went up from Clemenceau on hearing an eloquent speech by Lord Joigne. I mean Lloyd George (Laughter), "Oh! Si je pouvais pisser comme il

parle!" This is not merely the cry of one elderly prostatic to one younger in years and nobler in achievement, it is the cry of every after dinner speaker who has to follow a good speech. French is indeed a very expressive language; they can say all kinds of things in the minimum amount of verbiage, and they can bury their mistakes too, sometimes on an uninhabited island. This, so far, has not happened to a President of the Climbers' Club. (Laughter.) It is usual at some point in this speech for the President to take refuge in a mound of statistics and this I promise you I will have to do later on. But it would be very inappropriate if I didn't say, on your behalf, how very happy we are to have here Dr. Roger Bannister. Not everyone has heard of Professor Donald or Sir George Pickering, but everyone has heard of Dr. Roger Bannister, he is the best known doctor of them all.

I can remember in 1954 when I was up at Oxford, and we heard the news of the first four minute mile, what an amazing experience it was for us all at that time. There must be something in "miling" which has led to the three participants in that race, Roger Bannister, Chris Brasher and Chris Chataway being so eminent in later life. In his article in the British Medical Journal in December, Dr. Bannister points out that sport is intrinsically worth while, he does not seek in it any ulterior motive. Dr. Bannister will not ask us what climbing is for, but he may even give us a bonus that by exercising ourselves we may reduce our incidence of coronary and artery disease in later life. Although I am not sure which particular category of Climbers' Club member he is thinking about; whether the 'crinkles' or the 'yobboes' personalised, perhaps as D. C. Bull and Ken Wilson. (Laughter) Crinkles, if you aren't aware of these distinctions, are those who arise early to a dawn chorus of team-making, and yobboes are the ones who stay in their beds till Tremadoc time. (Laughter.) Tremadoc, that curious place where Bernard Pierre once said, "You can't see ze wood for ze T. D's." (Laughter.) Commenting on Dr. Bannister's eloquent speech, I think it a pity that we can't have a 100% grant for our administration. How much easier that would be. But, I was interested to learn, from what he said, that Dave Thomas was a track runner. (Extreme laughter.) There must be something in these diet sheets.

You will all have read the 75th annual report. The climbing year has all been detailed for you and I am not going to go over it. This is the only meeting that I've attended at which Chris Bonington has been present and not mentioned by name. So, I shall say on your behalf how sorry we were that he didn't manage to get up the S.W. face of Everest, but we're quite glad really because we can enjoy reading about it the next time! I was going to say something about women, but I think I probably won't! I think it was Robert Burns who said "The rights of women merit some attention". Well, they haven't merited much attention here tonight. Perhaps Burns was really thinking of his wife when he addressed the haggis as the "great chieftain of the pudding race." Perhaps those are our sentiments too. (Laughter.)

On a more serious note we have to note that four honorary members have died this year, Sir Geoffrey Summers, Arnold Marples, Arthur Lockwood and Leslie Shadbolt. I had a very charming letter from Mrs. Shadbolt who was very touched by our remembrance of her husband and she wished his name to be remembered to you here tonight.

Meets. — The Welsh Dinner, you will not have forgotten, was a mixed dinner for the first time in 1972. This was decided at a committee meeting presided over by Harry Sales, I being inadvertently in the Alps at the time. He ruled, that since the club effectively turned down the halfway measures at the last A.G.M. that would have permitted such a dinner, the committee was nevertheless empowered to over-rule the decision. (Laughter.) What an extraordinary diplomat Harry Sales is! And, while on the subject of diplomats I'll explain what a diplomat really is. When he says 'yes', he means 'perhaps', when he says 'perhaps' he means 'no', and if he says 'no', he is no diplomat! Contrary-wise, admitted ladies. A lady is a person who says 'no' if she means 'perhaps', 'perhaps' if she means 'yes', and if she says 'yes', she's no lady! Anyway, we're all agreed that it was a thoroughly good dinner.

Guidebooks — well I have to say something about guidebooks tonight, as it's a very important

issue in the Club at the moment. Some inkling of a financial crisis in guidebooks came to us in April of last year when our Treasurer, Peter Gerard, informed us that our distributors, Moac, were £1,850 behind in their payments to us for bound copies of guidebooks. Despite this appalling setback we nevertheless completed repairs to Cwm Glas and Ynys Ettws at the total cost of £2,450. I think this is quite a notable achievement in one year for a club as small as we are. A temporary loan was floated by members of the club for the club which temporarily bridged this rather awkward gap. At Buttermere in September 1972 Ralph Jones produced an important document, which concluded that it was impossible for a club as small as we are to publish guidebooks on quite the enormous scale we have been doing in the past. I must remind you that we have published 11 new guidebooks between December 1969 and November 1972. It's quite a remarkable achievement for a club with only 700 members. This has produced enormous problems of 'cash flow'. (Aside, "In other words, we're broke". Laughter.) It's on the strength of these rather salutary facts that we decided that we should reduce, if possible, our guidebook "empire". It has never been part of our guidebook area to include the Peak district. This came upon us, I think, in a pub, about 2 years ago when Jack Longland and Tony Noulam were having a talk together, and Jack asked Tony if he would kindly take over this function which the B.M.C. were then unable to do. Now the B.M.C. are keen and able to do this. I think it right that we should hand back the Peak District to their control. (Longland aside. "More money from the Sports Council". Ironical laughter.) Eventually these bills from Moac were paid. They paid £1,000 in Autumn 1972, and I went personally to see Bob Brigham in Manchester and wheedled the remaining £800 out of him in January 1973. As it stands at the moment we are all square as far as our guidebook account is concerned. This is not to say we have no problems, we have big ones. But, the situation is not so black as it can be painted.

Finally, the most important thing I have to do is to thank all the members of the club who have helped so much throughout the year.

I have a patient who belongs to the 'gin and Jag belt' of Stratford upon Avon. He inhabits a very smart house on a very smart road: He was out digging his garden in an appalling jacket and with his knees coming through his trousers, when a very large car, a Daimler or some such, drew up opposite him. A very smart lady came out of the car and beckoned to him. "Come here, my man", she said, "Do they pay you well for what you are doing?" "Not really ma'am?" he replied, "There are some fringe benefits. The lady of the house, well, sometimes she lets me sleep with her at nights." (Laughter of a rude sort.) Let me hasten to assure you that there are no comparable fringe benefits in the Climbers' Club. (Cries of 'Shame' and 'Poor fellow'.) So, I ask you to spare a moment of your thoughts for our two Vice-presidents, Harry Sales and Mike Westmacott — who is now in America — and for our new one, Alan Blackshaw here; and for the three men who really do the most work in the administration of the Club, Martin Sinkler, Robin Prager and Peter Gerrard — without them we would be absolutely lost. I know for a fact that Robin Prager spends six hundred hours a year working on the Club's business, and I think that it is a very remarkable effort — if we were all doing that what a very splendid thing the Club would be. Moreover if all the members of the club were doing this too how easy life would be. Also the publications committee — Ralph Jones, Peter Hatton, Bob Allen — who between them and the various guidebook editors did such a fantastic job in publishing over the last two years. A really remarkable achievement for which we owe them a vote of thanks. We also thank the new publications committee, Trevor Jones and Mike Yates, for taking on this difficult and onerous task. The hut sub-committee — Edgar Siddall, Richard Owen and Claude Davis with all the hut guardians — who receive all the brickbats and so little of the genuine credit which they genuinely deserve. Roy Beard for all his designing work at Cwm Glas, and Derek Wigget for carrying it out so excellently — despite which I gather, the water is still flowing up hill — deserve a special mention. Tim Lewis, the Journal Editor, I have offered him help with the galley proofs next time! (Ironical laughter.) Mrs. Walker, for typing out all our notices, which she does so well. Bless 'em all, bless 'em all, the long and the short and the tall. Seven members of the Club were invited to attend this dinner who had actually been members for fifty years or over. The only one we have tonight with us is John Poole. (Applause.) He looks surprisingly fit considering that he has listened to such dull speeches for such a large number of years. And, I thank all the members of the Club who have by

their hard climbing maintained the reputation of this as the esoteric and desperate body that it is. They have practised their art in this country and in the Alps and have strengthened their muscles on climbing walls or by suspending themselves from doorways. Perhaps they are emulating the charming young lady of Norway, who clung by her toes to a doorway. She said to her beau, just look at me Joe, I think I've discovered one more way. (Laughter.) I thank you all for coming to this dinner and for making it such a successful and large, and I think happy, gathering. We have come to a democratic decision tonight. Perhaps not all of us agree with it, but then not all people can agree with democratic decisions — that's what democracy, I am assured, is all about. I have been asked to say one or two important things. There is a Bill before Parliament concerning the Llanberis/Dinorwic hydro-electric scheme and you are all asked if you oppose the proposal that you write to your M.P.'s and say so. I should like to thank particularly Pip Hopkinson and his wife Janet for the enormous amount of work they have done organising this splendid dinner. (Hear, hear.) I ask you all to raise your glasses and toast the health of the Climbers' Club. (Applause.)

NEW CLIMBS AND NOTES

New route. Romsdal Valley. Norway.

On The Trolltind Wall.

THE ARCH WALL. Grade 6.5.9, A5.

This is the fourth route on this great wall, the biggest vertical rock wall in Europe, and it is to date the most difficult.

It begins in between the French and the Rimmon routes, crosses the French route at the level of the Great Flake. After a huge pendulum it climbs the overhanging white wall without bolts by a thin crack system up to the huge roof — The Arch. After climbing the Arch a direct line is taken to the summit until the Norwegian route is joined for its last few pitches. This was unavoidable as we were both suffering from frost bite and were in serious pain, and an independent finish would have taken at least two more days. For would-be climbers of the route, a direct finish — for about the last six pitches, is possible, desirable and almost certainly difficult.

The ascent took us twenty days. We took food and water for twelve days and we were without food for the last three days. Seven and a half days were lost through atrocious weather which has to be prepared for even in midsummer in Romsdal, on long multi day routes: we had snow, sleet, hail and rain, rain, rain.

We hauled about two hundred lbs. of gear in total which comprised food, water, (2 pints each per day) bivouac gear including an 8 oz. nylon tube tent which may well have saved our lives when we were trapped by the weather. We hauled with three (Karrimor) haul bags, one bag at a time until we reached the Great Flake from which point we could manage with two bags.

Several important facts emerged during the route which may be of benefit to anyone interested in climbing The Arch Wall.

Although the route could be climbed in ten days this would only be possible if there was almost perfect weather. As this is unlikely, additional food should be taken for sit-ins: dehydrated food is particularly good from the point of view of core warmth.

We are convinced that some kind of easily established tent is essential. We made our own tube tent which was press-studded along its length and sides so that it could become a hanging canopy when we need it that way.

We were in some danger from rope wear and strongly recommend that new ropes are used both for hauling and climbing.

Karrimats or some kind of non-water-absorbing insulating materials we also regarded as crucial in preventing exposure when we had our long wet waits.

All of the necessary bolts are in place at belays and in the route (we used two bolts for aid and

one for protection). We made the bolts ourselves, from Duralumin with a swaged wire loop and they only hold about 1,000 lbs.

After the Big Swing — the pendulum on the 20th pitch, escape would be virtually impossible so it is advisable to do pitches 17, 18, 19 and 20 before launching off from the Great Flake ledges. This can be done by using one's haul line as a back rope connected to the ledges until the pendulum has been done, as it permits one to abseil back, which would be otherwise impossible.

Hammocks are necessary for several of the bivouacs.

Our peg selection was as follows:-

3 — Short thin Hitens blades.	2 — 3" Bongs.	Nuts on Wire.
3 — Short thin bugaboos.	3 — 2½" Bongs.	2 — Moac wedges — largest
3 — Short thin Lost Arrows.	4 — 2" Bongs.	2 — Clog wedges — No 4
6 — Short thick Lost Arrows.	4 — 1½" Angles	3 — Clog wedges — No 3.
5 — Rurps	4 — 1¼" Angles.	3 — Clog wedges — No 2.
5 — Cracktacks (Hitens)	4 — 1" Angles.	2 — Clog wedges — No 1.
	6 — ¾" Angles.	3 — Peck Crackers — smallest
	4 — ⅔" Angles.	and next to smallest.
	4 — ½" Angles.	
	4 — Long thin Leepers.	
	4 — Long thick Lost Arrows.	
	1 — Long Dong.	
	4 — Long Thin Lost Arrows.	
	3 — Long Thin Hitens Blades.	

It is essential that one has about ten short thin knife blades in perfect condition as these will have to stand up to repeated use. Except for the Hitens knife blades and crack tacks which were marvellous we used all Chouinard pitons although the knife blades were far too soft as were the rurps. The Hitens however cracked at the junction of the head and the blade and all three of our short thin ones lost their heads on the route, fortunately by the time that the hard nailing was over.

Just over half of the route is artificial the rest being free climbing. Skyhooks are essential. All of the hardest pitches and many of the others have both free and artificial climbing at random which requires a smooth change from one to the other.

It is possible to collect water at The Great Flake by placing something such as a helmet under the constant drip from the small overhang about fifteen feet above the main ledge system. (This is pretty obvious when you get there). We collected easily two and a half gallons in our five day stay there which proved invaluable for cooking our dehydrated food.

It is advisable to do the first two pitches up the approach slabs and get the haul bags established under the overhangs and out of the weather before launching off as pitches 3 and 4 are particularly difficult for hauling and climbing respectively.

For bivouacing on the route we used thermo-electric underwear (Damart) 2 layers and dispensed with down as this very quickly becomes useless on the wall where wet is the enemy rather than pure cold. Nylon Fur climbing trousers and sweaters (Helly Hansen) were ideal in every respect and both of these items were perhaps essential with the repeated soakings that it is impossible to avoid all of the time.

Yosemite and Welsh Gradings

A Pitch by Pitch grading
and route account.N.B. 50 metre or 165 ft.
ropes recommended**Pitch 1. 100ft. 5.8 or 5A)****Pitch 2. 120ft. 5.8 or 5A)**

Climb the introductory slabs to the left hand end of the huge overhang which is at the bottom right hand corner of the huge smooth wall in between the French and Rimmon routes. The upper half of the wall is split by a single crack. Begin at the snowfield below the middle of this smooth wall.

Pitch 3. 120ft. 5.9 or 5B

Belay under the overhanging ribs of rock (Bolts in place). A short easy traverse to the left gives access to the big slab leading to the short flared chimney. Up this to belay on top. (Bolts in place).

Pitch 4. 120ft. A5 + 5.8 or 5A

The crack above, free, then under the roof to its right hand end. Then the wall following vague cracks, some free, to poor ledges — No Ledges: Bivouac (hammocks).

Pitch 5. 140ft. A2 + 5.9 or 5B

The perfect pitch. A few pins to start then beautifully free up to a hanging stance. (Bolts in place).

Pitch 6. 130ft. A2 + 5.7 or 4C

The groove above, mixed, to Lindy's ledge: Bivouac 2, bolts in place.

Pitch 6. 150ft. A4 + 5.9 or 5B

Straight up the groove above — 2 bolts for aid in place, skyhooks and free, to the smooth V groove. Up this A.1. to a good ledge above the roof. Bolts in place. Long pitch.

Pitch 8. 70ft. 5.6 or 4B

Left on loose free and up to good ledge.

Pitch 9. 100ft. A3 + 5.8 or 5A

Left to the end of the ledge then a few pins of aid, cross a slab left, then steep free to good ledges above.

Pitch 10. 110ft. A3 + 5.7 or 4C

Left for twenty feet then up steep grooves with a traverse right after 40 feet, then up steeply to rubby ledges (Bolts in place). Bivouac ledge down left (Lucky's ledge). Bivouac 3.

Pitch 11. 100ft. 5.8 or 5A

Move right for twenty feet then up awkward free trending slightly right to a good ledge, for about sixty feet. Bolts in place.

Pitch 12. 40ft. A1 + 5.7 or 4C

Left into a short smooth groove. Up this to a good ledge on the right. Bolts in place.

Pitch 13. 110ft. 5.8 + A4 and 5A

Move left on the steep wall, and use two bad pegs to climb up and left into a rough groove around the corner. This is followed for fifty feet, difficult free, until a hanging belay can be taken at tiny ledges just where the groove steepens.

Pitch 14. 150ft. A2 + 5.8 or 5A

Follow the crack in a superb position trending left to ledges at its close. Then free climb straight up for 40 feet until possible to move left into a good crack in a smooth groove just below the bivouac

ledges at the House of Heen Bivouac 4. Bolts in place.

Pitch 15. 150ft. A2 + 5.9 or 5B

First ferry the haul bags down to the lowest ledges at the left. Trend left up the wall climbing the smooth V groove with difficulty using a peg to begin. Trend left to a big platform with belays at the back.

Pitch 16. 60ft. 5.6 or 4B

Up loose blocks to the left then across on broken ledges to a good bivouac ledge far left. This is more or less out of the drips. Great Flake ledges, Bivouac 5. Bolt in place.

Pitch 17. 150ft. A2 + 5.8 or 5A

Easily back and up to the right onto a big platform (split the pitch here). Climb the groove behind the platform, first free, then aid and free, to a good ledge (as for the French route).

Pitch 18. 100ft. A2 + 5.8 or 5A

Move left up the groove, mixed, then the steep wall trending left, free, to climb a wall of blocks (Care), to a good ledge.

Pitch 19. 40ft. 5.9 or 5B

Hand traverse left and up with difficulty onto a good ledge.

Pitch 20. 120ft. A4 (Pendulum)

Descend for about 100 feet on the rope until it is possible to pendulum across to the foot of the groove over on the left. Difficult aid in last few feet.

Pitch 21. 50ft. A2

Up the groove taking care with the detached blocks, stepping left onto a small platform.

Pitch 22. 100ft. A5 + 5.9 or 5B

Free climb the black groove ahead using a couple of skyhooks and two pegs for aid ending at bolts and a hanging belay.

Pitch 23. 100ft. A4 + 5.8 or 5A

Thin nailing slightly right until it is possible to free climb across to the left to a small but good ledge about fifty feet below the Arch. Bolts in place.

Pitch 24. 120ft. A3 + 5.7 or 4C

Climb free to the left with difficulty, then straight up with awkward aid, to a good crack at the left hand end of the Arch. Follow the crack until just below the roof at its left hand end and then free climb across on small ledges to the right hand end of the Arch. Bolts in place. Bivouac 6.

Pitch 25. A2

A magnificent pitch. Follow the roofs out to the right until the vertical crack splitting the wall above can be gained. Belay about twenty feet up.

Pitch 26. 80ft. A1 + 5.9 or 5B

Free climb the shallow crack with difficulty, then using a point or two of aid the crack to the left leading to a good small ledge. The Altar. Bivouac 7.

Pitch 27. 110ft. 5.8 or 5A

Climb diagonally left with difficulty until possible to enter a short groove leading to a slab beneath an overhanging black groove. Bolts in place.

Pitch 28. 140ft. A3 + 5.8 or 5A

Up the groove, some free, moving left at the top, beneath the roof, to a thin crack around the corner. Up this to belay where the angle eases on the smooth slabs. (Bolts in place).

Pitch 29. 100ft. 5.8 or 5A

Up behind the belay to a protection bolt then left into a thin crack. Up this and the groove above to a good ledge.

Pitch 30. 100ft. 5.7 or 4C

Move right across an easy angled slab then up a short steep corner.

Pitch 31. 80ft. 5.8 or 5A

Traverse left into the crack. Up this, then left across a slab, to a good ledge below a short corner.

Pitch 32. 60ft. 5.7 or 4C

Up the corner and belay at a fault on loose blocks. (Bolts in place).

Pitch 33. 100ft. 5.7 or 4C

Traverse left for 40 feet and then climb up the chimney with its huge loose blocks. At the top move right on good flakes and then belay on the top of the huge flake.

Pitch 34. 50ft. 5.6 or 4B

Up the groove above onto easier ground and belay over to the left.

Pitch 35.)

Pitch 36.) 150ft. 5.7 or 4C. Traverse left for about 150ft until below a broken groove.

Pitch 37.)**Pitch 38. 60ft. 5.6 or 4B**

Up the groove to the ledges above and belay in the good crack to the right.

Pitch 39. 90ft. 5.7 or 4C

Up behind the belay then over big loose blocks into a groove capped by an enormous chockstone. Move left at the top to belay below a broken corner.

Pitch 40. 60ft. 5.8 or 5A

Up behind the belay then over big loose blocks into a groove capped by an enormous chockstone. Free climb this at its left hand side and belay on the slab above.

Pitch 41. 50ft. 5.8 or 5A

Move left easily then up the short overhanging wall with difficulty to the summit. That last eight pitches are as for the Norwegian route.

First Ascent: Ed. Drummond and Hugh Drummond. August 9th – August 28th inclusive, 1972.

CASTELL CIDWM – NORTH EAST BUTTRESS

The three routes described in the Cwm Silyn and Cwellyn guide take the left flank of the buttress, overlooking Castell Cidwm Gully and to the left of a shallow gully line which divides the buttress at the top. The two routes described below take the neglected half of the buttress to the right of the gully line, starting up the obvious expanse of clean rock and crossing a diagonal rake to an impressively steep finish. Both start above the left end of a small stone-walled enclosure, by

scrambling up to the right of a tree to a grassy ledge with a pile of blocks at its right hand end. The first climb has not been named since its first two pitches had clearly been gardened by somebody else in the fairly recent past.

(Un-named) 380 feet. Hard Severe.

1. 120 feet. From the left end of the ledge swing awkwardly up to the left and move up over ledges to the groove line. Follow the crack up this, crossing a narrow ledge with a tree at 70 feet, to reach a slab and large nut belay behind a bollard.
2. 50 feet. Easily up the slab to belay near the bottom of the rake.
3. 60 feet. Gain the wall behind the belay by an awkward move and continue up rightwards on small holds to a horizontal break. Traverse right to belay on a large block ledge.
4. 150 feet. Reverse the traverse and climb a groove to an overhang. Turn this on the left using dubious blocks and continue steeply up shattered rock to reach easier-angled slabs. Pleasant climbing to the top.

(Pitches 3 and 4 could probably be split more conveniently by finding a belay on the line of the route).

Acrophily. 330 feet. Very Severe.

The climb follows an open line generally to the right of the above route, with a delectable finish on the upper buttress.

1. 50 feet. From the blocks at the right-hand end of the ledge step up left and climb the steep groove to a small square overhang. Turn this on the right by a difficult move and continue to a cave with a tree belay above on the right.
2. 80 feet. Step left from the cave and up to a ledge with a tree on the left. Continue directly above the cave to a niche (thread runner) with a possible escape left. Better, step right into a steep and undercut mossy groove. Climb this, finishing left with difficulty to reach the bollard belay on the un-named route.
3. 50 feet. Easily up the slab to the rake, then walk a further 50 feet up the rake to belay beneath a rightwards-slanting ramp, its lower end a few feet to the right of the large block ledge which is the main feature of the upper buttress.
4. 100 feet. Gain the ramp from the right and move up it past a doubtful block, then up a short wall to the right on good holds to a comfortable niche (runners). Step down and left from the niche and climb the steep crack to a small ledge. Move up leftward on small holds in a position of superb exposure to reach a flake hold below the final bulge. Step left again and up to a small ledge above the line of the overhangs. Belay a few feet up.
5. 50 feet. Easily up slabs to the top.

First Ascent: 23rd April, 1972 — C. H. Taylor, M. R. Sinker (varied leads).

EDITORIAL

In February 1974 I discovered completely to my surprise that the Editor, Tim Lewis was unable to continue in his post. The restrictions and difficulties caused in the printing world by the three day week had a lot to do with this. I have therefore taken over the articles and photographs which he had collected and put them together in the shortest possible space of time. I trust that the Club will make due allowances.

As far as the Club is concerned, meets and dinners continue to be well attended. More use could certainly be made of the club huts in particular Cwm Glas, which is now, after extensive repairs and improvements a very pleasant place to stay in. Members should note that Cwm Glas is to be a family hut, for the use of C.C. members with their families including children of any age. The Club continues to be a major producer of guide books, and at present eight titles are in print, with two more presently to appear. In the past, Editorials have largely dealt with material which forms the bulk of the Annual Reports. This time I have included the Annual Report itself, number 75, and for this reason I can be more brief.

The problem of whether women are to become full members of the Club remains unsolved. It is interesting that the "half way house" solution proposed by Emlyn Jones and his sub-committee some years ago has now been adopted by the Club without them perhaps being aware of it. In other words, of our five huts, all except Helyg are now effectively mixed huts. Of our meets and dinners, all are mixed except the Annual General Meeting and the Annual Dinner. This change has happened in the easiest and most natural way, with scarcely any objections raised.

My own feeling is that restrictive Victorian attitudes cannot last for ever, and that the Club will inevitably become a mixed Club sooner or later. This being so, the sooner it does so the better. It will be interesting to see if the Alpine Club beats us to it: it would not surprise me if they did.

The President.

In March 1974 I discovered completely to my surprise that I had become Editor of this Journal. Members are owed a word of explanation for the novel format of this edition. The change has been dictated by the pressures on the Club's finances and I invite members' views on the change.

Secondly, this Journal has been produced to an absolute priority of getting it to the Club rapidly. For the future, I hope that normal service will be resumed as soon as possible.

The Editor

OBITUARY

ALFRED WILLIAM BRIDGE

Member circa 1932/1951, and 1957/1960

To most climbers of the present day Alf Bridge will only be a shadowy figure as most of his legendary feats and activity upon the climbing scene took place twenty to fifty years ago, but to all who knew and climbed with him he must still be anything but a 'shadowy figure'; a great personality indeed, making impact in many ways within the climbing world.

Alf was a Climber, and as such a very worthy member of this Club. He was a very good climber too and for about a quarter of a century was among the most active and effective of his time. He was also a tremendously strong hill walker both as regards speed and endurance; and he was no mean mountaineer, good at finding the way over unknown and difficult terrain. His interest and activity in climbing began in his boyhood and continued right through to his death.

Being a native of Longsight, Manchester, he began in the usual manner of the enterprising youth of those parts by making his way to the Peakland hills and Gritstone Edges in his spare time, on very little money, without transport of his own, doing long approach treks along the roads, disdaining to hitch hike.

His first ascents and other notable exploits on Gritstone were numerous. He was an outstanding climber on the Edges, a Master both of the strenuous and the delicate. And as a member of the famous Bogtrotters Club he performed many incredibly arduous walks over Kinder Scout, Bleaklow, and the South Pennines generally.

His prominence in these fields — over a long period — was well brought out in the Eric Byne/Geoff Sutton book "High Peak" in which many pages were needed to record just some of his more remarkable feats. For instance, his 24 Hour Circuit of the Peak, in 1927, from Greenfield to Chinley; climbing on the way on Laddow, Stanage, Cratcliffe Tor, Robin Hoods Stride, and Castle Naze. His Super Direct start to Lean Man's climb on Black Rocks, Cromford was a remarkable achievement.

About 1930 he joined the Rucksack Club, and formed a very enterprising partnership with Eddie Holliday, with whom he went further afield — to the Lake District, North Wales and the Scottish Highlands — where Alf's strength and skill, developed on Gritstone, enabled him to do many of the hardest climbs then extant. A little later, when he was in his prime, he fell in with Maurice Linnell, much younger than himself, who was showing great promise, and they soon became a most effective combination of youth and experience, craft and thrust. This was a very productive association, culminating in the first Girdle Traverse of Pillar Rock in 1931, a notable climbing event. And although it was Linnell who led the actual first traverse it was Bridge who 'cracked the crib', by leading on the previous day, the difficult Wall pitch (which later became incorporated in the Hadrian's Wall climb) making the connection between the North climb from near the Split Blocks with the Nor' — Nor' West climb.

During the Bridge/Linnell period of association Kirkus and I were climbing regularly together, and when we happened to meet up with them — that was a hilarious occasion at Old Dungeon Ghyll — the two partnerships merged into a foursome and we had many great days together. In 1932 Alf was on the first ascent of Curving Crack and the Direct Finish to East Buttress, on Clogwyn du'r Arddu, followed by his own route on Esk Buttress, and his hard Variant Finish to Hiatus. Then sadly the combination of Linnell and Kirkus as a pair determined upon greater achievements came to

an end with the accident on Ben Nevis when Maurice lost his life. Alf also climbed with Jack Longland, Ivan Waller and their 'friends', by whom he was quickly accepted as a grand personality as well as an outstanding rock climber. The two groups were often together. Those were the days! We were the last-but-one generation of the 'Free' climbers, doing everything without aid of pegs or runners or P.A.'s mostly in nails or 2/6d gym-shoes, often just in socks, running out great lengths of kinky hemp, between bollards. At least that was how it was up to 1947, when Alf would be about 45, after which we were soon educated to nylon and vibrams.

About 1932 Bridge joined the Climbers Club, not long after his resignation from the Rucksack Club after some quarrel with those he used to describe as "The Mandarins", meaning the Establishment, and he remained a member until 1951. In 1948 he was elected to the Committee and two years later became Hon. Secretary. Unhappily it turned out that despite his qualities and abilities he was unsuited to this Office. His enthusiasm for reform and for 'helping young and up and coming climbers into the Club outran his discretion and he came into constant disagreement with other personalities, so that eventually his position became untenable and he had to give up Office, in 1950. It could have been made possible for him to 'retire with honour', so to speak, to a Vice Presidency but he would not co-operate in this and instead resigned from the Club, to the great disappointment of his friends and supporters. Despite this unfortunate episode he retained his many friendships in the Club, and also his intense and almost paternal interest in bringing on young climbers, giving them encouragement and help in many ways. Among quite a few of the next generation who benefited from this characteristic were, for instance, Peter Harding and Tony Moulam. And years later he developed a friendly affinity with Joe Brown, easily bridging the inequality of age. His generous encouragement had earlier shown itself clearly in the case of Colin Kirkus to whom he became very closely attached after the tragic accident on Ben Nevis in which Kirkus was badly damaged, and he remained his great friend and correspondent right through his War Service until Colin was killed in action.

Alf's own war work included several long periods helping to train Mountain Warfare Commando's and young Officer Cadets. This gave him scope for his benevolent interest in young people, and part of his 'legend' is the impact of this extraordinary non-military character upon the military training scene. Much later there came a period when this same interest showed up with renewed force. He put enormous energy and ability into helping the 1953 Everest Expedition and the subsequent Kangchenjunga Expedition, earning the gratitude and respect of all concerned. His most important contributions were in the development and supply of oxygen equipment for both expeditions (a field in which his engineering experience and contacts were invaluable) and in his administrative work as the organising Secretary of the Kangchenjunga Expedition.

This was his greatest service to British Mountaineering — and it was typical of Alf that he did it all in a self-effacing and unselfish way. This effort on his part was probably some psychological compensation for his disappointment some 20 years earlier at not being able to persuade "the Establishment" to send Colin Kirkus and himself on the 1933 Everest Expedition. This was probably at the core of his antipathy to "the Mandarins"

Going back to his early days and his career in industry. He began work at a very early age as an apprentice steeplejack and became a notable member of that trade. He had a fund of remarkable yarns about the occupational hazards of steeplejacks and the extraordinary and sometimes very funny things that happened to him, including falling from a considerable height through a glass roof into the arms of a Typists Pool — almost uninjured — and immediately being offered a cup of tea, while they quizzed him as to where he had come from It was then that he started to develop his ideas about "The Art of Falling" which he later enshrined in his memorable article under that title.

As a hard working night school student he gained professional qualification as a Structural Engineer and consequently later as a Chartered Engineer. He then held a succession of increasingly

responsible posts in the engineering industry.

In his late 40's he met with a set back in his professional career and this unfortunately coincided with his term of office as Hon. Secretary of the C.C. and may well have had something to do with his limited success as such; it also up-set his climbing for a time.

However, there came a lucky break for him when he fell in with certain people in the engineering industry (including our former member Sir Eric Mensforth) who appreciated Alf's intensely professional approach to his work and were able to give him wider scope for his talents. In due course he became a Director of one of the John Brown Group of Companies when they were building the QE2. Alf was very proud of his association with this great enterprise. His major work for John Brown was in connection with the construction of the shells of many huge steam boilers for power stations – the biggest that had been built up to that time. This phase of his professional career covered a good many years but then, whilst he was still full of vigour, he quite unnecessarily decided to retire, and went to live at Colwyn Bay where he and his wife set up a beautiful residence. During a short period of semi-retirement he put his energy and experience voluntarily at the disposal of Bangor University and made important contributions to the development of a Scheme to link University Engineering with the needs of industry. Not surprisingly he could not adjust himself to the retirement way of life and when over 65, he returned to work as a partner in a Sheffield firm of Consulting Engineers with whom he gained high regard in engineering circles for his meticulously accurate work and his thoroughness. He was formidable at refusing to pass anything that was not absolutely perfect. And that was how he came to the end of his life – with his mental powers unimpaired.

Meanwhile, having passed his peak as a rock climber he again became interested in climbing in the Alps; this time with the leisure to indulge it. His association in engineering with Eric Mensforth who was an experienced Alpinist led Alf to several seasons with him, doing many classic climbs. And during this period he became a member of the Alpine Club.

At this stage in his life he seemed to have mellowed in his attitude towards "The Mandarins" and appeared to be living down his reputation as an impossibly rumbustious character. And as a result of his excellent work for the Everest and Kangchenjunga Expeditions, coming after his notable career in British climbing, he stood forth as one of the most notable people in the climbing scene. All seemed set for him to become 'one of the Establishment' himself.

So his friends persuaded him to apply for readmission to the C.C. and this was duly achieved during David Cox's Presidency.

But alas it was not long before it became apparent that his spots had not changed after all for in the course of certain "local difficulties" that occurred in the C.C. during 1959 and at the beginning of 1960 he took sides emotionally in those controversies and when his views did not prevail he again resigned from the Club. Subsequently he also resigned from the Alpine Club and from the Presidency of the Karabiner Club. The motives which impelled Alf towards this last bout of resignations never became clear, but probably they were a final quixotic gesture against "The Mandarins"

Nevertheless this stormy petrel remained highly regarded within the British Climbing fraternity, especially by the younger climbers who appreciated that he genuinely had their interests at heart. It was recognised that he was essentially a kindly man despite his prickly touchiness.

It remains for me to tell something of his virtues as a companion on the hills and on the crags. His first quality was that he was always full of fun and even in the most difficult situations and the most appalling conditions he would remain cheerful. He was a very strong and competent rock climber who led many of the hardest things available to his generation and he was also the proverbial tower of strength as a second man. He was especially good at the technics of giving a shoulder or a head and holding a foot, which he did for me many a time. He did not seem to mind me standing on

his head in tricounis, and when it came to giving me a push up such places as the Flake Crack on Scafell it was just like going up with a hydraulic piston behind one. I must have had more than a century of days on the hill with Alf during a period of great activity and I remember him as a wonderful chap to be with in a tight corner.

I knew him in all his numerous facets of character; as a climber, as a contender and opponent in the administration of this Club, and as a loyal friend.

He died very suddenly and quite unexpectedly in September 1971, at the age of 69.

Alf was very fortunate in his wife, Dorothy, who was utterly devoted to him.

My Epitaph upon Alf Bridge would be that he was above all a Climber, and as such an adornment to this Club. He was also an outstandingly warm-hearted personality. And if he often stirred us into a state of exasperated controversy he nevertheless made a great contribution to our way of life.

A. B. H.



ALF BRIDGE with SHERPA TENZING

OBITUARY

(CONTINUED)

LAURIE HOLLIWELL

When a climber is killed climbing there is always a lot of hard thinking and heart searching among his family and friends. Each one has their own sadness and their own particular memories. These are the property of the individuals concerned and cannot really be conveyed to others.

It is only the rare and exceptional climber who is known and respected outside this immediate circle and Laurie Holliwell was such a one. He was a climber of rare talent who created a formidable array of climbs which alone will ensure him lasting recognition. However he also had something much rarer than a high level of climbing skill. He was a man of unbending honesty in everything he did. He never cheated, he saw no point in it. He understood very well that British climbing is based on arbitrary, almost pointless, rules and he always kept the rules. In creating so many climbs in this spirit he contributed in a major way to preserving the sport we all belong to.

Laurie's routes show a unique combination of consistently minimal aid and consistent honesty about what was used. This was not achieved without effort and devotion but it was worth it to Laurie and the rest of us should be grateful that it was so. Laurie did not live in vain.

Malcolm Howells.

DEREK BULL

Derek was killed on April 30th 1974. He was knocked down by an express train in an appalling accident. He was 47. For a large number of people, nothing will be quite the same again without him. I had known him for 25 years so we were old friends. He was my best man. We met at Oxford in the days when one could take ones mountains unseriously, which he did. He approached life with a lightness, openness and good humour which endeared him to a large circle of friends.

He was a very generous man. I don't just mean that he would buy you a drink: he would lend you his car for a fortnight, and not many people will do that. He was a brilliant driver and took part in numerous rallies both official ones (the Tulip) and unofficial ones for instance the Marble Arch to P.Y.G. dash which had some vogue before motorways were invented. He held the record for some years in an old M.G. Saloon with an incredible average speed of 67 MPH. It took a Frazer-Nash to displace him. He was a brilliant raconteur and would hold us spellbound with stories about climbing and racing which I had heard him tell a dozen times but which never palled. He was the only fast driver in whose car I never felt perpetually terrified. It is true that he once drove us into a hedge on the way to Bosigran in Cornwall, but he did it with great skill. He sometimes boasted that he could only guarantee to be on time for an appointment if it involved a drive of at least 200 miles.

Derek read Law at Oxford and then went to work in an Insurance Office in the City. It cannot really be said that his soul was ever in the City. He was happiest on the hills and in his home life, where he had a delightful wife Natalie, and two charming daughters.

In recent years he had spent more and more of his time working with Approved Schoolboys and delinquent children. He felt very strongly that it was his duty to help them, and teach them something of his love of wild places. Who knows, he might eventually have found his vocation in this type of work.

Derek was on the committee of the Climbers' Club, and had run the Climbers' Club Welsh dinner for many years most successfully. He had visited the Alps on numerous occasions, the Caucasus in 1956, and the Russian Pamirs in 1962. His ascent of the Bezingi Wall of Shkara in four days was in his view his finest ever climb.

He was a delightful climbing companion, very safe, an athletic leader of hard climbs in his youth, and still able to climb to a high standard in his forties. I remember particularly a girdle traverse of the West Buttress of Cloggy which we did in the early fifties, five days in the deserted Pyrenees in October 1968, and our last climb together on the Pillar of Elidir, in January 1974.

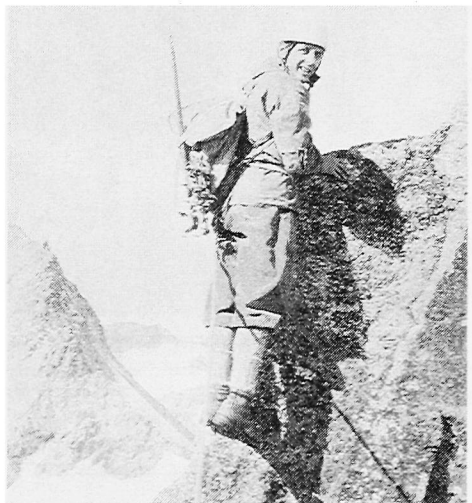
Derek was happiest in a scruffy old pullover and a blue beret. He cared nothing for sartorial elegance, and would rarely bother to buy any new clothes.

He had no enemies. I can remember no arguments or unpleasantness or disputes that I ever had with him which speaks volumes for his tolerance.

He was truly unselfish, and had a deeply developed social conscience. He was concerned with people, and not with things. Fuses might not get mended at Pendyce house, but his conversation revealed a deep concern for politics, for the ethics of big business, for youth, and for climbing.

I have a picture in my mind. Derek is in the middle and he is surrounded by his many friends and we are in the P.Y.G. bar. He has a cigarette in his mouth, and he is just talking, which he is so good at. But the picture is broken and cannot be mended, and nothing will be quite the same again.

H.G.N.



DEREK BULL

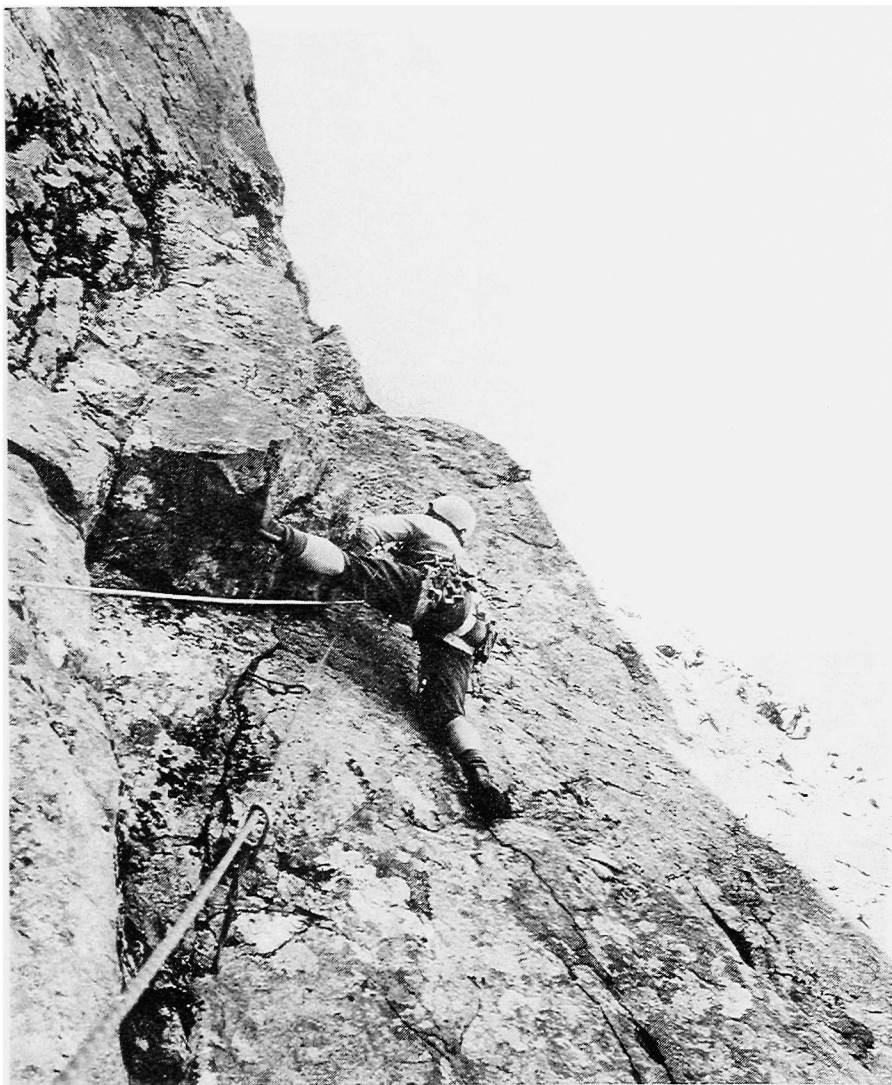
photo by Hamish Nicol

CLIMBERS CLUB ACTION PHOTOS



John Kingston leading Torro on Ben Nevis (Carn Dearg)
moving up to the Crux on Pitch One

photo
Ken Wilson

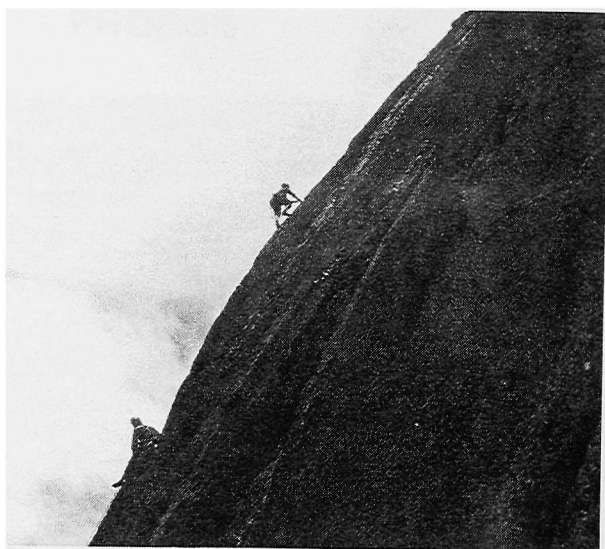


John Kingston on the Crux of Torro (Pitch One)

The guide advocates a peg for aid at this point. No peg is in or needed but it may be necessary to rest on a sling depending on how much effort is involved.

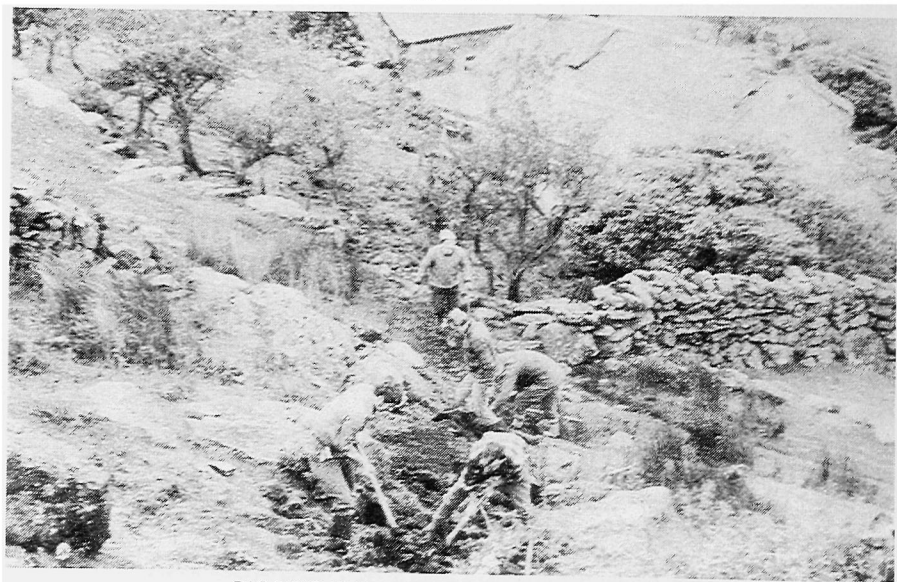
From this bridged position a series of right facing layback moves are needed to reach slightly easier ground

photo
Ken Wilson



TENNIS SHOE CLIMB

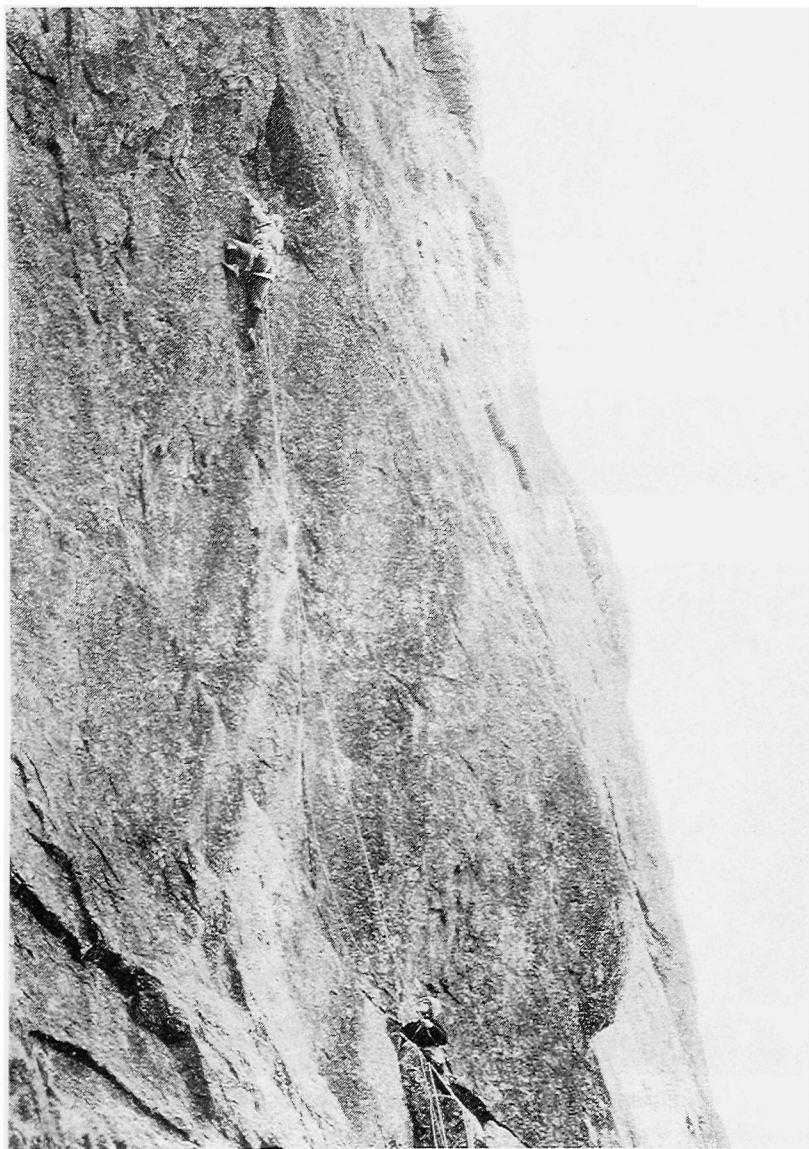
photo
Ken Wilson



DIGGING IN THE WATER PIPE TO CWM GLAS

Welsh Dinner Week-End 1972

photo
J. R. Lees



CLIMBERS' CLUB BRACKENCLOSE MEET
Chris Bonington (leading) and Mike Kosterlitz
on Nazgul — Scafell Crag

photo
Ken Wilson



H. Pretty and R. Handley
AT THE DOVEDALE DASH

photo
T. Lewis



CLIMBERS' CLUB MEET AT BRACKENCLOSE MAY 1972

photo
Tony Riley

Back Row(Left to right): Pat Cannings, Dav Alcock, John Mercer, Colin Taylor, John Campbell, Chris Bonington, Maggie Boysen, Ginger Cain, Dave Potts, Martin Boysen, John Kingston, Terry Parker, Di Parker, Robin Ford, Jim George, Alexa Boulton, Godfrey Boulton, Vee Withers, Roger Withers, John Peck, Mike Kosterlitz and Ian Roper.

Front Row Janice Alcock, Sylvia Mercer, Mike Thompson, Frank Cannings, Mo Anthoine, Dave Atchison, Martin Harris, Malcolm Howells, Nick Estcourt and Robin Prager. (Not shown (photographing) Ken Wilson and Tony Riley.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30TH, 1972 TREASURER'S REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS

The last two years' accounts have shown surpluses of £1,633 and £2,254, expenditure having necessarily been restrained by large sums tied up in guide book finance. This year more cash has been spent generously on the huts, principally at Cwm Glas £1,650).

In authorising a start on the work at Cwm Glas we anticipated that our guide book distributors would pay-up rather more quickly than transpired: we were saved from embarrassment by temporary loans generously offered by members, and these loans were repaid on January.

However, much work postponed because of the cash shortage in earlier years remains, costs are continuing to rise, and it no longer seems wise to count on profits from guides to finance other activities. This has led to the proposal to increase the annual subscription as well as to the rise in hut fees already approved by the Committee, and the background has been given in a note circulated earlier.

Income and Expenditure

Income (actual £1,788; target £1,750).

Interest again appears following the opening of an account with the Halifax.

Expenditure—Publications (actual £1,355; target £410).

Guide books show a £770 loss because our distributors have reconsidered their original agreement to pay in advance for some of the cost of unbound flat sheets; thus £1,190 comes off this year's income having appeared as part of last year's profit, and the overall position is a profit of £815 for the two years combined. The £2,880 of guide book stocks is for 6 editions in unbound flat sheets, and these will show a profit when demand allows them to be bound and sold.

Expenditure—Huts (actual £72 plus £1,650 Cwm Glas revaluation; target £410).

In addition to the improvements at Cwm Glas, £300 was spent on a new cess pit at Ynys Lloyd and £153 on repairs at Bosigran. A further £500 has been spent at Cwm Glas since September to complete the work. Income was down £140 on last year, a tightening-up on the use of Bosigran (fees £210 down) being partly off-set by more block bookings at Helyg (fees £140 up).

Expenditure—Administration (actual £804; target £600).

The total is close to last year's, but whilst we spent less on many items—notably stationery—this was off-set by a donation of £100 to the N. Wales Hydro-electric Protection Committee, by £75 for binding a gift of old journals and books, and by an increase of £32 in the B.M.C. subscription. Special mention must be made of a generous £72 gift to us from a C.U.M.C. memorial fund, all but £10 of which has so far been spent on books for the huts.

Assets and Liabilities

The overall position remains sound, but the proposal to raise the subscription reflects the Committee's opinion that we should no longer count on a measure of profit from guide books to finance other activities. The position on V.A.T. is unclear at the time of writing, but whether or not we register, it is going to cause costs to rise, since about half our expenditure (excluding guides) will bear the new tax whereas previously it was purchase tax free.

P. M. GERRARD,
Honorary Treasurer

The Climbing Year

The South-West Face of Everest continued to attract the big expeditions and to absorb a high proportion of the available finance. Scott endured the frustrations of the European Expedition, to return post-monsoon with the British Expedition, led by Bonington and including Estcourt as a member. This expedition is to be congratulated for reaching the highest point previously attained, under extreme weather conditions, and on eventually retreating for sound mountaineering reasons rather than because of internal strife.

In the Alps during January, Bonington took part in a prolonged but unsuccessful attempt on the Central Couloir of the Grandes Jorasses. The Summer season was mediocre, but McHardy and Alan Burgess managed the Central Pillar on the Freney Face of Mont Blanc with separate parties, and Burgess together with his brother made several other notable ascents.

Howells attended the International Camp for Young Mountaineers as one of two representatives invited via the British Mountaineering Council by the German Alpine Club on the occasion of the Olympic Games in Munich. It seems that Russian proposals to introduce top-roping as an Olympic sport are unlikely to succeed.

Among members active in other parts of the world were Cambell-Kelly with The Nose and North America Wall in Yosemite, and Drummond who made a new route on Trollrygen.

The growing sport of ski-mountaineering took a great leap forward with the British Alpine Ski Traverse led by Blackshaw and including the President, Peacock and Sykes. During March and April the expedition skied over as much snow as they could find between Innsbruck and Grenoble and then doubled back to Mont Blanc, which had somehow eluded them on the way.

Subscription and Hut Dues

For reasons outlined in the Hon. Treasurer's Report on the Accounts and described in more detail in an earlier report to the Club, the Committee has reluctantly decided that both hut dues and members' subscriptions must be increased. A motion to increase the annual subscription from £2.50 to £4.00 is on the Annual General Meeting agenda, to take effect in January, 1974. Increases in hut dues will come into effect immediately after the weekend of the Annual General Meeting, and will be to the following rates-per night: Members—25p, Reciprocal Rights—40p, Guests—50p, Camping—20p.

Women

Committee Motions to admit women to membership received a small majority at the Annual General Meeting of 1972, but less than the majority of two-thirds which is needed to alter the Rules of the Club. The Motions are to be re-introduced this year.

Meets

There were several innovations in the year's meets programme. The meet organised by K. J. Wilson in Wasdale during May was a considerable success, even if the few members present who had not been on Annapurna felt a little out of place. The 'Langdale meet' in September, popular as ever, moved to Buttermere and enjoyed a fine weekend and dinner at the Kirkstile. The Welsh Dinner was opened to ladies for the first time; it was well attended and was generally felt to be a

very civilised and pleasant occasion. Lastly, the Annual Dinner and General Meeting are being held in Derbyshire.

Obituary

Sadly, the Club has lost four Honorary Members during the year: Sir Geoffrey Summers, S. Arnold Marples, a former Vice-President, Arthur Lockwood, a member of fifty-five years' standing, and L. G. Shadbolt who had been a member for sixty three years.

Huts

The long-awaited major improvements at Cwm Glas have been virtually completed during the year. Roy Beard's scheme entailed renovation of the kitchen and rear bunk-room, including raising of the roof level, and installation of civilised washing and lavatory facilities in the barn. The work was supervised by members of the Huts Sub-Committee: Wiggett was the builder. A working party on the week-end of the Welsh Dinner dug in some five hundred metres of plastic pipe for the new water supply. Interior painting was carried out, and a small number of members with pyramid-building instincts made astounding progress with an extension to the terrace in front of the hut, intended eventually to conceal the new septic tank. A new septic tank has also been built at the R. W. Lloyd Hut.

Three Honorary Custodians have resigned during the year. The gratitude of the Club is extended to Handley (R. W. Lloyd since 1970), C. T. Jones (Helyg since 1962) and G. D. Roberts (Cwm Glas since 1964), also to C. E. Davies, who is retiring after five years as Honorary Hut Booking Secretary;

Reciprocal rights have been arranged with the New Zealand Alpine Club, a bargain for any members visiting those parts.

Publications

The cash flow problems mentioned in last year's Annual Report as having slowed guide book production have worsened during the year, to the extent that the Publications Sub-Committee now have several guide books ready for the printers, with no means of financing publication. The distributors have not been able to pay for published guides at the rate which had been hoped for, and there now appears to be little possibility of making alternative arrangements. It has therefore been decided to cut back the scale of guide book operations to the areas traditionally covered by the Club. The Peak District and possibly other areas will be handed over to the British Mountaineering Council.

In spite of these financial set-backs an unprecedented number of guide books has been published during the last four years. Thanks are due to R. F. Jones, Hatton and other members of the Publications Sub-Committee now retiring.

The combined 1970-1 edition of the Journal was published in July; the quality of production was unsatisfactory and will be improved for the 1972-3 edition, on which the Hon. Journal Editor is now working.

Protest Campaigns

One hundred pounds was donated by the Club to the North Wales (Hydro-Electricity) Protection Committee as a contribution to the campaign against proposals to dam at least one and possibly three valleys in Snowdonia for pumped storage schemes.

Putnam gave evidence on behalf of the Club in support of the Objectors at the Public Inquiry into proposals for the major reconstruction of the A66 road along Bassenthwaite Lake.

Membership

The total Membership is:

Membership at 30th September, 1971	..	703
+ new members and reinstatements	..	32
— resignations and deaths	..	13
Membership at 30th September, 1972		722

OFFICERS OF THE CLUB

President:

H. G. Nicol

Vice-Presidents:

H. B. Sales, A. Blackshaw

Honorary Treasurer:

P. M. Gerrard

Honorary Secretary:

M. R. Sinker

Assistant Hon. Secretary:

R. E. Prager

Hon. Journal Editor:

J. Longland

Committee:

D. C. Bull
L. R. Holliwell
M. R. Howells
J. R. Lees
R. F. Morgan
D. S. Potts
C. H. Taylor
P. H. Hopkinson

Huts Sub-Committee:

E. Siddall (Chairman)
C. E. Davies
J. R. Lees (Hon. Custodian
Cwm Glas Mawr)
D. K. Morrison (Hon. Custodian,
R.O. Downes Hut)
R. E. Owen (Finance)
J. W. Smith (Hon. Custodian, Bosigran)
D. Wiggett (Hon. Custodian, R.W. Lloyd Hut)

Publications Sub-Committee:

C. T. Jones (Editor)
C.E.M. Yates (Business and Distribution)
L. R. Holliwell (Area Editor, South-East)
F.E.R. Cannings (Area Editor, South-West)

The Climbers' Club Journal

Edited by
J. H. Longland

1975
The Climbers' Club

This is the ninety seventh issue
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FIFTY YEARS ON

The discovery of Helyg



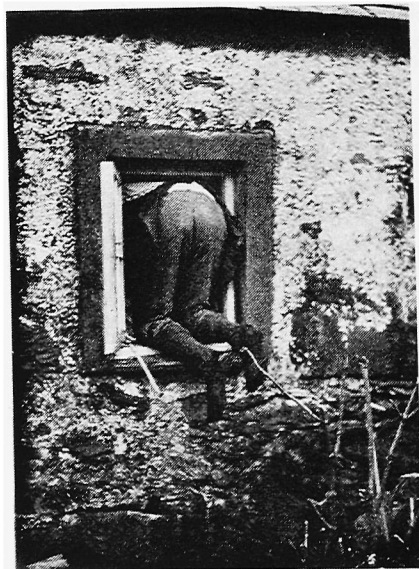
Helyg



Marples leads



Greene hesitates



Guinness follows

Photos courtesy Raymond Greene

A FACE: A FRIEND

by

M. F. BAKER

The wind blasted the previous day's snow from the great curve of the Lenspitze face. It could be heard or imagined even on the sunny patio in Saas Fee where we were enjoying an early, if frugal, Sunday lunch.

"Accuracy?" scoffed Colin as he applied himself to the millimetrically precise apportionment of our meagre cheese ration: "Accuracy is a concept which no scientists accept today". He was answering a suggestion that, for all its age, my Negretti and Zambra altimeter was an instrument of great precision. Secretly I think he found it slightly disturbing that his own modern plastic-fronted Swiss altimeter did not exude quite the confidence that breathed through the leather and brass of my own. It was inevitable that half an hour later we should find ourselves heading along the Mischabelhütte track. It is a path of unrelenting steepness and does not provide the perfect Sunday afternoon stroll, but it is well suited for the testing of altimeters. Colin's had been set in metres and mine, after some mathematics of such sophistication that the calculation now entirely eludes me, had been wound to the equivalent in feet. For an hour or two while the needles slowly showed our advance, we were able to lose ourselves in reveries of yesterday and tomorrow.

We had set off on Friday afternoon for the TäschHütte from Zermatt. The Saturday had seen us up the Alphubel by the Westgrat a recommendable route with a crux that is not to be underestimated when the wind is blowing and snow is in the air. The descent to the Alphubeljoch and the Langfluh had been at first a cold and blind affair, and then just a wet one. It had snowed high up for twelve hours solid and our plan to return to Zermatt over the Lenspitze N. E. Face looked optimistic in the extreme. It seemed more likely that we would have to creep back over the Windjoch and down the Ried Glacier to St. Niklaus, or even, perish the thought, take a bus to the Rhône Valley and go back to Zermatt by train. We reached the hut in good order and in a good time. Over a bowl of lemon tea Colin sat down to disprove the supremacy of my altimeter. It was a puzzled Taylor that reported eventually that his piece recorded a height of 3321 while mine, when converted, made it 3327. By the map and Guide Book the true height is 3329 metres. I thought it boded well.

Quite contrary to all our expectations, seeing it was a Sunday, the hut began to fill up between five and six o'clock. By 7 p.m. there was no longer any room to sit in the living room. By half past the hallway too was full. Soon all the bed space was taken and the place was undeniably bulging. Against the howling of the wind, which continued all night, the assurance of the Guardian that the N. E. Face would be in condition come the dawn sounded thin and diffident. From the deepest recess of his sleeping bag Colin muttered that all the wind would probably sweep the face clear of the piled up snow and the ascent would be a doddle. But neither of us believed a word of it. Though we did not know it then we had once again talked ourselves into a route.

It was Colin's theory, one of many, all of which he insisted on putting into practice, that a good alpine day involved at some point an assertion of superiority of his rope over 'the rest'. Deep down I think he felt that this was best done on the hill, but it undoubtedly bolstered up morale to start asserting early. 'Begin as you mean to go on' is a sound precept. Accordingly at three o'clock a.m. precisely, while others slumbered stertorously on, we girded our ironmongery, donned our warmest clothes, and crept assertively downstairs, hushing one another as we went. We lifted our warm water from a dormant stove, stuffed our mouths with unwanted rolls spread thick with jam and frozen butter, and shivered as the wind continued its battering of the exposed ridge on which the hut sat. Only as we strapped on our crampons did the first Continentals stumble into the room. The shortness of their axes and the superciliousness of their manner betrayed that they too had designs on the North East Face. With briefly muttered greetings (not reciprocated) we slipped through the door and, before we had traversed past the hut's ablutions, were in a cold, windblown, steep and inhospitable country.

For an hour or so we plugged upwards. Each step had to be won from the blown snow. The temperature had not risen sufficiently since the snowfall to form even the merest crust. The snow emitted a high pitched noise when compacted by our cramponed boots. Soon we could see behind us the lights of the first of the other parties. It was perhaps natural that we should think they were catching up. The ridge flattened

out. To our right was the apparently flat Hohbalm glacier leading to the great concave snow face. Above the face was a jagged ridge, then the stars, and everywhere a gigantic wind. We roped up and left the ridge, vainly hoping for refuge from the wind, but we didn't find it. Every pace towards the foot of the route reinforced the feeling that our actions were no more than a performance put on partly for the benefit of those who flaunted the lights behind, and partly to defer for ourselves the moment of facing the truth; namely that the route was not feasible.

The going deteriorated steadily. The wind had piled up enormous and unending drifts leading to the foot of the Face. The snow, which had been ankle deep, crept knee-high and further. Simple forward movement became impossible. To make a foot's advance it was necessary to turn half round and sit on the snow, then complete the circle and kneel it into a sufficient compactness to create a footstep. Our tracks turned into a furrow, and the furrow into a slowly advancing trench. It seemed ages before we reached the Bergschrund which by then we had openly declared to be the day's objective. Down the maws of this glinting monster there dribbled a continuous stream of windblown snow. We edged our way up, mere warts upon its chin, only feeling bold because we were both convinced that we would come straight down as soon as we had set foot upon the face itself.

Above this Bergschrund however the whole situation changed. The snow had been blown from the Face, leaving no more than a rime adhering to the hard compact snow-ice below. Moreover the angle was nowhere near as fierce as it had appeared from below. This is a characteristic of all the Valais snow faces and has doubtless prevented many worthy parties from ever setting foot upon them. So we decided to go on. We climbed on a full 150' of rope leading through in pitches which we estimated (wrongly) at about 250 feet. The distance from Bergschrund to summit is 490 metres expressed vertically but when we had each led five through leads on the full 150 feet of rope we did not seem much more than half way. The best line is easy for it follows an aesthetic curve leftwards and up towards the topmost point on the ridge. Yet far below the dots that were the other parties, amalgamated now, seemed to be heading further rightwards. We were, I think, four and a half hours on the face. We did not need to speak. Pitch followed pitch, with a single ice peg to secure the belay. We used Salewa 8" hollow screws and felt them to provide excellent security. It seemed, no doubt quite falsely, that the final two pitches took almost the total time. They really were brutes for the wind sweeping from the west had made everything hard as iron and the final pitches are steep. But they yielded to Colin, and as he breasted the summit he emitted a most uncharacteristic whoop of triumph and glee which was almost immediately flung away and dispersed in the greater roar of the wind.

We now had to decide the best means of return. The wind seemed to be coming more from the south and neither of us greatly fancied the long trudge of the route via the Domhütte. We therefore determined to traverse to the Nadelhorn, descend to the Windjoch to the North East — thus getting out of the wind — and then head North to the Bordierhütte, a pleasantly unknown refuge above the hamlet of Ried.

The traverse was dramatic and was, in Colin's words "effected briskly but with circumspection". Occasional gendarmes would loom out of the mist shredded by the wind which seemed to buffet the very rock bed. Any slack in the rope was instantly whipped in a horizontal curve to the right. There is nothing of any technical difficulty on the ridge, but nevertheless we were both glad to make the summit of the Nadelhorn, and gladder still to find below it some real shelter where it was possible to talk without shouting or fighting for breath, and even to pause for some mint cake and cold tea.

The descent to the Windjoch demanded care but not the complete concentration that the climb had hitherto called for. We were able to look around, particularly to see what had happened to the other party on the face. It had not progressed up our line; we spotted the climbers eventually in a direct line below the Nadeljoch on an unnamed route referred to briefly in the Kurz Guide-book. They did not seem to be making progress. There did not seem to be anyone else on the mountains, although a line of footsteps across the Hohbalm basin showed that quite a large group had tried to reach our col from the hut. From the col it was an arduous plod past the Western bastions of the Balfrin. It is however interesting to tread the Ried Glacier for it gives most interesting views of the Hohberghorn and the Durrenhorn, the continuation peaks of the Nadelgrat. The East face of the Hohberghorn particularly looks as though it merits more attention than it receives. The peak is, after all, a fourthousander.

It was early evening before we reached the Bordierhütte, a cabin undramatically placed on a moraine above the right bank of the Ried Glacier which falls sharply down at that point. We were both by then fairly tired but had the urge to continue. We had reached the Saas Valley from Zermatt in an afternoon and a day, and the symmetry of our plan seemed to require a return to the Zermatt Valley in the same sort of time.

Besides, there is something enormously satisfying in walking unhurriedly downhill in the cool evening after a long windy day. We therefore decided to go on.

The going is at first straightforward. The path leads across the glacier and down the left bank to the moraines. It plunges into deep pine woods just below the ruined chalets at Alpja. There we could smell wood smoke and pine and we could hear gentle streams. As the route became more tortuous it very soon became clear that we were not going to reach St. Niklaus in daylight. The question then was whether we would reach it at all that evening. Only after we had reached the junction of three paths, and chosen the one which eventually led back uphill, was it clear that we were not. Quite where we came to rest we were unclear. There was a ruined chalet and an irrigation stream which we had followed until it seemed interminable; but there was also a patch of luscious grass and that was enough for both of us. We had some chocolate and some water and some nuts and raisins, and a good measure of whisky. Colin lit his pipe. We both donned duvets, laid down the bivouac sack as a groundsheet and plunged our feet into our rucksacks. We lay back to watch the shooting stars flit across the night sky and silently drowse themselves behind the Weisshorn. We reminisced for a space. Then we slept.

NUPTSE 1975

The Joint British Army/Royal Nepalese Army Nuptse Expedition 1975

by

MAJOR JON FLEMING

The final major training period before the Joint British Army/Royal Nepalese Army Mount EVEREST Expedition 1976 takes place was conducted in the pre-monsoon period of this year on Nuptse (25,850'). As a first choice we had asked for Cho Oyu (26,750') but it had been denied us on political grounds. The Team consisted of 16 British members of the Army Mountaineering Association, 3 British Army Gurkha members of the AMA, 3 Royal Nepalese Army and 3 High Altitude Sherpas. There was also a Gurkha Support Party of 6, which included signallers and mail runners. The Expedition Leader was Major Jon Fleming, the Deputy Leader Lt Col John Peacock.

Having marched in from Kathmandu, through scenery and fauna which were just getting over the Nepalese winter, the Team established Base Camp on the Nuptse Glacier about ½ a mile down from the site of the 1961 camp on 2nd April. This was after having spent a week in Dingboche acclimatising, during which Peacock, Owens, Summerton and Brister climbed Island Peak (20,300') and during which we rescued the Doctor of the Italian Expedition on the South Face of Lhotse who was suffering from pulmonary oedema.

The chaotic boulderfield, which was a mile wide, of the Nuptse Glacier was successfully negotiated and on the 6th April Camp 1 was established, under the central ridge of the south face of the mountain. Lane, Stokes, Armstrong and Brister began forcing their way up this ridge to Camp 2 the next day. On the 8th April Camp 2 was established and then occupied on the 10th. The 4 lead climbers were going very well and so pushed on to Camp 3. The grade VI rock pitch, which we had all heard so much about, was very well led by Stokes and by 13th April the lead climbers were occupying Camp 3 at 19,800', perched on a small ledge just large enough to take the 2 tunnel tents and with fantastic views of Makalu, Ama Dablam and the jagged sawbone peaks to the west. The crux of the ridge was now before us. It presented some interesting and intricate climbing. It was always steep, it was icy, it was very exposed, and the seracs looked as though they would drop off at any minute. At one moment one was some 60' below the crest, at another on the rotten, crumbling crest, and at yet another actually passing through a tunnel in the crest. We had seen nothing like it ever before. Armstrong and Brister then later Agnew & Walshaw did a fine piece of route finding along this

section. Rope was being fixed all along the way to make it easier for the subsequent load carrying parties. The weather followed the normal Himalayan pattern of fine mornings and cloudy afternoons, sometimes with considerable snowfall thus filling in previously made footholds. By 22nd April it had become necessary to put in an intermediate Camp 3A at 20,400' in a little niche in the ridge because it was too far to push the route out to Camp 4 sensibly from Camp 3. This Camp was established and occupied by Agnew and Fleming, who then went on in deteriorating conditions to establish Camp 4 at a place which widened out considerably where the ridge abutted on to the main south face of the mountain, on 23rd April. The difficult ridge had at last been overcome and the task of getting sufficient stores up the mountain to Camp 4 in order to push further on up began. Using Camp 4 at 21,000' as a form of Advance Base the climb progressed. Following a very steep ice slope and tricky traverse Camp 5 was put in a crevasse at 22,350' by Pasang Tamang (Gurkha) and Fleming, on 30th April. It was occupied by Agnew and Gifford on 1st May. Later they were joined by Owens and Summerton, who in 1969 had climbed Tirich Mir (25,263') and Annapurna (26,525') in 1970. The final obstacle now lay before us, the Rockband. A way through this, not obvious from below, was very skilfully led by Agnew and Owens, while Summerton and Gifford fixed the ropes. On 5th May Camp 6 at 23,350' was established and then occupied by Owens, Summerton, Armstrong and Brister the next day.

Everything was going according to plan marvellously. On the 7th May Owens, Summerton, Armstrong and Brister moved across the long traverse of snow, it was over $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile long, to establish and occupy Camp 7 at 23,500', only some 100' below the one used in 1961. Because it was such a long way the latter two had to spend the night there and the next day while Owens & Summerton were resting their places at Camp 7 were taken by Agnew and Krishna (Royal Nepalese Army). Armstrong and Brister returned to Camp 6. The 9th May dawned fine and the weather forecast was good. Owens and Summerton left Camp 7 at 0715 leaving Agnew and Krishna there in support. The way led up a snowy couloir for about 2000 feet, on to a col some 350 feet below the top. In 1961 this had been ice and the route had taken over 12 hours to accomplish. The route could be seen from Base Camp and by those who were carrying loads on the mountain between Camps 3 and 4. The summit pair moved one at a time. At about 0930 they were seen just about two-thirds of the way up the couloir making good progress. At 1000 hours Winship, Kefford and Pasang (Sherpa) who were carrying loads from Camp 3 to Camp 4 heard a stone fall coming down the mountain to their left. They also saw an orange polythene survival bag, a rucksack and 'orange objects' fall as well. At the same time observers at Base Camp noticed that the couloir was now empty. The next radio schedule was due to be at 1630 hours and at that time Fleming, who was at Camp 5 and who had been carrying loads to Camp 6 that day, was told what had occurred. Agnew at Camp 7 then reported that Krishna had been hit on the head by a stone fall from above fortunately not seriously. The fact that 2 objects had been seen to fall from high up the south face was not in itself unduly alarming, for the pair would have continued the climb despite losing one sac out of two. Even so arrangements were made for a helicopter search to be made as soon as the weather allowed. For the whole of the 10th May we waited in vain for any signs of Owens and Summerton. Agnew & Krishna went some way up the couloir but could see no traces. It had snowed heavily that night and conditions were dangerous. On 11th May the helicopter arrived and guided by radio by Winship and Muster, Peacock and Gifford went to a crevasse at the head of the Nuptse Glacier and at the foot of the face where they found the bodies. Our worst fears had been realised. One can only surmise what had happened. But the most likely theory is that they were hit by a stonefall, only some 4 hours from the top.

Although very deeply shocked we decided to continue the assault. 2 fresh summit pairs were positioned at Camp 7, Brister and Pasang Tamang; Lane and Stokes. As a back up Dilly and Fleming moved up to Camp 6 but on the way were avalanched on the steep snow slope and only narrowly averted disaster themselves. Summit day was to be the 12th May but neither the weather nor the conditions were anything like good enough. On the 13th May it snowed hard all day and Fleming ordered a temporary withdrawal off the mountain to Base Camp. All the high camps were to be left in position for a further summit bid once the weather cleared. On the evening of the 13th May a huge avalanche engulfed Camp 5, completely flattening one tunnel tent, luckily without injury to the occupants who happened to be out of it at the time. The withdrawal began on the 14th May. Lane & Stokes left Camp 7 at about 1015 and descended along the traverse to Camp 6 in atrocious conditions. Brister and Pasang left some $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours later and followed in their footsteps, in so doing made excellent progress and caught them up a lot. The cloud came in early and by 1200 it was snowing hard. So much snow had fallen at Camp 7 that it had become all but engulfed and only one rope could be found. Because of this it had to be cut into 2 so that each party only had some 75' to work with. At about 1615 hours there was a break in the clouds momentarily and Stokes & Lane saw Brister & Pasang clearly. They had caught up a lot and a brief conversation took place. It was clear that all was OK. At Camp 6 only 1 tent was standing so Lane & Stokes proceeded to Camp 5 getting there after dark. The next day, 15th May, it was noticed by observers at Base Camp that there was no movement from or at Camp 6. Peacock also noticed a new 'black dot' on the face, just below the rockband. Later that day Walshaw & King went up

to the bottom of the rockband and shouted up to Camp 6. There was no reply. It was too late in the day to investigate any further. Again arrangements were made for a helicopter search of the face, and particularly of the new 'black dot'. On 16th May in appalling snow conditions Walshaw & King climbed up to Camp 6. They found no trace of the missing climbers; it was only too clear that they had never reached the camp. They reported as much to Fleming, who by now was at Base Camp. It had taken Walshaw & King nearly 9 hours to get to Camp 6 that day; there was no point in waiting at that inhospitable site so they returned to Camp 5 while daylight lasted. The second helicopter search was conducted by Peacock on the 17th May, in a brilliant piece of flying by the French pilot of the Alouette III helicopter of the Royal Nepalese Army. Brister's body was identified as the 'black dot' and a rope led up into a crevasse where Pasang's body lay. Again one can only surmise the cause of the accident; it could have been an avalanche coming down from the summit buttress, it could have been a slip. One just does not accurately know.

The weather never let up: a further summit attempt was out of the question. We gathered in as much kit as we could from the high camps and withdrew off the mountain in good order. We built a vast cairn of rocks to our lost companions and erected an aluminium cross on its top. We left the Base Camp on 20th May, arrived Kathmandu via Lukla on the 23rd May and got back to UK on the 6th June.

Following a Board of Inquiry and a sensible reappraisal of our Everest plans for next year it has been officially decided that we should proceed as originally planned. The potential summit assault party for Everest needs now to be strengthened and to release Fleming to play a part in this Lieutenant Colonel Tony Streater, a very experienced Army Himalayan climber, will lead the Everest Expedition.

GIVING IT ALL UP

by

KEVIN FITZGERALD

I know now, I have learned the hard way, exactly when all aspects of climbing should be abandoned. I know when boots should be dug in under a fig tree, all ropes, ice-axes, (in my own case laughable 'Presentation' memorials), rucksacks, anoraks, general impedimenta, given away, and a bonfire made of the hundreds of books and pamphlets, journals, and maps which accumulate over the years. The date to be remembered, or noted and acted upon without hesitation or the delay of sentiment, is exactly six months prior to the climber's forty sixth birthday.

In front of me as I type this "Message to The Young Middle Aged" lies a document. It is a medical certificate, dated December 24th 1948, and it reads as follows:

"Mr. FitzGerald has suffered from a severe vaso-vegal attack, with syncope and slight congestive failure. He has improved on rest with medical treatment, but an electrocardiogram still shows multiple premature systols, and symptoms persist. I have advised a further month of complete quiet, preferably away from his home, and continued treatment"

As a result of that document my employers had me examined by their own doctor who began *his* certificate, "this man is worn out by continuous overwork", resulting in the document being copied and sent all over the world to give my friends in distant parts the laugh of a lifetime. But there was a month or two in hand while arrangements were being made to send me abroad. My dear friend and Chief Assistant Bryan Hilton Jones, that never to be forgotten man, seized the opportunity to start my rest and took me with him from Dublin to Pen-y-Gwryd. I was just forty six, the age at which, I now know for certain ALL climbing should be abandoned. On that first visit I had never seen a climbing boot, thought 'pitch' a derivative of coal tar, and 'stance' the position adopted at the wicket when confronting a bowler. All I had to do was to say 'No'

when, on that first morning at PyG in January 1949, Bryan asked me if I would care to come out with him for a quiet stroll. Instead I went with him, flannel trousers, brown brogues, and the walking stick I had brought over from Ireland for the very light exercise permitted. I fancy I made an attractive figure, a gentleman strolling, or at any rate equipped for strolling, between PyG and PyP to indulge in a morning pint and a leisurely return for another before luncheon.

Within ten minutes of leaving the hotel I was standing, rigid with fear and vertigo, on top of the Eckenstein Boulder. An hour later I had a mild heart attack, (it was probably a mere absence of breath), trying to follow Hilton Jones from the Miners Track to that detestable Pig Track above it. Hours later I was sitting on the, in those days, deserted wall by the Owens' hotel when the sound of running feet announced the return of Hilton Jones from what he described as 'a quick round of the Horse Shoe'. Would that I still had no idea what that meant.

Looking back I think I might even then have escaped. I was a grown man, already 'over the hill'. I was in a comfortable industrial situation already because of the strains of my work thinking about a fairly early retirement. I had written a couple of books and had not only ideas but contracts for others. I was, quite simply, destroyed by the people engaged in the activity. Although I had played in my time a lot of first class rugby football I had always secretly loathed 'games' and everything that went with them. And here I was surrounded by the most agreeable people it was possible to imagine; men who knew nothing whatever about being capped for counties but larded their fascinating talk with mysterious words like 'abseil' 'traverse' 'holds' and 'belays'. Now and again they lowered their voices to mention the names of great men who had 'opened up' cliffs, made 'firsts', climbed distant mountains, died in heroic manners in terrifying circumstances. Within a week of this first resting period I began, not consciously at first, to feel that 'Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, had stolen my soul away'.

If I had simply put up with the desperate walking, the huge mileages, for a year or two, and then dropped back quietly into my proper situation in a chimney corner I think I would have become very quickly an ordinary normal television man, descending once more to the dreary business of attending race meetings and horse jumping competitions, or worse, re-entering (as a supporter and possible Committee Member) the bar and clubhouse, bawling-on-the-touchline life of a rugby club. God help me I might even have made a golfer of reasonable week-end standard. But I thought I wanted to climb rocks, get up certain cliffs, take part in the secret life of the climber.

I failed. Hilton Jones had no patience, Moulam thought and said that my feet were too big, Maurice Guinness remarked one day that only one person in the Kingdom made worse attempts than mine. I was at that time, and how weakly absurd it now seems, smoking sixty cigarettes a day, drinking to the point of alcoholism and beyond, over working all the time. Is it any wonder that Beddgelert over Snowdon seemed a long way round, and Roman Steps over Moel Siabod a long way away. I had permanently injured my back, and was lying in bed in PyG waiting for an ambulance, (Dave Thomas on the floor in a string vest reading my book), when I was elected to the Climbers Club. I was then three years beyond my already stated essential retirement date. I suppose I might as well put in here that I was living in the cloud cuckoo land of 'borrowed time' when the Committee of the Alpine Club, taking pity I think on near blind dotage, gave me the right of entry to 74 South Audley Street, perhaps the greatest moment of my life.

But all that was to come. Naturally any fool trying to get up the easiest of cliffs at an age when he should not be walking to the nearest posting box, or not too often, is going to suffer major operations, the trifling loss of all toe nails, the wrenching of bones and muscles, and frequent collapses on hillsides, roadways and mountain paths. He is going to have to wear steel and leather corsets, feel ill at all times, be described by friends half his age as 'totally unfit'. But there is always a moment. There came a day when in tears from pain I groped my way round Llyn Idwal and made up my mind about one or two things. That night I gave up smoking. It wasn't enough.

There was only one thing for it. I gave up drinking. Three months after that appalling step a totally abstaining, non-smoking FitzGerald walked over the Col of Craig yr Ifsa and was looking into the Amphitheatre before realising that this was a walk he couldn't do, and on which he had had a very bad collapse three years earlier. "I thought you were finished", said the doctor watching me sipping water in Helyg after that little experience. So did I.

So I bought a pair of Kletterschue, two sizes too small to compensate for my huge feet, cramming into them over silk socks. Thus footed I had a go at Geoffrey Winthrop Young's climb with Doug Verity. I'm not

saying I made much of an attempt but I got up — you could get up a brick wall with Doug leading. I had made a genuine start. I was sixty.

Wonderful days and times followed. I walked over the Glyders one morning, down to Idwal and Mrs. Williams Cottage, (as I still think of the horror which has replaced that early Sanctuary of the Unfit), and back along the road to PyG without really feeling that I had been 'out'. I had one of the most hilarious days of my life on Amphitheatre Buttress with Cox, Glyn Roberts, Doug Verity and Ray Greenall. And I couldn't even find the place where I had come off twice many years before. From that moment I have believed without question in 'Almer's Leap'. I know now that what is huge and intimidating on a mountain or rock climb on a given day is simply not there when all is prospering. Whympers saw Almer, and I'm sure he did, leap across some frightening abyss. Coolidge walked across it, not even realising it was there. "It is all in the mind at the time" as Mike Harris used to say.

I kept my age to myself when I made my first personal ascent of Great Slab in Cwm Silyn, but it was worth every one of the long long years. A few yards to my right David Baldock and a friend were skimming up the nasty looking crack of Kirkus's Route. They spoke to us on the top, and used our route as a quick way off. I didn't mind that; I'd done what Kirkus said ought to be done, I'd "been in the right place at the right time with the right people".

So of course I know now when to give it all up. Hang up your boots at forty five/forty six the age when I started. That's the proper age to stop. Just think of all the things you could do between forty five and my age now. You could have the most wonderful time. You could take up golf, you could go on winter cruises to the sun with bunches of drunks like yourself, you could 'join the crowd' in the Local every blessed Sunday morning, suggesting to your eager listeners that in your opinion Muhammed Ali was losing his punch.

You'd miss a little, of course. In fact if you take my advice you will miss just about everything worth having, everything worthwhile, and all the friendships that have ever mattered. Perhaps on balance you had better be like me: Start all over again at forty six and see the thing through to the finish. I recommend the Eckenstein Boulder in grey flannel trousers and a nice smooth pair of brown brogues. You'll enjoy that.

BAPTISM OF FIRE

by

MIKE BALL

It took a long while to get dark, allowing us time to get thoroughly cold several times over. A base line was reached fairly early on, however, and I did not appear to be getting any colder, so, after the first two or three hours it was clear that morning would see us fit for another long day if necessary.

I sat on my empty rucksack inside my survival bag, on a small area of flat rock under a small overhang. To my harness was attached a sling with a big hexagon jammed in a horizontal crack under the overhang. Everytime I drifted off to sleep I would slide off backwards, awake shivering with the harness tight around my waist, and hoist myself back on to the ledge again. Below me four others lay side by side in the snow. In the gloom I could not make out which one was my son. The remaining member of the party, like myself, was on his own. After it at last began to get really dark snow drifted down: a good three inches in about an hour. How much more was coming?

When you land in difficulties by yourself, or with someone of equal experience whom you know well it is not so bad, you do not have to keep thinking about them. Here I was with five young, relatively inexperienced people who had not done a route on a mountain of this calibre before. For three of them it was their



DENT BLANCHE

The Ferpectle ridge is next to the left hand skyline

Photo M. J. Ball

first season on snow, and one of the other two had only been out once before. All were good rock climbers, but I had not allowed for their slowness on easy rock. This was because the one climbing with me on the three routes I had done before had appeared to come along quite well, and before I got acclimatized had done better than I. Also, only our own rope had been on these routes, except at the beginning on the Petit Dents de Vesivi where only one other rope had gone really slowly. It had been the same today. Mike, on my rope, come along well. However, we had had to wait several hours for the others to catch up at one point or another. If we two had been on our own, we would have been over the top and down the South Ridge to easy ground before dark or, at the worst, bivouacked lower down near the end of the difficulties. Instead of this here we all were; an indefinite distance to the summit still to go and the weather doubtful: Regularly it had always clouded over in the afternoon, clearing up in the night, and there was no reason to suppose it would not do so again. But it had snowed. The last view up through the clouds before settling down had been through a sudden gap revealing prongs of rock, apparently at an incredible distance above us; it looked about a thousand feet. Could it really be that far to the top? At least the main difficulties appeared to be behind us.

Mike, who was climbing with me, was the only one who had not really wanted to do this climb. He would have been quite content to do the South Ridge, up and down, and, in fact, the original plan was for four of them to do this and only one to come with me. Mike must have found it very galling being forced to sit waiting for the others to catch up.

A second night out would be a much more serious affair. The situation was particularly infuriating because to get one man out of it at any time would have been fairly straightforward though that would have meant leaving the other four to look after themselves. I could not leave my son, however, and equally I could not take him on ahead and leave the others on their own. I had brought them on to the ridge and had got them stuck as a result, I had to get them off again. They would not have it this way afterwards "You weren't responsible for us. We decided to come. Why didn't you go on and get down. We would have followed!" Nevertheless they did move faster because I was ahead route-finding and I did haul the four of them up the last difficult rock-band before the bivouac.

That rock-band had been the crux of the day's climbing. The Ferpecte Arete of the Dente Blanche is really a straightforward route; not too long, not too difficult, though the route-finding must be accurate. I had always wanted to do it, and Joe, particularly, was keen to climb the mountain, so the incentives were there. I had been up and down the South Ridge on my first season in the Alps twenty-five years before, which had been particularly dry with rock, not snow, at the summit. There could not have been a more natural target for the party.

After a few years away from the Alps I acclimatize much more slowly. To avoid wasting most of the first week I need to go regularly, and by not doing this I have failed to walk the easy way up the Weissmies. This particular season I had failed to do the traverse of the Aiguille Rouge d'Arolla, but I had done the Tsalion ridge since, although slowly, and that was part of the trouble for four of the others had decided not to come. A guide had been killed on the ridge by a recent stone fall and the French guide book said that the ridge was dangerous unless you kept to the edge. The guide and his party had not done this. It is surprising accidents do not occur more frequently, for when Joe and I climbed the ridge we seemed to be the only party who kept to the edge. The others were a bit fed up when they found out what they had missed and so were no longer content with the South Ridge of the Dente Blanche. I took my dormobile round from Arolla to above Ferpecte and walked up to the Rossier hut while the others walked across from the Bertol, partly to bring up some more food and partly to see if I was properly acclimatized. Finding I was I determined to do the Ferpecte and so the decision was made.

We left the hut about a quarter to three. The usual nightly clouds had kept the temperature up and it was much too warm. Water was dripping from the rock and the snow was abominably soft. To get at the Ferpecte you have to go up a ramp of snow on to a glacier, across this and then down it in order to traverse to the ridge. Our pace was funereal and our socks were wet through by the time we reached rock. Then we had to cross several easy rock and snow bands and find a wire leading up to the left across the steep lower part of the ridge. There was no definite indication of the wire; one or two possible diagonal lines led up to the left. As we climbed up it became apparent that a particular one of these lines had to be the wire if an easy route up to the crest of the ridge was to be found.

Already Mike and I were ahead, in spite of a stupid error I had made at the start, trying to go the wrong way. We reached the diagonal line I had decided upon, found it was indeed the wire and arrived on good, easy, solid rock. Moving together we soon reached the ridge, and things began to look up as we breakfasted

in the sun. However, an hour passed before there was any sign of the others. We did not wait for them to catch up but set off along the ridge.

First one severe pitch and then another kept the interest going but we moved together most of the time. We next approached what I took to be O.G. Jones's gendarme, where his pyramid tactics showed their appalling danger. Again we had had to wait above one pitch to ensure the others could get up it; time was getting on. Now we had to traverse right into worse snow than before. I had to pack it down with my leading foot several times before putting my weight on it, otherwise I would have finished up lower down than where I started.

Back on the rock at last we returned to the ridge fairly easily. "From now on the ridge gets steadily easier", says the guide book, but a formidable looking gendarme ahead seemed to disagree with this. Perhaps I had it wrong and this was Jones's gendarme. The description fitted the lower one better, but the early afternoon clouds were gathering and it was difficult to be sure. I tried to traverse it on the left but it looked nasty, so it was back on to the bottomless snow on the right. A fine rain was wetting the rock, and our pace was once again funereal. I knew we could not avoid a bivouac now, but still hoped to make it on the descent.

The first possible line up looked hard so I went a little further, and went up another line that was no worse than mild severe. It was not at all obvious where the easiest line went. Beyond this our difficulties obviously decreased, but the other four were way behind so we sat down to wait. For ages nothing happened and I got more and more depressed with the impending prospect of a night out. After a while I started shouting down and, eventually, David, my son, replied. He was climbing with Joe and they were waiting for the other two who were less experienced rock climbers. The wet rock was slowing them up. I kept shouting down. What was happening? It was difficult to conduct complicated conversation, but I decided they were gibbing at going further right and wanted to take the first, hard-looking line. I did not like the way things were going. They were obviously tired and kept sending rocks crashing down the south-west face. After one fall I could not immediately re-establish contact and, for a horrible moment, visualized my son following O. G., Jones down the mountain. Another, more desperate yell, was rewarded by his somewhat irritated voice from below, and I realised how worried I was. They had to be got up to where Mike and I were. "What about a top rope?" Yes, they liked the sound of that and so did I. It would mean physical contact over the unknown difficult pitch they were about to tackle.

Once or twice during the course of the day I had considered going down again, but the final flounder back up and over the glacier put me off. Even if we had to bivouac on the descent I judged the pattern of the weather to be unchanging. In the position we were then it was almost certainly easier for us to get out upwards.

I unroped from Mike and moved a little way down the ridge in order to get above the others. At the second attempt they caught the rope. Pete came first, finding it difficult. At one point the ropé got hitched under an overhang so when he moved up it ran down and then sideways horizontally to him. He was tired and thought it would free itself as he moved higher. I was also tired and had the rope under both shoulders but above the lower part of my rucksack. This turned out to be above my centre of gravity. When he fell off and penduled down I immediately found myself upside down. I had never been pulled upside down before but recognised the situation immediately. Arnold Carsten's story of how he fell off the traverse on Bow-Shaped turning his second upside down flashed into my mind. "I called up to be lowered a few feet to a hold," said Arnold, "but my second, who was upside down, replied 'That will be very difficult.'"

Fortunately I was lying on a forty-five degree slope of rock and it turned out only to be difficult. After one downward movement of both arms I thought perhaps I could turn round. At this stage my second, who was of course a little way above and unroped, spoke: "There's only about two inches of rope left on your belay". This was not part of Arnold's story at all, but I felt securely held. "Can I turn round?" I asked Mike, who wisely did not reply, so I turned round. Pete had by now got himself established on the rock again, so I moved the rope down below my sack and inspected the belay. There was a bit more rope to spare than Mike had thought. At least I had made a sensible belay, but it was time to stop making more mistakes.

All four of them needed a pull at the difficult point and the whole business took a long time. We were all getting tired now and it was clear that the only thing to do was to move up a little and find a decent spot for the night. Another snow trudge and we reached a relatively flat area from where that last depressing view upwards suggested we were still perhaps only just halfway up the ridge.

As I wrung out both pairs of socks and put them on again I wondered about my feet. My hands were going to be all right; I had a spare pair of gloves and wore both pairs. In fact, my hands were the only part of me to remain warm throughout the night. As a surgeon I am sure this is the right priority. As a diabetic I was reasonably well prepared. I had a little spare food and my emergency bag of sugar with enough lumps for another two days if necessary. I had enough disposable syringes for two days as well and, at a pinch, could always use the same one twice. There was no spare food for the next day in the party, however, except the odd bar of chocolate.

It was probably a handicap that I had never had a forced bivouac before, unless you count the halfway station on the Snowdon railway, where three of us once lit a fire. It went against the grain and is not the sort of record one likes to break. Joe had already spent two unexpected nights out and he seemed much less upset at the prospect that I. I felt a great weight of responsibility for the others, especially David. It was the most unpleasant night I have ever spent.

During the night it continued to snow intermittently, but with much less force. Later, when the clouds began to clear Ferpectle and Evolene appeared down below and summer lightening flashed round the horizon. I did a bit of torch flashing myself. It seemed to me that if the weather turned bad it was as well if someone knew we were up there. If it remained fine it would not matter. Later, the Bertol hut came into view and I flashed at that. Nobody came to look for us the next day, but the morning after that a helicopter flew up to look at the Dente Blanche as we were walking down from the hut, and a guide who had been at the Bertol knew we had bivouacked. There was some grumbling about the torch flashing from the rest of the party. Their morale was certainly better than mine at that stage.

Dawn was clear as usual and we thawed out enough to start at 4.30 a.m. One look at the ridge made descent that day a certainty. There were only 500-600 feet to go of relatively easy snow slopes, in much better conditions than the previous day. In fact, we had to put on crampons for the last two rope lengths to the summit ridge. A well-worn trail ran down the South Ridge. The climbing became enjoyable and we admired the view of the Weishorn. A Brocken Spectre appeared on the right as we negotiated the short rocky part of the South Ridge and I called back to my son to point it out. It was only the second I had seen, the other being at the top of the Great Slab in Cwm Silyn, again in his company. Both had "glories".

I was climbing with Pete on this day, and was still a bit worried about the speed of the other four. By midday we were below the Grande Gendarme, within earshot of the others, where the difficulties end, the only contretemps being the loss of one of Pete's pegs.

I was by now feeling extremely sleepy and felt that we could safely go on ahead. Two Frenchmen had passed us going up the South Ridge and would be above our party. They would not come to any harm now. After some easy climbing the route passes over a sort of knob and then down a walking rock ridge. The sun was out and I could hardly keep my eyes open. I lay down for a brief rest and was immediately asleep. Pete woke me after a little while but, a hundred feet lower, I had to stop again. Below the route was obviously safe solo so he went on alone while I slept. I woke an hour later with the chill of the afternoon clouds covering the sun. Visibility was right down and there was no sign of the others.

The snow got worse during the day. As I walked down the final ridge to the hut little avalanches kept breaking off on my left. Higher up, Andy was wearily following the well-worn trail, when a cornice suddenly wilted under the strain, leaving him standing rather uncertainly three or four feet lower down the slope with his axe, at first below, now well above him. My son found this an impressive sight through the clouds.

I reached the hut about an hour after Pete, and yet it was still another three hours before David, the last of them, arrived. It took two or three days to recover, but I noticed a longer term effect. On the night of the bivouac I did not loosen the laces on my right boot quite as much as on my left. I had no frost-bite as such and the skin remained fully alive. However, the sensory nerves went in both big toes, the whole of the right big toe being involved but only the distal half of the left. It took three weeks for the left to recover and eight weeks for the right. This fits in with the known speed of regeneration of nerves damaged in this way, nerves being the first structures in a toe to suffer from shortage of blood. I have met one similar case since on Ben Nevis.

When you get down to it, one always allows too little time on an occasion like this. In good snow conditions we would probably have just been all right. Certainly the original plan, for only two to do the Ferpectle and the rest the South Ridge was sound. In fact, we just about kept in control and I was most impressed by

the resolution and optimism of the rest of the party. We had made the second ascent of the Ferpectle that season, so had something to be pleased about. I do not think I will go with such a large inexperienced party into a similar situation again though. The Schalligrat will be much better done with just a rope of two, and no one else to worry about.

HIRAETH for AHWAHNEE:

an ascent of the NW Face of Half Dome

by

DANIEL HOPKINS

It was a dream that face.

Even in Asheville it was golden, ethereal, surrealistic; more so, three thousand miles later when it faced us, yellow and alone, catching the very last of the sun's gift for that day.

The sun. That was the secret of it all.

The pinkness of dawn, the sombreness of even, the cock-crow regularity of its appearance, and the way its warmth cut through my cold, as its light pierced the cloud given gloom in the valley.

Then the two combined, on that third day; the dream and the sun — but only for a moment. For as the sun dissipated my cold there, on that Thank-God (thank God!) ledge, it also removed the dream; and showed me the reality (because it gave me hope), — of which dreams are the real impostor. It shook me out of that complacency of self-doubt, the moribundity that depression leads to, and by its warmth gave me light.

So we continued our climb, assured now of more, with a confidence and control that only half of us possessed before. The traverse passed competently, pausing only to revel in our position, so to the crux aid pitch, penduling from rurps, magnificently exposed, and then the top friction leading to the anti-climatic summit. The bald scrubby acidic planet top, emphasising starkly again, that it is not for the summit that we climb.

We drank stale water, smiled for a camera, hugged awkwardly, and exchanged platitudes. Then coiled, packed, and scampered down the hill — free. Released now from that umbilical which had bound us so unequally, for so long, in such verticality; it had accentuated our differences to extremes of parody, but with its removal came an honesty, so refreshing, so long desired.

We talked as we can on that trail as beings and equals, running perhaps to escape the division which the umbilical imposes, and needing too much the womb that lay below us. And as we talked, a bond grew stronger than the cord; its imposed awkwardness disappeared because we were no longer leader and follower, strength and weakness, calm and fear. We began to understand, hesitantly, that calm is sometimes fear, and a greater fear, — that of the womb; and that leading and following like strength and weakness flow into one, not absolutes, but states of mind.

So where had we been. On that upward trail, by that rainbow fall, and a sight of the hinterland that the valley did not give, and a yes, those girls. Perhaps this was the real Yosemite we thought, and wished to escape into it; but the lure of the vertical and the umbilical were too great, and we had not the strength to break them. So by lack of courage, we were drawn sheep like into that seemingly greater pen.

So up the trail, and the search for water; to the spur leading down to the bottom of the face, and our first look. So steep and certain of itself, with that chimney cleaving to the sky. Me in there (?), the fear intensified, and then solidified — he was as unperturbed as ever. So to the base, and the foiling of our plans. No longer could we push straight up, our places were taken, and we had to sleep horizontally that night.

Awakened by the ringing, piercing call of a hammer on pin, we started; free, then aid, and a mixed water dropping groove. Progress slowed, I looked for a cloud, finding none, suggested we could still retreat, pointing to the water bottle beneath us. But soon, after the first bolts, I realised we could not return, the pull was too great, — then the tension eased. Those four above us slowed our passage, and we slept uncomfortably, the bed sloping and the pins frighteningly insecure. Just the lights of the womb taunted us, but although they called, we had truly escaped at last — the vertical is another world. Again, that ringing noise intruded my peace; and after water and salami (a traditional breakfast), we moved across the face to the big swing, into that cleaving cleft of yesterday's fears.

Fly like I sat, and saw two abstractions.

Across the wall, in the blank vertical distance, for the third time a man attempted to climb the princess's tears (were they too wet?) for like them, he fell downwards: only to return. But I was oblivious to him, and his fears had no contact with mine. Then down below a bear roamed over where we had slept, my heart warmed to him: (a King in his Kingdom, he was right to be there. We were not;) silly little men, pushing ourselves up out of place out of tune. My heart found his for a moment, I loved his unpretension.

So we gaunched upwards; struggling in the chimney, frightened on the face, jumaring desperately in the groove, then flying over the void; praying that the metal in rock holding the elastic would stay. So up to the second night, and those other four; greedily their water and food was received, then manoeuvring them for places to rest, above that drop. Talk, sleep, music floating upwards from Ahwahnee; and wake, and ever that space below us. We start early; the pink cold burning into our black granite bitten hands, the zig zags, the fear, that jumara (no pride left now), me so lonely — then finally thank fully the Thank-God ledge and at last the sun.

It was soft that night the ground air the trees the fragrance of pine; and we ran faster obeying the call of the womb. Past those who had been with us, with a shout and a wave (empty promises of what was to come, but only a testimony to what had been). We were happy in our release and revelled in our closeness, thinking of what we had learnt. Three days of self see, had displayed faithlessness in all aspects; yet growth and strength, and when the rope was removed euphoria at success.

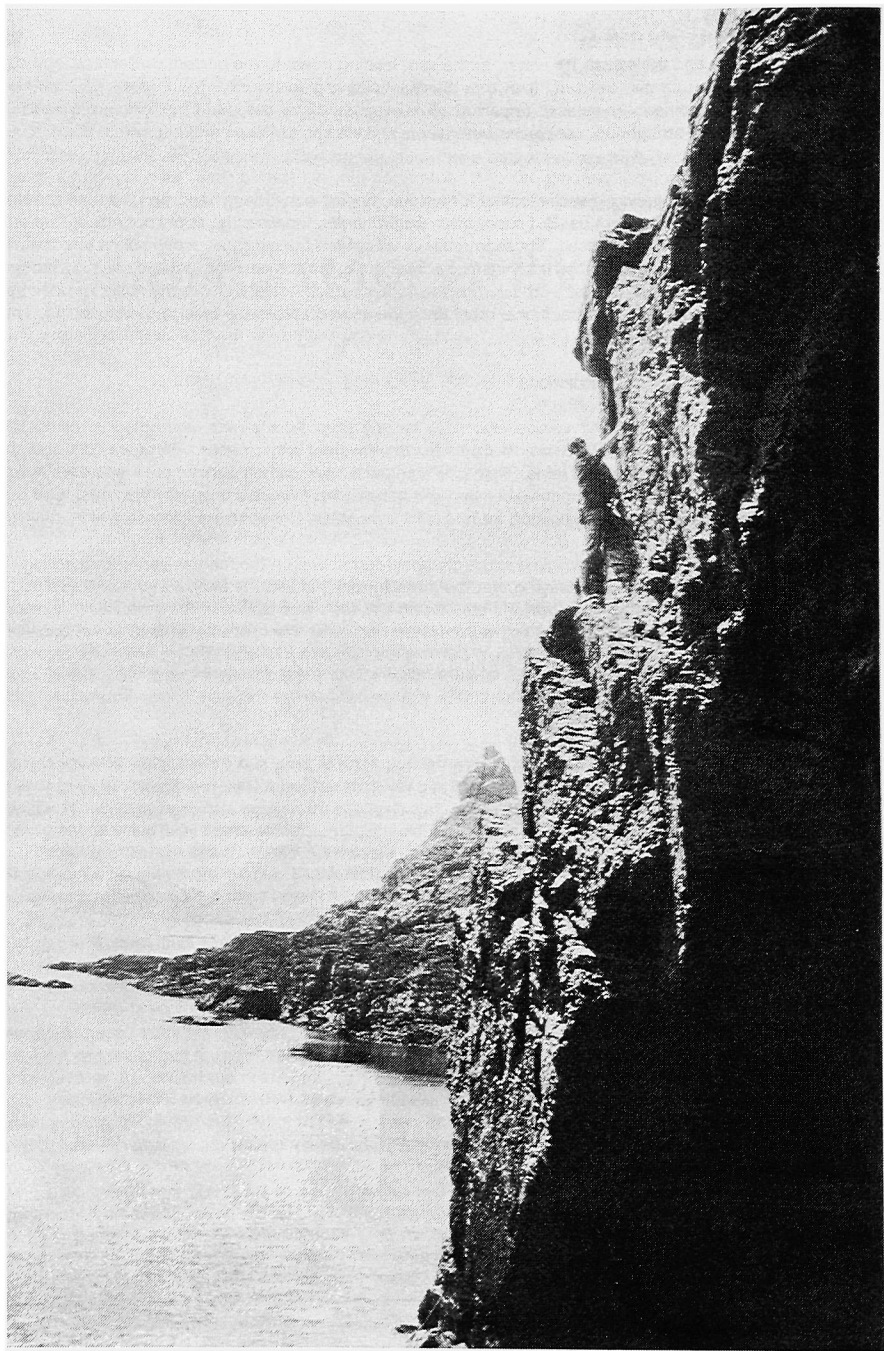
And so we came to the trees.

The light was puzzling, a fine ray piercing greyiness, and as we approached it took form. She was lost, afraid and needing help. Stumbling, she asked the way, we responding (bloating by our success, forgetting our weakness), answered glibly — and ran on.

As soon as it was done, we turned into ourselves and chastened; the womb's call was not that great, — our pride was, our honesty had not been that deep. The umbilical had failed, it had given too easily, its distinction was too precise. Had also the sun? Or, was it just that, that made our hearts sad, and helped us realise that face-lessons do not give real courage, nor indeed require it.

We reached the womb, and all it had to give, — but it was largely false as the euphoria had been.

It had taught us little, we realised separately; and we both knew to ourselves, that the real lesson was still on that trail, which after our face we had found so easily, and with that sun which had so easily found us.



SARK

Dave Atchison on the first ascent of Sea Horse

Photo R. Bond

SARK '74

A C.C. SAILING EXPEDITION

by

HARRY SALES

I've written this article once but it was deadly dull: it caught nothing of the romance of the sea, the boat hard over on a beat, the long night watches, the dead reckoning, the live mackerel, the relentless sun, the cooking at an angle of 45 degrees and the sheer amazement that we found our way there and back. And then there was the off-beat climbing. So start again, do it in diary form and let you the reader use your imagination and add romantic ingredients whenever needed. At least it's one way of getting a diary published, a thing I never thought I could do.

But first an explanation of how we came to go. It was Hugh Wright who had the brilliant conception. Why not cut out all the hard work and sail to the bottom of the cliffs? At least that's the idea he sold to us landlubbers. He didn't let on that he really enjoyed the sailing bit too. So we all fell for it however little we'd sailed. Five of us were members of the C.C. and were subconsciously trying to emulate Tilman and our famous canoeing member, Joe Brown: climbing by itself has not enough to offer: let's mix it. There was another climber, St. John, and an ordinary John who didn't climb but did everything else from navigating to mending the failing electronic instruments. There were also odd characters, wives and children turning up from time to time. Those were the dramatis personae and it was a tribute to Hugh that he could assemble such a cohesive and unmotley crew. If I go on paying tributes to Hugh you will know why at the end if you don't already.

Friday 14th June. Sailed from Gosport at 20.35 on the Seahorse of REME, a 26 foot, 6 berthed yacht. Hugh, a Colonel in the R.E.M.E., had sailed her before and the rest of us were quick learners: we had to be. Not that we were disciplined: we were on the loosest possible reins, but we were told what to do and how to do it and we did it. For example, I was ship's bursar, a most unnatural job, but I did it. And I ended up as ship's cook!

Saturday. Arrived Yarmouth 01.35 and (Alpine start) sailed again at 06.30. Beautiful view of the Needles in early dawn light. Swanage to shop and then, wasting no time in getting to the rocks, Tilly Whim. Precision timing on Hugh's part: there is Sue Tuke half way down the cliffs. Her rope comes hurtling down and she after it whilst we put a rubber dinghy ashore. And here's the place to tell you that if you haven't climbed from a rubber dinghy you haven't climbed at all. It adds a 4th dimension. But our climbing was minimal that day. Some of us were put down at Blacker's Hole but those of us who didn't go to sleep at the top went to sleep at the bottom.

Sunday. Anchored in Chapman's Pool — learn to sleep in a rocking boat. Sail off early to Boulder Ruckle where we anchor by the threatening rocks in a fairly rough sea. The Ruckle looks almost as formidable from the sea as it does from above. I had no ambition to climb there but was dragged up Jericho Grove by Hugh, anxious to display his local expertise. The rest of the excitements were at sea, first getting off the rocks in the dinghy with a rough sea pounding, then sailing in a thick sea mist round Old Harry to Poole Harbour, which we overshoot. Lost at sea! Our one major lapse in navigation. But we recover ourselves by steering along the 20' line on the echo sounder till we find the entrance to the harbour. Then up the River Frome to Wareham where Hugh lived and where Sylvia, his wife, made us welcome.

Monday. A day divided between bird watching at the Arne reserve and climbing at Subliminal. I won't list either the birds or the climbs, but we failed to see the Dartford Warbler. What is worth recording is the trip down the Frome river, where we manage to run aground in the dusk. All the conventional remedies, anchor out forrard and kedge out aft, fail and we only manage to snarl the kedge rope round the propeller. The thing to do then is to pick the biggest climber and chuck him overboard. This happened to be Dick Bond, who did a splendid underwater job and assured us he kept warm.

Tuesday. Sail from Poole at 12 noon, make about 5 knots most of the way and amazingly arrive at Cherbourg at 4 the following morning. Steering by the stars is a new experience for me. Hugh had us beautifully organised but was himself violently sick and ill on the way across. A good sleep seemed to put him right and he took us expertly into the harbour.

Wednesday. One can get a climb in at Cherbourg. The two daftest in our party, St. John and I, did. There is an enormous natural slab below the fort. It lies back at an easy angle but there is no protection to be had on it. St. John led first with a 180' run out, which happened to be the length of the rope: I led through to the top of the slab where I managed to put a runner on a gorse bush in broken rock before traversing right to a gun emplacement presumably left by the Germans. From there one can proceed subterraneously with lights.

Thursday. Sailed to Sark under a blue sky and on a smooth sea except for the race round the headland of the Cherbourg peninsula. Landed at Derrible Bay and put Dick and Dave Atchison ashore to meet their wives. I won't bother to describe the pub crawl that followed but it was a good job that the landlord of the Bel Air lent us a torch to find our way back down the precipitous steps, where our dinghy was now 30' above the sea (there are 36' tides in Sark) and we had to get it down wet, steep, slippery rock.

Friday. No. I can't keep this diary business up any longer. Not now we've got to Sark, where each day merges into the next and time means so little. But we were far from idle: the climbing was pleasantly mixed with sailing, pub crawling (the main occupation on Sark: whichever pub one goes to, there are the same faces) and visiting the various shore establishments. The latter consist of a modern chalet shared by the Bond and Atchison families and a primitive cottage at the southern end of Little Sark where the Longland family lived. John & Co. had only joined us at this stage. With each new arrival, be they man wife or child, we were able to show off our seamanship; by then we'd become almost part of the Seahorse and our skipper could relax completely, as he did. We could show off the island too from the sea, with its wealth of sea birds, including puffins, razorbills and oystercatchers, its caves which you can best explore by dinghy, and its tide races like the Gouliot Passage, where we had fun.

But back to the climbing. None of it is terrific, or at least it is not terrifyingly high because the island is only about 250' at its highest point. But the rock is beautiful to climb on and everywhere one goes one feels one is making a new route. We tended to notice possible climbing areas from the sea and then explore them the next day. Two of the best routes are described elsewhere in this journal. Corner Crack is an obvious line, provided you have managed to get to where it is obvious from, which means getting round more or less at sea level past the anemone cave just north of the Havre Gosselin, or else dropping down at the right place from higher up. All the climbing party went up, gardening as they did. It was an enjoyable aperitif. Seahorse Ridge is a prominent line on a big block of a cliff in the Havre. Dave and Dick did the one and only ascent. There are also several other routes to be made, one, also found by Dave and Dick lies vertically underneath Seahorse Ridge and starts inside a cave with a very delicate traverse then up. Hugh and St. John also found a route on the seaward side of the anemone cave, up a slightly overhanging wall to finish up the broken ridge to the summit of this bit of the island.

Whilst the others were doing these last things, John Longland and I were developing our own little area near Victor Hugo's cave, to which we had got Simon, John's brother-in-law, to row us. (That's the right way to go climbing). I was somewhat flattered by John's willingness to let me lead him. Six years of the lush life of South America had reduced him to my level and this was his first day's climbing. There are plenty of routes to be found on both sides of the cave, but mostly only of v. diff. standard, but one could by stringing the harder bits together. There is a satisfactory crack (severe) in the area south of the cave which we named Oystercatcher Crack and a more extended route on the ridge between two major rifts. The rock was so grippy and warm in the sunshine that it was a pleasure to scramble about anywhere. John was enjoying re-establishing his feeling for climbing and I was enjoying the positive feeling of fitness and a semi-spartan nautical life gives one.

Just behind this area we found two most impressive rock faces, facing each other across a small inlet at right angles to a bigger inlet near Victor Hugo's Cave. They are both a sheer 200' and get little sun and so are dank: any start would have to be from a rather boisterous bit of sea with nothing to moor to at the bottom. I mention this only to encourage those who may be looking for more desperate things than we were.

But this is getting tedious again. There is no point in describing every bit of rock we touched. There is plenty left. Go and see it for yourselves. If you don't find it gives you enough to do you can fill in time by watching seabirds, swimming, boozing, lazing about or sailing around the island if you are lucky enough to

have a yacht with you. We had one, thanks to Hugh, and thanks to him the whole trip both went according to the master plan but on an enjoyably impromptu basis from day to day. Hugh was dangling out the possibility of another trip the following year to the Scottish Islands. We've lost him though as a companion: tragically he died a month or so after we got back.

SOME THOUGHTS ON ALPINE COMPANIONS

by

WORRIED of WILMSLOW

What of the men? Alpine companions on the other end of the rope? I remember a bronzed Scottish colossus who grunted supercilious replies to my cautious enquiries about his abilities. He bandied names such as Bonington and Patey and I was glad to climb with such a hard man. But was puzzled that I hadn't heard of him.

But on the stance of the tenth pitch of the South Ridge of the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey he seized me in a bear hug. His eyes had a mad look and he insisted that we went down.

It was an important lesson. Never to be impressed by muscles or bar-room braggadacio. A lot of alpinists are like women. It is impossible to assess their future potential by their appearance or conversation.

There are the Tarzan types who march straight past resting places on the way up to the hut. They continually look at their watches when you arrive long after them.

"Oh yes. Here at last, then? I've been here an hour already. Knocked half an hour off guide book time."

Then they approach closer.

"Rather unfit, aren't you? I hope you're going to pull your socks up. I can't wait while you stagger about far behind."

As you open your mouth to reply they march to the windows, fling them open, take about fifty deep breaths and make optimistic comments about the weather.

There are difficulties about joint decisions too. In the early sixties two of us decided to try the Comici route on the Cima Piccolissima. My companion developed bad stomach trouble in the early morning and decided to stay in bed.

Several hours later he made a startling recovery and leapt out of bed in the dortoir and said brusquely,

"Come on, Jones, off we go. Got to get today's VI done."

"Aren't you still feeling off colour?" I replied timidly.

" 'Course not. What's the matter with you?"

"I was just concerned about you, that's all."

"Nothing but a bloody faint-heart, that's your trouble. Come on off we go."

At the foot of the climb he again felt unwell, but persuaded me to carry on if I did all the leading.

Four hundred feet up the route I was involved with a difficult mantelshelf when I heard a groan far below. He had fainted. Fallen from the tiny stance and was rotating gracefully in space from his solitary belay piton.

The situation was desperate. I didn't fancy reversing the overhanging wall and decided to shut my eyes tightly and became converted to instant prayer and even said a few Hail Marys.

Fortunately another climber appeared near the rotating second and grabbed hold of the rope. One of those Alpine silences ensued when we got back and we didn't speak for three days.

There are problems climbing with gifted people. I met Robin Smith in Chamonix. I was immediately in awe of the young uncrowned king of Scottish mountaineering. We sat in the Bar Nationale over several vin blancs and discussed plans. The conversation went something like this:

"The Eiger," he said.

I spluttered violently. "No!"

"How about the North Face of the Matterhorn?"

Twisting my glass, I replied, "Perhaps you should know I'm a rock-climber by trade."

"Well, what about the Eckpfeiler Buttress?"

"Eck what? What the hell's that?"

"A magnificent wall of rock and ice. Only done by the great Walter Bonatti. It's in Courmayeur."

"Sounds super. Can't we do something here first?"

"I suppose we could try the second ascent of the West Face of the Blaitiere. Just a rock route."

"Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Let's start."

On the way up to the foot of the climb he dropped his ice-axe down a crevasse.

"Aw, Christ. There goes our bluidy axe."

"What do you mean, our bloody axe. I've got one."

"It's the only one between the four of us. What'll the other three say?"

On our first bivouac on the climb I noticed he shivered excessively and didn't have any down clothing.

"Where's your duvet?" I asked.

I realised at this moment that the Scots were different from soft Welsh climbers.

We descended the Spenser Couloir with one axe between the two of us and one crampon each.

An unbelievably severe storm broke as we got to the Nantillons Rognon. We were desperate to catch the last train from Montenvers after 3 days on the mountain. It was just pulling out of the station as we ran on to the platform. Robin jumped into the guard's van. I missed my footing and fell, but he managed to catch my braces and dragged me in so that we both fell into a laughing heap on to the ribbed metal floor. Great days

with Robin with more elan than anyone I have ever met.

Then there are the organisers who take charge of the party. Before the start of the holiday, a thick envelope drops through the letter box. Inside a wad of instructions about the journey in *his* car.

'The members will assemble at my house at 13.00 hours on Friday July 26th. As you are notoriously untidy, a vetting operation of all your luggage will be necessary. Particularly no drink must be carried on the journey.

Sickness in the car will result in cancellation of our Alpine plans. It will then be necessary for you to make your own way home by ---Hommes 40, Chevaux 8.

During the journey reveille is at 04.30 a.m. 15 minutes is allowed for a lengthy breakfast.

There will be no unnecessary stopping en route. Bodily evacuations to be finished before the start or after the leisurely stop for the evening at midnight.'

Usually these people are the same on the climb. He suddenly shouts out,

"My God!"

"What's the matter?"

"We're on the second overhanging wall and we're already half an hour behind the time of the first British ascent team. We'd better hurry up, hadn't we?"

"Why? I thought we were supposed to be here to enjoy ourselves."

"Enjoy! Enjoy! We can't do a second British ascent and be slower than the first lot. I wouldn't be able to face the rest of the Alpine Climbing Group.

I had one season with a Joe Brown team. All miniature Manchester King Kongs, except me. We went to the Dolomites. The weather was terrible. It didn't make any difference. They just stumped off to the North Face of this and that, breaking boulders with the force of their tiny feet. When it snowed their eyes narrowed to Chairman Mao size.

"Snowin', Joe."

"Aye."

"Fifty degrees of frost, Joe."

"Aye, must be."

"Trevor's shiverin'."

"Stopped him talking." (Joe witticism accompanied by flinty smile which was immediately frozen in situ.)

I think we are all aware of the expert rock gymnast who cannot transfer his ability to the Alps.

One particularly good Alpine season we had a brilliant rock gymnast as a member of the team.

But when a wisp of cloud appeared, he immediately prophesied snow-laden hurricanes. One hard pitches he talked nervously about the stability of the pitons. He produced instant illness symptoms during bivouacs and during moments of stress his eyes showed windscreen-wiper symptoms.

At the end of the holiday we all lay on the grass in the valley. Doubting Thomas chirped into life, sang silly songs, made putrid puns and generally cheered up.

With malice aforethought I whispered to a companion a bogus plan to try another route.

"Well, mate," I said loudly to the companion, "what about the North Face of the Death Spitz? You know, the one with the stonefall? Be good for our reputations."

"Good idea," said my mate.

An awful change came over Doubting Thomas.

"Tra-la-la-la-ugh-oh-help-my- stomach-eeee...." He slowly sank to the ground clutching his middle.

"You'll have to go by yourselves. I'm ill."

My mate and I got up quickly and when out of earshot burst out laughing, so much that it hurt.

I suppose this episode is one of the reasons why I've made so many enemies amongst my dear friends.

CUILLIN CONCENTRATE

by

IVAN WALLER

I started rock climbing and joined the Climbers' Club in 1925, and at Wengen that Christmas had my first experience of skiing, going on to Murren to join a Climbers' Club Skiing Meet which included an epic visit to the Concordia Hut and Grunhornlucke from Jungfrauoch with Maurice Guinness in the party. The following summer I set off for my first visit to Skye, and Abraham's "British Mountain Climbs" as our only source of information on the Cuillin. The old road through Glencoe was quite an undertaking and the track from Tom-doun over to Cluanie was even rougher. Dornie Ferry was an open boat with two planks fixed athwart the gunwales, and towed by the ferryman's small son in a rowing boat. By the time we reached Sligachan we wondered if we would ever get back, and at Glen Brittle the sense of isolation was complete.

In wonderful weather we did Naismith's Climb on the Bhastier Tooth and on to Sgurr Nan Gilleann, up the West Ridge and down the Pinnacle Ridge. We found this classic circuit really delightful. Moving on to Glen Brittle, where we slept in the open on the seashore, we did the Window Buttress on to Sgurr Dearg to traverse the Inaccessible Pinnacle in thick mist, and also had a day on the Cioch. We traversed Clach Glas and Blaven, and finished the holiday with the face of the Third Pinnacle of Sgurr Nan Gilleann. The weather had already broken and a column of water was pouring down the Chimney Pitch. I was reminded of this forty-six years later on a January ascent of "C" Gully on the Wastwater Screes when the scene was re-enacted at every major pitch.

My next visit was in 1960. I climbed Sgurr Nan Gilleann by the tourist route, and spent the rest of the time walking with my wife including a visit to Coruisk by the Bad Step, where she surprised me by appearing at the far end having found a through route uncovered by the low spring tide. This was the full extent of my contact with the Cuillin until 1973. They remained a dream world, exciting and mysterious, challenging and inaccessible. After I retired, thoughts of Skye began to loom large with the Cuillin Ridge as a target. It never occurred to me that I should have any difficulty in doing the traverse in the day, in fact I had some extravagant ideas of enlarging on it. After all I had in 1969 done the Pennine Way in nine days and since then the Lyke Wake Walk, the Yorkshire Three Peaks, the Lakeland 3000's and the Cairngorm 4000's, all in quite good times, but I was in for a sharp disillusionment.

I set out with Jim Ingham from Elgol—it was May 1973—with 10 lb. of calor gas, a gas ring, crates of food, a tent and all our gear. It was a Saturday, and when our boatman put us ashore at the Iron Ladder near the Coruisk Memorial Hut, he promised he would return for us the following Thursday—unless there was a swell.

Much too late, we set off the following morning and arrived on the first peak, Garsbheinn at 9 a.m. I expected to find a path along the ridge, but in fact with the near gale force wind it was a balancing act from boulder to boulder for mile after mile, and the white horses blown up on Loch Coir' a' Ghrunnda emphasised the roughness of the day. The dips in the ridge seemed much deeper than expected, but the Thearlaich-Dubh Gap, King's Chimney and the Inaccessible Pinnacle provided pleasant if time consuming interludes, and it was after 5 p.m. when we reached Sgurr Na Banachdich, the halfway point, with rain beginning to fall. Jim would have like to have gone one, but I was disheartened with the certainty of failure, and from the next Bealach we set off down to Coruisk, and arrived at our tent wet through some three hours later.

The next day was glorious. We got up late and climbed the easy rocks on to Sgurr Na Stri above the Bad Step. This is one of the best points from which to view the Cuillin. We should of course have been on the ridge.

Next morning we were up really early, and dawn found us traversing down into Harta Corrie. We were on Sgurr Nan Gilleann by 7.30 a.m. but the weather was grey and ominous although the clouds had not yet come down on to the ridge. We spent a long time getting off the Bhashtier Tooth, and as we were not sure which was the top of Naismith's Climb, we took the ordinary route right down on to the screes on the Lota Corrie side. At last, with cloud now down and rain falling—no wind this time—we reached Bidean Druim Nan Ramh and spent some time finding our way through the complexities of the North and Central Peaks, so that when we reached the top it was after 4 p.m. The amount of time we had lost on the way was most discouraging. That was it. On the summit rocks we met two climbers from the Coruisk hut, and together we set off back along the long ridge of Druim Nan Ramh. Soon they left us behind, showing up my slow progress, and again it was over three hours before we were back at our tent.

Next day was perfect and we did the Dubhs—thousands of feet of clean gabbro slabs and an amusing abseil off Sgurr Dubh Beag followed by an interesting rock climb on to Sgurr Dubh Mor. Once more, we should have been on the ridge.

In the morning our boatman did not come—his engine had broken down—but another boatman with a full load of tourists promised to come back for us. We watched the swell getting fuller and fuller as the wind built up, but at 4 p.m. the boat arrived and soon we were safely back at Elgol. We learned that the larger boats from Mallaig can deal with much rougher weather, and this is probably a more reliable approach.

That stretch of ridge from Banachdich to Bidean was on my mind, and two months later I returned to Glen Brittle with my wife in our Volkswagen mobile mountain hut. Jim and I had left out An Stac so I started up Corrie Lagan and made for the An Stac Chimney, a 200 foot moderate which I found desperate because my rucksack prevented me from reaching the holds inside the chimney. But I got up. I by-passed the Inaccessible Pinnacle, traversed the peaks of Banachdich, and struck new ground over Thormaid and the Three Small Teeth. On Ghreadaidh I saw two climbers coming towards me, apparently making heavy going of the rock pitches on Mhadaidh, and I began to have misgivings. However they reassured me when we met, and I had no difficulty. I hope they were able to complete the ridge, it was their second attempt.

Arrived at last on Bidean on now familiar ground, I retraced my steps to the Bealach Na Glaic Moire and went down Coir A' Mhadaidh, formerly shown on the maps as Tarneilear. The Corrie was carpeted with grazed turf and alpine flowers and the weather had been perfect all day. I had seen two hares, twelve rabbits, an eagle, a warship on Loch Scavaig and two human beings. I was back in Glen Brittle 10 hours after setting off. In 1932 Peter Bicknell took only twelve hours from Glen Brittle to Sligachan to do the whole ridge. Thus was I cut down to size over my presumption that I could do it in the day.

In the meanwhile I was overcome with an urge to do all the branch ridges and spurs, and incidentally to set foot in all the corries, that I had not done during the year, so in August 1974 I arrived at Sligachan in my mobile hut. I started with the Pinnacle Ridge on a wet and cloudy day. Without a rope the descent of the Third Pinnacle was quite exciting. From Sgurr Nan Gilleann I crossed Sgurr Beag to Sgurr Na H-Uamha, which is a beautiful little peak, and returned down Anglas-Choire to the Bloody Stone and Glen Sligachan, a very satisfying first day.

The next day was wet with the clouds right down, and I had a nice bit of route finding up Bruach Na Frithe and down Sgur A' Bhashtier. Then round to the Glen Brittle Memorial Hut which I can thoroughly recommend. On Sgurr Nan Gobhar I met Stephen Pogmore who was staying at the Youth Hostel and had company for the rest of the holiday. We went on into the mist to Banachdich, failing to find An Diallyaid or Sron Bhuidhe, and then on over Sgurr Dearg and down Sron Dearg. This is a very popular circuit, but the next one was even better. From the very impressive Coire A' Ghreadaidh we climbed Sgurr Eadar Da Chuire on to Sgurr Ghreadaidh, then across the Eag Dubh and An Dorus to Mhadaidh, and down the ridge to Sgurr Thuilm, all in quite pleasant weather.

A horrible day of cloud and rain followed when our efforts to find the way up Coire Na Banachdich landed us on top of Sgurr Dearg, fortunately identified by the Inaccessible Pinnacle looming through the mist. Sron Bhuidhe again eluded us, but at least we managed to find our way down over An Diallyaid.

Then came the perfect day. Colin Furneaux the temporary hut warden joined us, as in fact he had for Sgurr Eadar Da Chuire. We climbed the left edge of the West Buttress of Sgumain, thinking we were on the North Buttress, over Alasdair and Thearlaich, and down from the Bealach Mhic Coinnich to 'Sgurr Coire An Lochain and its attractive North Top overlooking Coruisk. Here we parted company as my friends wanted to do King's Chimney on Mhic Coinnich, and I had planned to go down by Coir A' Ghrunnda, a truly wonderful place. Miraculously we met up again on the shoulder of Sron Dearg and returned together to the hut. In the morning the weather was impossible but I was glad of a rest.

Finally with Stephen and Colin's wife Pat, we went via the Bealach A' Mhaim to Sgurr An Fheadain, scrambled up the ridge alongside the Waterpipe Gully, and continued on to Bidean Druim Nan Ramh. The descent by Tarneilear under Bruach Na Frithe was an interesting finish to the day and the project.

But what about Sron Bhuidhe? It is said to be the best way up to Banachdich from Coruisk when crossing to Glen Brittle, and that is how, one day, I hope that I shall use it.

NO ACCESS TO ACCESS

by

RICHARD JOHNSON

A lot has been written and even more talked about access to the various contested rocks and open land. The comments in this article attempt to demonstrate that the group lacking access is indeed the climber himself. If the climbing community had a better grasp of the basis of access then real progress could probably be made.

Let me apologise in advance for any possible unknown inaccuracies or unintended hurt feelings. Even if these exist I think the points being made are still valid.

Amongst climbing "officialdom" there seems to exist the idea that one simply "negotiates". This term is never really defined by the participants and so one must look to the way the concept is put into practice to try and get a grasp of its meaning. Two examples will help to illustrate the various points. One is contemporary, Den Lane in Saddleworth and the other is historical being the famous Kinder issue.

About a year and a half ago Den Lane changed hands. The new owner virtually immediately prohibited climbing in the area, without any doubt the new owner had no understanding of the role of Den Lane to North West climbers and to all intents and purposes exhibited a somewhat "difficult" attitude. Consequently the problem of access was responsibly handled by the climbers in the area who duly contacted all the official

climbing bodies. Included in this was the B.M.C. (newly arrived in Manchester), and the committee on access that had been set up to deal with problems in the North West area.

The response was that the appropriate people would go and "negotiate" with the new owner and then as everybody is reasonable things could be nicely sorted out. Result, quite as predicted, nothing! Now this approach as we will see is quite different from that used by the Peak Park and also that employed successfully during the famous Kinder issue.

Den Lane, in common with many other examples, illustrated the naivety of the climbing community in thinking that negotiation is a matter of discussion. It is not, it never has been, and it always will be a matter of power. Unless both parties to a negotiation have means of applying pressure on their adversaries it is very unlikely that a solution will be found on common ground. As with the new owner of Den Lane he expressed total disinterest and offered to do nothing. Why should he, he had nothing to lose by taking that stand and what's more I think his attitude is definitely understandable.

A similar attitude has been demonstrated by England's worst land owner, the Water Authorities. To me £1,000 number plates are a fairly minor issue compared to the way the Water Authorities ride rough shod over any other interested party, that in any way threatens the great edifice of that authority. The case of sailing clubs is just as powerful and as relevant as that of climbers wanting to gain access to rocks on Water Board's land and, indeed, there success, until recently, was just as poor. I suggest that the Water Authorities reason for total disinterest is that they are completely impervious to any pressure that interested groups can place on them. This again makes the point that to negotiate one must do from a position of strength. Organised labour has successfully and destructively demonstrated this to our cost. The lesson is worth learning, how can it be applied to the problem of access? How can the climbing community gain access to understanding the problem itself?

The Kinder issue is an excellent example of the approach that I believe is the only solution. Contrary to the view of the climbing world's Marxist interpreter of progress, the Kinder issue was not settled by the great will of the people, but by the clever planning of the middle class taking on directly the land owner by using techniques that he couldn't resist.

The Laws of trespass and those governing the right of way were fully exploited by Percy Cookson and his friends of the Rucksack Club, one of whom was the Chief Engineer of the Great Central Line. On the first confrontation they were accompanied by barrister members of the club, who duly explained that if the land owner wished to contest their access, he could do so in the Manchester courts that following week. Naturally the landlords lucky, the gamekeeper, was somewhat confused by this original tactic and could do nothing except summons a stronger body of men to use more basic techniques in the following week. Their total defeat is well documented elsewhere and, of course, the Kinder issue was won.

The point to be made from this event is that physical force was nothing more than the icing on the cake of the well informed legal force that was used to gain access. This is the aspect that modern climbing officials appear to be wholly ignorant of. Another example of it being used, less spectacularly fortunately, is of course by the Peak Park planning authority. Peak Park is able to use its prestige to gain an interview with a landlord and so discuss a possible solution to a dispute. I would suggest, however, that if it wasn't for the fact of possible compulsory purchase for access, then the Peak Park Authority might as well stay in its nice offices in Bakewell. The Peak Park Authority has never actually had to use its powers. The presence has been enough even to solve such stubborn issues as Windgather. It will always be the presence of an effective cudgel in the form of statutory powers that will ensure the landlord lends a willing, though reluctant co-operative ear.

Certainly for the Club to be an advocate of conflict would be absolutely wrong. Indeed, myself included, I am sure we would all be the last to want to violate an individuals private property rights. However, the object of any situation must always be to balance conflicting interests. This balance will not be possible on the access problem without improvements in the way climbing officialdom exploits the power that it could have available. The recent Government Green Paper on the use of natural resources has certainly gone a long way to creating the right type of climate. But unless this could be forced down the line to local authorities and they accept that they have a very real obligation to look after the interests of protecting scarce climbing locations, then I see progress being as slow as it always has been except for one or two rare examples. Indeed all the various time wasting committees should pack up and go home until the supposedly diplomatic climbing officials have sorted out with local authorities, solicitors and anybody else who is appropriate, what real

power could be made available to bring pressure on to landlords.

A lot can be done by the climbing community to further its cause that an apparently useless bit of rock is a scarce resource which brings a lot of pleasure and satisfaction to a significant and responsible minority in the community. This would be the back drop against which climbing officialdom fashions the tools that it will use to make real progress with its opponents.

I personally love the idea of sweet reason, unfortunately this rarely works.

1 9 8 5

by

PETER HARDING

Maybe I never should have answered the advertisement.

CLOGGY GREAT WALL AND OTHER MODERATES. BEGINNERS. ANY PARTY. SATISFACTION GUARANTEED. 5 (NEW) POUNDS 600 (OLD) POUNDS. (OR 2 DEUTSCHMARKS). J. ALLTON. REGISTERED CLIMBING GUIDE.*

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But that was how I came to meet Joe (Lead'em) Allton, famous T.V. personality and rock climber.

Of course he had needed to drag me up, despite all the modern gear, but we had struck up a rapport and, eventually I had been conned into an Alpine season.

I insisted on a rock venue after asking Joe about his reputation as the fastest ice man in Britain. I gathered that this must have been earned when working as a delivery driver for the Longon Refrigeration Company's fleet of supercharged mini-vans.

We put our permit applications to the Ministry for Sport early, specifying the TreCima di Laveredo and were fortunate to be allocated July 13th to 14th inclusive.

Nothing harder than the Direttissima; Allton had promised as we brought the helicopter down near the new 600 room Climbotel.

As we steered our power wheeled climbing caddies laden with gear, round to the foot of the North Face, I still had misgivings. Stopping at the Parkplatz, below the vertical sweep of the Dibona Ridge; Lead'em set about unloading all the tackle; finally 'mechano-ing' the caddy frames together to make a sizeable frame tent.

I set up the 'Atomicooka' portable bivouac oven, turned up the heat to Regulo 7 and put in two 'Freezi-food' synthetic dinners. Meanwhile Lead'em hammered in four 'Supachrom' pegs and attached the computerised 'Autosecond' automatic seconding machine. He clipped himself on to five of the titanium nitril fibre climbing filaments issuing from the top of it, plugged the micro-transmitter/receiver module into the socket in his new iridescent blue helmet and set off at a rate of knots in a vertical direction. The powerful Magne-tronic soles of his J.B.'s made little noise other than the characteristic 'plink', 'plink', as he moved rapidly upwards. At 70 metres he whipped out his 'Hot-Shot' automatic bolt gun, fired in a couple of the latest poly-mite coated golos, attached a collapsible stance seat and sat swinging in space. The loudspeaker in the 'Auto-second' crackled and Lead'em's voice spoke out, 'O.K. I'm ready: send up the grub'.

The dinners were almost done. I gave them a few seconds more at Regulo 9, then taking one pack out of the oven, I attached it by the hauling ring of the packet, to a 'Minikrab', clipped it to one of the ancillary service ropes and pressed the No. 1 'Haul' button on the 'Autosecond'. I watched it go skywards for a few metres, then set about my own meal. It's great what they can put into a one cubic centimetre 'Freezifood' pak these days. Two Tournedos steaks, three veg; a container of Gaelic coffee and one goodly portion of plum duff: difficult to believe they are all man-made protein from DuPont. Suddenly a squelchy plonk on my climbing helmet punctuated the gastronomic enjoyment. Lead'em, deadly accurate as always, had trundled a brussel sprout on to me!

'Bloody got you!' A voice crackled out of the 'Autosecond' speaker. 'We're off when you're ready'.

I packed the 'Atomicooka' into its hauling sack, connected it to a free filament and pressed the appropriate haul button. Within five minutes I had organised the hauling of all gear apart from the frame tent which was one of the new disposable 36 hour self-destruct jobs; only taken in case bad weather made any climbing illegal. Finally I arranged the 'Autosecond' to haul itself, with me attached to its base by two krabs, up to join Lead'em.

Masses of gear were now fixed to pegs and golos some 70 metres above the scree. 'Now Mate', said Lead'em, 'We start the climb proper'.

Allowing me time to connect up the 'Autosecond' to four bolts and myself to a water soluble plastic channel peg, he led off on a diagonal overhanging traverse to the right. The 'Autosecond' ticked away smoothly whilst I sat comfortably on the stance seat reading 'Mountain Life'. The odd hum, whistle and expletive cracked from the speaker as Lead'em moved upwards. The run-out meter registered 96.5 metres above several overhangs and roofs. From the speaker, 'This is your leader calling, come up when you like, but don't forget to switch the 'Autosecond' to manual'. 'Yellow second to blue leader, Roger, Wilco, Ten four point five, over and out!' I replied.

After the gear hauling routine, I slipped the machine on to my back like a rucksack and set off.

With the aid of finger Fi-Fi's, B.UR.P.S.* , T.W.E.R.P.S.+ and some old fashioned etriér work, I eventually reached Lead'em on a small ledge above a fair sized overhang. I was, in two words, demoralised and knackered.

'Good pitch that', he said. Even though there were only sixteen overhangs and four roofs.

'This, my friend Lead'em bloody Allton, is not the bloody Direttissima Route at all.' I said vehemently.

'No', he remarked, 'Thought you might enjoy a new one. The only real problem is going to be in avoiding the Direttissima, Super Direttissima, Direttissima Variant and the old Comici staircase'.

I observed that the wall above was quite blank, but way over to the right, I espied a rusty peg from which hung an old fashioned nylon tape sling. On the left a thin crack was sealed solid with the now illegal jammed nuts, their wire strands sprouting like the legs of abandoned North Sea oil rigs in a Scottish Loch.

'Super Direttissima Route', observed Lead'em. 'The only way to avoid it, is to pendulum over to that groove beyond'.

Taking two 'Mac Grip' hand operated rock suckers from his sack, he plip-popped up the blank wall above for 30 metres, then hanging from one sucker he put in a ring bolt from his selector type Mk 2 bolt and leeper gun. Clipping one rope through the ring, he shouted, 'O.K. put the seconder on to abseil!'

I pressed the appropriate button and watched the abseil integrater dial. Lead'em was lowered down slowly. 'Give me 20.4 metres and calculate the swing setting,' he said. I took two readings from the photo-electric rangefinder needle, took out my pocket computer and fingered a quick calculation. I set the 'Autosecond' green dial to 20.4 and the red pointer to 51.9 metres.

Lead'em came to rest some 20 metres above my head, swinging gently.

'Now', he said 'Actuate the pendulum sequence'.

I programmed the 'Autosecond' whilst Lead'em plip plopped with his suckers back up to the left.

'Right' he announced. 'Ready for action'. I pressed the button marked Z and saw the illuminated tell-tale flash 'All systems Go!'.

Lead'em certainly did go. Releasing his suckers, he penduled down and across, deftly firing in a 30 second evaporation type mini-bolt at the end of his swing. With the fastest draw I have ever witnessed, he produced his rock screw applicator pistol from a shoulder holster and established a stance with three medium 'Hi-Tense' beryllium rock screws. (Euro Standard 11/78/3B).

'Whizz oh!' he said, 'It would have been bloody well impossible to get across without using that old peg or the holds on the Super Direct Route, especially since the Commission for European Climbing banned the use of nuts'.

'If you don't mind,' I shouted, 'I'm going to keep my hand in at the old fashioned stuff, by climbing across the Super Direct'.

'You're going to miss a gripping pendulum'. said Lead'em.

Established on the next stance, or more correctly, hanging from the base of the 'Autosecond', which was in turn, attached to the three rock screws; I surveyed the next pitch. A horrible, crumbling reach of rotten red coloured rock. 'I'd sooner scramble up 200 feet of vertical *custard* in frogman flippers than even try to climb that lot'. I groaned.

'Not to bloody worry!' smiled Lead'em. Carefully, he extracted from the depths of his duvet, a small rocket. Setting it pointing upwards in two ring pegs, he clipped a chromolly self-tapping ring spike, complete with krab and rope end, into the warhead. Connecting up to a hand operated ignitor, he started to count down. '5, 4, 3,---Lift off!' Woosh! We choked in clouds of pungent smoke as the rocket departed skywards with filament screaming out of the 'Autosecond'. 'New Mark 3 Bonatti Bazooka', said Lead'em. 'Range up to 200 metres. Homes into solid rock only, at whatever height you set on the dial. Better gear than the Whillans Whizzer!' He continued, 'Once attached my bloody waist rope to one by mistake when trying 'em out on Cloggy. Whisked me up 70 metres until it banged in right between two novices soloing up Woubits Left Hand. Bloody marvellous. The buggers were gripped rigid!'

The rope filament suddenly stopped. 'Here we go then Mate', Lead'em leered, and clipping on a Magnadrive Jumar Escalator, the well known solar powered automatic prussiker, he gyrated upwards. Eventually I followed in similar fashion.

Lead'em had made a stance on two pegged-in alloy foot plates at the foot of a gigantic crack. 'Good jamming above', he said, 'We'll need a No. 2. setting on the old 'Crackerjams'. Forthwith he pocketed his bionic crack width gauge and took out his crack jamming tools. One in each hand, he set off.

The smooth sided crack was a uniform 30 millimetres wide, having been produced by controlled neutron activation fracture to the latest recommendation of the Technical Sub Committee of European Climbing (N.E. Italian Division). It was vertical for at least 64 metres. Inserting his left hand jamming iron, Lead'em squeezed the pistol type grip, locking it into the crack, and pulled up to insert the other. Hand over hand, with the rhythmic clicking sound of the 'Crackerjam' actuating toggles he swung up easily. At 66 metres he paused to arrange a runner, using his alloy, lever type, semi-automatic bong fixer. Thus reassured he pressed on over a large roof. Suddenly the speaker on the 'Autosecond' crackled a startled 'Whoops!' Rope filament screamed out of the top of the machine and the whole device became alive with red and green flashing lights. 'Alert' flashed the illuminated tell tale. The print-out spewed perforated paper tape announcing 'Leader falling!' Fascinated (and scared stiff) I dragged my eyes from the 'Autosecond' and looked up. Lead'em was plummeting towards me, legs and arms flailing, still gripping a jamming iron in one hand. With a screech, and some blue smoke, the disc brake on the right hand side of the 'Autosecond' glowed red, and finally locked up as Lead'em came to rest smoothly, 3 metres above my head. 'Bloody marvellous!' he said, 'I'm taking that bloody jamming iron straight back to old man Brown's Supermarket in Llan bloody beris just

as soon as we return. That's the second time it's let me down.'

'Yeah!' I moaned. 'If we do return, --- get me a new pair of those synthetic Tibetan Yak wool underpants.'

Lead'em quickly stuck his jamming iron back into the crack, deftly produced a spare and clambered back up the fissure.

After some twenty minutes I heard a distant voice from above, 'What the hell has happened? I'm waiting for you to follow.'

I looked at the 'Autosecond'. The rope register run-out dial reading was 257 metres and still going strong! The illuminated tell tale flickered on and off 'Fail' 'Fail'. The print out paper read '3XHE-OPQ/A:?!'. 'Oh! No!' I ejaculated; 'The damn device is doing its own thing?' I rattled it, flicked all the switches, shook it, kicked it, but no joy! I shouted up, 'Pull, I'm climbing,' and with all the gear plus the sick machine on my back, I took my old Mk 5 crack plugs and moved up laboriously, with a lot of rope (and nervous) tension.

'Bloody well fused' I spluttered, joining Lead'em at the foot of a fearsome looking diedre. 'Strewth', he gasped, 'What a time for the bloody second to go kaput!'

For two hours or more we pored over the instruction manual on the Gee Whizz Electric Company's 'Autosecond. Mark 2. Lead'em scratched weird circuit diagrams on the rock with a carbon fibre micro-peg.

'It must be the trionic transistor in the secondary feed back circuit that has fused the main core labyrinth and shorted out the primary energising matrix', said Lead'em. 'You could be right', I agreed, having recently done a six week crash course on cybernetic climbing aids at the Old Age Pensioners Polytechnic.

'I only sent it over to Yosemite Electronic Climbing Gear Inc. last month for a complete overhaul,' spat Lead'em. 'We'll have to bivvy'.

Using our peg and bolt guns, we rigged the hammocks, one above the other on the left wall of the diedre. I got to work with the 'Atomicooka' and expanded an emergency 'Cragfast' food pak --- Fillets of Sole bonne femme with mussel and oyster sauce plus lemon tea and two portions of crepe suzette. As Lead'em pronounced when we were ready for kip in our 'Sputnick' lunar heated bivvy suits, 'Bloody Marvellous!'

Memory fades on the detail of the following morning. I recall that we slept in until 10.45 a.m., before shaving with the Brut facial hair eradicators built into the shafts of our peg hammers. I remember best the bit that made my day. We were near the top and the overhanging rock had relented to very broken ground. 'I can't go on', moaned Lead'em. 'It's these damn jugs and the angle of the rock', he went on, 'I always go dizzy when it goes off the vertical this way and I don't trust these bloody great natural holds. We'll have to abseil off'.

'Not bloody likely!' I yelled; and led through for the final pitch of 20 metres. Thus the description in the new 1980 series Citizens Climbing Guide Books Volume 14 reads:—

'Indirect Route. First Ascent. J.L.E. Allton* and P.R.J. Harding + (leading through) July, 1984. Grade 9 Sup. Plus A6/36.8. 486 pegs. 42 bolts. 10 golas.'

* Guide (First Class). Bachelor of Mountaineering (Wales).

+ Pensioners Climbing Permit No. EB/146/3C (Restricted).

NEW CLIMBS

Lands End.

'Great Expectations'

80 ft. Mild Very Severe.

Immediately right of the Worlds End approach as one faces the cliff is an obvious flake crack. Start below this.

1. 50 ft. Mantleself on to a platform and climb up to the foot of the overhanging flake crack. Climb this by layback to a large platform.
2. 30 ft. Straight up the cracked wall above in the same line.

First Ascent: D.T. Roscoe, Miss B.M. Spark. 8th June 1975.

Chair Ladder.

'Ipsissimus'

200 ft. Hard Very Severe.

Start: At the foot of the obvious overhanging jamming crack about 10 feet to the right of Mitre.

1. 70 ft (5a) Climb the crack, steep and strenuous, to the easier line leading leftward into the gully. Belay as for Mitre.
2. 100 ft. (4b) A diagonal fault splits the gully wall right of Mitre. Pleasantly up this to the large overhangs which are turned by a rightward hand traverse to the arête overlooking the gully. Up the slab above to good belays by the huge flake block.
3. 30 ft. (4b) Steeply up the right arête until a move right can be made to easier ground or:
- 3b. Climb easily up behind the flake block.

First Ascent: D.T. Roscoe, Miss B.M. Spark. 25th June 1975.

Chair Ladder.

Almost

110 ft. Very Difficult.

Start: At the bollard belay at the foot of South Face Direct. The right bounding wall of East Chimney is split by three cracks. The route starts up the centre of these.

1. 45 ft. Up the crack to a large ledge on the left. Nut belays.
2. 30 ft. From the left hand end of the ledge climb the bulging crack to another large ledge.
3. 35 ft. Up the steep crack in the bulging wall above to the top.

First Ascent: D.T. Roscoe, Miss B.M. Spark. 14th June 1974.

Sennen, Pedn Men Du.

Marionette

70 ft. Hard Very Severe.

Takes the fierce looking jamming crack which splits the overhanging buttress just right of Gilliwiggle.

Start: Twenty feet right of Black Slab in an overhanging nook.

1. 70 ft. Up easily to the foot of the overhanging crack. This is narrow at first and two slings were used for aid to reach better jams, improving steadily towards the superb finishing jugs. Very strenuous.

First Ascent: D.T. Roscoe, R.C. Firth, Miss B.M. Spark, T.M. Clarke. 18th June 1974.

Tater Du.

Fret.

45 ft. Very Difficult.

Start: At the foot of the buttress just right of the unnamed Difficult crack to the right of Sentrybox.

1. 45 ft. Up the buttress, difficult at first, follow the central line of weakness to the top. A pleasant pitch.

First Ascent: D.T. Roscoe, Miss B.M. Spark. 24th June 1974.

Sark

Havre Gosselin

Seahorse Ridge

200 ft. Very Severe

To the right of the orange slab between big caves on northern side of bay.

Take the smaller dagger shaped slab to right of main slab until it gives out. Traverse delicately left to above bright orange patch of main slab. Belay. (70 ft.)

Up right edge of slab with crack to left. After 15 ft. meander slightly leftwards and up to small deirdre which can be bridged. Up broken rock for 25 ft. to stance on arête (peg belay).

Traverse somewhat leftwards to ascend final summit block.

First Ascent: D. Atchison and R. Bond.

Corner Crack

120 ft. Severe

On N.W. face of ridge on N. side of Havre Gosselin and overlooking Moie de Gouliot.

Obvious crack at right angular recess. Up slanting loose rock and vegetation to bottom of crack. After first 10 ft. of crack the next 15 ft. can be laybacked or more easily bridged by small footholds on left wall and right side into crack. Loose rock above, much of which has been gardened. After another 20 ft. the crack widens to a chimney and can be chimnied to the top.

First Ascent: D. Atchison, R. Bond, St.J. Gilbert, H.B. Sales, H.Wright.

Oystercatcher Crack

100 ft. Severe

Obvious crack in area south of Victor Hugo's cave.

Stance halfway.

First Ascent: J.H. Longland and H.B. Sales, alternate leads.

OBITUARIES

M. S. EGGLESHAW

Maurice Eggleshaw joined the Club 38 years ago. He became a fairly regular visitor to Helyg and soon became involved in the running of the hut. He joined the Northern Committee and was Secretary later of the Huts Sub-Committee. He never missed a meeting of either.

He was a keen walker but not enthusiastic about rock climbing. For over 40 years he was on the staff of Wallasey Grammar School and a few years before his retirement was appointed Deputy Headmaster.

In addition to his scholastic achievements he was a first class organiser of games and athletics and tremendously energetic. In his last 10 years he worked hard for the New Brighton Rugby Football Club and was one of the select few responsible for its development and success. When overtaken by illness he was Secretary and had just written and published a history of the Club.

Without exception Old Boys of W.G.S. speak of him with admiration, respect and affection and many were helped by him in one way or another. His cheerful disposition made him an ideal companion and explained why he had a host of friends who will miss him greatly.

E. Stuart Chantrell

COLONEL HUGH WRIGHT

Hugh Wright died at his home in Wareham early on the morning of 27th October 1974. There had been no illness or warning of the blow that was to come, so the shock could not have been more severe either for his family or his friends from all walks of life.

He was born on 15th May 1929 and was subsequently educated at Baines Grammar School, Poulton and at Bristol University. As a National Serviceman he was commissioned into REME in February 1951 and subsequently obtained a Regular Commission before going on to take his degree at the Royal Military College of Science, Shrivenham. At the time of his death he had just been promoted Colonel.

He excelled in those appointments which brought him into contact with people and where his understanding and regard for the soldiers who served with him and his tremendous enthusiasm for doing things achieved great results. Many young officers at Shrivenham will have cause to remember with gratitude and affection his wise counsel and his constant encouragement during his time there on the Directing Staff.

His profession as a soldier and an engineer was only part of his life. In 1953 he married Sylvia Mant and his deep love for his family and the intense interest and pride which he took in the activities of his two boys made him, perhaps more than any other of all his great qualities, a man to be regarded highly. One can but count oneself as deeply privileged to have shared in that close-knit family circle, not that this was by any means exclusive, for it was typical of Hugh that all his friends were drawn into that warmth. The privilege lay in the real warmth itself.

After his family, his two great loves were climbing and sailing, both taking him out of doors and both providing a field where his unbounding enthusiasm and dedicated and frequently meticulous approach brought him steadily increasing success. He was a qualified off-shore skipper and in his Shrivenham days had been very active in encouraging and teaching young officers to sail. His own skill brought many successes too, sometimes in spite of the less competent efforts of his crews. In all this, his ready and dry wit coupled with a delightful sense of humour made him always the most engaging of companions. A staunch and true friend, he was a man who would readily share one's joys, whatever they may be, or buoy one up with the right remark which dispelled the blues and yet never showed that perhaps at the same time he had his own troubles. A week in the glorious hills of Wester Ross was made unforgettable by his enthusiasm over new

country and his competent performance on rock. The regular weekends on the fierce limestone of Swanage cliffs close to his home at Wareham, coupled with his usual disciplined courage, had enabled him to realise an almost unprecedented rock climbing standard for a man of his years, better than many men half his age. His 'climbing simulator' was how he described these cliffs and his delight and pride knew no bounds when his own son, Ian, demonstrated on bigger hills not long before Hugh's death, how effective these smaller cliffs had been as a training ground. As a member of the General and Executive Committees of the Army Mountaineering Association, and as a member of the Joint Services Mountaineering Committee, Hugh Wright gave a great deal of his time to other people's problems. The local Swanage lads too, have reason to remember him gratefully, for, unbidden, he took their cause to the local authorities and successfully advocated the provision of accommodation for local climbers. It was an act entirely typical of the man and perhaps this is how he would most wish to be remembered: for the generous help and encouragement he gave to others in every walk of life. Our lives cannot be but the poorer for his passing and we cannot begin to imagine the loss to his family. Our warmest and deepest sympathy goes to Sylvia and his two boys, Michael and Ian.

JDCP

COLIN TAYLOR

On 15th August, 1974, Colin was killed instantly when a section of the South Face route of the Ober-gabelhorn collapsed on him; he was buried in Zermatt. A first-rate mountaineer and skier with a fine record of ascents in the Alps and Himalayas extending over almost every season since his student days at Oxford University, he was well known in climbing circles. He was Treasurer of the Climbers' Club, Guide-book Editor of the Alpine Club and the A.C. representative on the Mount Everest Foundation Committee of Management and the British Mountaineering Council, where he was an active member of the Future Policy Committee. He was a tireless worker when it came to presenting information on Alpine Climbing to English-speaking mountaineers. For a time, he was Editor of the Alpine Climbing Group's bulletin *Alpine Climbing*, and he was also heavily involved in the translation of foreign guide books and in the production of guides for the A.C.

He began to spend more of his time in the Lakes when he moved north, first to an appointment with the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority at Culcheth, then to a lectureship in mathematics at the University of Salford. He joined the Fell and Rock about this time, and in the short space of four years, had become well known by the active members of the club. At the 1973 annual dinner, his wife Jane was chief guest and Colin gave the Sunday Lecture. Colin was a warm-hearted person and had a great sense of humour. He was a good man to have on the rope or on a committee, having great strength and ability, both physical and intellectual. He will be greatly missed by his colleagues at the University and by climbers of many clubs. The sympathy of the club goes to his wife and baby daughter.

John Wilkinson

(Courtesy F.R.C.C. Journal)

EDITORIAL

Even to members as fed up as the Editor with an increasingly numerous and occasionally bizarre list of victims of inflation, it should come as no surprise that the Journal has no immunity from the affliction. The main effect of his has been the painful if proper need to fit a Journal to an amount of money decided by the Committee, rather than the time-honoured technique of halcyon days when a budget could be adjusted to fit a Journal.

As the budget includes postal charges, which have risen faster than printing costs, some reduction of contents has been inevitable and, as pictures cost more than words, the number of illustrations has been heavily cut. The 1973-74 format, which produced remarkably little adverse comment, has been retained for reasons of economy.

The Club year will as usual be reported on more fully in the Annual Report, but two outstanding events should be anticipated here. Even in the temporarily enforced absence of its most persistent advocate, the A.G.M. of the Club voted overwhelmingly to admit women to membership on the same terms as men. This change of rules narrowly preceded legislation which would have made the old rules illegal in any case. More surprising, in view of the overlapping membership between the two organisations, was that the Club should find itself — in this field — soundly beaten to the post by the Old Lady of South Audley Street.

Secondly, the Club was well represented when, against the public odds of the pundits and the private ones of many more, the post-monsoon expedition reached the top of Everest by the South-West face. This feat, which also confounded its own computer predictions with regard to how quickly the face could be climbed, will stand for a long time as the most significant achievement in mountaineering and, as such, deserves the congratulations of the Club.

The Editor

SELECTED SPEECHES

ANNUAL DINNER 1974 — WYNFORD VAUGHAN-THOMAS

Mr. President, Members of the Club and Guests

Nobody feels more out of place than I myself to propose the health of this splendid, active vigorous and noble Club. I am a complete fraud, I have long ago fallen out of the serious world of modern climbing in every possible way, and it has all gone past me. I am out of date, I am in the same position as Dia Bach in the Rhonda who bought what is known in the Rhonda as a Vi-Spring Mattress. Now a Vi-Spring mattress, is splendid, glorious, beautiful, and he was taking it home and everyone said "Getting on in the world Dia" and he said "Yes marvellous". But the next morning they saw him taking it back hurriedly to the Co-op, and they said "What is the matter Dia, anything wrong with the mattress?", "Oh no, nothing wrong with the mattress" he said, "Well why are you taking it back?", "Too fast for Blodwin" (laughter).

I am in the same position as Blodwin with modern climbing. It has got far too fast for me, But perhaps I might have some qualifications for proposing the health of the Club, I after all am a member of the Club, and it is true that I got in by a proposal by dear George Band, who was at a loss in fact to summarise my qualifications for joining. However, he did drag me up Spiral Stairs and afterwards he wrote on my application, 'I not qualified to talk about Mr. Vaughan-Thomas' performance on rock, all I can say is that he is the most continuous talker on rock that I have ever climbed with', (laughter) until of course Mr. Ian McNaught Davis joined the Club (laughter).

Of course I am a Welshman and after all the Club (laughter) was born and takes its roots in Wales. It is

true that I also started climbing in Wales long long ago, and I was far too nervous ever to approach the great members of the Club. I looked at them with awe and admiration, I actually saw Jack Longland moving past me carrying a piton (laughter) and as you know in those days, we did take very seriously the great dictum, the hand that could drive a piton into English rock could shoot a fox! I bought religiously the volumes of the Climbers Guide. I mastered every beautiful phrase in Archer Thomson, I climbed holding it in one hand while I went up the North Gully, on Tryfan and there are those of you no doubt who could repeat the masters words, how he describes the various ways of getting out of the Gully, and the celebrated Crux 'two abnormally long strides to two abnormally small nicks,' and finally the instruction for performing a pirouette to the south, all of which of course I did. I learnt the jargon of climbing, but is the jargon of climbing as esoteric as we might think it is?

After all, Lord Hunt, I think you will agree the Army is the great master of esoteric jargon, as I learnt during the war. I always wondered a bit about the way climbers talked to each other, and of course the jargon changed from generation to generation, but that is nothing to what the Army did during the war. As a war correspondent I became a great connoisseur of the art of jargon. There was first of all the American method of putting over a briefing. You stood in front of a great map, the stars and stripes on either side of it, and a briefer stands up and he says "Gentlemen to put you in the picture" and he slaps his hand right across the map and he said "This is Monte something or other O.K. the Krauts are in there, they kind of like it there, tomorrow as some of you know being Christmas Day we are going to smack 'em out of it. General Mark Clark has got 57 different plans and he is going to use every one of them" (laughter).

But the British Army briefing, ah, that was a work of its own. I remember going up on the Anzio beach head with an American and we crouched by a gallant guards officer who produced an immaculately marked map china-pencilled all over, every position perfectly pointed, so he said "To put you in the picture, our chaps are hacking along with the Swede's on the left and we got a bloody nose, and the question is really should we thicken up the party or adopt fart or fly forward tactics or tie the whole thing up with the old boy net" (laughter) And the American turned to me and he said "Thomas, are we advancing or are we retreating" (laughter). I am sure Lord Hunt would be able to translate every single one (laughter) especially the final gentleman, he said "It is alright boys, we are going to do an oscar." (laughter) A rear attack I need hardly say (laughter). Of course there was the occasion when I was privileged to be received by the great Field Marshal himself. When he left Italy to take charge of the second front, it was pouring with rain, and again my American friend and I were there and he stepped briskly out of the caravan, and with very crisp well chosen words, said we were stuck in Italy, and it was quite clear we were going to be there for the winter in very damp surroundings, but he was full of optimism and he said "Well gentlemen, I am glad I have got you here. We are going to win the battle, but one thing I would like to tell you, all I have got to say to you is the troops are in great heart, they have got their tails up, well up". There was a slight pause, and the American said "Excuse me, General up what" (laughter)

But of course jargon has changed. I was recently privileged to watch Mr. McNaught Davis climbing and stagger up behind Mr. Edwin Hammond on one or two climbs, and I could not understand what they were talking about. Above the jangle of ironmongery around the waist, I deduced that the whole world had changed completely, and again I felt totally out of date in exactly the same position as the two old coal miners I knew who worked in the Rhonda and retired. Of course they could not, as I cannot, really cure myself of the illusion that I am still a climber and they, although they had the old age pension, the coal board was looking after them very well, they hankered after the old business, so they wandered up the slopes and they discovered a little outcrop hidden behind a rock about 1,000 feet up. They started a little level quietly on their own. They were having a lovely time and selling a little bit on the side, nothing wrong with that, and then some cads split on them and they looked down one morning on the mountain road and there an enormous cavalcade of coal board cars had drawn up. Up the mountain path came striding the inspectors, brushed them aside, and there was Dia and Will looking horrified by what they saw. The level was propped up with old rusty bedsteads, old bottles holding up the roof, and the lighting, it was unbelievable, two old candles and a moth flying round. He said "Stop at once, stop this at once, it is outrageous", clapped his hands and told them off and Dia shouted "Everybody out ventilation fan gone" (laughter).

How often I have thought my ventilation fan had gone as I followed Joe and Ian up the mountainside towards Clogwyn. But I think the exciting thing for us all, for me in particular, is we still, whatever our ages, climb and we still hanker after the heights, though heaven knows we can never really attain them. I propose to stagger along come what may in my humble capacity in the mountain world, and I do not propose to be over awed by sometimes the tremendous pride and power that these modern climbers demonstrate.

There was Ian McNaught, looking absolutely the lord of all he surveyed on one occasion, and I remem-

ber I was almost tempted to tell him the story of the famous commander in chief in India. His train stopped in a junction in some far lonely station. Commander in Chief got out and paced impatiently up and down the platform followed by ADC. Two Babu gentlemen watched very carefully and suddenly plucked up their courage, went up to the Commander in Chief, tapped him on the shoulder and said "Excuse Sir, what time does the next train leave for Bombay (laughter) and the officer said "You blasted....." and went on pacing up and down and one of these two tapped him on the shoulder and said again "Are you not the station master?" He said "I am not the station master" "Alright" he said, "If you are not the station master why do you walk so proudly" (laughter).

This Club has a proud record, but it has never walked proudly, it has been an encourager, a creator, an inspirer and it has welcomed to its ranks even people like myself, who are not great climbers but talkers and encouragers, and I am very proud and indeed am grateful that I have been a member of the Climbers' Club and that the Club is still noble and flourishing. Long may it be so, changes are taking place on the mountains, some of them not altogether for the better, but the Climbers' Club, I am sure will always be there in the heart of things, standing for the right things and inspiring everybody to come to the mountains for the right reasons. So I am very proud indeed that you have invited me tonight to propose the toast to the Club, I do so with right good will. May I invite you now to lift your glasses not only to the Climbers' Club to its past, its present, and to its most confident and glorious future. Gentlemen, the Climbers' Club (applause).

ANNUAL DINNER 1975 — KEN WILSON

Mr. President, Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to propose the toast to the Club. It is a particular pleasure because two years ago I withdrew from your midst and it is good to know that no malice was taken from that act, no malice was intended and I am very pleased to be here tonight because of that.

Fellow Guests may be aware that the Climbers' Club has for sometime been embroiled in fierce political turmoil. This turmoil is centred on the thorny issue of women. How best to accommodate them (laughter) what to do with them. A internecine struggle has taken place (laughter). Friend has turned against friend (aside, I didn't really mean it honestly) fathers against sons, really quite harmless people, good souls minding their own business have been dragged willy-nilly into the struggle. Now here I must confess that I too was drawn reluctantly into this struggle (laughter) as Trevor has already pointed out I once took part in a heated debate with you Mr. President and Roy Beard in Ynys Ettws some time ago. Harsh words were spoken, cats and dogs skulked under the table, women peered through the windows (laughter), tempers rose and emotional speeches were given. Eventually the effects of alcohol wore off and we all slumped back weary from the struggle. That was nine years ago, since then the battle has been waged across huts, AGM's, Bulletins, Journals and in pubs and on the Craggs. But despite the virulence of this struggle I feel that the deep strength of the Climbers' Club has always shone through, that the underlying fellowship of the Club has rarely been threatened. Indeed I think I can name both yourself and Roy as still friends and I hope you will regard me with a small amount of favour and won't smack my bottom or anything like that (laughter).

However, I wonder if this debate on women has masked a more fundamental issue. Perhaps it has come to represent the Club's desire, or non-desire to remain in the centre of the climbing world or keep abreast of events (laughter) and contemporary change. This theme has surfaced on several occasions amidst the high flown rhetoric of the AGM's, some have claimed falsely and with deep conviction that the Club is a private organisation, that its duty lies solely to its own members, it has the right to include or, in the case of women, exclude whoever it likes. Others have replied, with no less force, and even deeper conviction and large amounts of principle and emotion, the Club is in some ways a touchstone of climbing progress. It is an institution with institutional responsibilities. Unless reforms were made they claim, the leading climbers of the day would gradually come to feel that the club was no longer relevant and not worth joining. Without their support the Club's authority would rapidly dwindle.

It must be admitted that others just retired to the bar wondering how so many could say so much about so little. You may recall a famous incident, in the university rag week when a student disguised as a man in the street, walked into the police station to report that a group of students disguised as workmen

were digging up the main road. A posse of police were duly despatched to the scene. At the same time another student also disguised as a man in the street went up to the group of workmen who were digging up the main road and told them that a group of students disguised as Policemen (laughter) were on their way to stop them digging (laughter). The policemen worked the net and for a short time the confusion was absolute. The trouble was they failed to recognise each other for what they were (laughter) I felt a little like that (laughter).

The first AGM I attended in 1965, I think it was, back in 1965/66, to a tense assembly I proposed that the word "Gentlemen" be replaced by the word "persons". It all seemed clear to me, it seemed a perfectly simple device to remove sex discrimination from the Club but I was suspected of wishing to clear the last Winter Palace (laughter—aside, you behaved like one). I can assure you I am a very right wing Socialist. The turmoil has continued for nine years, and it was this turmoil that caused me to resign two years ago. I must apologise Mr. President for giving you this tedious crap, you cannot say that I did not warn you (laughter) I could have listened to McNaught Davis (laughter) and attempted to give one of his witty speeches, he might be interested to learn incidentally that on our recent trip to Japan he was mistaken for Tom Jones (laughter). He was walking in a temple and a group of Geisha girls standing in mini skirts said "Ah Tom Jones, it is Tom Jones" and he said "No I am not Tom Jones, I am McNaught Davis" and they said "Oh no no you Tom Jones" and when he eventually extracted himself from the ruck, (laughter) autographs etc., kisses and the like, he got back to his hotel and the implacable hotel manager was not at all moved, he said "You English all look the same" (laughter).

For anybody who reads, there cannot be many, my magazine you will have noticed that McNaught Davis has recently ruined things for all after dinner speakers by his exposé of the various categories of speech. I shudder to think what category he will give me for this one, but (aside, "C" laughter) not bad, I was expecting lower than that (aside, "for a CC member you are going well". Laughter). Actually to be perfectly frank I give myself D minus. I think this is worth a D minus. Having made life difficult for me, I might as well tell one of his latest tall tales, hot from the presses that he is going to tell at one of his new dinners (laughter). There are 20 dinners that he has got to attend between now and next week. This one concerned one of his posh lady friends in Hampstead. She landed a plum job as a T.V. sports interviewer, and her first job, her first task, she was sent down to interview the captain of the Oxford Boat Race team on television, World of Sport. "I understand" she said "that you are the heaviest team ever to row in the Boat Race". "That is absolutely correct" he said "We have also got the biggest Cox too" (laughter) applause. This was on television (laughter)— Her eyes slowly dropped to his crutch (laughter) "I am sure they must be very useful to you" (laughter) and she rings up to complain to her producer about being given the task of interviewing a sex maniac (laughter).

Mind you this sort of mild bawdiness pales into insignificance compared to the after dinner speeches of the filthy after dinner speeches of Emlyn Jones complete with heavily disguised legal dirty jokes. Some of you will remember the unabashed sordidness of the Fanny Green joke of the 1968 Welsh Dinner (laughter). I might also be foolish enough to attempt to emulate John Hunt and try to give one of his glittering speeches Polished and perfectly balanced, no notes, historic flourishes, measured diplomacy and above all deep humility. It was the deep humility part that appealed to me because as you know one of my finest qualities is humility (laughter). Eventually I rejected that idea however, I sought advice and received very strong hints from certain members of the Committee that a dose of retrospection was called for. Anyway I spent the last few weeks immersed in ancient journals, mugging up my C.C. history in order to give you that, so keep quiet while I give you the retrospection.

This is the serious part of the evening. The question I particularly tried to answer was whether the Club ever intended to play a leading role in British Climbing. After reading some of the early records I now believe that it did. The Club was formed in 1897 it was based on a nucleus that met regularly at the Pen y Gwryd. They petitioned others, and by the First AGM, 209 climbers from all over the country had joined, famous figures such as Slingsby, Rose, Moss, Haskett-Smith, O.G. Jones, the Abrahams, Eckenstein, Solley and Archer Thompson. They all became members. Indeed, the Club included in its ranks the cream of the nation's rock climbers. The trouble is now all we have got is Dave Potts, and Ian McNaught Davis (laughter). C.E. Matthews who was a founder member of the Alpine Club was made the first President. Both the President of the Yorkshire Ramblers and the Scottish Mountaineering Club came to join the Club as well.

The first dinner took place in the Egyptian Room in Piccadilly and Matthews with imperialist confidence noted in his Presidential Speech that the Club was based on wide foundations. We have an interest in climbing in England Wales and Ireland he said. We number among our ranks 13 scholars, 15 lawyers, authors,

Journalists, clergymen, members of the civil service, merchants, manufacturers, inspectors of schools, Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates. They can matriculate in the Climbers' Club (laughter) they can graduate in the Alps and carry off the highest honours to the Caucasus to the Himalayas. This latter remark indicates that the Club was clearly intent on becoming eliteist right from the start. I can really recommend those early Journals, they are most stirring reading. The Annual Dinner speeches were reported in full, they usually had at least 7 speeches at every dinner (hear hear laughter) all of them longer than mine. They were so keen that they published 4 Journals a year, they needed them to publish all the after dinner speeches (laughter). Later the Club in its low period had difficulty in producing one Journal in 4 years. The editor proudly wrote, listen to this, 'We number amongst us the finest rock climbers of the day. Whenever they accomplish something worthy of note they should remember that the editor is eager and anxious for the fullest details.'

Their gripping first ascent account of Slanting Gully and Devil's Kitchen, articles on Cornwall, Gritstone, Lakeland and even Chalk Climbing on Beachy Head. The Club grew in strength, Winthrop-Young, Mallory, Herford, Pope, H.O. Jones, they all joined (laughter). They all joined in the early part of this century and the Club had reached its zenith by 1910. By 1923 it had dwindled to three quarters of its original strength. Herbert Carr recognised the danger in 1926 when he wrote "The more climbers the Club gets, the greater its capacity for service and the more important its position in the Climbing World".

By the early 30's the Club was again a hive of activity, it acquired Helyg, embarked on publishing a series of guide books and it was involved in advanced climbing both at home and abroad. Small wonder that talented climbers such as Jack Longland, Kirkus, Hudgkin, Alan Hargreaves and Edwards all felt it worth their while to join the Club at that time. The Journals reflected it all, they positively rippled with interest with accounts of the major developments on Welsh Cliffs. And so it has continued. The climbing remained active after the war. Winthrop Young and Barford played a very leading part in starting the BMC and Barford became its first Secretary. The C.C. members also took part in the various Everest Expeditions and in the Kanchenjunga trip. The Journal chronicled exciting events at home and in the Alps that stirred us all. Is it the same to-day? I wonder if I am wrong to detect that some of the vitality is draining away and the Club is once more slipping into a decline. Some people tell me that the meets lack flair, that the huts are often empty. I wonder how many of today's leading rock climbers are seeking to join. Some people say that the attendance at Dinners is dwindling. The Journal has grown sparse, and infrequent, the guide books are late and criticized. True there is still a lot happening. C.C. members are active in many spheres but I wonder if I am correct in suspecting that they are disparate groups and they lack the strong bonds of unity that drew them together in the past. Mr. President I must apologise for coming here with these gloomy forebodings, I am confident that even if they are true that they do not represent a permanent state of affairs. I am sure that the members have the resolve and the Club can quickly regain its past prominence. It maybe however, that another rôle is preferred.

The phenomenal rise of the BMC presided over so ably by Alan Blackshaw and Dennis Gray (aside, boo. Turn coat). It is funny, I was sure that would get a clap (laughter). The rise of the BMC has become so marked, that the Club may well feel that now has come the time when it is going to withdraw to a more background role. Whichever course the Club chooses, climbers will have cause to be grateful to it for the remarkable contribution it has made to British Climbing. Climbing literature would be poor without the writings of Noyce, Winthrop Young and Edwards. The C.C. has given us Journals, bulletins and guide books, they have administered five huts and above all they have protected the climbs themselves. Those who sneer at the machinations of the Clubs like the Climbers' Club might well pause to consider what British Climbing would be like if they had never existed (aside, hear hear). I suspect that the cliffs would be hammered to pieces. With imperceptible skill the great clubs have exerted a strong paternal influence over British climbing and it has left us all with a tremendous legacy of magnificent climbs to inherit and it is this legacy that is the envy of the World.

Mr. President I am sure I speak for all of us here when I say that the Climbers' Club has played its part with distinction. Whatever course it chooses in the future it has already earned our gratitude for its remarkable contribution to the culture of British Climbing.

Mr. President I would like to propose the toast to the Climbers' Club.

A. G. M. 1975

Women Membership 'Debate'

Martin Sinker

Some of you are against the idea of the Climbers' Club as a mixed Club and probably angry that the issue has been raised again after only two years. However, this is not a frivolous motion, it is a very serious attempt to benefit the Climbers' Club so I would like you to listen to the arguments that I am going to put forward with an open mind, and to balance them against your own convictions.

There are three main arguments I think for admitting women to the Club. Firstly there is the basic principle of equality of the sexes. It is really quite unacceptable today, that women climbers who would otherwise qualify for this Club should be excluded simply because they are women. Secondly there is the fact that for the last five years there has been a majority in the Club in favour of women membership. The postal questionnaire of 1970 showed, I think, 137 in favour, 78 against. In the voting at the AGM's in 1972 and 73, there were again majorities in favour of women though less than the two thirds majority needed to change the rule. Of course the members attending the AGM's is a small proportion of the total membership, but I really do not think that there is a huge silent majority with strong feelings either one way or the other. I do not think it is fair to accuse the absent majority of apathy, I think very probably they do not have strong feelings either one way or the other, they are probably more interested in other things like climbing. The third argument, and I think the strongest one from a practical point of view, is the damaging effect which the issue has on the Climbers' Club (aside, hear hear). For the last 10 years we have been divided over it and members have resigned from the Club on both sides. The committee has spent an enormous amount of time and effort in discussing the issue, often at the expense of more important matters, such as guide books and the maintenance of the huts. Successive secretaries including myself have toiled far into the night writing letters to members infuriated either pro or anti women. For the good of the Club I think all this must stop, but with the present majority for women I think it is not going to stop, until we become a mixed club. It is hard to assess the effect on potential new members with our men-only image but I think the membership figures in the Annual report make it pretty clear that we are not being exactly swamped with applications at the moment.

Looking briefly at the changes women will bring to the Club the motion is worded to allow men only huts. My feelings were shattered recently when I discovered my mother stayed in Helyg 40 years ago (laughter). Helyg aside, all the huts are mixed as you know and all Club events are mixed, except this Annual Dinner and AGM. The number of women qualified to join the Club and wanting to join, will be pretty small, at least to begin with. It is worth considering I think the possibility that by opening our doors to women who are good climbers we might help to improve the standard of climbing among women in this country, which as Ian McNaught-Davis points out recently in an article is relatively low compared with women climbers on the continent. So to those of you who have come here intending to vote against the motion, can you really justify continuing to impose your minority opinion on us, bearing in mind if you succeed, this obsessive issue will continue to divide and disrupt the Club? Would it not be better to gracefully abstain from voting so that the Climbers' Club can be reunited and let us get on with more important things? (applause).

H. G. Nicol (President)

It gives me great pleasure to second this motion on behalf of Women membership of the Climbers' Club. I think it is a question of humanity, which is a quality of being educated and fair minded. The Climbers' Club has always been the best Club in Welsh climbing. We have had a high admission standard, but we do not exclude people because they are Catholic, Protestant, Atheists, Negroes or Indians, and in my view we no longer have any right to do so because they are women. There would have been an almighty howl of protest if we did exclude anybody because they belonged to any particular ethnic or religious group, but up until now we have excluded women, your wives, your sweethearts and your climbing partners because they are women. Now this is not all right with me, and it is not all right with the majority of young people whom we would like to join this club. They are losing interest, some of them are not joining, some of them are leaving.

Peter Harding wrote me an interesting letter about this. He has recently changed his views, he is now in favour of women membership and he said that if the younger members of the Club became disenchanted

with the Club, on a principle such as women membership, then it would be the Club which would lose out. And Kevin Fitzgerald, who was not able to be here tonight, stated quite boldly that the concept of an all male enclosed society is not with the present generation, they will simply stay away from an institution holding this idea.

I do not want anybody to underestimate the importance of this motion tonight. Nobody seriously doubts that women will eventually become members of the Club. There has been such a tremendous common sense drive in this direction recently in our politics, our universities, and in our schools. But will they join in time, will there be any active members left if the present situation whereby young members are not joining continues?

Now the Alpine Club admitted members to full membership last year. Everybody knows this, and they did so in the nick of time, and now look at the Alpine Club, they have got a most flourishing Annual Dinner and members are flocking to join the Alpine Club. I counted 14 new applicants at the last circular I received, which I think is a record number, I do not think this is a pure coincidence. They have also had a gift of 150 members of the Ladies Alpine Club. I cannot suppose that we would have such a stroke of good fortune, (laughter) but if the Alpine Club had the good sense to do this, can we hold our heads up? Won't we look extremely stupid if we do not follow them? Most of us here have tacitly accepted that this is a de facto mixed Club, all our huts except Helyg are fully mixed, — there is no intention for the committee to change the status of Helyg. Admission of women would not change very much but, it would remove prejudice and discrimination from our rules, it would bring them up to date; after all they were written in 1898, they have done extremely well, but are due for a dusting occasionally. And we must do this quickly so that new members coming to this Club will really believe that we have joined the 20th century.

David Cox says, he also cannot be here tonight, "It seems to me that the continued exclusion of women from the Club would have disastrous effects, whereas their inclusion on the same qualifications as men would give the Club a much needed push into the latter half of the 20th century." I hope some women will in fact want to join the Climbers' Club. I do not think there will be any mad stampede. On the whole our image is too stark and unkempt, and one might say untidy, but when they join they will each make their own individual contribution. I do not know whether you have noticed this but the influence of women on men and men on women is beneficial, they (laughter) belong together, it is a biological fact. It would never have been otherwise unless in Victorian times when our rules were framed women had not been considered as second class citizens and were excluded automatically from all activities, except housework and child rearing. These days are passed, and the Club must accept this fact and move with the times. Lord Hunt says "In a sport which is equally enjoyed by both sexes and in which there is a large and important social element to its enjoyableness it is nonsense to prolong segregation"

Gentlemen, let us not have "gentlemen" any more in the Climbers' Club. I doubt very much if there ever were many. Let us just have "people", or "persons". People who like climbing, who love mountains whether they be men or women. Thank you very much. (applause).

President:

I now throw the motion open to the floor, who would like to speak about this?

Michael Ball

My views in the past have been well known Mr. President and Gentlemen, and I now wish to put a slight caveat on this motion to make people think before the enthusiasm, and in many ways very strong points put forward by the previous two speakers may have had on people. I think the first thing we must do is to get the facts correct. As to these postal questionnaires. In 1966, when they in fact first came out 36 voted for and 63 against. There was a motion put forward in 1969 by our guest of honour strangely enough, which was defeated. I have the figures but it is not relevant to the proponents' argument because the postal questionnaires in 1970/71 had 63% for and 36% against — almost the two-thirds required you notice, but only just under a third of the Club voted. In fact at the last two AGM's the for and against figures have been 55—45 and 56—44 so these figures in fact do not suggest the steadily increasing desire for members to have

this proposal passed. We could if we wanted I think show that these figures show a slight decline but I am sure the figures are not statistically significant.

It is not a continuing thing and I did urge you Mr. President in a letter at that time that the right thing to do is not to wait a short time, but to wait three or four years for a further referendum and then see on the strength of that whether we should admit women. The Club after all has been going for over 70 years now, and an extra year or two are not as vital as you would say. It would seem to me that if this motion is to be carried it ought to be carried by a pretty overwhelming majority, and I think it would be much better for the Club, I think as Martin Sinker particularly has said, it is damaging that we should have to get up again and again, though I must say that I have several friends in the room here and nobody seems to get at me for this, and I really am most grateful (laughter). But what, in fact since we last debated this is the same, what has changed? What's the same is, that we and other Clubs regard this as an internal matter, there is not a strong force from outside for us to change, it is our own members and ourselves, this is the same, and again I do not think large numbers of women wish to join us, this point has been made already. What has changed? Well one thing certainly all the huts are now mixed except Helyg and I would like to remind you Mr. President that it was I myself who made the proposal to you that women should be admitted to Ynys Ettws in same dormitories as men. I made this proposal, you took it up, and it was passed and it has I am sure been a success, and I am glad to see it has. You may ask why did I do this. The answer of course is to get members to see whether *this* is what they want, or whether what they want is to have them actually as members of the Club and I am sure members will have made up their minds about this problem. Now the next thing of course that has changed, which has been mentioned already, is that the Alpine Club has admitted women and I would like to dwell on this a little bit.

I was present at the last dinner of the Ladies Alpine Club and I found this a very sad occasion in many ways. The Club was despondent at being disbanded, the next possible President was, you know, being regretted, and this sort of thing, and I do also understand that at the combined meeting of the A.C. and the L.A.C. when they joined the only opposing vote was in fact from a woman, that is interesting too.

Now finally then, bearing these points in mind, how do we see the Club and how do we feel it should be going. I must just make a few points before I get to what has been said already. This mention of equality of sexes is all right in most things but you know you cannot have equality in the sexes, in athletics for instance one side does tend to run rather faster than the other etc., and we do not all have to be exactly the same, we do not want Welshmen in the London-Scottish Rugby Team.

People are still joining the club, that is the only answering point, and the numbers are not dropping (aside, they are). I know those enthusiastic for women coming in would like it to be the other way, but you know numbers have not dropped, I know one or two have been checked out just recently for not paying their subscriptions but that is all. The other point that I do think ought to be made is what really should we think about the effect on the Pinnacle Club. Has any discussion taken place? I feel that we cannot just leave the Pinnacle Club out in the cold (aside "yes we can," laughter) that is a personal point of view.

Now finally then how do we see this Club? Your President has said it is the leading Club in Wales and I would certainly agree with this, but is it a Regional Club? I think it is more than that. Certainly its heart is in Wales, and one can see this by looking at the excellent photograph of Cloggy at Ynys Ettws, but it is more than that, its membership comes from the whole country, there is a very wide range of membership and a very wide range of activities. I personally see the Club as a Club of leaders and pioneers, this has always tended to be a masculine attribute and I feel we should keep the Club just the same. (applause).

Harry Sales

I disagree with pretty well everything that Mike Ball has just said. (aside, So do I. Laughter and applause). I have the greatest possible respect for him, he is the nicest possible man and somebody over there, used that word resign, I hope there will be no such stupidity. What Mike Ball has done, he has catalogued changes and these are only little changes. The big change that has happened in the last few years, is that the reputation, in spite of all your efforts Hamish, of the Climbers' Club has gone down, because we are getting known as a fuddy-duddy Club and the important thing now is to bring us screaming into the 20th century, and we can only do this, as I said earlier on in that very long speech that I was challenged about, to make us representative of the whole climbing world and that means making us people instead of gentlemen

and I have got a whole lot of letters like you have from people who I have spoken to about this issue. None of them could come but they are all converted now to the idea of women, with one exception and I will come to it very quickly.

I will only mention two of these letters, one from Kevin whom you have heard from. He says if the Climbers' Club keeps on keeping out women there will be no Climbers' Club in less than 10 years. It is a long letter, I will not read the rest of it except the P.S. it says that "it occurs to me that if the vote goes through I will be able to end my C.C. letters like St. Paul, greet the brethren with a holy kiss" (laughter). And another one from somebody called Christian Bonington (laughter) who says, "I hope persons on the day will excuse us from gentility" and that is what I hope, that we cut out this gentleman nonsense. Now the only opposition I have heard to this is from an illiterate policeman (laughter) and he could only write on a beer mat and he says "Keep the C.C. all male" and that is about all he could write. (laughter). Apart from that, all these letters and all the people I have spoken to are all the same, and I think if we do not do this now we are in for becoming the sort of institution that the Alpine Club was threatened to become some years ago. Hear hear (applause).

J. Mellor

In your capacity as President, I understood you to say that the use of Helyg would continue to be all male, that it was the Committee's intention to keep it all male. In fact, the motion as I understand it says it is at the discretion of the committee.

The President

I think it is a play on words isn't it?

J. Mellor

I think this is an important point, if women are admitted to the Club what is the intention of the Committee?

The President

The intention of the Committee is to keep it as a male only Club (laughter) male only hut.

J. Mellor

Nevertheless you take my point the motion says "at the discretion of the Committee".

The President

Well it has got to be at the discretion of the Committee I mean that is what the Committee is for.

J. Mellor

Well no, I do not think so, I think that perhaps if it was thought appropriate, the use of Helyg could be designated for males only, except perhaps those people that would abstain or perhaps be deeply opposed to the motion, and if it was thought appropriate to change the use of that hut then this could perhaps be put to an AGM in a more formal manner.

The President

I think Robin is anxious to say something about that very point.

Robin Prager

The motion was put forward by Martin Sinker who was the Secretary immediately prior to me, and he is very much aware of the rules of the Club and the way the Club runs. We cannot have a rule which excludes women from Helyg because the use of huts is at the discretion of the Committee, and that must stay so, I do not think we can write it into the rules that a hut can have women, or cannot have women, shall have a calor

gas heater, or an electric heater, shall have a shower, or not have a shower. I think that if women are members it certainly is the intention of the Committee and the proposed Committee, to retain Helyg as a women only hut (Laughter, aside, 'men only hut'. Laughter).

The President

Is everybody quite clear that Helyg at the discretion of the Committee is going to be a male only hut? Would anybody else like to speak?

Ralph Jones

Gentlemen,

I speak as one who has changed ones views over the last five years particularly. I support this motion because I believe it talks about change. I know that some of the other members will resist this change, but the fact is this is not new in the Climbers' Club, I have been in it a modest 25 years and I can assure you that in 1951 we went through a much much bigger social change than the one we are talking about now. Those of you on the Committee at that time will know what I am talking about. I think you have got to realise your responsibilities, not now, but in the future. I am talking now about the proposal to admit women to the Club. I think that those who oppose this motion should think back on the motions I know some of them supported, that changed the Club in a very big way in the time of 1951, and think how beneficial those changes were at the time, and I believe they have now got to think of the future of the Club and admit women to it in line with the social changes that are taking place. I believe it will be a healthier Club, it will be a more dynamic Club, and I think a more growing Club in the future, which I do not think it is at the present time. (applause). Thank you.

Sir Jack Longland

I am in rather an odd position tonight because over the last 100 years, no 70 years in this case, most of the necessary changes and revolutions in the Alpine Club have been masterminded by members of the Climbers' Club. If you go back through history you will find this again and again. I find it very odd that at this particular moment in time it is we in the Alpine Club who have a lesson to offer the Climbers' Club. This seems a very strange thing to have happened, admittedly it took 117 years for the Alpine Club to decide that women were as equal as men, but it has been a perfectly delightful marriage which has now been arranged, as those who attended the first mixed dinner of the Alpine Club will confirm. We have had virtually no casualties because though no one would expect Bill Tillman ever to say any words anywhere at all in favour of women; in fact he did accept honorary membership of the Alpine Club and a very very slight difficulty was readily and easily overcome (laughter).

So here we are with the Alpine Club being praised for its sex appeal, as compared with the Climbers' Club, and it is the most astonishing situation in the climbing world that has ever occurred in this country—that we poor old fuddy-duddies in the Alpine Club should be holding ourselves up quite rightly now to tell the Climbers' Club to come kicking its feet into the 20th century. This is the most extraordinary reversal of fortune in a mountaineering club (laughter).

Finally, what bastion is it that we are now supposed to be defending if we oppose this motion? The huts are mixed all round, whether Helyg goes that way or not is at the discretion of the Committee as the motion suggests, but what bastion is there that the people who do not want to admit women are now thinking that they are defending. It cannot even be the lavatories, because the lavatories at the Alpine Club are incomparably worse (laughter) than any of the huts managed by the Climbers' Club. Most of us in our homes if we do not actually live at Chatsworth do not in fact normally separate the female members of our families and make them use a quite different elsan (laughter). Let us not be in this extraordinary situation in which we shall have to be taught a lesson. Thank You. (applause).

The President

Anyone else bursting to speak about this?

P. Evans

Mr. Retiring President, (*The President* I am still the President) Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I came here resolved not to say anything, but (hear hear) I have heard so much nonsense put forward that I thought my own addition to it might not make a lot of difference. What is the connection between the 20th century and whether the Climbers' Club is mixed or not? What is the connection between the Climbers' Club and the Alpine Club which I think has no huts — I may be wrong; I cannot remember. (*Roger Chorley* Yes it has, South Audley Street) You know so many non-sequiturs have been dragged across the floor this evening. But my main reason for saying something is that I was threatened with violence if I did so (laughter) (*McNaught-Davies* From me) That's right, but this is all very boring and (aside, hear hear, laughter) and got you.... (laughter) and the point is you are going to vote, or not vote for a different Club, not the Climbers' Club, but a different club. It will be an entirely different Club that will eventually emerge from this and the rest of you have to decide whether you want a different Club or not (aside Rubbish). It is nothing to do with the 20th century or The Alpine Club. If you want a different Club, fine — I think a change of name would go along with this, personally; I favour the "Mixed Climbing Club" (laughter).

Is it in order to put an amendment, I think it should be because the motion only reached me six days ago. (aside, The President, You can't make an amendment unless due notice has been given).

Elliot Viney

It seems to me that the last speech was not even a non-sequitur. It was a non. Mr. President I have come up today because of one particular reason, it was 40 years ago today that I was elected to the Climbers' Club, (applause) and though I come as a very senior member, I have come up to vote for this motion (cheers.. applause). Of all the arguments I have heard being put forward particularly by the President of the Alpine Club, I think it is absolute nonsense this should still be going on. Although I will say this, following my last visit to Helyg, I really do not think I would go again even if women were admitted there (laughter).

I really do hope the Club will after this long tiresome and distracting period, come to its senses and do what one can only call the sensible thing.

I wrote to you a postcard Mr. President, in which I just said I am in favour of (a) women, of (b) women climbers and (c) of women in the Climbers' Club. Thank you. (applause).

Peter Newman

I want a word about Helyg. This pressure is on the Club to let other people use their huts, believe it or not though we are a very fine Club, we are not such a very good Club as regards the huts. The huts cost money whether they are used or not. People who at present keep up this rather nice tradition of lots and lots of properties tend to be outsiders. Now the pressure is on already for Helyg to become a mixed hut because this is the hut which is less popular than any other amongst members. This is the hut that we use for block bookings. This is the hut that makes not necessarily the most money but makes money because it is more regularly used I think than any other hut. This is also the hut that has free electricity which proves that it does not make a profit. All the other huts you have to put money in a meter. In spite of what we have been told and in spite of what the motion says Helyg is not going to remain a men only hut even if women are not allowed into the Club, because the sheer economics of the thing, is that Helyg is ideal for mixed parties of school children and other Clubs, and we need the lolly. Now the only way you are going to get over this if you are going to vote against women, is to start using the huts far more yourselves. Helyg is a red herring in this context. (hear hear..applause).

McNaught Davis

I discovered some years ago a thing which said "A hundred reasons why the earth is flat". I thought, this is brilliant, you know, it explained absolutely with precise mathematics why boats disappeared and that was caused by refraction of the light because it was a flat surface. So he came across and said "here is your globe and round that globe is a blue band, the earth has not got a blue band on it, therefore the earth is not a globe" and this is more or less the sort of argument that you get into if you start dealing with the pros and cons of women in the Club, or women as climbers or women as anything, you get this illogical paradox. Effectively one is dealing with prejudice and what I found in the Alpine Club, and I wanted to argue this case,

because the most touching thing I found was one very old gentleman and he said, "I am very much against women being in the Alpine Club because when I was on the Grossebundistock in 1923 there was a womens party ahead and not only were they extremely slow, but they rolled rocks down on me", and from this stems his prejudice (laughter). But happily the Alpine Club recognised that this was an issue of prejudice and they laughed at his little story and nobody actually spoke for women in the Alpine Club except John Hunt and David Cox and everybody else spoke against it and what I find is a paradox, is in the Climbers' Club everyone is speaking for women and all you get is people who are pissed like Evans (laughter) senior citizens, cultured, really deep in the code, and everybody speaking for women. I think it is absolute bloody nonsense, I am 100% pro this motion. I think you should put it to the vote Mr. Chairman. And Martin Sinker's three reasons which I would like him to reiterate, that is the core of what we are after and that is what we are voting for. This is a disruptive element in our Club, that is a major issue. It is also ridiculous and nonsensical in this day and age. I joined this Club and I was proud to join this Club when I was proposed by Tony Moulam, many years ago. I was proud to join it because it is a Club of top rate climbers and I was mixing with a group of people who climb, and I want to be a member of this Club because I want to go climbing with people in this Club, and that is what it is about, going out and pulling on rocks grabbing and heaving and pulling; and I find that climbing with women is great fun (laughter) and I think a lot of it is thanks to the Climbers' Club and I think the Climbers' Club has done fantastic things in this country. It has written all the guide books and there is a standard for guide books and there is a standard for climbing.

Look at the women, they have not written any guide books, they have not done a decent damn climb you know in 25 years, 30, 50 years, since Nea Morin led Slimfinger, about 100 years ago. There are no women climbers in this country, and the Climbers' Club has a lot to answer for that— The Alpine Club is a load of fuddy-duddies (laughter) but they are a load of very tolerant fuddy-duddies (laughter) who really understand what is going on, and I believe this Club should sweep this motion through totally and I still cannot understand anybody who opposes it. The only person I have ever proposed for the Alpine Club was a woman and I would not propose a man, I would not even have come to the dinner tonight because I will not go to single sex dinners, except the Pinnacle Club (laughter). I proposed one person to the Alpine Club as I just said, I do not know anybody in the Alpine Club that has got a climbing record like this. She has done over 100 major routes in the Alps in 24 seasons, and of course she was instantly a member of the Club and that was the sort of person that Club was excluding. That was the sort of person that the Club should have had in, not after she had done 24 seasons, but we should have grabbed that sort of person on their first damn season.

And that is what we should be looking for today, young members keen and eager. Our problem is not women, it is not our huts, it is not our guide books. There are too many damn huts, there are too many guide books, there are not enough young enthusiastic keen members joining this damn Club (hear hear, applause).

This is a major cause. They want to bring their birds along, they climb with their birds, if they do not climb with them they sit in their damn tents or sleep with them, and that is normal and healthy (applause and laughter).

Harry Sales

May I just say one word and then suggest to you that the vote should be taken. I did send this to the Alpine Club because I was away climbing at the time when they had their meeting when they did this.

On March 3rd 1875 Sir Leslie Steven wrote to a man called Neo, a Frenchman who had just been elected to the Alpine Club, and he said "It is the Club which should thank you for the honour you paid us by desiring to become one of our members. Madam Neo should be elected by acclamations as soon as the principle of equal rights is accepted by the Alpine Club, and this principle is making headway very quickly", (laughter) that was in 1875.

The President

I think it is time we put this to the vote, unfortunately some people have just left. Are they coming back?

Robin Prager

I think the Committee does share the view that there are people in the Club, they are a minority, but they do wish to go along and stay in a hut that is an all male hut, and I cannot talk for the Committee in 10 hence, I am Secretary at the moment, and I hope to continue as Secretary for a while yet. Harry Sales has got three years to go. It may be that we are forced into a situation where women are allowed into Helyg. One

cannot just see how things will go, but certainly at the moment it seems there is a proportion of the Club who would like to visit huts which are men only huts, and while that proportion exists, the Committee, I am sure, would like to keep a hut which does cater for those members. (hear hear, applause).

McNaught-Davis

I am still waiting for one solid reason why we should not have women in this Club.

The President

I think we must put this to the vote Gentlemen, we have to leave here in 10 minutes. The usual procedure is to put your hands up.

Those in favour I ask you now, those in favour of this motion, number six, to raise their hands. All those in favour raise their hands please.

69 in favour

Would all those against the motion now raise their hands.

8 against

69 in favour, 8 against, the motion is carried.

Cheers and applause.

Item No. 7 any other business.

Mike Ball

Could I just have one final word on the motion. The thing is I am very glad to see that this motion was passed with a huge majority. This is the way it should be passed and though I have been opposed to it I feel now that those of us who are opposed, and this does not hold at those in this room, should now work strongly with the rest of the Club and with the Committee to make this a success (hear hear, applause).

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