

THE  
CLIMBERS' CLUB  
JOURNAL

1977





# THE CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL

Edited by  
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## CONTENTS

Page

Himalayan Adventure .....	H. F. Ellis	1
Me Tarzan — Me Himalayan Tiger .....	Trevor Jones	4
Trango Tower .....	Malcolm Howells	8
Tyrolean Tactics .....	F. G. Balcombe	13
The Generation Gap .....	Al Evans	21
The Con Men .....	Philip Gordon	25
A Window On Mt. Kenya .....	Bill O'Connor	28
Time To Cry — "Ichabod"? .....	Marjorie Allen	33
Alpine Retreats .....	Ron Fawcett	38
Sliding Through The Oberland .....	Sally Westmacott	44
Early Days at Tremadog .....	Trevor Jones	51
An Extraordinary Ordinary Route .....	Alec Sharp	53
Can I Just Have A Quick Look At Your Guide Pal? .....	Geoff Milburn	56
Obituary: Don Morrison .....		62
Officers of the Club .....		63
Sub-Editorial .....		64
Correspondence .....		65
Review .....		66
New Climbs and Notes .....		68
New Climbs, 1977: North Wales, Pembroke and Cornwall ...		76
Climbers' Club Guidebooks .....		93



# HIMALAYAN ADVENTURE

H. F. ELLIS

"Talking of this new assault on Everest," said Charlie (Matterhorn) Simpson, "reminds me of an adventure of my own on the more westerly and infinitely grander peak of Chandaragara."

"About how high would that be?" I put in.

"Mount Chandaragara ranks, I think I am right in saying, fourteenth in the hierarchy of Himalayan peaks, being a little lower than Nanga Patanga and some hundred feet higher than Kimbalapaliri, which in turn but slightly overtops the majestic massif of Pandamaulanarunga, Maiden of the Snows."

"Thank you," I said.

"Our expedition, apart from some thirty porters, consisted originally of five Major Hardy, Stephen Craig, my old friend Tom Blake, Dr. Humbold and myself; but misfortune quickly thinned our ranks. Major Hardy was knocked down by a bicycle as we were leaving Darjeeling, a most unlucky accident for such a competent mountaineer; Stephen Craig shot himself in the foot while out after duck at the end of the third day's march; and at the tiny frontier village of Polapur Dr. Humbold unexpectedly announced his conversion to Bhuddism and had to be left behind. Altogether it was a chapter of accidents that might have daunted the boldest hearts. But Blake has never known the meaning of the word defeat, and as for me my heart was set on the achievement of our goal. We decided to push on.

"For some days all went well, and it was not until we were among the very foothills of Chandaragara that fate dealt us her crowning blow. Our thirty porters deserted us. So there we were, alone—"

"Amid the eternal snows?", I suggested.

"Alone," said Simpson shortly, "amid the barren and rocky fastnesses of the lower Chandaragara system. We were still some thousands of feet below the snow-line. Blake advised the abandonment of the attempt, but I, knowing that he was thinking only of my safety, refused to hear of it." "We must push on", I said.

A day or two later I was standing at the top of a particularly difficult and dangerous rock face admiring the speed and sureness of Blake's ascent when I suddenly became aware of a party of three mountaineers calmly eating their supper a few paces away. Clearly it was to be a race for the honour of planting the British flag on the summit of the fourteenth highest peak in the Himalaya. "Good evening", said one of the three, and at once I realised that the race was to be a grimmer one than I had imagined. The man was a foreigner.

"Good evening", I returned pleasantly, "We did not see you coming up"; "Nein, it is not going up but coming down we are. We could no higher get."

"Really", I asked, striving to hide my satisfaction, "how was that?"

"Ve had der summit reached."

"I refuse to believe it," I cried angrily.

"You will der German flag up there find."

I was dumbfounded by the fellow's insolence.

"May I ask", I said coldly, "by what right you have planted the German flag on this mountain? Surely you are aware that this is Tibetan territory." I turned my back on the impossible creature and rapidly explained the situation to Blake. Still solicitous for my welfare, he urged that there was now no possible object in our proceeding further, but to this I could not agree. "I will not rest", I declared, "until I have removed this foreign emblem in the name of the Tibetan government."

"And did you succeed?" I asked breathlessly.

"I have no doubt I should have done but for the culminating disaster when I lost my climbing boots."

"Lost your boots?"

"We pitched Camp 27", said Simpson quietly, "at the very edge of the snow-line. On retiring to rest I automatically placed my boots outside the door of the tent, though naturally there was little hope of getting them cleaned in those desolate wastes of rock and snow. I woke early and stealing from the tent to watch the splendours of a Himalayan dawn, was horrified to find that my boots were gone—only the nails remaining as witness of their fate. Close by were the unmistakable footprints of the giant barunga, the dreaded Himalayan snow-rat."

"I need not tell you of the shock of that discovery. To a climber, especially on ice and snow, his boots are indispensable, I realised that without my boots I should be a hindrance rather than a help to my companion, and I resolved that, cost what it might, I would not be a handicap to him in his gallant assault on the final fifteen thousand feet. With infinite care to avoid waking him, I crept back into the tent, scribbled a hasty note wishing him luck and, snatching up a pair of boots which I found lying unwanted by his bedside, stole silently away down the mountain. So ended, in bitter disappointment, my long cherished dreams of the conquest of Chandaragara."

"But what happened," I asked, "to Blake."

"I like to think," said Simpson gravely, "that he reached the summit and carried out the mission which fate did not grant me to perform."

# ME TARZAN

## ME HIMALAYAN TIGER

TREVOR JONES

At the beginning of every Climbers' Club Journal is the major article, usually about the Himalayas. There is a photograph of the unclimbed giant, glistening with the sunlight on its ultimate snows, followed by a dozen pages of text and acknowledgements. The whole article being indescribably boring.

A couple of pages are devoted to the drive overland. Who cares? Marco Polo did it. I did it in 1931? There is a motorway practically the whole way with Forte Service stations at Istanbul. Tehran, Kabul and Nant Peris.

Near the end of their journey the expedition vehicles reach the Indian Frontier, where there are frustrating delays. The Indian customs officials are implied to be mad, indolent, inefficient, obstructive locals whose sole purpose in life is to hinder the clean living, hard climbing, young English climbing heroes.

At Rawalpindi or Khatmanov they collect their liaison officer who seems to be a dark-skinned descendant of the British raj, he is waited on hand and foot by untouchables, dhobi wallahs, who feed him lotus blossom butties every ten minutes. Unfortunately, as the old saying goes — "Cheer up the worst is yet to come".

The march-in commences, complete with leeches, umbrellas, the strikes and vagaries of porters and despite the magnificent views from the camp site the expedition members spend their leisure time arguing about the number of slings they used for aid in the crack on the Great Wall of Cloggy.



Base camp is set up at the foot of the mountain. The scenario changes to sights to all those like myself who have seen six hundred and thirty-three Himalayan lectures. Sherpas start tramping with heavy loads through icefalls.

God!! If I do not see Sherpas overcoming such articles for another fifty years (D.V.) it will be too soon.

Unfortunately for Climbers' Club readers bad weather sets in and a couple of pages are filled with the joys of enclosed tent life — peeing into bottles and other minutae of high altitude living.

One forlornly hopes that they might start fighting as we did on the 1961 Nupse expedition when we became bored and set up the world high altitude brawl record at 23,500 feet on a platform six feet square. But the young lads don't seem to be made like us anymore.

The weather gets better. Sherpas tramp through the icefall again for the eighteenth time.

Sprindrift. Ah yes. A few tons of it cascade on to the leading pair, who naturally shun these like Englishmen without uttering a word of protest. For is not the summit near and the taking of blurred photographs? And the subsequent plaudits of the Padarn Lake and South Audley Street. I just think of Whillans' comments on the Himalayas:- "Himalayas is 'umping bloody grairt lawds up bloody grairt slawpes".

The summit pair may even be fortunate enough to have a bivouac, the result of which will be the loss of toes due to frostbite which will be a considerable asset on the Foyle's lecture circuit in the subsequent winter months since any lecturer who still has toes hasn't suffered enough and his fee will not be so high. I understand that such frostbite problems can be solved by a few nights sleeping in Boardman-Tozeoff Ltd. refrigerated cold rooms in Salford where for a small contribution to B.M.C. funds mortifi-

cation of one's feet can be speeded up considerably.

It is important that the article states that the mountain is the last great problem. There have been thirty-seven of these in the last five years. "Last Great Problem" is the in phrase which will help major expedition whizz-kids to extract the relevant finance from banks to whom will be explained that the conquest of the "last great problem" will rejuvenate Britain's prestige in Nepal/Pakistan/Ongo-Bongo land.

It is a pity there are not more international expeditions since these are much more entertaining than the Morecambe and Wise Show. It starts off with the whole expedition standing in the grounds of a far-off embassy, all shaking hands and uttering cliches by the cartload and platitudes by the Imperial Pint.

As soon as they get on the mountain everyone reverts to type. The French accuse the English of perfectly everything, hogging the lead and neo-colonialism. They pack their things with tea pouring down their cheeks (especially for French T.V.) and depart in the general direction of the bar Nationale in Chamonix.

Occasionally there are light-hearted moments:- **unidentified German** (on hearing of West Germany's victory in World Cup Football) "Ve haff beaten you at your national sport, Villains. Vot haff you to say?"

Whillans — "Oh aye (pause). Just remember Fritz (menacingly), We beat you at your national sport — twice".

There is of course a general trend towards two-man expeditions. These are becoming popular because, if successful, fame and fortune are bestowed on only two people and not diluted as is the case on big expeditions.

Continual prusiking, bivouacs by the score, abseils from wedged sardine tins are of course common-place. Naturally there is no mention of enjoyment but there is the ultimate saving grace that

there are no sherpas tramping through the icefall.

Is this right? How dare these small expeditions take away the livelihood of these worthy people. Pictures of icefalls without sherpas will never be the same again.

I shall report this matter to my local branch of the Association of Scientific, Management and Technical Staffs immediately. I am certain our brothers in the Indian customs will block all such future small expeditions.

# TRANGO TOWER

MALCOLM HOWELLS

Martin Boysen hung on his jumars and looked up. The crack was vertical to begin with and overhanging further up. It looked just the same as last year, in fact there was no possible way it could have become any easier. Twelve months earlier the crack had nearly killed him, made him part of the Trango Tower forever. He had wedged his knee in the crack - a normal enough thing for a climber to do - and then found it was stuck solid. After struggling it was still there and beginning to swell. The prospects were obvious and terrifying. Mo Anthoine stood below holding the rope, powerless to help, while Martin worked, straining in the awkward position, panting and gasping because of the altitude. Using a piton, which is about as sharp as a cake knife, he eventually managed to chew through his climbing breeches until the knee part could be pulled away. At last the knee popped out.

There had not been enough supplies for any further attempts and the party retreated. Now Martin was back ready to settle the score and the recollections of last year were not going to make it any easier. He could easily have let one of the rest of us try it. He could have drilled bolt holes up it, but he had not come all the way to the Himalayas to evade the problem. He thinks of climbing as having to do with men, and their ability, and strength of will, measured against the problems of the mountain, as an elemental battle not an engineering problem. He wanted to climb it, and the rest of us hung back and let him get on with it.

Again Mo was holding the rope - no doubt adding to the sense

of déjà-vu. He made steady progress for 100 ft., passed the knee jam using the last peg, and carried on. But the difficulties did not relent, and worse, it was essential to use knee jamming to make progress. The climbing was strenuous and he was gasping the thin air repeatedly after every move. It was clear that he would have to free climb the last section. He steeled himself, and with every muscle straining and lungs bursting, made it to the top of the crack. Triumph.

These events took place about halfway up the main face of the Trango Tower, and they represented our first steps into the unknown territory beyond the previous year's high point. The advantage of prior knowledge however, did not mean that we got to Martin's crack without any problems. The Karakoram range is a desert area. Nothing grows and no one can live except in places where melt streams run down from the high snows. Travelling through this terrain is hard work and very expensive. Although portering is part of local life, it is gruelling work and the prices demanded are high. Balti porters get a daily rate similar to a professor in Karachi University. This means that the major problem of organising a Karakoram expedition is raising the money to pay the porters. The Mount Everest Foundation, The British Mountaineering Council and Barclays Bank gave us generous help, but most of us will still be paying off expedition debts for a long time to come. It is something you learn to live with or you don't go; a matter of priority.

To get to Trango Tower you go to Rawalpindi in Central Pakistan and fly north to Skardu, the capital village of Baltistan. A 50 mile jeep ride takes you to Dusso and from there it is 75 miles of hard, dry walking. It took us (with our porters) eight days.

We were rewarded with our first sight of the Tower and it really did make all the effort seem worthwhile. I was immensely relieved that this mountain that I had never seen but had come 5,000 miles to climb was so obviously worth it. It was some kind of a freak shape, a great pinnacle on a Himalayan scale, a rock climber's

dream. But we stand gazing at it from the Trango Glacier 3,000 feet below the bottom, so there follows another punishing period of load carrying to establish a camp at the foot of the face. This is sheltered by a huge boulder about the size of the average cinema and becomes known as the boulder camp. From here it is an hour to the foot of the ramp which slants up right-wards to a small snow field in the centre of the face. Now the climbing begins in earnest. The ramp is a mixture of easy-angled snow pitches with steep steps in between. These are rock with a layer of ice on top. We operate in two teams: Mo Anthoine and Joe Brown; Martin Boysen and myself. The two cameramen, Tony Riley and Jim Curran, keep up with us filming. Some of the fixed ropes from last year are still there, some are buried in ice. None can be used except with extreme caution. If a fixed rope breaks there is no second line of defence. You go right to the bottom.

After three days we have the ramp fix-rope again and have dug out a flat space on the snowfield big enough to squeeze in two small tents. They are sagging and distorted down to half their normal size, and everything gets wet, but we are safe from falling stones.

Above the snowfield the face is more or less vertical right to the top. Martin and I start work on it the next day leading pitches in turn - sometimes the old fixed rope is helpful, other times it is totally buried. The next day Mo and Joe push on further. They are two pitches below Martin's crack when the weather, which has been breaking all day, suddenly becomes intolerable. It begins to snow heavily and they retreat down the ropes to the snowfield. There are now five of us here and we spend a cramped night with all the vital things like our spoons and mugs getting buried. Snow piles up round the tents and in the morning we have a real mess to contend with. The mountain is plastered in new snow which periodically drops off in big heaps, and it is still snowing heavily. We dig out what we can find of our stuff and rush down the ramp to the safety of the boulder, collect a few things, then down to the glacier.







The bad weather keeps us waiting there for three days. The rest is much needed and when the time comes to go back up we are refreshed and fit. We have seen ledges above Martin's crack through the telescope and we decide to gamble on getting up the crack and finding a safe bivouac there on the first day. We will then be well placed for an attack on the summit chimneys. Mo and Martin start early and jumar up to the crack. They climb it and another pitch above and reach the ledges. They are fairly good. There is an overhang for shelter but we have to sleep on snow. Tony follows the lead pair, filming, and Joe and I come behind hauling a bag of food and bivouac equipment. The ledge is just big enough to allow four to lie down and is surrounded by a great deal of space: a tiny perch above the void.

Next morning I attack the first pitch of the summit chimneys. We are all hoping they will give a soft route to the top, but I soon find they do not. The climbing is steep and strenuous with ice clogging the cracks at the back of the chimney. I do free moves, peg moves, axe moves, all the time panting with the altitude. Finally it is done and Joe comes up and goes ahead. Another mixed pitch overhanging nearly all the way. He gets into a wide crack and has to keep leap-frogging the two pegs we have that fit. Finally it opens to a V shape that will not take the pegs. He makes a desperate free move to hand jam and places the next peg hanging from that. Then it is me again, mostly free climbing once the holds are dug out of the snow, round a corner to a ledge and horror of horrors: an impasse. It looks impossible above. Either a chimney about a foot wide and a foot deep full of hard water ice, or an overhanging corner, black with verglas. Depressed we both go down and give a pessimistic report to the others. We sleep fitfully and next morning Mo attacks the black corner. It is not impossible but it takes him three hours of hard pegging. Martin comes up and takes over. They are hoping like hell that the difficulties relent because the weather has broken again and there is no more food at the bivouac. This is probably our last chance. It soon becomes clear that far from relenting the difficulties are re-doubling. Martin is in a deceptively steep and long V chimney full of ice. He free

climbs to start with then takes to pegs when the effort becomes too much for the amount of air he can breathe. He runs out of pegs and goes free again. Next time he can't get enough breath, he falls off. The rope holds him and more pegs are sent up. The tools of war: he fights it again. Again he falls off. A setback, but his will-power is not quenched. He goes up again, and once more at the limit of his strength manages to pull out a bit extra and does it. Another three hour pitch. By now it is late afternoon and there is not much time but at last the mountain relents. The angle eases and they race up three more easier pitches to the top.

Suddenly all the straining, panting, shouting, worrying, is over. Just a clear, still evening, a blue sky and range after range of mountains as far as the eye can see. They think their thoughts and enjoy the moment. For Martin it has been something of a blood feud and now the summit is there at his feet. They go back down to Tony who has been filming from just below the summit. There is a lot of smiling and joking as the tension relaxes and they go down to the bivouac. More laughter and stories. There is no food, but no one minds. Next morning Joe and I set off early to retrace the route to the top. The weather is still getting worse and it is snowing, but we expect no problems and find none. We get our summit although not the view and then go down. Everybody gets down to the glacier by the afternoon and after that it really is all over.

# TYROLEAN TACTICS

## THE EARLY EXPLORATIONS OF THE AVON GORGE —

F. G. BALCOMBE

Ken Wilson writes: While researching for **Classic Rock**, to check the first ascent of Piton Route at Avon, I was lucky to trace and interview F. G. Balcombe. Balcombe, apart from his extensive discoveries in the Lake District, was responsible for the first serious climbing in the Gorge.

Early guidebooks and other records all stated that he discovered Piton Route in 1950. This seemed unlikely as his active Lakeland period was in the mid 'thirties. Sure enough, it transpired that Piton Route was in fact climbed in 1936. In that year Balcombe had been one of the climbers who entertained the visiting German climbers, who, among other climbs had made the first ascent of Munich Climb on Tryfan. When the Germans left, they gave a set of their pitons to Balcombe, who, mindful of the disapproval of piton use in the main mountain areas, decided to experiment with them on the then unexplored Avon cliffs. By this time he had virtually given up climbing in favour of caving, but Avon Gorge was on his route to the Mendips and thus involved little inconvenience. In the following article he describes his discoveries both in the Gorge and on Churchill Rocks.

When I talked to him he was unsure of exactly which areas of the Avon cliffs he had climbed. Studying his route descriptions it is clear that his second route at Avon is the one now called Piton Route, though in fact he only used two pitons (one for aid, one for protection) on its first ascent. His other probes seem to have been near to the routes Desperation and Depravity. The article was first published in the Northern Cavern and Fell Club Journal 1936-37, which explains why the details of the explorations have remained obscure to the climbing world for so long. It is clear that this was an important chapter in British climbing history, so the C.C.J. is taking this opportunity to republish the article and thus put it more firmly on the record.

Bang ! Bang ! Bang ! went a Bavarian's hammer, and a mauerhaken sank into a virgin wall of Welsh rock. Yes I said WELSH

rock. From the screes below rose an indignant protest from one who evidently would guard the sanctity of Britain's queenly climbing grounds: "You can't do that heah, you know !"

Well it is a vexed point, but the problem can have only one solution and this needs only time. It may not be with this generation of climbers — may British conservation prevent a sudden and overwhelming invasion of the hammer and haken brigade !

It is generally considered that there is no climbing of any worth to be had in home limestone areas. As a general rule this can be accepted. Those who have assayed ascents in the Cheddar Gorge or such like places and who have by Providence escaped the coroner's court will agree that the standard of difficulty must be very low indeed, or the route becomes dangerous from loose material. No one climbs for the thrill of falling off, some people seem to become so blase that a bit of doubtful rock and a few grass handholds are deemed necessary to relieve boredom of their S.S. route but even they, we hope, would like the route to be still recognisable on the next ascent.

Upon investigation it soon became apparent that the natural cliffs of limestone had no place as a climbing ground, but that now and then an artificial cliff, a road-cutting or a quarry would prove over-tempting and surprise us by its soundness.

Churchill Rocks, some ten miles from Bristol, were first to command serious attention, and moreover, where a delectable slab rose serenely a hundred feet up from the roadside. It looked hard from a distance but on closer acquaintance it lay back to a disappointing extent. In fact it seemed that all one had to do was to walk up, which course rapidly became due for reconsideration.

It was just above the critical angle, true slab and not glacié. A delightful crack seamed the centre of this slab and provided the obvious means of ascent. It was named Tyro's Crack, not because it was easy, it was not, but because it was such an amusing place





to which to bring the tyros; they all just walked up it, until they skidded, which was not very long.

Now alongside this, the rock had an undulating surface which made it alternate between glaxis and slab, with a wavelength of about one or two feet, providing a route of almost entirely outwardly sloping holds, which route we called the Witching Waves. Of course, there was no natural security in a place like this, and since as far as I know the cry of "no pitons in the home rocks"! has not yet reached our county, we used security haken.

Next a variation was attempted where the waves were attenuated practically right out and the means to progress were little more than small pieces of bird droppings and an occasional flake of shale. This was the Dilemma Ziz-Zag, and as pioneer leader I was twice on its horns. In the lower section it includes a few feet of rising traverse which are desperately severe or relatively easy according to your faith. My faith was lacking, and sweating in anguish, fighting to keep the "sewing maching" from starting, I just managed to make it go. My second's faith was strong and sound he was in his bloodiest novitiate, and soon described a beautiful arc across the slabs, whereafter he climbed noticeably less quickly and became almost unduly suspicious of even a perfect jug-handle.

Higher up the Zig-Zag should have crossed left to the Crack but I shirked it; having traversed on next to nothing but fresh air, the way on was provided by footholds of loose shale, the only available handhold being well over the other side. I would have sunk to the degraded depths of "piton en passant" but the effort to drive it was foiled and our status as cragsmen temporarily saved, by the fact that all the cracks were jammed full of consolidated Triassic muck.

Hence the descent had to be faced, and quickly too for the sewing machine was just starting. Very red in the face, hot and bothered, (the stage before the hair rises, deftly pushing off the

batting and predicting a fall within a few seconds !) the return was made wondering all the time how the blazes the pitch had been ascended. Suffering from reactions presumably the remainder of the route was chosen to avoid rather than include difficulties.

It was then getting dark and an attempt to rope-off having proved abortive, there was nothing for it but to finish up over much shattered rock to the summit, thence to find a way through the jungle to an easy descent lower down the cliffs.

The next visit was to the steep buttress which bounds the great slab, and more or less overhangs the road. This road is the main Bristol-Taunton road and traffic is frequent. Also, loose stones of various dimensions were abundant. It was named Sunshine-Roof Buttress.

The climb is a good V.Diff., possibly the last move is severe, but it presents other amusements as has no doubt been gathered. The first hit was a bull; a tiny pebble from seventy feet up caught a passing cyclist right in the middle of his dome. He wobbled dazedly from side to side — luckily nothing else happened to be passing — dismounted, looked around, but saw us not, then drunkenly staggered on to his mount again, soon wobbling out of sight down the hill.

The next shot was also a good one, we were drawing in the rope at the top when a large block sailed into space and looked like hitting an approaching car a fourpenny one in its radiator; instead it hit the road, bounced up, and hit him amidship with a resounding crash. We quickly vanished.

We then left Churchill Rocks, leaving four stance, or abseil, pitons, in-situ, and sought out better game.

The Avon Gorge has a certain reputation for attracting would-be climbers, who more often than not have to be rescued from above. The cliff face here is about half-a-mile long and two hun-



dred to two-fifty feet high, with varying degrees of steepness. Exploration with geologists hammer had already proved a remarkable soundness which can be attributed to the fact that it is not many years ago that the whole length was quarried back to permit the construction of the main road at its foot.

In a concavity of cliff, separated from the road by a strip of brambles and more redolent vegetation a promising route appeared to run up some two hundred feet then left to a position with doubtful exit.

The first pitch of a series of short walls brought us to a broad ledge with natural security, then upwards over shattered blocks to an iron spike left by quarrymen. Here the climbing became really serious, although so far it had been sufficiently hard to keep the local yobs at bay. The next pitch did not go, so we roped off in the failing light and wended homewards.

The next attempt was on a Saturday afternoon, and with Digger Harris anchored to the iron spike, the next pitch was forced to a band, then going left to a corner where it stopped. Our climbing had hitherto been free, using haken only for security, but now, and not without some pricking of conscience, a goodly spike was driven high up in the crack above, the karabiner snapped home, and up I went Waygood-Otis fashion, over some steep shattered blocks to an unsecured stance, whence the outlook was hopeless.

After half-an-hour debating the possibilities, I was forced to retreat. The pitch was unduly strenuous and the weather unduly warm so the discovery of a grassy haven at the head of the next detour pitch was welcome.

By this time a crowd had collected in the roadway, pedestrians, cyclists and motorists were packed so densely that such traffic as did wish to pass by, did so only with great difficulty, and much hooting. We seriously feared complications with the police for causing an obstruction. The cliffs above were lined with hundreds of spectators craning their necks over the top, the railings groan-

ing under the unaccustomed load; the passing pleasure steamers on the Avon hooted at us while their passengers waved and pointed.

From the haven a traverse back to the original route was not possible, so we continued to bear right over shelves and terraces eventually reaching the upper rubbly beds. At the base of these, and over plenty of fresh air, we drove a spike as belay then finished out round the corner into a hollow below the cliff top.

A policeman had joined the crowd below, and while we were debating plans to avoid him, our consternation can be imagined as we run into four more assembled on the ridge! It seems that spectators had reported men in difficulty on the cliffs — the same old story — so the police were turned out in force to rescue us. They were extremely decent about it all, they took particulars, but promised not to divulge them to the press, and all was well. We slid down to the roadway and sucked ices under cover of a friendly copse until the crowd dispersed, then crept away.

Since that occasion we arrange to advise the police before starting, and so avoid being rescued.

Next time we repeated the route during an evening but the crowds were just as bad, descending the route again, we were overtaken by dark, and had to rope over the bottom pitch. Here we had to face the mob properly; further, a reporter rushed up wanting particulars. That had torn it, we thought, but luckily we got away without identities becoming known. O Boy! See the placards and the headlines next day! All the papers had the yarn and the letters to the editors waxed indignant and sarcastic for days thereafter, suggesting we tried some more worthy goal — say Everest. Tut! Tut!

Those newspaper sleuths got very hot on the trail and very nearly tabbed us: friends of ours received offers to spill the beans, but they held fast; they trailed Harris down in suspect, but he was

much too cunning for their tricks.

Next Jack Sheppard found a quarry with possibilities. Ten feet up on one wall a handhold came out and spoilt the first climb; fifteen feet up another wall one handhold and two footholds came out simultaneously — so did Sheppard. Laugh? It was the funniest thing out, and just as amusing was the indignant look he gave the pieces as he picked himself up!

All that was left to do was a vertical wall some fifty feet high and obviously impossible to ordinary methods. The first ten feet were ascended in free climbing, whence a crack led upwards, to an overhang, a bedding plane led horizontally right underneath it traversing a holdless wall for another ten feet. Therefore, Bang! Bang! Bang! Haul on the white! and so on. Six haken brought us within sight of a foothold, but time stopped further progress.

Meantime we had cast loving eyes on the wall behind the tennis courts in Avon Gorge, just where the suicides go over, nice and steep, fresh air all the way — you know? It was, however, far too public to tackle at ordinary times so we rose with the dawn, Jack Sheppard and I, and sallied forth with the hammer and nails. The route up the nose of the buttress was chosen as the ideal but it was barred at about eighty feet by masses of overhanging shattered blocks. As there were no holds and we had no liking for driving the nails behind loose blocks, we left it alone, traversing rope-assisted left then up a glorious groove pitch to a stance under an overhang. More banging and hauling and over the top to easier going and an exit on the summit. We left seven spikes for future use and also had employed a couple of handy quarrymen's irons. These iron bars surmounting a troublesome pitch are just like angels' heads.

On a second ascent a week later two of the spikes were dispensed with, and knocked out.

Meantime the quarry wall route had been pushed out to the

foothold, and up to the next bedding plane — eleven spikes in twenty-five feet. The next visit showed that it could actually be climbed for the next five, then a slim haken was driven carefully behind a treacherous looking flake and delicately used for a balance hold wherewith to mount the next mantelshelf, then, still with heart in mouth, another few feet higher to a bedding plane. Would it take a haken? Gingerly withdrawing hammer and holding the spike against it, the tip was inserted into the invisible crack overhead; but no, it would have none of it.

Leaving that one, another was inserted alongside, but fell out and was lost. (A "catcher" should have been used, a small snap ring on a line). Third time lucky, and just in time; as soon as it bit, the rope went over and was pulled tight while I rested. Refreshed, the rope was properly fixed with snap-ring and the hook driven well home. Further progress entailed rising up above the haken on desperately thin holds and hoping for the best, but it was beyond me.

A traverse to the left was just possible a little way below, still desperately thin. I had got nearly to the main crack again, when fingers began to give out. Would they last for the return journey? - Quick! - phew! - nearly off that time! The haken was reached again in the nick of time and completely done I fell on it and abseiled to the ground. These haken get you into devilish places, but they seem to get you out again.

There are still ten to fifteen feet to be done: who is going to do it? There are two ropes and thirteen mauerhaken to catch him if he falls, but if the top spike rips, the other twelve are a long way below!

# THE GENERATION GAP

AL EVANS

"Today the Fell and Rock is no longer the leading light in Lake District climbing. As a club it has failed to recruit the young influential climbers and its present age-structure gives cause for alarm."

Rob Matheson (F.R.C.C.)

"Lakeland Climbing in the Seventies"  
Mountain 54

Thus spoke Rob Matheson, himself probably the most able and influential of the F.R.C.C.'s contribution to the new wave of hard rock climbing at present in operation in the Lakes.

Matheson's fears could equally have been applied to the C.C. recruitment record as little as 18 months ago, at that time with perhaps one or two exceptions the C.C. had practically no climbers operating at a level consistent with the hard rock routes of the day. Consequently our contributions to climbing, in Wales in particular, were at an all time low with almost no prospect of improvement and in a situation which would make our own guide book credibility as low as the Fell and Rocks is fast becoming.

We had to produce a new Cloggy guide, it was sorely needed (no thanks to the C.C.) but who on earth did we have available to take on the task? In the end we took the (I think) unfortunate step of asking a non-member to write the guide. That Alec Sharp was not made a member until after he had completed the task is a reflection on the recruitment problems at that time. Alec had been making

major contributions at Cloggy, Gogarth and Llanberis for some time, that he was so late in joining the club showed a real fault in the system, that no present club member could undertake the job emphasised that point.

The committee realised that the situation was getting out of hand, no young hard climbers means no young hard climbers to propose friends who are other hard young climbers etc. It was decided that to make the club more attractive to these young 'stars' we should need to increase the numbers of club members who used the huts and climbed at the new standards. We should then have a snowballing effect.

Sharp, Fawcett and Gibb were all invited to join and elected. A continuous stream of up-and-coming young lads have since applied and been accepted. Peter Gomersall, Jim Moran, Jerry Frost, Andy Sharp and Steve Lewis are but a few of the young climbers already operating at the highest standards whose names you will hear much of in the future, from the ranks of these will come our next generation guide writers. Jill Lawrence and Elaine Upton, two of the leading female lead climbers also joined during this period.

An interesting side effect has been the re-awakened interest of the generation of top climbers that were missed in the C.C.—Tom Proctor, Geoff Birtles, Brian Wyvill and Ben Wintringham are just some of the recent members in this category.

So o.k., the C.C. is suddenly again bursting with talent but what is this "wind of change" that is happening at the hands of these young protagonists.

Well let's get this straight, despite this timely action our own precious Wales is still behind the "New Wave" Lake District climbing. This isn't really surprising since the Lakes re-emergence started earlier at the hands of a very competitive non-cohesive band of non-Fell and Rockers with a whole new approach. The details of this are documented elsewhere far better than I can record them but a brief look at the results will serve to illustrate my points.

So many routes, at such a high standard, have been climbed that it became obvious that the range was too wide for one extreme category. A very simple answer was to put the climb into an open ended system which began at around the old "standard extreme" category at E.1., this system is at present extended to E.5 which is the highest difficulty yet thought to have been achieved. To give you some idea of just how hard that must be, such old time Lakes desperates as Ichabod, Central Pillar, The Medlar, Extol and Post Mortem (free) barely scrape E.2. in the system. In Wales Vector (free) and Big Groove (free) indicate opposite ends of the E.2. category.

Already well accepted in the Lakes, this system is now being tried and tested by the new young breed of Welsh hardmen. Indeed it is very likely that the C.C. will overtake all opposition and be the first to use the new grading system in its guides. In fact few climbers as yet have had wide experience on the new desperates so initial gradings quite often require re-assessment but familiarity is rapidly increasing and climbs are falling into their true categories. Appended is a list of routes graded under the system which may help.

The Lake District climbers have not had it all their own way. Several C.C. members have made major contributions and repeats in the Lakes but at the time of writing the same level of competition has not developed on our own home ground. In fact both the Peak District and the South West (led by our own Pat Littlejohn) reflect the Lakeland "new wave" far more than does Wales.

This situation must change, and in fact is already starting as can be seen from our regional notes and new routes section. The next few years will be very interesting in Welsh climbing, we will see the establishment of new standards of difficulty and the smashing down of old reputations, the great thing is that the Climbers' Club will still be there at the head of it all.

## GRADED LIST

All routes, unless otherwise mentioned, are graded for a completely free ascent. Only routes of fairly accurately known status have been included as most of this year's horrors are as yet unknown quantities. The technical grades remain unchanged and are not repeated. All these routes should be well known so the location is taken for granted and not stated.

- E.1.** Cenotaph Corner, The Thing, Cromlech Girdle, Sickie, The Grooves, Zeta, Vember, Shrike, Troach, Woubits, Slanting Slab, Gogarth, Concrete Chimney, U.F.O., Creeping Lemma, Wasp, First Slip, Diadic.
- E.2.** Left Wall, Surplomb, Erosion Direct, Crucifix, November, Boldest, Jelly Roll, Daurigol, Big Groove, Rat Race, Winking Crack, The Moon. Extraction, Vector, Falcon.
- E.3.** The Skull, Lubianka, Silhouette, Medi, Woubits Left Hand, T. Rex, Graduation Ceremony, The Cow (1 pt. aid), Fingerlicker, Vulture, Vulcan, Cream, Neb Direct.
- E.4.** Great Wall, Positron, Ordinary Route, Zukator, Marathon Man, Resurrection (Llanberis).
- E.5.** Right Wall.



# THE CON MEN

PHILIP GORDON

We lounge at the bottom of Bosigran racked by indecision. Lying there with the gulls screaming, the surf pounding and the sun shining it is an effort to even think about climbing. To do something we hadn't done before would be satisfying but for me Bow Wall is the outstanding candidate and as I haven't climbed for some weeks (always a good excuse when fear raises its ugly head) a more modest venture is deemed necessary. Ian, always a fund of information, casually mentions that Pat Littlejohn has done pitch three of Suicide Wall free. Christ, I have always found that hard with pegs! But if we were to try that at least we would be on known ground — it seems the lesser of two evils.

The coal face is dealt with swiftly, I come across as last man, a position I feel to be most suitable. At the pinnacle the others puff away at their fags and contemplate the intimidating, steep, black wall that has to be crossed. Is it my imagination or did I, in my youth, dance across this pitch taking the low and more elegant line without so much as a peg for protection? Nowadays I make a beeline for that friendly peg in this inhospitable wall, clip in unashamedly and stretch, stretch, stretch until my fingers sneak over that horizontal crack. Then slap in the jams, muscle along leftwards and inelegantly ease myself onto the small stance.

But the others are both up, time to stop dreaming and follow. I'm beginning to "warm-up" now, even considering the next climb. Bow Wall perhaps? At the ledge a shock awaits me. Ian points out that he is well belayed and Glyn is tucked into a corner so it would simplify matters if I led this pitch. The plotters smile at me and sympathetically ask what I'd like in the way of gear. Looking at the problem in hand, wings seem to be the obvious request. I paw the rock with my hands and kick at it feebly with my P.A.'s.

There is incredibly little to use. Once again my mind goes back twelve years when from this position I stood on John Smoker's shoulders and finally his head to overcome this apparent holdlessness. I cast a crafty eye at Ian's head. It's a good head for standing on, plenty of friction and a good six feet from the ledge. But Ian is muttering about this bloody Littlejohn doing the pitch free and I gather that he is no giant.

A feldspar crystal for the left P.A., nothing for the right, a side pull for the left hand, a crystal for the right and I move up. There I stand poised in a position of considerable tension with the feeling that my one P.A. is adhering, but only just. I feel around with my right hand, surely nobody could pull upon that! Back to the ledge trembling slightly and shaking my tired fingers downwards. Up again, the move becomes no easier with practice. That bloody peg is leering at me, if I was allowed to touch it just briefly — two seconds would suffice. Legs atremble I turn to Ian. "Do you think maybe Pat used this peg for just a moment — lightly". The reply brings me back to the ledge. "If Pat said he did it free he did it FREE".

I am getting the feeling that I'm beaten. Excuses start to race through my mind, none of them very convincing. Right, one more attempt. Move quickly, try to ignore that tempting peg, another move. Christ the holds are getting smaller. Lock in a single finger jam, pull up painfully, bring my feet up to a thin bridging hold. What now? I could never reverse that lot. I am poised in a strength sapping position staring at the hair line crack before my eyes. Seconds go by while I wait for inspiration or for the crack to widen. Then Ian comes to my rescue, "A good hold high on your right." I'd forgotten that. I grab it but my hand is suffering from the abuse it received on the finger jam. My whole concentration is focussed on keeping that hand fastened to the rock. My fingers feel rubbery, are they going to hold? How embarrassing to fall when clutching a good jug. A couple of tense seconds and the battle is over, some strength returns to my right arm. A sigh of relief, a few relatively easy moves and I'm on the big ledge.

A wave of exhilaration sweeps over me. I belay and peer down at the others. "Actually, it's not too bad", I lie cheerfully but they're not convinced.

# A WINDOW ON MT. KENYA

BILL O'CONNOR

Ever since reading Bill Tilman's, "Snow on the Equator", I'd nurtured a longing to climb on Mt. Kenya. So when, in the summer of 1975, after a euphoric day spent on the North East face of the Badile, John Cleare suggested I join him and Ian Howell climbing in East Africa over Christmas, I jumped at the chance.

The idea of going to Africa to climb ice seemed bizarre, but paradoxically, the Dark Continent's finest collection of ice-routes are all but astride the Equator, on Mt. Kenya. The history of climbing on the mountain began with the traverse of the Diamond Glacier by Mackinder and his two alpine guides, Oliver and Bocherel in 1899, when they made the first ascent of Batian, the highest summit. Mackinder described the Diamond glacier as . . . "steep, so that our shoulders were close to it . . . each step requiring thirty blows with the axe". It was fifty years before another ice climb was done on the mountain.

By 1959 the last of Mt. Kenya's virgin ice masses, the Northey Glacier fell to the efforts of Mike Adam and Robert Chambers. Both were fit, having just climbed the beautiful West Face. Mike Adams wrote . . . "We were able to see the Northey Glacier, a horrible sight, the upper glaciers as overhanging ice-falls and the snow fields glinting with the steely hues of ice. It was absurdly steep and seemed to survive against all laws of nature between the plunging arms of the North and West Ridges".

It was not until the 70's and the advent of dropped-headed and curved ice climbing gear that climbers turned again to Mt. Kenya's

ice, and its many plummeting couloirs. It was an American, the assistant park warden, Phil Snyder who opened his mind and his eyes to the fine and major unclimbed ice lines on the mountain.

In 1971 he opened his account by making an ascent of the Diamond Couloir with Ian Howell. They climbed as far as the steep headwall and retreated. Snyder returned to complete the ascent with one of his park rangers, Thumbi.

The Couloir is undoubtedly the finest feature on Mt. Kenya, dominating as it does the South Face of the mountain, by dividing its twin summit in a single glittering slash.

The last few years have been the "Golden Age" of gully climbing on Mt. Kenya, with Phil Snyder picking most of the plums.

Seventy four years after Mackinder's ascent, the mountain revealed one of its most precious gems; the Hidden Couloir and the Diamond Glacier's "Ice-Window". The couloir is a narrow slither of ice, rising from the Lower Darwin Glacier and running more or less parallel and to the right of the Diamond Couloir, before it curves leftwards and butts against the vertical headwall it shares with that couloir, beneath the overhanging lip of the Diamond Glacier. As with the most of the modern ice routes on the mountain it was realised by Phil Snyder.

It was Ian Allen, one of Kenya's leading climbers, who got me interested in the Ice-Window Route. Over a beer in the friendly Mountain Club of Kenya in Nairobi, he said the Window must have one of the finest positions on the mountain. "Imagine having climbed the couloir as far as the headwall and finding a huge cave, with no way up and out. Imagine cutting a horizontal shaft through the hanging icicle curtain at the lip of the Diamond Couloir. Imagine the feeling of squeezing one's body through the hole, and the situation on the other side with the wilderness of the Diamond Couloir beneath your feet, and the relatively tame slope of the Diamond Glacier draped like a great white sheet from the

Gate of the Mists, six hundred feet above. This is the Ice-Window".

A few days later with Ian Howell, I leave Nairobi and drive up the mud road from Naro Moro en-route for Mt. Kenya. The road is cut through dense bamboo and high mountain jungle. We force the car as high up the track as we can delaying the moment of putting on boots and shouldering heavy sacks.

At the Met Station the road ends and a muddy track climbs up through dense jungle. There's no sign of the mountain, only an awareness of growing altitude beneath a canopy of tall Juniper and Ponticarpus. The trees thin and give way to the dreaded "vertical bog"; a nightmare of high-angled, ankle-twisting, water-logged peat and grass tussocks. Above the bog, an open moorland with outcrops of knobbly lava and the strange, sparsely scattered botanical freaks of Giant Groundsel and Lobelia Teleki.

We walk saying little, each adjusting to his own efforts; a heavy load, altitude and the shifting areas of discomfort; feet, shoulders, back. We sometimes speak of other mountains and climbs, shared friends and future plans. By late afternoon we cross a ridge and descend into the broad Teleki Valley, down a narrow path through a jungle of high groundsel. At dusk we cross a small stream, meandering along the valley floor, and stumble at last light, into Klarwells, a primitive wooden bothy.

The following dawn we push on to the foot of the Lower Darwin Glacier, but our hopes of the route fade with the lowering cloud and snowfall. We retreat to Two Tarn Hut (14,500 ft.), depressed. As Ian prepares the meal I clamber around the lake looking at the line of the West Face and the possibility of new things on the mountain and Pt. John. Tame rock, Hyrax play like Marmots around the hut and the ephemeral pink glow of evening is reflected in the still Tarn.

I find the pre-dawn breakfast hard to stomach and gulp the cold air as we leave the hut, to suppress nausea. We stumble

around the lake under a star saturated sky, and balance across the boulders of the moraine as we traverse under the south face. Our headtorches' shifting beams distort and cast strange shadows that confuse. We scramble up under the Diamond Couloir and move diagonally right up the snow cone of the Lower Darwin.

Unroped, we climb the couloir it shares with the standard South Face route, until a rock wall bars the way. The Darwin Direct goes out right from here. Our route breaks out left into a narrower couloir and the start of the Hidden Couloir proper. As dawn creeps down the mountain the continuation of the couloir is seen as a narrow channel rising in the series of vertical steps towards the Diamond Glacier and the Gate of the Mists, the col separating the twin summits of Mt. Kenya.

On the first ascent, Snyder was climbing with two Frenchmen, supposedly taking them up the South Face Route. Instead of breaking out right, however, he continued straight up into the Hidden Couloir and into the unknown. Surprised by "the quantum leap in voltage", the route takes at this point, Snyder continued until the way was barred at the cave below the Diamond Glacier. Unschooled in traditional climbing methods, he set about hacking a tunnel out of the cave until it emerged above the overhangs on the lower lip of the Glacier !

Ian and I swing leads up the narrowing couloir, 16000 ft. and going higher, a series of beautiful pitches, more typical of Scottish climbing than orthodox, big mountain ice. A stairway of vertical steps of hard blue-green ice set between granite walls offering perfect climbing.

I pass Ian, belayed to a good peg in the granite side-wall and follow an ice ramp to the other side of the gully. Above is twenty feet of vertical ice. A drive-in plates the surface, but holds. Terrors placed high and deep, I walk my points up towards my hands, trying to use ripples on the ice instead of kicking. Extract terrors and repeat, bridging out right to use holds on the rock, looking

down at the narrow cascade of ice below. Above, the angle eases and the rock wall offers another good belay.

The final pitch of the couloir cuts through the ridge separating it from the D'iamond and traverses beneath impending rock towards the vertical ice of the headwall. "Another quantum leap in voltage". Then a long run-out up steep ice leads to the "amazing cave" and its unique exit. I bring Ian up and we search for the "window". The movement of the glacier above and a rainy season's accumulation of snow has closed the window; it is now double glazed !

We take turns to hack at the hard green ice, cutting an almost horizontal tunnel, occasionally breaking through the outer-wall for unwanted views down the couloir. Our shaft gives way to another, smaller cave and tunnel at the end of which light shines through a thin semi-circular glaze; the original Ice-Window. Ian smashes through and tensions out above the headwall and on to the lower lip of the Diamond Glacier.

Whilst we had been inside the ice, burrowing, we hadn't noticed the build up of cloud or the snow that was falling. Now, with only six hundred feet to the Gate of the Mists I smash hammers in hard and kick deep into the moving river of spindrift. Unable to find an ice belay, I bury a Terror and call Ian on, the avalanche of snow building up between me and the ice as I wait. Four long unprotected rope-lengths in complete white-out and we reach the Gate. Still roped, we lead through, along the final rock ridge to the summit of Nelion, and the small bivvi shelter a short way down its east face, which was built by Ian some years ago. Inside the box we brew, talk and release built up tension with laughter. Tomorrow we can descend.

The Ice-Window will undoubtedly become the Classic modern ice route of Africa. Not so obvious as its famous neighbour the Diamond, the Hidden Couloir is a thinner ribbon of steely blue ice full of esoteric pleasure that climaxes in the unlikely experience of the Window. A truly unique climb.



# TIME TO CRY - "ICHABOD"?

MARJORIE ALLEN

A very familiar craggy face appeared over the top of a boulder. An even more familiar voice crackled through the mist shattering the air with jackdaw like intensity:-

"Hello, Hello, Hello —, which route are you two going for" ?

We were all planning on Ichabod but Scafell East Buttress was not inviting just then with an atmospheric humidity more appropriate to a London fog in November. Only the first twenty feet or so of the routes were visible. But the fever of competition soon got hold of us. Here was Ken Wilson "elbowing" us from the route with his verbal barrage and as it was important to save a reasonable amount of time and energy for the climb we conceded to this editorial giant (after all if we climbed on the route alongside him who knows what dramatic photographs he may come up with in the next Bumper Fun Book).

Why not seize this opportunity to enlist his support for my application for the Climbers' Club. Wasn't he the fellow who caused such a fuss and did such a public spirited thing as resign because women weren't acceptable — surely he'd write a supporting letter . . . . .

In the relatively commodious sentry box stance at the foot of Ichabod and Phoenix I felt the atmosphere was a little less humid, a little less hostile, in fact, in the intimate proximity of Ken's aromatic presence I naively made my request. Wilson never concedes that easily I've now realised on better (or worse) acquaint-

tance. He'd never miss such an opportunity for an inquisition and detailed analysis which would put any psychoanalyst to shame.

"Applying to the C.C. — Well, now — my philosophy is — support you with pleasure, providing you can prove to me that you really can GO IT ALONE — GET YOURSELF OUT OF A REAL EPIC FIX — Not lean on any man — Stand on your own two feet."

Christ, I thought, — here we go — Chauvinist Pig approach within the first two sentences. Poor fool, hasn't he heard that "every woman is a potential Napoleon with a possible empire in each man she meets" — NO man to "lean on" — no empire !

My mind whipped through cameo-like scenes of past alpine seasons. Surely, there was enough material here to give him a convincing picture of my competence. My imagination took off into orbit as I moved from crisis to crisis tasting the mountain "high" of the one who intuitively led the team through a maze of crevasses in white out conditions. At dawn dodging avalanches with split-second timing in that death-trap of a couloir when my companions had sworn it was only raked by Piano-sized blocks at 11 a.m. The only one with fingers thin enough to jam that overhanging crack on the crux pitch; light enough to risk hanging from that bootlace tied off from a bolt; agile enough to leap the void of a crevasse. Next morning, the only one with energy to arrange that diagonal abseil across a complex face — the rest debilitated with altitude sickness. The team finally staggering back into the hut (with the exception of C. T. Jones who'd been ignominiously dragged across the glacier by his ankles after passing out from the agony of parting with a kidney stone — from-we-all-know-where.)

Unfortunately, the cameo scenes were those of pure fantasy. My alpine seasons had been remarkably uneventful — indelibly printed in my mind as traumatic experiences but, no doubt, rather tame by Wilson's standards. He was unlikely to be impres-

sed with the pathetic near-misses I could recall.

— that avalanche on an ice-route in the Bregalia. As I froze in my tracks within inches of the avalanche groove — Bob (safely belayed) called “don’t move I want a photograph of this” I felt I was certainly about to “go it alone” — and with some velocity.

— that descent down a rotten rock face in the Pyrenees, all of 3,000 ft. of indescribable rot. As I leapt to one side the gendarme I’d been hugging only seconds before dropped below like a gigantic candle. No chance of leaning on any man there — we’d have dislodged the entire mountain. A situation which called for movements of feline stealth — one graphically described to us by a French climber “you move with extreme care as eef you ’ave placed an olive between zee cheeks”. The locals claimed we were the first to come off the face alive.

— those unexpected bivouacs from some combination of sheer fatigue, incompetence and lack of acclimatisation. My man, at risk of dying of exposure, needed me to lie on top of him to avoid a disastrous drop in temperature. And after all, I might just need his expertise the following morning to get me up that 5 Sup. pitch we had ahead of us before the summit. Score: one all, not much standing-on-my-own-two-feet material here. No use at all, when what I’d be needing was a bionic grip of those blue hand holds over that impossible looking overhang — and a snug rope.

— admittedly, I know that once in my life I’d had the opportunity to really savour the exhilaration of being in command — if that’s what you could call it on the vast vertical desert of the Olan when we’d avidly followed the guide book instructions (the one where you need to be smart at knowing the game of chess moves — when to move to the left and not the right; to realise that what is described as a couloir is really a crack and that the “highest” snowfield in 1975 is in fact non-existent in 1976). Those dubious instructions had led us into a stone fall couloir festooned with shreds of scalp sprouting black curly hair and other “petit morsels” of that aspirant guide who’d attempted to solo the route

the previous week. There may have been just five seconds between the bombardment of "bricks" that were tipped from the natural quarry above. I think I kept calm — or was it numb, or resigned to a similar fate to the guide when I spotted human spore prints on a natural terrace cutting across the entire face. Such an escape route was a gift from the Gods for any mountaineer. This qualified to me as a real epic fix alright with Mike's right hand out of commission from one of those stray bricks ricocheting from rock face to helmet to index finger. He felt faint from the steady flow of blood and deliriously insisted that we just sat down and waited for a helicopter. We'd have been suitable fodder for vultures by the time a helicopter had strayed to that remote region of the Alps.

I offered a synopsis of these incidents but evidently lacking the conviction to really cash in on the situation to reach the Women's Lib. currency that Ken aimed at wringing from me with Shylock tenacity. Each was demolished — not enough evidence, lacking autonomy, no real quality of leadership or the character forming stuff that men are made of.

"Intuition — you can't compete here", I said, (Once arrogantly defined as "what is intuition in a woman is but transparency in a man"). How often I had instinctively pointed out the correct descent ridge when my male companions were blundering about in fast-fading light, checking and re-checking compass bearings, never admitting to the futility of this when they were in a total white out devoid of any reference point. The peal of raucous laughter that followed this caused Wilson's leader to finally protest in a strong Aberdonian accent that he was not confident in making this crux move across the traverse with such little support below. He didn't reckon that parabolic loop of rope to the deck was adequate protection.

Meanwhile, I too, was called to order from above. My leader had reached the top of the first pitch and for once I was confronted with the attractive alternative of stepping on to rock to leave

this situation which had turned out to be far more stressful than I'd bargained for. If this fellow had resigned protesting in favour of women what formidable force he must have left in the front ranks. After all, I had only asked for a letter of support — not a gold medal in the art of survival.

Ken broke his brief silence after a curious survey of the steep crack I was about to launch myself at. "That looks desperate", he said. I looked around to see who had joined us using such a dulcet tone of voice, full of concern, almost paternal care. But no, there were only the two of us and did I recognise a hint of identification of anxiety on his part that this could be his next climb? "You'll never reach that jug up on the left, tell you what, how about combined tactics, — here's my shoulder".

..... he never did write that letter.

# ALPINE RETREATS

RON FAWCETT

Ten years ago the annual summer pilgrimage invariably led any keen climber to Chamonix, that den of iniquity where reputations are made, broken or arrested. The weather is notoriously fickle with an abundance of snow often falling in the wrong place at the wrong time.

However, recently the more adventurous amongst us have started visiting the pure rock climbing areas throughout Europe.

The Calanques, which are an area of limestone sea cliffs East of Marseilles on the Mediterranean coast have always been popular as an Alpine retreat. The centre of the area is Cassis, a French version of Bognor well endowed with cafes, yachts, supermarkets and the most enviable of French commodities, their girls. To the west of the town the area becomes more interesting, the girls become more daring, from merely bikini-clad in the town to completely starkers in the Calanques themselves.

Calanques means "inlet" or zawn and they epitomize perfection in sea cliff climbing, deep blue sea, golden beaches and rock man rock, vertical white limestone rising nearly 400ft. from the oggin. The best calanques in "Eu Vau", the south wall of which has some very striking vertical crack lines well equipped with pegs, if done without they provide some very exciting moments. The sea level traverses are also brilliant, technical moves on bulging limestone, if one gets tired, bored or hot just do a quick back flip and you're in, swim back. Oh, I forgot to say if you can't swim don't bother, take plenty of sun tan cream and water and you'll be o.k.

Nearer Chamonix, yet far enough away to be warmer and drier is the Vercours, another limestone area lying between Die and Grenoble. The valleys are idyllic greens and blues, the latter being extensive lavender fields grown to feed local bees who produce an exotic honey, the air perpetually scented by this, adding to the Eden like surroundings. On the other hand the crags are far from gently, soaring faces, huge prows and Dolomitic exposure make the routes memorable experiences. At the southern end of the range are many fine mountains, the better routes are to be found on the giants, Gerbier, Glandose and Rochers D'Archievre, the latter a sort of mini Roraima, vertical cliffs surrounding a lush plateau. The most impressive route here is the Paroi Rouge nearly 1000 ft. of overhanging rock sustained at VS/H.V.S. with the obligatory peg runners, starting half way up the mountain on a circuitous ledge the exposure is already slightly harrowing, instead of traversing in on this ledge it is better to do a route that finishes on here.

The other classic of the hill is the St. Pillar, a real gem that has had a good few British ascents, the guide mentions odd aid sections up to A3, take no notice. Pete Livesey and myself set off on the route at mid-day, our usual early alpine start, we were also too lazy to bother tying on. The first two or three hundred feet over stubby rock went easily up to a large flake-cum-pillar behind which it was necessary to struggle. I was just giving it the old gritstone udge when I came across a hole which was stuffed by two French who had been on the route since daybreak. My "Bonjour 'mon-sewer' " seemed to startle them somewhat,

"Ou est votre companion?"

"Oh!, il, est, um, eh, eh, ici".

Pete swam up, he was a little better with the lingo, they appeared quite concerned that we weren't tied together, he assured them that we had no brains as I stuffed my hands into the A3 crack above. It seemed quite airy hanging up there on rattling jams, the difficulties were short lived and we came out onto some superb Malham like limestone walls. The guide gives it as the crux, from the end of the ledge teeter across rightwards, a quick slip, visions of flying,

Peter went first on this section and tied on the end of a scratty length of rope we'd brought along in case of trouble (?), tied it in a loop through a ring peg and shot across the pitch, no trouble, I followed likewise with a little less finesse, delicate moves on small holds, it is handy to be able to turn the brain off at moments like these. The sun was moving higher so we followed it to the half way ledges where we changed places. Nice finger jams led us up an A1 crack, the sun was hot and our parched throats urged us to hurry, hands followed fingers, Pete wasn't keen on the wide jaws, his small hands hardly plugged the wedge cracks above. We were really flying now. Al Manson and Johnny Walker were not far above and we caught them up just below the final pitch. A1 and IV said the book, loose V.S. said Pete as he bridged his way and over the void, the exposure was electrifying but I was soon following him over the top on loose blocks and grass sods to the click of Pete's camera, we lazed in the sun. The first time for nearly 1,500 feet looking out over the high peaks of the Western Alps still plastered with their Winter snow, we were chuffed. John and Al arrived and we blundered through the hardy pine trees, E.B.'s aching sinking in the old snow drifts that we ravaged to ease our parched throats. The abseil descent was easier to find on second acquaintance but the scree run was just as bad, evening at the refuge, food, vino and the usual irate foreigners. Other routes to rave about are the "Pelle" on Mont Des Trois Becs a superb steep route up one of the most picturesque walls I have ever seen, Montague De Glandose has some brilliant lines too.

Further South towards the affluence of the Mediterranean lies a particularly impressive backwater, the Verdon Gorge, an area little frequented by British parties despite superb climbing and excellent Spring weather. Again it was left to the scourge of Bingley, Livesey and Sheard to explore the region. An Easter visit left a lasting impression so a return visit fortified with other Yorkshire vagabonds was on the cards.

Castellane is the largest town of the area, typically French with a square equipped with a fountain surrounded by cafes and over-



looked by a church on top of an impressive peak. To the south of here on the Nice road one is met by a very impressive peak, Montagne De Terron, a very steep triangular face cut by many superb lines, the S.E. pillar and the Grand Diedre are the best routes our team did. The latter was a real gem with some very steep work on good rock. The walk from the parking/camping spot is only ten minutes and the descent is equally leisurely but beware of Spring cactuses, they have a habit of grabbing unsuspecting short clad legs.

Back to Castellane the road winds West through the rim of the Grand Canyon De Verdon, the French answer to its American big brother, it is nearly a comparable sight set in desert like surroundings, desolate, with incessant Mediterranean sun reflecting off blinding white limestone.

There are many cheap (free) campsites in the vicinity, one we found was on the local football pitch that was equipped with the usual French "hover bag" and fresh water which can be quite scarce in this typical Karst region where streams have a nasty habit of disappearing. The only drawback with the site was that we were challenged by the local Eusebios against whom by sheer luck, dastardly deeds and Sheard's management we managed to hold our own, okay, so their goalie was only twelve.

The Gorge itself is some twelve miles in length through which it is possible to walk although some of the sections would tax even the most intrepid explorers, there are wire ladders, tunnels, boulder jumps and awkward route finding. The actual river that flows through the Gorge is a highly rated canoe trip that is even better on a lilo.

The crags themselves are a little difficult to locate on first acquaintance, except from the superb Paroi-De-Duc that dominates the Northern end of the Gorge. It is possible to drive to within fifteen minutes of the cliff, the only awkward section being crossing the river. There are only two routes on here at the moment, the

Grey Diedre, a nice looking T.D. sup. and the Voi Des Eurages given E.D. sup in 20 hours in the French guide. This seems a little on the generous side but it is definitely not a route to take lightly nearly 1000 feet of vertical rock with a gruelling descent from the summit, bushwacking through jungle back to the valley floor.

Further down the Gorge the footpath leads one through some impressive man-made tunnels out of which it is possible to peer through some giddy holes out of which one can also descend to the river. Above these tunnels is perhaps the best cliff in Verdon, Falaise de l'escalas, superb limestone rearing up, split by vertical cracks up which the French have banged and dangled. The routes have uninspiring names like Voie De Bananas and Lunar Bong but don't be misled, the climbing is brilliant, long jammlug pitches with peg runners when the going gets tough.

Notwithstanding the climbing, the Verdon has many attractions. I have already mentioned Castellane, the largest town in the area and the most popular with the tourists but it never gets as crowded as the other pre-Alp tourist centres. In the Gorge proper La-Palud is a small dusty village with the inevitable cafe often frequented by the jaded crag-rat after a day in the Gorge.

It is an area I would return to, not in the Summer but during Spring when the cream of the continentals head south to warm up their rusty limbs ready for the big Summer grip.

Further North back towards the land of fish and chips, mugs, of tea and sit down loos we find the Saussois, a crag quite popular with the English climber en route to the Alps. It is situated some 100 miles south of Paris near the town of Auxerre. It is the ultimate in roadside crags, peculiarly bulging limestone looking like a frozen 200 ft. wave bristling with little rust marks, the scourge of the Saussois, iron soldiers. The French have a peculiar way of scaling these impressive crags, they call it "free" climbing, I call it grabbing every peg in sight. It can be a very strange sight on first acquaintance to see some big booted Frenchman madly rushing from one peg to the next, seemingly oblivious to the lucid pockets

and large jugs which abound on even the steepest routes.

There are exceptions however, as everywhere the E.B. and resin brigade are fighting back using the pegs for runners producing some very fingery routes equal in standard to, and a lot more impressive than, stoney Middleton. I am not saying that these areas could in any way oust the Western High Alps but they are there as a bad weather alternative or for the family man who wants to alternate between a lazy time and a few accessible sites or for the Spring and Autumn climber who wants to climb and not be hampered by atrocious weather. Have fun.

# SLIDING THROUGH THE OBERLAND

SALLY WESTMACOTT

The trouble with the Oberland is that it consists of impossibly steep north faces, enormous glaciers which mainly flow south and fantastically long hut bashes. For these reasons we decided several years ago that the only really sensible way of exploring the area was on skis. As long ago as 1972 Colin Taylor, Mike and I drove out to Wengen in April with the rather hazy idea of just setting off on skis heading in an easterly direction. However, our plans, such as they were, rapidly changed with first of all too little snow and then suddenly, far too much. We fled to Zermatt and consoled ourselves with the Breithorn and the Cima di Jazzi.

Two years later a strong party headed by Colin and including Alan Wedgwood, Hamish Nicol and Jim Milledge crossed the Oberland, starting at Les Diablerets and finishing at Grimsel. They all felt afterwards that using the Jungfrauoch railway was ethically unsound and Colin said on a postcard to me "In fact I have decided that the true traverse is from Andermatt to Les Diablerets and this still remains to be done". Tragically he did not live to do it.

In 1975 Alan decided to continue with the plans and to reconnoitre some of the missing central links. Alan and Jan Wedgwood, Mike and Sarah Baker, Jim Milledge and I based ourselves on Leukerbad, planning to ski in a clockwise circle from there. We started off badly, discovering at the last moment at the vital Gemmi Pass lift was shut for repairs, so we had to take a bus round to Crans Montana to get started. We crossed to Kander-













steg, traversing the Wildstrubel on the first day, which was perhaps a bit hard on Mike Baker who had spent only four days in his life on skis. There was masses of snow that year and we were able to ski to within 3 kms of Kandersteg Station, descending the avalanche prone Innerueschinen Valley. We then cheated and took the train around to Grindelwald and on up to the Jongfraujoch, ski-ing down to Konkordia in a white-out. After a day of blizzard we crossed the Lotschenlucke and descended the Lotschental on fresh untracked snow, ski-ing into the centre of Blatten. From there we'd hoped to reach the vital link across to Leukerbad but the avalanche danger was so high we were strongly advised not to go. So we tamely finished up on public transport back to our base at Leukerbad.

This year we hoped at last to complete the traverse, starting as Colin had suggested from Andermatt and finishing at Les Diablerets. Two Wedgwoods, two Westmacotts and Jim Milledge took the train from Andermatt to Realp, where we started slowly plodding up the road, carrying our skis. We hadn't got very far when Alan noticed that the whole heel piece from one of his Rotomat bindings was missing. Luckily a car driven by two German lads was just about to descend in the Andermatt direction and so Alan went down with them to search for the missing bit or buy a new one. It was a Sunday so of course all the shops were closed, but luckily met Michael de Pret Roose who kindly lent him the missing part. He was back with us in under two hours having taken a taxi as far as possible up the road. After this rather shaky start the expedition got under way again, making for the Albert Heim hut. I then discovered that I had consigned my spare cables and ski repair kit round to Aigle along with my clean clothes. We couldn't do anything about this so simply pressed on, hoping that no repairs would be needed.

After a misty arrival at the hut, the weather cleared and we could see the col we were to cross next morning to the south east of the Galenstock. Later the next day, after cramponning down the steepish slope beyond the col and lowering the skis in a

bundle, we came to the conclusion that it must have been the wrong col, but at least it led down to the Furka Pass. We had checked this part of the route with a helpful and charming guide, Ernst Renner, before leaving Andermatt and he had suggested that after leaving Furka we should ascend the Rhone Glacier to the north, cross a second col and ski down the Nageligratli to the Grimsel Hospiz.

We had a very tiresome descent on breakable crust to Furka and as the weather was clouding up again, decided that discretion was the better part of valour. So instead of ascending the Rhone Glacier we skied down the road and eventually down the railway line to Gletsch, almost losing Jim en route when he took a header off a steep slope into the meadow below. A rather tired party decided to bivvy in Gletsch and leave the ascent to the Grimsel til the next day. With some difficulty we found a small shed to use, with an open fire in one corner. It was a choice of being kippered by the smoke or frozen with the door open, and we sat around the fire celebrating Mike's fifty-first birthday with brews of soup.

The next day we knew was going to be a hard one and after a cold and uncomfortable night, we walked most of the way up the the road to Grimsel, only putting on skis and harscheisen to cross some steep slopes near the top. Grimsel itself was deserted and a weary and very hot ascent from the Totensee led us past a small privately owned and locked-up hut to the start of some of the few minutes of down-hill skiing we were to have that day. Another section of up and a steep descent on mushy snow took us to the Oberaarsee Dam Restaurant, where a flag was flying and people were in residence. Hurrah — we could obviously spend the night here as Michael de Pret Roose had suggested.

Alas, it was not possible. We ate a late lunch and argued with the Italian workmen employed on the dam, but we were told we had to go on. Warily we plodded across the lake and up on the glacier beyond, and on, and on, and on . . . . . Ironically the weather was perfect with the sun blazing hot overhead. But as the

sun set, extreme heat changed to extreme cold and when we finally arrived at the Oberaarjoch hut at 9 p.m. in full moonlight some of us were suffering from incipient frostbite as well as exhaustion. We staggered up the ladder and found the hut open, warm and dry, recently vacated. What heaven just to be able to sit down and stop moving, all except Alan who was busily lighting fires and making soup, seemingly unaffected by the rigours of the fourteen hour day.

We still felt pretty shattered the following day and as the weather looked dubious and we were comfortably placed in one of the nicest huts in the Alps, decided to stay put. During the afternoon it started to snow and some young Swiss tourers arrived. They came from the opposite direction, which in winter is a shorter approach and were heading east, and they proved to be very congenial helping us to dig out the hut the next morning while it was still snowing. We all went out and skied in the new snow during the afternoon but the snow was disappointingly heavy and sticky. We had to keep reminding ourselves during this that we were really climbers who slid about on boards — our skiing standard compared badly with the Swiss who made elegant turns in the most difficult snow!

At last on Good Friday we set off towards the Finsteraar hut in beautiful weather. The views were fantastic but we found ourselves having to ski rope through a crevasse belt. I had once done this years ago and it is not to be recommended except with the very best of friends — we still remain on speaking terms! We dumped our packs near the Finsteraar hut and climbed the Weissnollen, an easy snow hump with a tremendous view. Without packs we really enjoyed ourselves on the way down and got quite experimental in the fresh snow.

Somehow beds and a good dinner were produced for us at the very full hut but we were not tempted to stay on because of the Easter crowds. We pushed off early next morning, crossing the Grunhornlucke and having an awkward descent to Konkordia,

again in breakable crust. Passing the Aletschorn we continued on up to the Lotschenlucke where it was just like Brighton beach. We counted about eighty skiers having lunch in groups before descending the Lotschental. One of the popular outings is to take the train up to the Jungfrauoch, ski down to Konkordia and walk up the easy glacier to the Hollandia hut and ski down to Blatten. I thought sadly of the solitude and beauty of this descent last year in powder snow — now it was an overcrowded piste, mushy snow near the bottom and finally a muddy trudge into Blatten, relieved only by the glorious fields of purple and white crocus outside the village.

Easter Day was a marvellous contrast. Using the lift system from Wiler to get started, we ascended to just below the Hockenhorn. We could now see why we had been advised not to use this route last year — we were crossing steep south-facing slopes in fairly precipitous country, all nervous of possible avalanches. Once on the little ridge behind the Klein Hocken horn we breathed a sigh of relief and then skied down a delightful broad shoulder to a small hut on the Lotschenpass where we ate our Easter lunch. This was wonderful country, unknown to any of us and completely deserted — I cheered up and really began to recover from the day before. We ascended to a second higher pass, the Gitzi-furge, under the south face of the Balmhorn and a wonderful run on spring snow led into the pinewoods above Leukerbad. We got some curious and faintly disapproving looks from the smart Easter crowds on their way to church. We were dismayed to find our usual bunkhouse full of holidaying children but we were saved from having to bivvy by a nice English woman who was staying in one of the oldest chalets in town. She invited us to stay and produced beds and a much needed bath and we all went out for an excellent dinner.

This year Gemmi Pass lift really was working and we carried a good picnic lunch up it the next day, which we consumed before skiing down to Schwarenbach. I had always wanted to stay there. The old hotel is on the track from Kandersteg to Leukerbad, one of the oldest routes in the Alps. We had a very friendly welcome

in English and stayed for two happy days, climbing the Balmhorn on the second day. This was superb; easy skinning up the glacier led to a steep headwall where we stopped being skiers and became climbers. We cramponned straight up it, over the first summit and onto the second higher summit where we could see our route of the previous day. We descended the south-west ridge passing a Swiss party, one of whom was carrying skis. None of us felt brave enough to ski the headwall, ever supposing we could have carried skis up in the first place! We looked at him with admiration and carried on back to our parked skis. The run down the glacier was out of this world. All of us wished it could have gone on forever and we were back at Schwarenbach by lunchtime, far too early.

The next day saw us back at the Gemmi Pass and now we continued almost due west passing fairly close to the Lammernhutte where we had stayed last year. We were now reversing some of last year's route, climbing up the Schneejoch at the eastern end of the Plaine Morte. We were hoping to get to the Wildstrubel hut but poor visibility followed by a vicious blizzard sent us scuttling into the lift above Crans Montana, along with hordes of piste skiers. We hopped off the lift half way down and ran across to the Violettes hut where we were welcomed by the friendly gardienne who remember us from last year.

She accompanied us the following morning across to the Wildstrubel hut — there was no doubt who was the fittest person around! She set off through the new snow like a steam engine, with us all paddling behind frantically trying to keep up. From the Wildstrubel hut we waved good-bye to her and let out whoops of delight when we found ourselves skiing down towards the Plan des Roses in the most perfect powder. However, part way down we noticed ominous looking black clouds building up again to the north and remembering yesterday's blizzard, and knowing that it was along way to the Wildhorn hut, decided to retreat back to the Wildstrubel hut. The weather deteriorated slowly though Jim, Mike and I went out again to ski in the powder — we couldn't resist it. The hut filled up gradually during the day and early the next

morning the weather was decidedly poor. Our plan had been originally to ski over the Wildhorn to Les Diablerets but it was by now obvious that we were going to have to concentrate on just getting out to Sion.

Alan had been studying the map and it seemed that there was a possible route out to the south via Anzere, though it was not marked as a ski route. A local boy had come up to the hut the day before from that direction and he confirmed this. In a brief interval when the snow stopped, we started off again towards the Plan des Roses. We noticed that the local lad was keeping us in sight, evidently not trusting our route finding abilities. We ran into extremely rotten snow interspersed with boulders and then came to a steep cliff path which we descended gingerly, carrying our skis. At the bottom in the fields, skis on again and we now followed the local boy unashamedly. The weather had really socked in with continuous snow and the route was incredibly intricate, through the woods, along snowed-up cliff roads with an alarming degree of exposure, only checked by some rickety looking iron railings. We eventually emerged on a tarmac road at the head of a dam, and we all knew that if we had not had local guidance we would have spent hours thrashing around in the woods far below. The local lad now parked his skis in a nearby shed, put on running shoes and disappeared saying he would send us a taxi. Sure enough, shortly after we had eaten a cold damp lunch and walked down the road a bit, a taxi drew up driven by the boy's uncle! How lucky we had been to meet the boy at the hut. We were driven down to the bus stop in pelting rain which continued solidly to Sion, Aigle and eventually Paris.

When we read in the papers two days later of the late snowfall which had trapped hundreds of skiers in huts and had caused avalanches throughout the Alps we consoled ourselves with the thought that we might not be the world's greatest skiers but that the accumulated mountaineering wisdom of the party (totalling just about 100 years) had at least told us when to run.

# EARLY DAYS AT TREMADOG

TREVOR JONES

I got to know the Tremadog cliffs in 1953 when the Birmingham Cave and Crag Club (of which I was a member) bought Pant Ifan, a traditional Welsh cottage on the plateau above the cliff of that name. We found the cottage on our first trip to the crags when we did a new route by mistake, a common occurrence at Tremadog in those days. I became even keener to go there at weekends after acquiring a Welsh girlfriend called Blodwyn, who worked in the gunpowder works at Penrhyndeudraeth. Her previous Welsh boyfriend had "blown" off the scene owing to an explosion at the factory and I got her on the rebound. The charms of Blodwyn were all very fine but were mainly nocturnal and I had to do something else during the day.

As the cliffs were almost completely untouched new routes became essential to maintain the interest so we set about doing some. Ray Handley tried to do Barbarian one wet day. He took a poor stance with a mediocre peg belay and when my wet P.A.'s slipped I hurtled past Ray, who was pulled off his stance although he managed to hold me. The peg bent completely over until the eye touched the rock and then grated outwards half an inch before mercifully stopping.

After every new route we used to have a celebration; on one occasion we decided to have a drink in every pub in Portmadog, thirteen there were I think. We just made it back to the hut, where there were some staid sober members seated at a table with a full bottle of whisky on it. I grabbed it and took several gulps. They neglected to tell me that it contained detergent. The bubbles, froth and pain were quite enough until a couple of hours later I also realised that detergent was also a laxative, causing symptoms which are far too disgusting to relate in a magazine as pure as this one.

In the middle fifties I got involved with the Rock and Ice and did new routes with one J. Brown. They used to make early starts

because Mortimer the apprentice was the mobile tea-making machine and had the quick method of sucking the condensed milk out of the tin and spitting it into each cup. Everyone knows that I fell off the first ascent of Vector before an admiring throng of 50,000 J. Brown hero-worshippers. I was ignominiously lowered to the ground amidst a whirring of cine-cameras, a climax to yet another Brown extravaganza.

Pete Crew and I made the second ascent of Tensor after several people had been gripped trying it. I had forgotten my climbing clothes and had to climb in my best suit and unfortunately ripped the trousers badly. This major crime had to be confessed to my wife on getting back to Manchester and this has resulted in a close examination whenever I put on my "bezzies" for signs of abseiling, gardening, resin or chalk. Any signs of these on or in suits cause a mandatory two-week silence.

I had done some sea cliff climbing during my National Service in 1949 when I was an R.A.F. officer, although not a gentleman. I was stationed for a short time at Valley on Anglesey where there were some practice cliffs with a standard set of hard routes. The hardest of them was called "The Wicked" which needed a sling and a special chockstone which was kept in the equipment stores which was signed for and drawn out before an ascent was made. I soloed the route without the chockstone and threw it away; an early example of reducing aid I suppose.

Many of my new routes were done with Harry Smith, a prehensile plasterer of enormous strength, who always climbed in a pair of decrepit curly-toed spog boots. He had a very good collection of firearms and when elated or full of the joys of spring would blast off a few dozen bullets at the nearest target. He taught me how to climb hard and to break through the magic XS barrier. We discovered that we could climb hard at Tremadog all winter and so were very fit for the following summer season. But always after the Alps or even the Himalayas we always went back to our quiet Tremadog crags, where we were the only people on them in those far off days, when I was very young.



# AN EXTRAORDINARY ORDINARY ROUTE

ALEC SHARP

Last summer my plan was to climb during the summer and then give up climbing so as to concentrate on my work since this was to be my final year at University, but towards the end of the holiday I became obsessed with the idea of a rising traverse across the steep central section of Gogarth Main Cliff. I had an idea of the line but half of it was unknown and perhaps impossible. Of the known half, the crux pitch of Positron would be the most difficult and impressive part. I had previously made the second ascent of Positron with Hank Pasquill, with one resting sling and I was determined that this time it would go free. The crux pitch of Positron is short, only about 60 feet of good climbing, but is fiercely impressive, the climbing being mainly on layways, and there is little protection. The only holds on the wall follow a diagonal line across the continually overhanging wall, and once the crux is done commitment is total, with no more runners for a long way.

Obviously the first thing was to get fit so we were out traversing on farm walls several times a week and after five weeks and five routes we felt ready. I went out with John Whittle and we started the route as for the traverse of Rat Race. After 25 feet of this there is a resting ledge with a shallow groove above and to the right, which a couple of years ago had a nut jammed in it, seducing many parties from the true line of Rat Race. The groove gave some strenuous climbing and a creaking block to think about before running out at a sort of ledge. The next few feet overhung considerably more than below, but reasonable holds enabled a position to be gained, from which progress appeared impossible, until a small fingerhold caught my attention. At full reach left, feet up high, I could reach it but it was not big enough for two hands. To make things worse, all the footholds became small over to the left and because of the angle of the rock it was hard to tell whether my feet would stay on them, but some careful footwork allowed me to shift my balance enough to change fingers one at a time, still in an overhanging position.

This was one of the hardest moves I'd made at Gogarth, and was ten feet out from my last runner. Again playing around with my feet I managed to reach up for better holds. John came up and launched himself at the crux but had to grab a long sling which I'd left for that purpose. That was all we did that day but next day he was very reluctant to go back out. Since I was obviously very keen he lent me his car and I went out with Chris Dale.

We traversed in to the belay below Rat Race's chimney and feeling apprehensive I set off on Positron but once climbing on overhanging rock, all fear evaporated. Step round the corner and clip into the protection peg. Beautiful solid layways and rapid movement lead to a second runner, just below the crux. You have to climb fast, no hesitating or you'll run out of strength before the end. I don't look down any further than my feet because the rock goes in and in and I'm way out over the sea on small holds, in the middle of an overhanging wall with nowhere to rest my fingers, but I'd rather not be reminded. The crux is very technical but the holds on the other side are a bit larger and you bomb up for a beautiful layway. A long stretch left with poor footholds had me quite worried, but I made it, then up to the overhang where I hung for a few minutes trying to get my third runner in. I climbed over the overhang and moved left into the steep corner of Dinosaur, then climbed down this for a few feet to take a hanging belay level with the overhang.

I had only clipped one rope in on that pitch so on the other I pulled across the camera and both hammer and the pegs. They came across well away from the rock. Chris came up beautifully while I took photos every few seconds, to his dismay. He had to rest on a sling so we chatted for a while and then he continued. Chris is quite short, so he was stretched on the move left but he made it with a great effort and joined me.

I led off again, along a ledge into the overhanging groove of Mammoth, and up over the bulge to a three-inch ledge, where we took a peg belay. This turned out to be the easiest pitch. The line into Citadel was glaringly obvious, the only line across a smooth and overhanging wall, and it turned out easier than we had expected, even having a semi-rest in the middle. Two tape runners were placed on the exposed traverse and at the end of this a hard move enabled me to reach better holds on Citadel. Having reached these, my tape runners lifted off, leaving Chris feeling rather isolated. I climbed the very steep crack of Citadel to a slab and

belay around the corner. By this time the weather looked foul and as Chris came up Citadel it started raining. Fortunately, Citadel is too steep to get wet so Chris was all right, but by the time he arrived our next pitch was soaking, and so was I, so we spent a scaring time escaping along the easiest way onto Cordon Bleu and then reversed this.

Back at University I was glancing through the Ogwen guide book and suddenly realised that before Gogarth could become a proper cliff it had to have an Ordinary Route, so we named it that, to the amusement of our friends.

We went back later to do the last pitch, a steep groove in the arête left of the belay. It turned out to be very hard and at one point I was just about to jump off but decided to put a runner in and be lowered off. I put one in and calmed down enough to find some more holds and continue up to easier ground. The final few feet were up a very overhanging crack, perfect size for hand-jamming, a lovely finish to an amazing route. Chris came up, finding it as hard as I had done, and we decided to give up climbing.

# CAN I JUST HAVE A QUICK LOOK AT YOUR GUIDE PAL?

GEOFF MILBURN

Eventually the rain stopped and with great reluctance, Jim (Moran) condescended to join us for Overlapping Wall. At the top of the first pitch we caught up another party who were at a standstill and deep in conversation. Having nodded affably at them we soon broke into their conversation in time to learn that they had done the first pitch of Unicorn (VS) in mistake for Wrinkle! The leader who had thought that it was a bit hard for the V.Diff. grade which he was used to then proceeded to attack Overlapping Wall, evidently trying to get back on route. To give him credit he got a long way up the pitch (MXS) before backing off, not because he couldn't do it but merely because he had begun to suspect that he was off route. Before abseiling off they even tried to escape up The Crevice but eventually decided that perhaps discretion might be the better part of valour.

Perhaps that was the reason why we were flogging away at the next guidebook.

A few days later George, who was armed with the James guide, raced away up the hillside to do Plexus. On returning he voiced his disappointment plaintively and made it clear that he didn't think such a grotty route was even worth one star. Twenty minutes of fierce arguing failed to move him and it was only when he started complaining about fighting through holly trees and ploughing up grassy terraces that the light dawned on us. He hadn't even got the correct buttress and from his final description he must have done a variation on Jubilee Climb.

Of course we all get lost at some time or other and one of my most vivid memories while doing guidebook work is that of the occasion when I was fool enough to go looking for Calluna on the west wing of the Mot. The name should have been sufficient to deter me but as it didn't the price had to be paid — an hour or so of grappling with overhanging jungle a tortuous descent down equally bad vegetation and a mangled new rope, after one of several falling blocks attacked it in a most vicious manner.

Who but a lunatic biologist such as myself would go looking for Botany Climb? Of all the Pass cliffs it was Rhaeadr which scared me most, but there is something special about it; it has a savage quality which can only be savoured on close acquaintance. Every route seems to give an epic battle and the long unprotected runouts get the space tugging at one's heels, especially when spray from the waterfall sweeps across the wall. At least the main face is tolerably clean whereas to its right the routes have been so little done that each ascent needs major gardening. While bridging the main groove of Botany Climb great sods came away in profusion and slid merrily down the pitch; is this what guide book writing is all about?

During 1976 the route checking seemed endless and we dashed about frantically trying to sort out each unknown or obscure area. In April we sweated our way up The Thing and had to retire to the shade of the Mot, whereas a year later Easter was so bad that the high winds which howled down the valley threatened to tear us from our holds on Flake Chimney (which should have been a pleasant Diff) on Dinas Bach. For several days we stuck it out knowing full well that Mike Mortimer working on the Tremadog guide was basking daily in eternal sunshine only a stone's throw away from us. Is there no justice? If only we had known what was in store for us later in the season we would probably have packed up there and then and gone back to hibernate in the Peak.

While writing the Historical section of the guide it had struck me that apart from the Right Wall saga there was little to get excited about and the valley seemed in dire need of a shot in the arm to get things going again. Obviously a few good new routes would help things but what was needed was a really juicy controversial issue which would rouse some interest. The new wave of free climbing had hardly touched the Welsh scene and at Gogarth for example the total number of aid moves had only been cut down from an initial 217 to about 80. Even the new Cloggy guide had over 80 aid points. Surely if free climbing is the name of the game then guides should miss out routes with aid? A bit too extreme a view perhaps but it really could work for Llanberis Pass. The original 200 points of aid had already been cut down considerably and a "Free the Pass" campaign might just succeed. Crag magazine (thanks Al!) entered into the spirit of things and kept the climbing world well informed throughout the season as the pace hotted up. The main targets had to be the four aid routes: Nexus Direct, Sexus, The Grinder and most important of all the

"suspect" Black Mamba, whose description irritated me every time I picked up the last guide.

Over on the Mot a team strolled by and a climber unwittingly asked if he could have a quick look at my guidebook. Little did he know what a shock he was about to get: as soon as he flipped through it his eyes shot out on stalks. Every page was virtually obliterated with crossings out, cryptic comments, symbols and strange hyroglyphics in a variety of bold colours. He must have finished up more confused than when he started out, much to our delight.

Our first target was The Grinder, which needed a good brushing to remove the top layer of powdery lichen. Jim didn't take long to dispose of the point of aid on the second pitch but the main roof seemed too intimidating at first sight and so we escaped up Plexus to have a look at the Nexus Direct Finish. Jim brushed it off despite not liking the idea of doing it without some positive protection and undoubtedly the brushing stood the successful team in good stead.

When news filtered through that Dave Hollows had freed the roof pitch of Sexus people could hardly believe it, but he is a strong lad and this ascent triggered off a new onslaught. Two days later Dave and Jim took Black Mamba by storm and having freed it of its aid immediately set the stage for some dubious publicity. Renaming of routes which had split opinion in the Peak had not so far reached Wales. The ace insult was finally conjured up by Gabe Regan when he suggested "Times Past" as a possible name. It was a pity really as Black Mamba was, after all, a good name, but the chance of stirring things up was just too good to miss and Jim luckily aided and abetted the diabolical plan. Ken Wilson of course hit the roof and began inciting the crowd to violently oppose such a suggestion but after a few members of the establishment such as J.P. and M.A.B. gave Jim some support, Ken was temporarily out-manouevered and an uneasy truce was declared for the time being.

Two routes which hit the headlines at an early stage were Quasar, Jim's test piece on the Grochan which repelled quite a few leaders and Alec Sharp's Zangorilla. Much to my annoyance, Alec undergraded the latter route and promptly departed for America saying that he was leaving a route to sort them all out and give them something to think about.

Of all the young leaders who were operating, it was Dave Roberts who impressed me most and not surprisingly it was he who hit the headlines with his free ascent of the vicious Nexus Direct Finish, which had so far scared off all comers since Crew first raped it with pitons. Dave went on to beat us to Mole Direct, which gave the lads a great pitch in its free state; a real candle snuffer with crutch-splitting bridging nearly all the way. The day before the weather broke (July 16th!) we excavated extensively to the left of Gollum for a first pitch and a sneaky wind lifted the streams of dry earth until my eyes were choked up and blurred vision put an end to further cleaning. Above Mole Direct, Jim broke out left onto the arête and finished off The Molehill on sight. That night the heavens opened to clean our route and the bad weather stuck in earnest.

Over the next few days we had a few sorties out during the less damp spells and Jim not only freed Jawbone but beat a fast approaching storm when he eliminated the aid on The Toad, a route about which rumours had circulated for many years. After a slick and confident free ascent who cared whether it originally had one or two points of aid.

A new route which gave me a great deal of pleasure was Curfew, the arête left of Sabre Cut. Why was it left untouched for so many years? Dave Roberts nearly grabbed it but failed when he concentrated on the wall to the right of the arête. He did, however, snatch S.S. Special, the initials of which stand for "Seat Sniffers". The latter derogatory meaning was aimed at the locals who gave Paul Williams and Jim a bad time when they first started to use chalk on the local Welsh scene. In the Pad I prevailed on Dave to tone it down a bit and happily he soon agreed.

In August a howl of disbelief went up when Martin Crook claimed an ascent of a new Extreme route on the Wastad. Claimed as an on-sight solo it would if true have really been something. Unfortunately there were no witnesses and the critics insisted that Martin always liked his protection above his head! Luckily John Harwood solved my problem by pointing out that he had in fact done the route and treated it as a mere variation some years before.

The biggest laugh of the guide was the Graded List of Climbs and I took great delight in hawking it around and watching the sparks fly. Mike Mortimer got the last laugh however on a sunny

morning outside Ynys. About a dozen of the lads were arguing like mad about the order of the harder Extremes when Mike burst onto the scene like a tornado. "Where's that bloody Milburn character? What's all this graded list nonsense? The Parson's Nose (D) is **miles** harder than Flying Buttress (D)." Collapse of everyone in all directions, giggling like idiots. Mike had mischievously chosen the two easiest routes on the list.

In October we went down for a last attack and added Runnymede to Groper Buttress. Under foul conditions the arête seemed vicious and serious and we graded it highly without hesitation. Later the locals approached it in trepidation thinking that it was one of Jim's horrors. When they got up easily they gave us some light-hearted stick in the pub, but at least it gave Smiler's ego a boost.

On the 28th October, Dick Sykes, the retiring custodian of Ynys joined us on the Wastad as he was short of a climbing companion. He seemed mildly surprised when Jim wasn't bothering to garden the first pitch up the lethally loose Red Rock. He was utterly astonished however when Jim plummeted earthwards alongside a few rampant lumps of rock, but calmly took this as part of the new scene and soon followed Jim up sedately with slow and methodical moves. He wasn't quite into things however as he kept creeping from hold to hold and it was left to me to throw them all off when I went up as third man. Yet again, once the route was under the belt the weather struck with renewed vigour soaking the whole valley from end to end.

Next morning as I watched the horizontal belt of rain sweep majestically down the Pass I listened to the weather forecast. "The light rain on the east coast will give way to heavier rain in the west, while along the Welsh coast and in the mountains it will be torrential. Light easterly winds will give way to gale force winds on the west coast and even storm force winds in the mountains". At that moment, with a tremendous whooshing noise, the stout holly was bent double and we quickly turned the car for home. Later, in Climber and Rambler, I read in the Livesey column that, "A remarkable period of weather in late October saw people climbing in T-shirts and shorts on Cloggy in some of the hottest sun of the year". Could this really be the same Wales? Could it possibly be that Pete, that man of many "talents", has now learnt how to bring about localised changes in the weather? Damn the man, I knew that his ethics were suspect after all!



And so the year came to an incredibly wet and windy finish and it was at last possible to sit at home with the typewriter — the place where all good guides are written. Only a fool would actually go off climbing.

### NO COMMENT!

The following uncensored material came to light amongst the debris left over from the 1976 Journal.

The Ten Hardest Routes in Wales — This is for the C.C. Journal — a mischievous little exercise to get everyone seething into their pints. Please sort out ten routes and arrange them into the order you think correct. They are already roughly in order.

Right Wall (Dinas Cromlech), Ordinary Route (Gogarth), Great Wall (Cloggy), Zukator (Tremadog), Resurrection (Dinas Cromlech), Positron (Gogarth), Citadel (Gogarth), Fingerlicker (Tremadog), Vulture (Tremadog), Great Wall (Forwen), Great Arete (Llech Ddu), The Skull (Cyrn Las), Woubits Left Hand (Cloggy), Pagan and The Moon (Gogarth).

Add any routes which you think should be included. This list is being sent to a panel of "experts" and a consensus will presumably emerge to get everyone huffing and puffing for years.

# OBITUARY

DON MORRISON

1929-1977

Don Morrison is dead, he lost his life on the Latok glacier in the Karakoram at midnight on the 22nd of June, 1977. His body was irrecoverable, although several attempts were made by Tony Riley and two Pakistani Liaison Officers. At the time Don was leading his third expedition to this area, his first two expeditions to the Ogre had been thwarted by porter strikes. Latok 2 was to be his last expedition. A cairn was built to his memory by expedition members at the bifurcation of the Latok glacier and the Urzan Braak glacier commanding a magnificent view of the south west face of Latok 2 and the south face of the Ogre.

It was during his National Service in the R.A.F. that Don started climbing in the mountains of Turkey, since then he has climbed in various parts of the world. He lived for a while in Canada and was a mountain guide for the Canadian Climbing Club. Over the years he has done many routes in the Alps and has for the past few years run a climbing school in Zermatt.

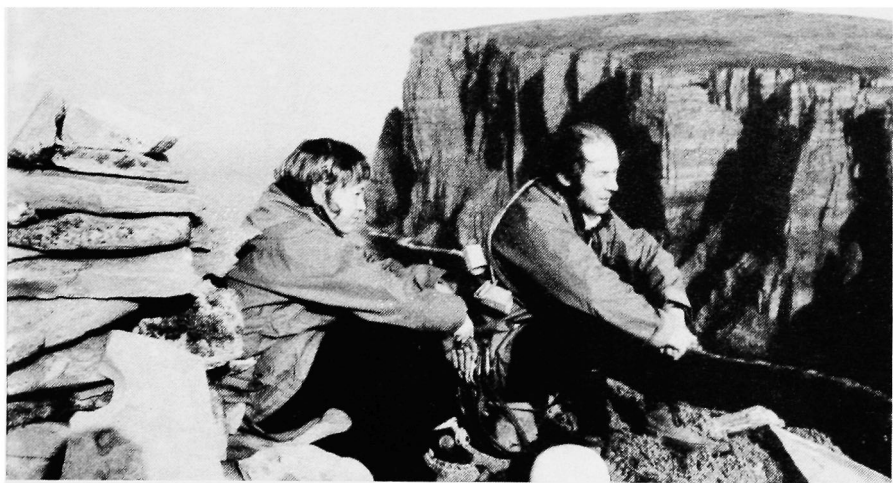
Don has been a member of the Climbers' Club for a long time during which he was custodian of the Bob Downes Hut near Froggatt in Derbyshire. He was a well known and popular figure in Derbyshire and did quite a few first ascents in the 60's as well as helping with the Stanage Guide. In recent years he has sponsored the Edale fell race now known as the Don Morrison Sky Line Race.

Don was a successful business man, being a builder by trade and recently opening two climbing equipment shops, one in Sheffield and a later one in Liverpool; he leaves behind a wife and three children, his wife Pam is to keep the shops running.

Although Don is dead, his memory will live on and he will be dearly missed by his climbing companions. On behalf of the Latok team and climbers everywhere, I bid Don Morrison a last farewell.

Patrick L. Fearnough.

Note: Since writing this obituary Pat Fearnough has himself been killed in a climbing accident. An obituary will appear in the next issue of the Journal.



Don Morrison with his son Robert (aged 14)  
on the Old Man of Hoy.



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# SUB-EDITORIAL

"Slap the whole lot together", the man said "and lets get the darned thing out". This was hardly the slick approach of the dedicated and dynamic club enthusiast who we had all got to know so well, but after all this was January, 1979 and the gestating 1977 Journal was by recent C.C. standards only "just" a bit overdue and was in imminent danger of aborting completely.

Luckily it was the printer who acted as a catalyst and kick-started the somewhat weak C.C. engine into life when he casually pointed out that some of the early journal proofs had been lying about his office for some months. Did we still want them?

Despite having already done the bulk of the initial spadework, the Editor was unfortunately unable to carry the work through to completion owing to unforeseen circumstances. When he eventually had to give up the task, almost with the end in view, no one offered to take his place and time just rolled on by without anything positive happening.

The Publications Sub-Committee, who to a man felt strongly on the matter, agreed that they ought to be more actively involved with the Journal, especially as the guide book machine is thankfully now running smoothly, and subsequently at the January, 1979 meeting they agreed to take on the responsibility of publishing an annual (that's original!) Journal on a more formal basis. It was obvious to all that it is not fair to allow any one person to shoulder the full responsibility without a back-up team who can help if things start to get tough.

The Committee had also come to the same decision and Paul Nunn has agreed to occupy the hot seat and take on the job as Editor, starting with the 1978 Journal. This will be published (famous last words!) late in 1979. Paul will have the support of the now very active P.S.C. to make certain that come hell or high water (Gogarth level even) the Journal will roll off the presses.

In the meantime it has been decided that the material which has already been collected for the 1977 Journal should be sorted out and sent to the printer without delay. Obviously some of the material will look slightly dated when read in 1979 but we hope that members will look at it in the context of 1977 and not be too critical. Hopefully when read in years to come, the Journal will not look out of place when read as one of a series.

Inevitably, certain sections have not been given the full treatment, but normal service will be resumed in the next issue and the message which is going out loud and clear is that the show must go on.

Despite several successful expeditions abroad, the main shock was the news that Don Morrison, well known Peak District expert for many years, had tragically been killed during the Yorkshire Expedition to the Latok group of the Karakorum. It seems somewhat uncanny writing these notes in retrospect knowing full well that Pat Fearnough who wrote the obituary for Don was himself killed (but that is next year's news). The tragic loss will be felt by the club for a long time.

The good news of 1977 was that after publishing several new guidebooks in 1976, work was in full swing for several more publications — this was despite the atrocious summer weather which had to be experienced to be believed. In addition to the new Bosigran guide the two new "double" guides were coming along well. The Llanberis Pass guide was starting to gel and it was a race as to whether or not it would be ready to go to the printer before the Tremadog and the Moelwyns guide. Several more guidebook amalgamations are planned which should give the club some good publicity and stave off any competition from Selected Climbs guides.

Summing up 1977, one could confidently predict without any fear of being wrong that 1978 was going to be an exciting year for the club. Just wait for the next action packed issue of the Journal.

Geoff Milburn, 1979

## CORRESPONDENCE

Sir,

**Snowdon**

It is time some serious and really deep thinking was devoted to the problem of Y Wyddfa, and I have just emerged from a long period of contemplation. Snowdon must be declared a Holy Mountain.

Everything which at present troubles the conservers, protectors, exploiters, developers, philistines and aesthetes, will at once be settled. The Mountain will be closed and the restaurant at the summit turned into a non-sectarian rest house in the charge of a Resident Hermit, I. McNaught-Davis. He will dispense water and rye bread without charge, to such pilgrims, compulsorily barefooted, who complete the ascent. Suitably placed Offertory Boxes will not only reimburse the Hermit, but provide adequate compensation for the proprietors and staff of the existing restaurant. A Nunnery should be established at the Half Way House, in care of Mother Audrey Salkeld, and from her Gateway, Pilgrim Trains for the Elderly may be run at suitable intervals. No motor cars will be permitted in any circumstances, within three miles of the Mountain approaches.

Finally, Sir, the necessarily stringent regulations might be relaxed a trifle, (sand shoes, galoshes, raincoats), on not more than five Grand Feasts; Lord Hunt's Birthday, The Lassitude of Mr. Joseph Brown, (A Double of the First Class with Octave), the Elevation of Sir Jack Longland. I am Sir, your Obedient Servant,

Kevin Fitzgerald

# REVIEW

**Recent Developments** by Steve Bancroft

B.M.C. £1.00

Few guidebooks in recent years have provoked the interest and controversy that was caused by this action-packed volume, even before its publication.

Rumours of horrific undergrading were rife; young inexperienced climbers were to be slaughtered in their thousands attempting Derbyshire V.Diffs that were in reality Welsh HXS. The B.M.C. guidebook committee were criticised heavily for allowing Bancroft to produce a run-away ego trip for himself and his friends. The adverse publicity so frightened the committee that they issued a warning about the gradings in the front of the guide, a strange and unfortunate precedent for a guidebook publisher to make.

The guide has now been out for several months and it is a good time to take stock and see just how much of the criticism is justified and if the guide has any good points.

As an active and long serving Peak District climber any new guide to the area comes as a shot in the arm, the new possibilities unveiled offer a whole new inspiration. This latest offering is a concentration of all the best new goodies throughout the area, and at £1.00 a throw is unbeatable value by today's inflationary standards, an absolute must for any Peak District regular who climbs VS and above.

The descriptions are concise and accurate, amazingly so for this type of guide and Steve deserves high praise for his thoroughness and all the research and effort he has put into making it so. The layout, etc. is just as good as it should be considering the state of the art and it is probably about as robust as an interim guide needs to be. As a bonus, two new crags are included, Chee Tor East Buttress and New Mills Torrs and also the guides to John Henry Quarry and Brockholes Quarry are completely re-written, although I'm not sure why, as the original guidebook offering is perfectly adequate and a mention of the new routes would have sufficed.

The selection of climbs is not definite and the decision as to whether or not to include a route was more or less left to Steve, with suggestions from the various area editors being considered. There are quibbles here, as with the star system and I think that Steve's undoubted personal preference for gritstone has inevitably shown through at the expense of a number of excellent limestone routes.

I can now put it off no longer and must get round to discussing the criticisms leveled at this guide. Ken Wilson went so far as to state in 'Mountain' that, "The gradings are so ludicrously depressed that it will be necessary to spend a winter on climbing walls in order to get up ordinary Peak VS climbs in future".

As a reasonably average performer (At what though? — Sub Ed.) with a foot in either camp so to speak, and having given the guide a fairly extensive use since (and before!) its publication, I feel reasonably qualified



to make a judgement based on experience of Steve's system rather than hearsay.

The most important and often overlooked factor in the debate is a statement in Steve's 'Technical Notes Section': "The technical grade is an attempt at an objective assessment of the difficulty of the hardest move on the relevant pitch, regardless of other factors (exposure, poor protection, loose rock, sustainedness, etc.)."

Using this criterion, Steve's technical grades are just about spot on, perhaps very fractionally harder than the C.C. Welsh equivalents move for move. His adjectival grades are quite acceptable taking into account that Peak grades are traditionally about half a standard up on Wales and the Lakes, though I do feel that maybe a few of the more serious propositions (e.g. Hairless Heart) could have merited something more than the ordinary XS grade. After all, grades are supposed to be for on-sight leads and several routes haven't yet had any!

The key to the problem in his technical grades is his exclusion of sustainedness as a factor involved. I would (and have!) contest that the ability to rest and the ability to work out technical moves fast is in fact a 'technical' skill and therefore the need to use such skills, i.e. on a sustained pitch, should be incorporated into the technical pitch grade. Steve disputes this in his system and merely grades the single hardest move; within this limitation his grades are probably accurate.

Unfortunately, under Steve's system a climber could rest on slings and still claim to have done a technically 6a pitch; under a system where sustainedness is a factor, his ascent would be patently invalid.

In fact, due to the anomalies in Steve's system, climbs which are not sustained end up being graded the same under both systems, e.g. a route with one 5a move would be a 5a under both systems. One with ten strenuous 5a moves would still be a 5a under Steve's system, whereas it would be 5b or even 5c under the C.C. Welsh system. Fingerlicker at Tremadog is a good illustration; no move is harder than 5a so under Steve's system it is 5a, but in the C.C. guide it is a good 5c.

In actual practice in the guide what this has meant is that most of the VS and HVS routes and some Extremes that are not too sustained are all quite reasonably graded. On the other hand, any with sustained difficulty (e.g. London Wall) seem desperately undergraded to climbers brought up on the Welsh C.C. system. The problem is one of alternative systems rather than mis-grading and it is a problem that must be resolved in the future. It will be necessary for guide writers to specify just what they mean by a technical grade until this discrepancy is resolved. Steve has stated his application of the system, it is the same as Crew's was when he introduced the system in his Cloggy guide. However, it would appear that Crew and Bancroft's application is dated as the majority of guidebook writers prefer to include sustainedness and this may be a result of the super-sustainedness of some modern routes.

It seems a shame that so few people have given this valuable guide the praise it deserves and instead a subtle difference in what is after all merely an addition to the established grading system has caused so much criticism.

Al Evans

# NEW CLIMBS & NOTES

## **The Yorkshire Karakoram Expedition, 1977**

This expedition attempted Latok 2 (23,340 ft) by the West Ridge, a route previously attempted by the Japanese in 1975. Originally planned as a four man expedition consisting of Don Morrison, Pat Fearnough, Pat Green and Paul Nunn, it was expanded to include Tony Riley who came along as climber and film maker.

It was Don's third expedition to the upper Biafo area and the result of his repeated attempts to climb the Ogre. Earlier expeditions in 1971 and 1975 had climbed minor summits but failed to reach the Ogre from the north. Latok 2 was second choice when permission was granted to another British expedition to attempt the Ogre in 1977.

The expedition reached Skardu on May 23rd and established Base Camp on June 1st near the junction of the Uzun Brakk and the unnamed (Latok 2) glacier. Further camps were established below the slopes leading to the West Ridge Col and after delay with bad weather, upon the west and east ends of that col by June 20th. The steep step at the base of the ridge was climbed by Nunn, Green and Fearnough in the next two days. As support from below, which had been expected did not materialize, Fearnough returned to Base Camp to find that Don had been killed on June 22nd in a midnight fall into a crevasse. He had been moving up with Tony Riley to join the push up the ridge, bringing a considerable load of additional supplies. Frozen conditions had allowed rapid unroped progress up the path below Camp 1. When Don attempted to cross a snow bridge to one side of a crevasse, he fell through and could not be contacted or reached despite long efforts by Tony Riley in the following hours and next day.

Nunn and Green pressed on in ignorance on the ridge until forced to retire by lack of supplies on June 26th. They met the other two climbers in the couloir leading to the col and the whole party withdrew from the mountain, eventually reaching Skardu on July 10th.

The high point reached may be that achieved on the previous attempt. It appears that the Japanese may have tried the mountain twice, for their fixed ropes are manifestly of two widely differing ages. It also appears that the earlier attempt may have gone higher than the one made later. From the long mid-slope of the West Ridge there remains a great deal of difficult climbing in the upper sections, a combination of steep rock and ice and gendarme formations for about 2,000 ft.

Don Morrison had played a leading part in the early re-opening of this area in 1971 and 1975. Though he ascended two mountains west of the

Biafo in past expeditions, it is particularly tragic that he died in a strong attempt upon a major Biafo peak which would, if successful, have largely compensated for the deep disappointment he experienced in failing to secure permission to attempt the Ogre which had been his prime ambition in recent years.

Technical Data:

Porters: 25 Askole-Base  
10 Base-Dusso

There were numerous problems resultant upon precedents of overpayment and uniquely short stages, even for the Karakoram, both largely generated by Japanese and to some degree American expeditions. Equipment and food — 500kg.  
Cost — £6,000.

Paul Nunn

MAYOH CLIMBING BOOK 26  
**The British Barnaj Expedition, 1977**

Jim Curran, Amargeet Singh Chabbewal, John Escott, Paul Nunn, Geoff Smith, Geoff Tier, Rick Walters, Bob Toogood.

The expedition attempted Barnaj 2 (20,800 ft.), an unclimbed mountain in the Padar region of Jammu-Kashmir, close to the Ladakh border. Geoff Tier, Jim Smith and Bob Toogood travelled overland between August 1st and 20th to Delhi with the equipment. The expedition assembled in Kishtwar by August 27th. Between August 29th and September 2nd, the equipment was moved by mule to Machail (supposed 9,900 ft), accompanied by Geoff Smith and myself.

Geoff Smith and I travelled about forty miles in a round trip to explore the eastern approach to Barnaj 2 via the 16,600 foot Hagshu La, a pass into Ladakh. The pass was reached on September 4th in good weather and we were able to see Barnaj 2. It was still several miles distant and the eastern approach was unlikely to be easy with porters. In any case, there was a risk of being snowed in beyond the pass without an easy way out as deep snow is not unusual in September. Thus we plumped for the west approach to the mountain and returned to Machail on September 5th.

The expedition was now fully assembled. After some delay our liaison officer had at last arrived and allowed Geoff Tier and the rest of the party to come to Machail. After a day of Hindu festival and repacking, all of us, with the exception of John, who had badly swollen feet, set off up the Barnaj Nal on September 7th. Geoff Smith and I went on and reached the glacier snout in rain after six hours walk. Leaving all equipment we then explored both banks of the glacier and in gathering gloom found a good base camp site. Benighted on the way back we were greatly helped by Geoff Tier's torch flashes. Base Camp was established on September 8th, and I went about half way up to the eventual Camp 1. Bad weather discouraged the porters next day and most would not come to Base Camp. Large bear tracks all around Base may have provided another reason for their doubts. In atrocious weather we spent the next three days with three porters ferrying loads to Base. Even they eventu-

ally decided that it was too cold and snowy and went down, but another three appeared later and moved up more food and equipment.

A clearance on September 12th allowed six of us to break trail up the glacier to Camp 1 and dump gear on the snow plateau above, but we were driven down by another three-day storm as an alternative to consuming supplies which had been carried there so painfully. On September 16th, another clearance allowed the two Geoffs to re-open the path to Camp 1 and with Jim and myself they spent the rest of the day digging out the tents which (unsurprisingly) had all been flattened by a few feet of snow. In the next two days we crossed the snow plateau, climbed an avalanche swept couloir and fixed rope up to its top at about 18,000 ft. Climbing equipment and fuel were dumped at the high point and in a safe cache below. On September 18th, in very snowy weather, Rick and Amargeet carried large loads of food and fuel in support to Camp 1 so that we now had very ample supplies for an extended stay at altitude. The following day the weather was worse, but after a hard frost, the two Geoffs, Jim and myself set off on the 20th with heavy loads to set up Camp 2, just under the South ridge of the fore-summit of the mountain at 18,600 ft. By this time Bob, continually ill since Rawlpindi with a form of dysentery, had decided to call it a day after making great efforts on September 16th. He weighed barely seven stones on reaching England two weeks later. John Escott too had troubles acclimatising and some body swelling. Thus there were four climbers on the mountain and two keeping the supplies route to Camp 1.

After establishing Camp 2 on a serac knoll which gave a little protection from serious avalanche-prone slopes, we tried to climb to the ridge and move up all our food and equipment into a safer position on September 21st, but were defeated by a severe storm by 10-00 a.m. retreating unhappily to the site of the previous night from a high point about 150 ft. from the ridge. Next day, with the blizzard resuming at full strength by 8-00 a.m., the two Geoffs made a bold effort, climbed to the ridge and made up to about 19,300 ft. Jim and I brought up the remaining supplies, so that we had food and fuel for many days. Jim barely missed an avalanche as he escaped from the steep slope below Camp 2. On the 23rd and 24th there was no easing, and dangerous masses of snow accumulated above the camp, making the prospect of good weather a doubtful blessing. With a little frostnip and regret we retreated, still in very bad weather on September 24th.

In fact, as is so often the case, clear but very cold weather appeared on the two subsequent days. It is debatable how much use it would have been to us with extremely wet equipment and already (in my case and Jim's) frozen toes, for the clearance was accompanied by very high winds at altitude. As it was we were glad even at base to get our gear a little towards dryness. On the last night, Amargeet, sick of some unknown bug, went to sleep leaving a candle burning in an unoccupied Vango 3. Sleeping bags and other gear went up in flames before Rick saw and led the attack upon it. Fortunately the tent was unscathed, but Jim and I set off out to return to work for October 3rd with sleeping bags still sodden from the mountain spindrift. The rest of the party waited to shepherd out the remaining equipment, but were scheduled to reach Delhi for the long drive back on October 15th.

Paul Nunn

## NORTH WALES NOTES

After several years of near stagnation, North Wales is now undergoing the intensive development that has been taking place in the Peak and Lakes over the last couple of years.

The two areas that have been receiving the most attention to date are Llanberis Pass and Tremadog, with over twenty new routes going up this year. Aid elimination is also in full swing with such notable efforts as Dave Hollows' free ascent of Sexus on Dinas Mot and Ron Fawcett's free ascent of Vulcan at Tremadog and Citadel on Gogarth.

Of the routes at Tremadog, Cream stands out as one of the best with fine climbing in superb positions. The top pitch, a thin finger crack up the Vector Buttress headwall, is particularly good. On Craig Pant Ifan, Vulcan in its new free state must be one of the best lines at Tremadog; certainly its line is flawless.

In the Pass, the forthcoming new guidebook has created a great deal of interest and stimulated much new route activity and aid elimination. Geoff Milburn's call to, "Free the Pass", may well be an ideal that will soon be realised.

Perhaps the best new route is Lubyanka, which takes a line of grooves and the impressive headwall to the left of The Skull on Cynr Las. It was climbed by visiting Lakeland stars, Ed Cleasby, Rob Matheson and John Eastham and must have been like a red flag to a bull to some of the Pass regulars.

On Dinas Cromlech, Right Wall is one of only two routes in Wales to get the new E5 grading. This has now seen third and fourth ascents by ropes led by Chris Hamper and Dave Roberts. Also on the Cromlech, Foil, Memory Lane and Resurrection have had several ascents.

On Cloggy, the main activity has been the elimination of aid from climbs. The only new route was added by Alec Sharp, Hazy Days, and takes the often looked at arête right of Woubits. Sharp also made a solo ascent of The Hand Traverse, an impressive effort. Great Wall in its free state has had numerous ascents, fully justifying the new guidebook policy of describing climbs in their free state.

On Llech Ddu the fine weather of last year resulted in several new routes. Les Holliwell discovered three new climbs, the best is possibly Cerebus which climbs the steep wall left of Gytrack. Ray Evans and Brian Wyvill climbed the steep rock between Scarface and The Groove to give Marathon.

On Gogarth, perhaps the best effort of the year was Paul Trower's and Dave Pearce's. The Cow, which takes a stupendous line through the overhangs of Yellow Wall. Perhaps this is destined to rank with some of Pearce's other routes like T. Rex or Dream of White Horses. On Red Wall. Pat Littlejohn climbed the obvious line of grooves left of Wendigo to give Red Shift.

Mick Fowler and John Stephenson added another girdle to the main cliff. This starts up Resolution and finishes up Citadel, so crossing some of the most impressive rock on Gogarth.

Al Rouse's, Positron gets the other E5 grade and hence also Ordinary Route. (Not according to Al Evan's article, see page 24, Sub Ed.) and has given several people a hard time. Pete Livesey and Fawcett both managed to do the first on sight free ascents. This team also added two big routes to the Wen Slab area. High Pressure is a line up the slab left of Wen whilst their other route, Broken Mirror, climbs the wall opposite the slab. Finally, on Gogarth, mention must be made of Citadel, which must rank with the best anywhere, now that Fawcett has climbed it free.

Elsewhere in Wales, Rowland Edwards continues his one man development of the Ormes by making several new routes. His New Dimensions has received several ascents and is reported to be superb. Rowland has now made a completely free ascent of this route. Craig-Y-Forwen has consolidated its position as a popular and pleasant change to Tremadog.

In Cwm Idwal, two new routes were added to the Suicide Wall: Last Rites by Pete Thexton and Ray Latham, and Death Row by Bill Wayman and Nigel Shepherd.

As for the future, The Ormes and Gogarth are still the two areas with large amounts of unclimbed rock, Gogarth in particular is bound to see a lot of activity with the new guidebook out soon, and as for elsewhere if new climbs can still be found at Tremadog, then a lot of cliffs must inevitably see more new routes in the coming years.

Ben Wintringham

### Peak District Notes

In last year's Journal, Paul Nunn applauded the meteoric burst of activity that had taken place in the Peak District not just for the sheer difficulty of the climbing involved, but also for the quality of some of the routes which this "new wave" left in its wake.

Quality is an important but undefined factor in a route and it could be argued that the only way to really appreciate this quality is to do the climb. So while 1974-75 signalled the arrival of the new standards and methods of approach which precipitated the new route boom, so 1976-77 has been the year of the repeats.

Almost all the major hard routes on both grit and limestone have now been repeated (notable exceptions being, Linden on Curbar and Cream Team Special on Raven Tor). Nunn's assessment of these routes has been well borne out and many of them are already being elevated to the status of 'modern classics'. It is interesting and encouraging to see just how many people are now climbing at standards high enough to ascend routes that only a year ago were considered impossible to all but a select few.

While the major routes of the last couple of years were getting their come uppance, the new route boom continued with barely any slowing of pace throughout the year. Worthy of particular note is the total transformation of Two Tiers Buttress in Chee Dale by Gabriel Regan, with a couple of additions by Jim Reading and Al Evans. In particular, Regan's Mad Dogs and Englishmen has been received with enthusiasm and his ferocious free version of Darl has also received acclaim. Further down the valley Chee Tor has continued to provide good routes, Regan's Ceramic and

Geoff Birtles' Rave-On are two which produced favourable comment, but others are no less worthwhile.

Chris Jackson amazed everybody by discovering an excellent little crag around the corner which he named Chee Tor East Buttress. He and Bob Conway proceeded to work the crag out in secret until Tom Proctor paid a visit and picked the plum line; a superb central groove which gave a fierce sort of limestone Green Death, and which he called White Life.

Jackson and Conway were also active in Water-Cum-Jolly with numerous new climbs including a complete transformation of Swamp Wall and the free climbing of Triton and Pirhana Wall on Moat Buttress. Evans and Birtles added Sheerwater, a good climb on the left of the same buttress. Jim Moran's, Black Sabbath on Witchcraft Wall is another notable addition to the dale.

At Stoney Middleton, Proctor returned to the fray with some very powerful ascents, most notable being his free ascent of Circe and Kink. Also on this crag, Gabriel Regan captured the plum challenge of Bitter Fingers, the fierce thin crack line right of Dead Banana Crack.

In the Southern Limestone Area, High Tor continued to receive attention, Ron Fawcett added the superb Supersonic, a very hard climb, which uses as its start the initial groove of Flaky Wall that was left over from the other free version of this route. Odd points of aid were eliminated from various other routes but the only other major contribution was Jim Moran's free version of The Pillar, a long awaited ascent.

Finally on limestone, mention should be made of Fawcett's free ascent of Raven Tor Girdle (Cream Team Special), in Millers Dale, badly under-sold in the Recent Developments Guide, this was one of the major routes of the year. If to fall off a route while leading makes an ascent invalid, then the great majority of the first ascents lists in British Guides need drastically revising.

On gritstone, new routes continue to be found in the most unlikely of places. John Allen's Strapadichtomy and Proctor's Hard Cheddar on Froggatt or Allen's Moonwalk and Mooncrack on Curbar are typical examples of new obvious challenges that everyone had just walked past for years.

One of the most amazing contributions of the year was made by visiting American climber Ray Jardine. Something of an overhang specialist, he made repeated ascents of several of the Peaks major roof climbs including Quietus, Harvest and Ramshaw Crack (free), before going on to climb the obvious long standing challenge of the fierce off-width roof crack at Baldstones. This had turned back several of Britain's leading climbers and, in fact, took Jardine attempts on three separate days before he was successful. He claimed that it was the hardest route he had done in the U.K. and gave it an American grade of 5.11d (in contrast to the 6a Ramshaw Crack which he only gave 5.10c).

One lamentable trend has been the rash of manufactured routes on the gritstone. While the removal of loose rock has long been an accepted practice on the less stable quarries of limestone, apart from the isolated acts of vandalism (Great Slab at Millstone), natural gritstone has remained

inviolable, at least in terms of real routes. The wholesale sculpturing of holds which has taken place on such routes as Downhill Racer, Long Johns Slab and Linden just cannot be tolerated in an area where unclimbed and unclimbable rock is in such short supply. In each case the first ascensionists of these routes deny responsibility for the chipping, and their ascents so soon after the act must be regarded as merely opportune. We can only hope that this has been an isolated outburst and that such practices have now ceased. (\*)

The chalk argument rages on amongst all but the Peak's top climbers to whom it is now standard equipment. In reality, the fears that it would spread right down through the grades have been mainly unfounded. Isolated examples have occurred but these have not indicated a general trend and while ever more respect is shown for chalkless ascents, the problems involved should be kept in check.

(\*) Footnote: Unfortunately a new set of chiselled holds has appeared up the centre of Great Slab on Froggatt between Hairless Heart and Heartless Hare; at the moment no claimant has come forward but suspicions are rife.

Al Evans

### SOUTH WEST NOTES

With the most active climbers frequently lured to new pastures on the South Wales coast, it has been a quiet year for many crags in the South West. In keeping with national trends, levels of performance are rising noticeably — however, the absence of climbing walls for training, continued resistance to chalk use, and a vogue of on-sight leading has meant that first ascents by South West based climbers have yet to match the hardest routes being achieved further North, where current practices are somewhat different.

The newly exposed rock around Avon's Unknown Butress has been put to good use by Nipper Harrison, who now has most hard routes in the gorge under his belt and has expressed an interest in writing a new guidebook. At Cheddar, Pete Livesey opened the season very well, if a little early with a free ascent (1 point) of Paradise Lost. Bob Dearman blanched on hearing of this in Yosemite. Harrison was the only other person to make any impact at Cheddar, mainly in the form of repeats and aid eliminations. Warlord went free at a stiff 5c, aid on Siberia was reduced to one point, Satori, Visionary and Crow were repeated and found excellent. Perhaps Harrison's best achievement was a chalkless repeat of Paradise Lost, thus maintaining at zero the number of routes in the Bristol area without chalkless ascents. With Dick Broomhead's guidebook due out this Autumn, climbing at Cheddar may at last come of age.

Baggy Point continues to attract climbers from far and wide, and although innovations were few last year, they were significant. Andy Sharp and Steve Lewis created a 6a problem by climbing free up the blank slab between Terrapin and Lost Horizon. It had been ascended earlier by Ben Wintringham using two aid pegs. On the previously virgin Cheesegrater Cliff, between Concrete Rose and Scrattling Zawn, Pat Littlejohn and Chris King climbed a steep crack and chimney to give Rindstone (150 ft., E1, 5a). Exploration elsewhere in North Devon was only saved from stagnation by Ian Peters and Paul Buttrick, who discovered and developed a pleasant cliff at Foxhole Point.



That Lundy remains a new route goldmine was demonstrated by two separate weeks of activity this year. Arni Strapcans and Frank Cannings teamed up to climb Scorched Earth (160 ft. XS, 5c) and Bleed for Speed (200 ft. XS, 5b) employed combined tactics and four aid points, but this quota was reduced to two by Littlejohn on the second ascent and could be further reduced in dry conditions. As it stands, it is one of the best and purest jamming pitches anywhere in Britain. August saw another week's exploration during which Littlejohn, partnered by Chris King and Cannings, made free ascents of Time Bomb, Bender, Jetset and Wolfman Jack (almost!) as well as adding four powerful new routes, Captain Cat (200 ft. E3, 5c/6a) takes a thin crack in the slender buttress left of Wolfman Jack and is a superb, technical pitch on excellent rock. A direct line on Wierd Wall, left of Wodwo, gave Astral Traveller (200 ft. E3, 5c) whose main pitch is steep, sustained and bold. Focal Buttress provided the best entertainment however. The true arête between Wild Country and the Great Divide proved one of the prime climbs on the island (Golden Gate, 320 ft. E3, 5c) being distinguished from neighbouring routes by having sustained difficulties right to the finish. An optimistic attempt at the blank looking wall to the right of Wild Country paid off to give Lundy her best and hardest face climb — Olympica (300 ft. E4, 6a). All major lines were led hammerless, chalkless and on sight. Worthwhile contributions were also made by Charles Wand-Tetley and 'Chuck' Berry, particularly with their development of the elegant 100 foot buttress above the Parthenos cliff.

The lack of settled weather this year kept seas turbulent along the North coast of Cornwall, where a lot of unclimbed rock remains unclimbed and unapproachable. The only known development occurred one Sunday in June when Pat Littlejohn, accompanied by Ian Peters, completed a line begun some time ago with Keith Darbyshire on the big wall right of Mercury at Carn Gwla. Though undeniably a brilliant route, The Andromeda Strain (270 ft. E3, 5b/c) is lethally serious, having virtually unprotected climbing on fragile holds in a remote situation. The same day, at Doyden Point, the pair added Lotus (155 ft. HVS, 5a) an excellent route breaking rightwards out of Decumanus.

The long-neglected greenstone cliffs of West Penwith have at last seen some activity. Strapcans and King entered the hostile chasm of Zawn Duel to repeat The Adversary, and at Gurnards Head, Behemoth has reportedly been climbed free and a new route added to its left. At Bosigran, Jim Moran climbed Kafoozalem rendering it free of aid pegs but leaving it heavily chalk-coated. Clean-handed ascents by Ed Hart and Pat Littlejohn followed closely. In the Great Zawn the steel-fingered team of Moran and Gabriel Regan were defeated by pitch two of West Face, and their comment that it "seemed incredibly hard" might have confirmed the route's position as the hardest in the South West, had not its originator, Pete Livesey, produced another "aid-free creation" just to its left. Tentatively graded E5 and with two sustained and poorly protected pitches of 6a, Fool's Lode is likely to command respect for some time to come.

A couple of miles West of Bosigran the damp, brooding wall of Green Zawn was breached by Littlejohn and Dave Garner to produce Roraima (240 ft. E3, 5b/c) a serious route of character. Toni Carver has also done some enterprising exploration in this area. Reserves of unclimbed rock at Land's End were drawn upon quite heavily: first by John Barry with

his fierce Land's End Short Climb (60 ft. XS, 5c) and later by Littlejohn who added half a dozen new lines and aid eliminations, the best being Antenna (85 ft. E2, 5c) on the face left of Longships Wall, and Voices (100 ft. E2, 5b) which climbs the hanging face left of Parasite, excitingly.

Finally, to semi-tropical Torbay, where the best climbs lie neglected in a sort of Limbo, being too hard for the locals (that should get 'em going) and not sufficiently publicised to attract climbers from very far afield. Of the routes recorded in '76/77, the best are Snakecharmer (360 ft. E3, 5c) a sustained girdle traverse of Daddyhole Main Cliff and the Yardarm (140 ft. E2, 5a/b) a strenuous and sensational pitch taking the arête right of Iron Butterfly on the Old Redoubt. Climbing in Devon generally should receive a boost from a forthcoming guide (edited by Bob Moulton) to Dartmoor and the North Coast. The book will also contain a supplement of post guidebook climbs in the South Devon area.

Pat Littlejohn

## NEW CLIMBS

### NORTH WALES, PEMBROKE, CORNWALL

As in last year's Journal, the Climbers' Club is publishing details of new routes recorded in its traditional guidebook areas, and also in areas such as Pembroke and North Cornwall, where development has been almost entirely in the hands of Club members, and in which there has been no continuous history of guidebook publication.

The Central Snowdonia section has been rather depleted this year by the departure of routes to their respective permanent niches in guidebooks forthcoming. A better picture of activity in Anglesey, Tremadog and the Moelwyns, and the Llanberis Pass will thus be gained from the Welsh Notes section. Some routes which have escaped publication in years gone by, through indolence or lack of organisation, have been gathered into the fold. Other routes, re-recorded, exhumed, or otherwise worthless, have been banished once again into the cold.

Jim Perrin, 1977

### NORTH WALES

#### CLOGWYN DU'R ARDDU

##### **Apollo**

This route has now been climbed free and the new name of Spacebound has been proposed. In its free form the climb is 5c and apparently very worthwhile.

First ascent: July, 1977. A. Sharp, J. Lamb, S. Clegg.

**Diwedd Groove**

This has now been climbed free.

First Ascent: July, 1977. A. Sharp, S. Clegg.

**CRAIG CWM TRWSGL**

This is the large cliff at the head of Cwm Pennant mentioned in the guide to *Cwm Silyn and Cwellyn*. A few good routes have been done here over recent years, but the best have been left unrecorded hitherto because peregrines breed on the cliff. Since the birds are in year-round residence, the area of rock between Helex (see guide) and The Second Coming should be avoided at all times. It is to be hoped that climbers can show self-discipline in these matters, and not repeat the deplorable and selfish actions of certain well-known climbers in recent years in pioneering routes on the South Stack cliffs during the breeding season.

On the extreme left of the cliff is a fine diamond-shaped slab which gives the following route:

**The Exterminating Angel.** 180 feet. Extremely Severe (E3).

An esoteric delight; the first pitch is serious.

Start: Below a fluted tongue of rock, directly beneath the ledge and tree at half-height.

- (1) 60 feet. 5c. Climb the Vee-chimney on the right of the fluted tongue to a foot ledge on the left. Move up to a thin traverse line leading left. Follow this until a move up can be made to reach a fragile spike beneath the overlap. Traverse left under the overlap and climb it at a small corner; up the slab above and then right to reach the ledge and holly.
- (2) 120 feet. 5a. Traverse left to gain a slanting crack, and climb this to a difficult finish. Go up the grassier slab behind to a belay.

First ascent: September, 1974. J. Perrin, D. O'Brien.

**The Widening Gyre.** 250 feet. Mild Extremely Severe (E1).

Start: The central section of Craig Cwm Trwsogl's western wing has a steep rib-and-groove structure. Prominent features are an immense overhang low down to the left, and a short bottomless chimney high on the right. The route follows the corner and crack line between these, making a direct line up the buttress at its highest point. Scramble up steep heathery grooves to the right-hand corner of the slab beneath the huge overhang.

- (1) 150 feet. 5b. Follow a heathery ramp up right until directly beneath the corner. Climb a mossy slab into this, and follow it to a small overhang. Layback up to a large overhang and climb this with difficulty to good holds above. Up the groove to a grassy bay from which a short crack on the right leads to a higher bay and belays left of the prominent chimney.
- (2) 100 feet. 4a. Move round to a ledge on the left, and climb the crack up the slab above to finish.

First ascent: May, 1975. J. Perrin, P. Doncaster.

**Mere Anarchy.** 150 feet. Hard Very Severe.

Start: Beneath the rib which bounds the slab on the left of the start of the last route.

- (1) 70 feet. 5a. Climb the rib until at its top a difficult move can be made up right into a groove above the overhang, which is climbed for a few feet until a move back left can be made, then up to a small

stance and nut belays.

- (2) 60 feet. 4a. The groove on the right leads to a ledge with loose blocks. Climb the wall behind to a heathery rake and go left to the foot of a crack.
- (3) 20 feet. 4c. The crack.

First ascent: May, 1976. M. Boysen, J. Perrin.

**The Second Coming.** 400 feet. Mild Extremely Severe. (E1).

Start: The south-west wing of Trwsgl is dominated by a huge overhang,, two prominent ribs leading up to it, and a bald slab lying above. Helex (see guide) takes the left rib, this route the right. Scramble up heather to its base, on the left of a slabby amphitheatre. There is a prominent roof on the left of the rib; start to the right of this.

- (1) 50 feet. 5a. Climb a groove on the left for a few feet, then up right to gain the narrow crest of the rib. Follow this to its top, and traverse right to a grassy bay and belays.
- (2) 120 feet. 3b. Climb a groove on the left for a few feet, then up right to gain the narrow crest of the rib. Follow this to its top, and traverse right to a grassy bay and belays.
- (3) 60 feet. Climb the short corner behind the belay to steep heather leading right to a block belay beneath the overhanging corner.
- (4) 120 feet. 5a. Strenuous climbing up the corner into a niche. A groove leads laterally right to a rib, which is climbed for a few feet, until a traverse left can be made across a groove to a good flake. Follow the open groove to a grass ledge and spike belays on the left.
- (5) 50 feet. 5c. Step back right and move up to a good spike. Cross the wall to the left with difficulty to gain a shallow groove which leads to the top.

First ascent: April, 1975. J. Perrin, M. Boysen.

**The Blood-Dimmed Tide.** 200 feet. Very Severe.

This climb takes the steep red pillar to the right of the main cliff mentioned in the topographical section in the guide.

Start: Below and right of the pillar is a little rib standing out from the heather and reached by very steep heathery scrambling.

- (1) 110 feet. 5a. Climb the rib to a heathery landing, and traverse left into a scooped groove. Up this to a ledge on the left. Move up the steep wall on good holds to gain a footledge on the left, awkwardly. Climb leftwards up the slab into its left bounding groove, and up this to a poor stance and belay.
- (2) 90 feet. 4b. Traverse into the centre of the slab and climb it with disappointing ease to gain a niche. Move left out of this to finish up the slab and steeper groove ahead.

First ascent: May, 1975. J. Perrin, I. Nightingale.

**GALLT YR OGOF**

**Samson.** 230 feet. Extremely Severe. (E2).

To the right of Green Gully on the Lower Cliff is a magnificent overhanging groove line, its right wall giving the line of Roseda Wall and the groove direct that of Samson. One of the best jamming pitches in Wales.

Start: Grassy scrambling to a point in Green Gully directly beneath the line of the groove.

- (1) 100 feet. Grassy rock in the lower line of the corner, with an awkward rock step, to a belay at the foot of the groove.

- (2) 130 feet. 5b. Climb the mainly overhanging corner crack, crux at sixty feet, into a niche. Exit left or right to finish, the left being more pleasant.

First ascent: August, 1972. J. Perrin, D. Cook.

Attempts by other parties had failed to climb the groove direct.

## CWM IDWAL — SUICIDE WALL

### **Death Row.** 90 feet. Extremely Severe. (E3).

This route, described as "delicate, sustained and serious" climbs the obvious line to the right of Route One, joining that route for its second crux.

First ascent: 1977. B. Wayman, N. Shepherd.

### **Penal Servitude.** 150 feet. Extremely Severe. (E4).

Start: Directly below scoop of Route Two.

- (1) 150 feet. 6a. Climb the nose direct, crux at 8 feet, to the scoop. Peg runner. Traverse right for a few feet on the line of Route Two, then left onto the steep wall. Climb straight up to good thread on left; sling in place. Continue direct to reach the ramp on the girdle. Traverse right for a couple of moves, then diagonally right across a slab to reach the final groove of Direct Finish. Place runner to protect final slab. From just below the start of the groove gain the left edge of the slab by a good foothold on the left. Climb the slab, finishing up a thin crack. Belay 20 feet back.

First ascent: September, 1977. B. Wayman, T. Jepson.

(The pitch was cleaned and inspected, and the sling placed, from a rope prior to the first ascent).

### **Last Rites.** 160 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: At the left-hand end of a flat grass ledge, just right of a blunt arête below the crescent-shaped ledge of Route Two.

- (1) 100 feet. Climb up and diagonally right to a small pocket. (peg runner). Move up with difficulty and continue to the flakes on Route Two (peg runner to right). Climb the steep wall just left of a large pocket to the upper slab. Semi-hanging belay halfway along pitch two of The Garotte.
- (2) 60 feet. Climb the slab above to a wet pocket, and follow a thin crack more easily to the top.

First ascent: August, 1976. P. Thexton, A. Latnam.

### **The Direct Finish.** 90 feet. Extremely Severe. (E3).

- (1) 90 feet. 5c. From the top of Suicide Groove, step left into the obvious groove. Climb this and its shallower left-hand continuation to the top.

First ascent: 1977. N. Shepherd, B. Wayman.

## GLYDER FAWR UPPER CLIFF

### **Grey Lady.** 290 feet. Hard Very Severe.

Much more of a challenge than the original route on the steep slab recessed between Central Arête and the West Buttress.

Start: In the middle of the terrace, just to the right of the slanting shallow groove of Great West Slab.

- (1) 140 feet. 5a. Climb straight up the slab to pock-holes, then continue in a faint weakness over a small bulge to a shallow light-coloured groove at 70 feet. Move left and up to the edge of a grassy tongue; now make an exacting diagonal traverse across the slab to a good ledge on its right arête.
- (2) 150 feet. 4c. Step up left and proceed more steeply now, but on good holds in an open situation until just beneath some perched blocks. Move right round the arête and on to a pleasant slab to finish.  
First ascent: September, 1975. Z. Leppert, Miss M. Hankey, B. Pankey.

### LLECH DDU

#### The Psychlist. 320 feet. Extremely Severe.

A serious and exposed route, its quality only marred by the grass break where Ribbon Route crosses. It climbs the overhanging buttress right of Iota.

Start: At a groove in the arête left of the start of Ribbon Route.

- (1) 70 feet. Climb the groove and traverse right 15 feet below the overhang on dubious flakes to the arête and a block. Straight up now to a small stance on a flake.
- (2) 80 feet. Climb through the overhang directly behind the stance to a chimney and onto the ridge. Follow this vegetatedly to Ribbon Route and a belay at the foot of a groove in the Upper Tier.
- (3) 130 feet. Climb the groove, swing left round the overhang to a steep wall and two thread runners, and from the right-hand of these climb straight up to a huge roof (peg). Gain a ledge which leads right to a niche. Continue diagonally past three pegs (two protection, one aid) to a sling. Tension from this to a rib on the right and follow this to a restricted stance in the gully.
- (4) 40 feet. Climb the slab behind, and the gully to the top.  
First ascent: Five days, April, '74 — April, 1976. R. Millward, N. Ingham.

(Much aid was used on the first ascent, but the first ascensionists appear to have "rationalised" this in the description above. Antics such as these are surely a sufficient plea for a degree of élitism amongst those climbing new routes on our few remaining areas of steep rock. Ed.).

Pitches 1 and 2 first climbed by L. R. Holliwell, J. Kingston, 1972.

#### Cerberus. 220 feet. Extremely Severe.

A rather contrived line taking the steep arête left of Gytrack, which gives continuously interesting and exposed climbing.

Start: As for Gytrack.

- (1) 80 feet. Pull over the initial bulge of Gytrack and traverse horizontally left for 40 feet, then climb the wall diagonally right to the base of the arête. Step right and belay in the groove of Gytrack.
- (2) 140 feet. Climb the arête to a small overhang, step left and go up shattered cracks in the steep wall to a tiny niche. Move awkwardly right back onto the arête and go straight up for a few feet. Trend left, pulling onto a ledge which gives access to an exit ramp leading diagonally left. Flake belays 30 feet back.

First ascent: August, 1976. L. R. Holliwell, G. J. R. Everitt.

#### Anubis. 270 feet. Hard Very Severe.

The central groove in the wall left of Gytrack, finishing up a vee-groove on the skyline.

Start: Scramble up the vegetated rake to belay directly below the top

groove of Gytrack at a rocky step. An obvious traverse line leads left across the wall.

- (1) 120 feet. Traverse horizontally left for 30 feet. Step up into a clean shallow groove which is followed until the wall can be climbed diagonally right to the base of the main groove. Go up this for 15 feet. Peg belays.
- (2) 150 feet. Continue up a ramp in the groove to within 10 feet of the roof, then move out to the left edge. Step round and traverse left for 10 feet, up for a few feet, then traverse diagonally back right to a ledge below the final groove. Surmount some shattered pinnacles, and climb the vee-groove. No belays.

First ascent. August, 1976. L. R. Holliwell, G. J. R. Everett.

### **Sirius.** 270 feet. Very Severe.

Takes the very obvious groove left of the last climb, and immediately right of the huge bulging overhangs.

Start: About 70 feet up the vegetated rake, at a good spike on the left.

- (1) 120 feet. Climb the lower wall trending left for 40 feet, then straight up. Traverse right for a few feet, then continue up to a good rock ledge. Move left, and up a short steep wall to the base of the main groove. Belays.
- (2) 150 feet. Go up the groove, continue more easily into a cave, move out left and climb the final gully/groove to a spike belay just below the top.

First ascent. September, 1976. L. R. Holliwell, A. Cotton.

## **CRAIG YR YSFA — LEFT WALL OF THE AMPHITHEATRE**

### **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.** 180 feet. Very Severe.

Takes the buttress between Coffin Scoop and Cradle Chimney. A good climb, it takes the blunt nose on the lower section and the prominent groove on the extreme left of the upper section.

Start: 40 feet right of Coffin Scoop, at the base of the blunt nose.

- (1) 130 feet. Climb straight up via two narrow bilberry ledges to a bulge with quartz veins. Surmount this on the right, move left, then continue trending back right, up a short groove and right up a ramp to belay on nuts.
- (2) 50 feet. Go up the steep groove to a small ledge, swing out left to another short groove, move left round an overhang, then step right and up a bilberry runnel to belay on Amphitheatre Buttress.

First ascent. September, 1976. L. R. Holliwell, R. Laville.

## **CRAIG LLOER**

### **Good Egg.** 120 feet. Hard Very Severe.

Start: Higher than Hhier. and 50 feet to the right. is a light-coloured groove below the highest part of the crag. Belay at its base.

- (1) 120 feet. Step left and climb the groove to a ledge at 30 feet. From its right hand end, go up on suspect holds to an arête. Pull back onto a steep bubbly (sic) and up to a small bilberry ledge. A short corner crack leads to a large pinnacle on the right. Step right from its top into a short bottomless groove. Awkward. A few feet higher, easier climbing leads to the top.

First ascent. August, 1976. L. R. Holliwell, G. Rowlands.

## NORTH WALES LIMESTONE

## CRAIG Y FORWYN

**Purple Haze.**      feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: By the fence left of Stretch.

- (1)      feet. Climb the overhanging wall left of the obvious corner. Traverse, right into the corner and make a hard move to start it. Climb to the roof and move out right. Move back left and climb the wall to a triangular ledge.
- (2)      feet. Make a diagonal traverse across the wall to the arête and finish up this. (Glade Arête V.S.).  
First ascent: 1977. N. Shepherd, B. Wyman.

**Scalar Arête.** 115 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: At the steep wall left of the start for Scalar Direct.

- (1) 115 feet. 5b. Left up the steep wall to a small roof and peg runner. Over this to a steep slab, up to a second roof. Follow small holds left to a resting place on the arête. Continue into a steep groove and crack, and looser rock to the top.  
First ascent: January, 1976. R. Edwards.

## LITTLE ORME

**Beyond the Grave.** 410 feet. Very Severe/Artificial.

Start: From the boulder beach 200 feet left of Wall of the Evening Light, directly below the large caves high on the face. Tidal.

- (1) 100 feet. Artificial. A short wall to a roughcast cluster below a large roof. Over this trending left to a blunt shattered flake crossing the crag. Up, right, and up again to a point 10 feet below the first cave. Left for a few feet, then straight up to the left-hand side of the cave. Large stance.
- (2) 70 feet. Artificial. Out left and up to the next cave. Follow a diagonal crack through the 30 foot roof above to a short wall and earthy exit onto slabs.
- (3) 140 feet. V.S. Earthy slabs to a freshly-gardened wall at 70 feet. Peg runner. The wall and grassy slabs above lead to a cave.
- (4) 100 feet. Up for 10 feet, then traverse left out of the amphitheatre, up, and traverse back right to a peg belay on the grassy bank above the overhang.  
Traverse right to escape as for Wall of the Evening Light.  
First ascent: Over five days, December, 1976, January, 1977. M. Brady, P. Temple, B. Courtney.

## GREAT ORME — CRAIG Y GWYNT

**Demos.** 145 feet. Very Severe.

Start: 80 feet left of the descent gully, just right of a cave and large boulder.

- (1) 75 feet. Enter the groove from the right, loose at first, move up this until it steepens and swing out left onto the wall. Ascend this diagonally to a flat ledge. Belay round corner to the right.
- (2) 70 feet. The steep wall behind the belay, making towards the groove



and large flake. Traverse right across the steep bulge to a small ledge, finishing via a corner and slab. The corner on pitch one can be climbed direct: not as good.

First ascent: January, 1976. R. Edwards.

**The Appian Way.** 375 feet. Extremely Severe.

Traverses the top of the crag; exposed, and on sound rock.

- (1) 75 feet. As for Demos.
- (2) 95 feet. 5b. Climb the steep wall, and up to a groove and large flake on the left. Descend slightly to the arête, move onto the steep slab, follow the roof left, and descend to the belay of New Dimensions.
- (3) 65 feet. 5b. Traverse to the prow, cross the groove and continue 20 feet to a thread runner. Move strenuously to a small ledge and belays.
- (4) 20 feet. Descend to lower ledges on Central Pillar.
- (5) 120 feet. 5b plus. Move left and down, peg runner to a small scoop. Climb to the fault line and follow it to the arête. Move round to a spike at the foot of a steep wall. This and a grassy groove on the left lead to the top.

First ascent: March, 1977. R. Edwards, G. Perry.

**Watling Street Finish** to above.

- (4a) 85 feet. 5c. Continue traverse to the overhanging prow and swing round to a poor resting place, peg. Traverse with increasing difficulty until the rock becomes less steep. Finish up a grassy groove on the left.

**The Psychic Threshold.** 190 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: At the foot of the arête left of Central Pillar.

- (1) 55 feet. 5a. The small pillar to a horizontal break; Climb this left to the arête. Peg runner. Climb the arete to a cave.
  - (2) 140 feet. 6a/artificial. Climb out of the cave by the roof on its right to a bolt in the middle of a short loose wall. Go straight up to a sling, then left to a less steep part of the wall. Climb to a niche. Good thread.
- Pull over the roof to the right and move up with difficulty to a sling. Gain a thin vertical crack in the steep wall above and follow it to the break of Appian Way. Continue straight up to finish via Watling Street.

First ascent: August, 1977. R. Edwards, P. Williams.

**CRAIG PEN GOGARTH — UPPER TIER**

**Hang Ten.** 155 feet. Extremely Severe.

The large groove up the arête of this buttress. Sustained.

- (1) 60 feet. As for Hang Five.
- (2) 95 feet. 5c. Climb the groove above, first on the left wall, then the right steeply to a small roof, and into the groove again on the left. At a peg move right to the arête, up, and left into the groove again. Straight up the groove, finishing right of the roof.

First ascent: R. Edwards, G. Perry. March, 1977.

**POINT FIVE BUTTRESS**

Approach as for Craig y Gwynt. but turn left at the bottom of the gully, and the crag is on your left. Routes described from right to left. The first two routes start from a large ledge at the top of a 20 foot crack at the very base of the crag.

**Zero. 110 feet. Very Severe.**

- (1) 110 feet. 5a. Climb the short slab to a cave, and up right to the foot of steep cracks just before the gully. Climb these, traverse right, and finish up a steep crack.

First ascent: May, 1977. R. Edwards, G. Perry.

**Huntington. 110 feet. Extremely Severe.**

- (1) 110 feet. 5b. To the cave, and straight up to a second. Up slightly right to the sentry box and then to a good flake. Continue up and left to the arête, and follow the crack to the roof and top.

First ascent: May, 1977. R. Edwards, G. Perry.

**King Ja Ja. 110 feet. Extremely Severe.**

This route evidently starts 15 feet left of itself in the next bay along. Needless to say, it is very spectacular.

Start: By an approach from the gully halfway down the descent gully, or the same as the previous routes.

- (1) 110 feet. Climb the short slab to the cave. Traverse right across one crack to another on the arête. Climb this to the roof and traverse left to an undercling. Peg on the lip of the roof. Swing out over this and move up, hard and strenuous, to finish.

First ascent: May, 1977. R. Edwards, G. Perry.

**Memphis. 85 feet. Hard Very Severe.**

This route is on the far left of the crag, and is approached as for the above. From halfway down the gully traverse right across steep ground to the base of the first groove.

- (1) 85 feet. 5b. The groove to a narrow chimney below the roof. Move out left and up to the roof. Go right to a groove in this and climb it, peg, to the top.

First ascent: May, 1977. R. Edwards, G. Perry.

**Oceanside North. 140 feet. Extremely Severe.**

A girdle of the crag; rock and protection are good.

Start: At the far left of the roofs which extend across the crag.

- (1) 120 feet. 5c. Traverse right to Memphis' chimney, climb up to the roof, and follow the fault rightwards to a sling. Continue past King Ja Ja round the arête to the edge of the crag.  
(2) 20 feet. Straight up to finish.

First ascent: May, 1977. R. Edwards, G. Perry.

**NORTH PEMBROKE****THE LAIRD'S CLIFF**

This is approximately the central amongst the series of cliffs running out along the headland of Penbwdy. Approach at low tide, or an hour before, by descending the ramp as for Arthur's Cliff. From its foot, cross a trough on the west side, and traverse a black face 20 feet up before descending to boulders in the small cove beside an 80 foot pinnacle at the base of the cliff.

**Banquo.** 230 feet. Extremely Severe. (E2).

Takes the obvious open corner near the left side of the cliff.

Start: At the broken buttress below and slightly right of the corner.

- (1) 80 feet. Climb easily to a large ledge at the foot of the corner.
- (2) 90 feet. 5b. Climb the corner to some overhangs (runner), descend 8 feet and move left to a line of weakness in the wall. Climb up slightly right to regain the corner above the overhangs, and continue on better holds to a steep crack. Climb this, then the left wall of the corner to a traverse line leading to the left arête, a ledge, and nut belays.
- (3) 60 feet. 4c. Move up right into a groove and climb this to a good small thread. Move right across a slab, up, then break right again near the top.

First ascent. July, 1977. P. Littlejohn, C. Wand-Tetley.

**Macbeth.** 260 feet. Extremely Severe. (E3).

Difficult and serious, this route ascends the convex wall left of the pinnacle.

Start: Beneath the overhanging groove which goes centrally through the barrier of bulges near the base of the wall.

- (1) 70 feet. 5c. Climb the groove to gain the base of the steep slab. Belay immediately with a thin blade peg, and a higher nut.
- (2) 110 feet. 5b. Follow the crack until it peters out in a blank shallow groove. Step back and climb until it is possible to move back right to the main line of cracks. Continue with increasing difficulty to gain the shallow groove capped by a triangular roof. Climb almost to the roof, then left to a ledge.
- (3) 80 feet. 5a. The slab is taken centrally, moving right to an unpleasant finish.

First ascent: July, 1977. P. Littlejohn, C. Wand-Tetley.

**PENLLECHWEN****The Rig.** 130 feet. Hard Severe.

A direct route between Penllechwen Groove and Knight's Move.

Start: Descend easy ridge on west of zawn, traverse left to a large ledge.

- (1) 60 feet. Traverse left across slabs, step across top of zawn, climb a steep wall trending left to large ledge with pinnacle.
- (2) 70 feet. Up the steep wall behind the belay to an obvious overhang, climbed facing right. Finish more easily.

First ascent: August, 1976. B. Rogers, J. Parker.

**MUR CENHINEN****Mur y Nos.** 160 feet. Very Severe.

Start: As for Slab Route.

- (1) 50 feet. Climb straight up the steep wall to a niche on the left. Move right past quartz holds to a corner, exit left onto slabs and belay in a cave.
- (2) 110 feet. Climb the wall right of the cave, and traverse left above the cave to a niche. Up right to the foot of a crack, move left, over a bulge to easier ground, and climb slabs to a grassy bay twenty feet higher.

First ascent: August, 1976. B. Rogers, P. Parker.

**SOUTH PEMBROKE**

A limestone region of unsurpassed coastal scenery, this is probably the most important sea-cliff to have emerged over the past ten years. Countless opportunities for routes in all grades exist, and will continue to exist for many years.

**ST. GOVAN'S HEAD**

**The Infiltrator.** 145 feet. Mild Extremely Severe.

A good climb taking the striking corner crack in the cliff below the coastguard lookout.

- (1) 25 feet. 4c. The corner to a ledge.
- (2) 60 feet. 5a. Climb the wider left-hand crack to a resting place beneath an overhang. Jam up the corner, traverse left to a ledge on the arête, and move left to an earth-floored stance.
- (3) 60 feet. 5a. Climb to the prominent face crack and follow it to a bedding plane. Step right to a ledge, and climb the wall to the top, taking care with a loose flake.

First ascent: April, 1977. P. Littlejohn, C. Wand-Tetley.

**MOWING WORD — WEST FACE**

**The Widowmaker.** 150 feet. Extremely Severe.

A very fine route taking the overhangs 50 feet left of Diedre Sud.

Start: Below the prominent groove capped by roofs. Pegs in place.

- (1) 90 feet. 5c. Climb the wall to the right of the groove. Peg runner. Enter this with difficulty, exit right at its top, and move 10 feet right to the undercut arête. Pull over the roof direct, peg runner, and up to a stance.
- (2) 60 feet. 5b. Traverse left beneath the narrow band of overhangs, to the break, move up awkwardly to the broken crack, and climb this to the top.

First ascent: July, 1977. R. Harrison, R. Broomhead.

**Sealhunt.** 110 feet. Hard Very Severe.

Start: As for Heart of Darkness.

- (1) 110 feet. 5a. As for Heart of Darkness to the foot of an obvious bottomless groove round the arête. Gain this awkwardly, and continue more easily to the top.

First ascent: April, 1976. R. Burns, J. Jones.

**MOWING WORD — SOUTH FACE**

**Charenton Crack.** 80 feet. Extremely Severe. (E3).

The obvious overhanging corner crack 40 feet right of Logos.

- (1) 80 feet. 5c. The first twenty feet are easy; the corner proper gives a desperate layback on a lacerating edge to the top. A route which would be quite in place on Curbar.

First ascent: September, 1972. J. Perrin, R. Pearce.

**STACKPOLE HEAD — WEST FACE**

**Trapdoor Fandango.** 120 feet. Very Severe.

The obvious groove right of Gargoyle Groove; better than its neighbour, and sustained.

Start: 30 feet right of Gargoyle Groove, and the hole through the cliff, an easy-angled buttress comes out from the cliff, from the top of which this route starts.

- (1) 120 feet. 4c. Climb slightly left up the slabby wall to gain an obvious ledge. Step right and climb steep rock to good holds beneath a groove. Follow this to a ledge, and continue directly up the next groove to the top.

First ascent: April, 1977. K. Wilson, J. Cheesmond.

**Heaven's Door.** 115 feet. Extremely Severe.

The twin cracks on the right-hand side of the sharp arête 100 yards from the descent ridge in the back of the bay. A fine route.

Start: Below and right of cracks, at the obvious entry corners.

- (1) 35 feet. The corners to a ledge on the left.
- (2) 80 feet. 5c. Climb steeply leftwards to the arête, move up with difficulty to the cracks, and follow these to the top.

First ascent: April, 1977. P. Littlejohn, C. Wand-Tetley.

**Cavalier.** 120 feet. Hard Very Severe.

Start: 20 feet right of the corner right of Puritan, at a cracked groove line.

- (1) 30 feet. A crack, then traverse right to a small stance.
- (2) 60 feet. 5a. Diagonally left to the groove. Move up, climb the left side of the fault to the horizontal break, and go awkwardly left to a stance.
- (3) 30 feet. 4b. Steep cracks.

First ascent: March, 1977. P. Littlejohn, R. Harrison.

**Condor.** 100 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: Beneath the narrowest point of the overhangs, above and left of The Hawk pitch 1, at a groove.

- (1) 55 feet. 5b. Up the groove for 10 feet, then left into a bottomless groove and climb bearing slightly right to better holds. Continue via a shallow groove to a large stance beneath the roof.
- (2) 45 feet. 5a. Traverse left to the obvious hold on the lip and pull up to a sloping ledge. Follow the thin crack just right of the open groove to the top.

First ascent: March, 1977. R. Harrison, P. Littlejohn.

**The Hawk.** Independent top pitch. 65 feet. Hard Very Severe.

- (2) 65 feet. 5a. Move onto the left arête of Stackpole Grooves pitch 3, climb a thin crack to a traverse left, move over a bulge into a loose groove, and finish up this.

First ascent: September, 1972. J. Perrin, R. Pearce.

**LYDSTEP — FRONTIER ZAWN****Bombshell.** 120 feet. Extremely Severe.

- (1) 40 feet. As for Gunner.
- (2) 80 feet. 5b. Climb the overhang in the corner above the stance, then move left along a ledge, continue left using an undercut crack, gain some dirty vertical cracks, and climb these till they end. Move into the steep groove high on the right, and follow this and a crack to

the top.

First ascent: April, 1977. P. Littlejohn, C. Ward-Tetley.

**Warszawa.** 150 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: 30 feet right of Grand Junction at a thin vertical crack.

- (1) 100 feet. 5b. Gain the crack awkwardly and climb it with difficulty. Slabby vegetated rock leads to a belay below the headwall.
- (2) 50 feet. The crack in the headwall.

First ascent: April, 1977. R. Harrison, R. Broomhead.

**Silk Torpedo.** 100 feet. Mild Extremely Severe.

Start: 30 feet up, and 20 feet right of The Breech, is a narrow corner line.

- (1) 50 feet. 5a. Gain the corner from the right and follow it to a large block.
- (2) 50 feet. 5b. Continue up the corner, taking the final bulges in spectacular position.

First ascent: June, 1977. R. Harrison, R. Broomhead.

**Sound and Vision.** 140 feet. Hard Very Severe.

- (1) 140 feet. 5a. The crack opposite the abseil post on the East Face of the zawn. A superb pitch.

First ascent: April, 1977. R. Harrison, R. Broomhead.

#### SKOMAR TOWERS — EAST FACE

**Dolomite Sprint.** 120 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: Right of The Dirk is a deep narrow cave. The route takes the thin crack immediately right of this.

- (1) 120 feet. 5c. Climb the crack awkwardly to a small roof, over this, then left to a ledge. Back right to the crack and follow it with difficulty to block belays.

First ascent: June, 1977. R. Harrison, R. Broomhead.

#### SKOMAR TOWERS — RECESS FACE

This is the steep, greyish wall passed on the way to Frontier Zawn.

**Faceless Face.** 130 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: 6 feet left of the cleft at the start of Electric Blue. Steep and intimidating, with sparse protection.

- (1) 130 feet. 5b plus. Climb vertically for about 40 feet, then left and up to a large cavity. Climb the bulge above, gain a sloping ledge with good thread above, step right, climb the wall past a pocket to a good hold, move up, gain a small ledge on the right and climb steeply left to the top.

First ascent: April, 1977. P. Littlejohn, C. Wand-Tetley.

**Electric Blue.** 130 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: Just right of the prominent crack and groove system which is just right of the highest part of the face.

- (1) 70 feet. 5a. Climb the cracked face for 50 feet, step left, and go up the crack to a restricted stance.
- (2) 60 feet. 5a. Climb 10 feet, move into the main groove on the left and follow it to the top.

First ascent: March, 1977. R. Harrison, P. Littlejohn.

**Gruff Groove.** 110 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: At the right-hand side of the cleft forming the start of the corner line which bounds the face on the right.

- (1) 110 feet. 5b. Climb the right edge of the cleft until it is possible to bridge across it. Continue up the corner to some detached blocks; climb the left wall on pockets to avoid these, step back across the corner and climb to a recess. Move round the overhang and finish up the corner.

First ascent: March, 1977. P. Littlejohn, R. Harrison.

**Mellow Yellow.** 110 feet. Hard Very Severe.

An enjoyable pitch at 5a up grooves in the right arête of the above.

First ascent: April, 1977. R. Harrison, R. Broomhead.

**MOTHER CAREY'S KITCHEN**

The routes recorded here bring the total on this fine buttress up to twenty-five, which must make it the best developed in the area. The name, incidentally, is not a local one as might be assumed, but was given to it by Mortlock and myself on our first visit here in 1968, because of the incredible number of Stormy Petrels, ("Mother Carey's Chickens") which we saw hereabouts.

**The Bungle.** 80 feet. Hard Very Severe.

Start: From the block at the Southern end of the West Face.

- (1) 80 feet. 5a. Traverse 20 feet right on small holds across the wall. Move up a line of weakness leading to the left arête of the deep cleft. Finish out left as for Entropy.

First ascent: June, 1977. Richard Berry.

**A Sea Change.** 120 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: On the right of the deep cleft which runs halfway up the West Face.

- (1) 120 feet. 5b. Climb up left into the groove and follow it round two bulges. Climb a third on the right by friable cracks to reach a recess. Move up to a leftward slanting groove to finish as for Entropy.

First ascent: August, 1970. J. Perrin, R. Pearce.

**Sporting Chance.** 150 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: Behind the low-tide pool left of Rock Idol.

- (1) 100 feet. 5b. Climb directly up from the right end of the pool and move left to a large ledge and caves. Continue up the bulging crack to beneath a roof, move precariously left to easier ground, and a good stance.
- (2) 50 feet. 5a. Climb the crack above until a ramp leads right to a ledge above and left of the stance on Oz. Continue up the groove above to a steep finish which demands care.

First ascent: May, 1977. R. Burns, B. Wyvill.

**Zeppelin.** 150 feet. Extremely Severe. (E3).

Start: At a groove 15 feet left of the corner of Rock Idol.

- (1) 90 feet. 5c. Climb the groove, step left, then go up diagonally right on good holds until the cracks end and the wall bulges. Climb straight up to some flakes, move right to gain a jutting ledge, and continue

up cracks to a stance and thread.

- (2) 60 feet. 5b. The groove above. Belay well back.

First ascent: August, 1977. P. Littlejohn, R. Harrison.

### **Strait Gate Direct Finish**

This route, described in last year's journal, should be credited to Perrin and Pearce, September, 1972.

### **The Welsh Connection**

This is a pleasant way of climbing the Great Wall, starting from the foot of Wraith, climbing diagonally left to reach the crack of The Strait Gate, and taking the Direct Finish.

First ascent: Summer, 1976. P. Thomas, J. Harwood.

### **Wraith. 150 feet. Extremely Severe.**

Start: At the foot of a groove beneath the Great Wall's right arête.

- (1) 150 feet. 5b. Climb the groove, move left onto the wall, climb across slanting cracks to a ledge on the arête, move left into the obvious crack and climb this, increasingly loose, to the top.

First ascent: September, 1972. J. Perrin, R. Pearce.

### **Nimrod. 120 feet. Extremely Severe.**

Start: At a shallow groove just right of that of Wraith.

- (1) 60 feet. 5b. The groove to an overhang, then strenuously to good holds and a stance.  
(2) 60 feet. 5b. Climb to the top of the groove, (sling for aid) and continue to a block-strewn ledge.

First ascent: April, 1976. A. Strapcans, D. Roberts.

The aid was dispensed with, June, 1977 by R. Harrison, who gave the revised grade as 4c.

### **Brazen Buttress. 120 feet. Extremely Severe.**

Start: Just right of the cave entrance is a groove in the toe of the buttress.

- (1) 50 feet. 5a. Climb the groove and exit right to a stance.  
(2) 70 feet. 5b. Up and left to a deep slot; up and left again to a crack leading right. Follow this to its end, step right, finish direct.

First ascent: April, 1976. P. Littlejohn, R. Broomhead.

### **Un-Named. 120 feet. Extremely Severe.**

This route takes the line of cracks between Brazen Buttress and Herod at 5b. No further details are available.

First ascent: August, 1977. R. Harrison, C. King.

### **The Star Gate. 130 feet. Extremely Severe.**

Start: As for Deep Space at the first groove right of the landward wall of the cleft.

- (1) 70 feet. 5c. Climb the groove until just above a series of flat overhangs at 50 feet, then traverse right to beneath another leaning groove. Thread belay; stance in slings.  
(2) 60 feet. 5a'b. Climb the groove and move right into the scoop, with an obvious exit right to finish.

First ascent: March, 1977. P. Littlejohn, R. Harrison.

### **The Warp Factor. 140 feet. Extremely Severe. (E4).**

Start: At a groove just right of that taken by the above.

- (1) 70 feet. 6a. Climb the groove past the overhangs to a prominent semi-spike on the wall above. Resting sling. Move right into the



groove again, climb to a large thread, and swing round the corner to the right to a square foothold. Thread belay.

- (2) 70 feet. 5c. Pull up right to the obvious footholds. Climb up to and over the bulge, and continue steeply until good holds on the left are gained. After a few feet, traverse right into a cave, then up overhanging rock to the top.

First ascent: July, 1977. P. Littlejohn, R. Harrison.

### **Lickin' the Ladle.** 390 feet. Mild Extremely Severe.

A girdle of the buttress from left to right.

Start up Rock Idol: At 70 feet traverse right to the cave of Joyous Gook; reverse the traverse of The Strait Gate, descend its crack for 15 feet and follow a line leading right to the belay of Nimrod. Traverse easily right into The Cracks, move over the arch, and descend on the far side to a ledge on Brazen Buttress. Follow the obvious line leading right to the arête of Herod, swing across the gap above the overhang of Deep Space, and finish up this.

First ascent: June, 1977. R. Harrison, R. Broomhead.

## **LYDSTEP POINT**

### **The Rip.** 130 feet. Hard Very Severe.

Start: At the foot of the striking crack splitting the cliff at the top of the point, below the face traversed by Poseidon. Approach at low to half-tide by abseiling down the face to a large rock at its base.

- (1) 130 feet. 5a. Move down and across to the start of the line. Pass the first bulge on the left, then follow the crack all the way.

First ascent: August, 1977. C. King, D. Roberts, P. Littlejohn.

## **CORNWALL**

### **ST. AGNES' HEAD — CARN GOWLA**

#### **The Andromeda Strain.** 270 feet. Extremely Severe.

Climbs the big wall left of Mercury. A serious, sustained and brilliant route, with poor protection and subtle route-finding.

Approach procedure: Fix a short length of rope from the abseil thread above Mercury to the cliff edge. 150 foot abseil from this leads to the half-way ledge. Belay on nuts in opposition. Abseil again to the low tide ledge at the foot of Mercury, which route offers an escape in the event of failure on either pitch of this climb.

- (1) 120 feet. 5b/c. Traverse right, rising slightly at first, to a series of small ledges beneath a shallow groove of orange coloured rock. Small wire runner to the left. Climb steeply into the groove and follow it to its end. Move up to a large hold, then traverse left to a bay beneath a small overhang. Turn this on the left and climb direct to the ledge.
- (2) 150 feet. 5b/c. Climb for 25 feet to a small downward-pointing block. Dubious runner. Move right then climb direct via a shallow groove, vital wire runner, to a long narrow ledge. Climb the steep slab on small holds to an overhang, pass this on the left, step right, and climb to another overhang. Pass this on the left, traverse right along its lip, and continue to a pillar of hard red rock. Climb a few feet to a good protection peg, continue direct for 15 feet, make a rightward traverse

to a groove and follow this through the final overhangs to the top.  
 Belay to abseil point.  
 First ascent: June, 1977. P. Littlejohn, I. Peters.

## DOYDEEN POINT

**Lotus.** 155 feet. Hard Very Severe.

Start: As for Decumannus.

- (1) 120 feet. 5a. Climb Decumannus for about fifty feet until good holds above the most strenuous section are reached. Follow a steep diagonal crack on good holds across the right wall until it swings round onto a slab and becomes discontinuous. Follow the slab up to the right until a steep move leads to a rounded bollard. Move right and step down to belay on easier-angled rock.
- (2) 35 feet. 4c. Move awkwardly round a rib to gain the next slab on the right, then up easily to a ledge. Pull leftwards across the final wall to the top.

First ascent: June, 1977. P. Littlejohn, I. Peters.

## PEDN MEN DU — SENNEN

**White Man's Burden.** 65 feet. Very Severe.

Start: At the steepest part of the wall midway between Africa Route and Double Overhang.

- (1) 65 feet. 5a. Climb the wall on very small holds to the ledge at 15 feet. Step right and climb the overhanging scoop right of Double Overhang direct to the belay spike (45 feet). Finish as for Double Overhang (20 feet).

First ascent: June, 1976. D. Roscoe, P. Temple.

## LAND'S END — HOTEL BUTTRESS

**Aberdeen Angus.** 75 feet. Hard Very Severe.

The left hand of two obvious vertical cracks forty yards right of Capillary Cracks is climbed direct. 5b.

First ascent: August, 1977. R. Abbas, T. Mawer.

## LAND'S END

**Longships Wall**

Climbed without aid sling, sustained at 5c plus.

June, 1977. P. Littlejohn, I. Peters.

**Antenna.** 85 feet. Extremely Severe.

- (1) 85 feet. 5c. Climb Longships Wall for 25 feet, traverse left to the higher of two overhangs in the left edge of the wall, and continue in a direct line to the top via a short wide crack.

First ascent: June, 1977. P. Littlejohn, I. Peters.

**Parasite**

Climbed completely without pegs at E2, 5b.

First ascent: August, 1977. P. Littlejohn, D. Roberts.

**Witch Hunt.** 120 feet. Extremely Severe. (E2).

Start: As for Black Power.

- (1) 120 feet. 5c. Climb to the small ledges, then follow a thin crack diagonally left to the chimney of Backlash. Climb the shallow chimney, past a difficult section in cracks above, until a good horizontal crack cuts right across the buttress 25 feet from the top. Step left and make a hard move up a blind crack to reach a flake crack on the right, above which another move gains the top.

First ascent: August, 1977. P. Littlejohn, D. Roberts.

**Voices.** 100 feet. Extremely Severe. (E2).

Start: As for Parasite.

- (1) 100 feet. 5b. Climb diagonally left to the groove of Parasite then pull left onto the wall and up steep cracks until a few feet below the overhang. Move right and up into the chimney beside this, climb it for 10 feet, then step left above the overhang to a good small foothold. Climb directly up the face to a line of handholds, move up at their left-hand end, and continue up the cracked face on the right on to the top. Belay well back.

First ascent: August, 1977. P. Littlejohn, D. Roberts.

**The Time Lord.** 100 feet. Hard Very Severe.

- (1) 100 feet. 5a. Follow Zawn Face Route along the stomach traverse and up the groove for a few feet, swing right, and follow the obvious line of flakes to the top.

First ascent: April, 1977. P. Rigg, K. Marsden, N. Metcalfe.

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**IN PREPARATION**

South East England.

Ogwen (Idwal and Tryfan).

At grips with Quassar

*Photo : Chris Griffiths*





Nectar, H.X.S., Stanage, climber Chris Gore

*Photo : Chris Griffiths*







