

**THE
CLIMBERS' CLUB
JOURNAL**

1981

THE CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL

Edited by
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	Page
Life in the Fast Lane Dave Cuthbertson	1
A Glittering Diamond Trevor Jones	8
Fictions Jim Perrin	12
The Ascent of Bunk Three Geoff Milburn	16
Right Wall. . . Only the Best Route in Wales Mike Owen	20
Some Aspects of the Mallory Legend Herbert Carr	23
The Great Escape Tony Husbands	26
A Soft Man's Lament Ben Smith	33
Evening Walk—Bosigran M.S. Binnie	35
We're Just Having Fun John Harwood	36
A Week at the Lizard Rev. C.A. Johns	41
Graduation Ceremony Dave Hope	48
Claws H.R.C.C. & G.M.	52
Kerry Clifford Fishwick	58
Far Out Man Ian Smith	61
Landscape with Figures Jim Perrin	63
Women—Ten Years On	67
Edwardian Eccentric H.R.C. Carr	68
A Loft of Journals Dave Gregory	71
1919—C.F. Holland's Year H.R.C. Carr	75
Trilogy Geoff Milburn	81
Reserve De Neouvielle, Pyrenees J.G.R. Harding	87
Digging is a Holesome Pleasure Geoff Birtles	96
Top Roping and Soloing on Sandstone Les. Holliwell	100
Obituary: Lord Nick Percy	108
D. Gordon Tinning	110
R.D.S. Carpendale	111
H. D. Greenwood	111

Roger Stokes	111
Dave Edwards	112
Officers and Officials of the Club	114
Editorial	115
Reviews	117
Expedition and Area Notes	133
New Climbs 1981: North Wales, Pembroke, Cornwall	147

‘The Committee proposes and the Editor of the Bulletin does his best; but he would impress upon members that unless they really desire to have the Bulletin written almost entirely by himself, a singularly unlikely assumption, they must provide him with material for his pages.’

C.C. Bulletin, April 1920.

‘As usual the Editorial task of discovering the more noteworthy achievements of members has been rendered extremely difficult by what they call modesty, but he knows to be idleness.’

C.C. Bulletin, May 1932.

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

DAVE CUTHBERTSON

My pals at work, being typical laymen, ask me when I'm going to write a book on climbing. They don't see much of me, or the boss says that he doesn't. Mind you, 1980 was a good year, ambitions came and went, all the Ron's ticked, and early successes on Pavey Ark, where an encouraging crowd of C.C. members hurled abuse until I'd done the tricky crux of Risus. Thanks lads. Then on to settle an old score, Fernhill on Cratcliffe. Trevor's and Derek's performance somewhat overshadowed mine, but I was happy.

But more was to come! Returning to Wales, Memory Lane fell at last, and Slake Direct started to feel easy, after the tenth ascent.

While doing Totalitarian on Raven Crag, Thirlmere, we had the privilege of watching a modern young tiger on Creation, 6a with several harder moves. As we watched, he turned to his second, whilst pausing on the crux, and spoke harshly to himself: "Come on! All kinds of shit have been up here!" Then whooosh! He was up. Very impressive. Afterwards, I chatted with him and learnt that he was coming down to Wales to work. We agreed to meet to do some climbs.

Some reunion! The first a Friday after work, Foil, then The Thing! It didn't stop there. Hard route followed hard route until the weather broke at the end of May. In between, a couple of interesting routes at Pembroke. They say one of them remains unrepeatable and its not because there's too much else to do.

Just before the rain came, Alan and I had an evening on the Clog, doing alternates on Great Wall; simply fantastic to polish off a dream.

Then the rain came, but fortunately I was now on a different tack. Pete Alison and I had agreed to have another go at the big 'E'. We'd been on it together in '74 but the weather had turned us back. Since then snow and helicopters had kept the most sought after summit

from my grasp. But this year I was really keen. Who wouldn't be after four goes? We even put our departure date back for two weeks after a warning from Pat, that the snow was too thick everywhere.

When we arrived in Grindelwald the scene was perfect, weather great, not too much snow on the face and icefields looking in good nick. It was too good to miss. So with a perfect forecast for the Monday and Tuesday, we left everyone noshing Sunday lunches, and approached a face we couldn't even see, hidden in thick clag. A conventional start this; 2.30 p.m. with plan A, to reach the Swallow's Nest and get a good bivy. Conditions were good, not too wet. The Hinterstoisser a little damp, but no ice, so we were in good time at the nest.

Plan B; have the nosh, hope the clouds lift, and push on in the evening to somewhere around the bottom of the Second Icefield, the idea being to climb the slabs above the ice hose while wet and not in the morning when they were icy.

Suddenly, around 6.0 p.m., the murk lifted and the upper part of the face was exposed, basking in the evening sun. Off we shot up the First Icefield, bypassing the Ice Hose by the rock pitch on its left, then off up the wet slabs, towards the Second Icefield. Our hunch had paid off, no stonefall, and all that we had were V. Diff. slabs.

I got to about five feet from the Second Icefield when we decided to pack it in for the day. I fixed the rope to the highest peg, then ran back down the rope to Pete's belay ledge—a little cramped and damp, but apart from the shivers we passed the night O.K.

Up at 4.30, off for 5.30 and hand over hand up the rope. Now with crampons on the icy rock, but alright with a hand rail. The weather was perfect, but cold enough to cause some delay in getting the frozen rope to run.

We were pitching up easy ice by 7.30 a.m. and were able to motor on with the famous landmarks in our sights. We hit Death Bivy at about 10.0 a.m. and stopped for an early lunch. Pete and I hadn't spoken much since the start, but now, all was falling into place, and after twenty years for Pete and four attempts for me, that's what we wanted. Here we could relax a little, chat and look around. Lots of junk here: tin cans, gear, gaz cylinders, bits of rope etc. I'd always wanted to write a book and call it 'My Climbs in the Slag Heaps of the Alps'. Here we were in the biggest. Still put these thoughts behind; we'd hung around long enough. 11.0 a.m. and onto the Third Icefield. It amazed us how long two pitches took us. Almost

noon and onto The Ramp—a little different than when I was last here. No six-foot drifts this time, just icy rocks, all O.K. until the wet chimney, like Ivy Sepulchre only this time with crampons on. Desperate. After a struggle I led my hard pitch, then Pete led his. Only the ice bulge to go now then we'd be out of The Ramp. BUT, someone had other ideas. It seemed like buckets of rocks being emptied above the ice bulge.

It was getting on for 3.0 p.m. and we weren't going to sit and wait. I got onto the Ramp ice field and dived for the belay just above. The easy part done! Then Pete ran the gauntlet to the exit. I followed as fast as I could. The Brittle Ledges at last. I sort of knew how Pete was feeling—having already been through the stages of being so high. What a thrill to get out of The Ramp and onto the final stages. Weather still perfect. We thought about the top but guessed we were a bit optimistic. Anyway we pushed on—no stonefall here. I wanted to lead the brittle crack but it wasn't so easy and a little engineering (tut! tut!) was needed to get started, the going made a bit more tricky with crampons on. How I looked forward to some dry rock.

The top of the crack and we could look across the Traverse of the Gods—more like a narrow ledge this time. Still tricky though and made even more scary when rocks with an 'Alison' painted on thudded on their first bounce to hit the ground next five thousand feet below.

We weren't being fooled this time. 5.00 p.m. on the traverse meant at the latest 6.00 p.m. in The Spider. Who knows where we could get to?

Racing across the loose rock we stepped onto The Spider. "Wonder if I can find my ice axe from last year?" Moving across a little black ice, relief came in the shape of good neve in the middle (just like the book says).

Having spent some time looking up before, I knew the proper exit crack and three pitches of easy ice landed us in that spot. It was nearing half past seven by the time we'd done two more pitches and the light was definitely going. We cleared a narrow matchbox, pegs in situ, so someone had kipped here before. Duvets on, we settled down to a chilly meal.

Next morning we had a late start (6.30) as there were some peculiar clouds around, but we'd go out fighting from here. First the quartz crack though.

Surprise, surprise, just like being at the 'Madoc. A little harder because of the crampons but straightforward and without much verglas.

We shot along a bit of rope and passed the Corti bivvy so fast all I could do was think to myself, "What a place to spend Whit-week". Then down the rope into the exit couloir. Up this we climbed, swinging leads as always. A little icy, but mostly like being in Western Gully in summer, with crampons. The face was giving in slowly and by 10.00 a.m. we stood on the ridge. I changed my film to colour, to catch the sun, then it was just plodding. No Ian Clough stuff here. Pitching up ankle deep snow for what seemed like ages, we finally shed some gear at 11.00 a.m. and carefully rounded a few rocks to the top. A few photos (by God, I'd earned them), a few minutes rest to let the situation sink in, then off down to beer, steaks and our pals who could only say, "Thank goodness you've done it; now we can get some peace!"

For some unknown reason the rest was an anti-climax. Half of the Schmidt Route on the Matterhorn until the wind forced us on to the Solvay Hut, a rapid six hours on Le Courtes, Swiss Route, and off home to the Pad and the missus.

Back home I met Ronnie Dutton, who earlier had asked me to join him on a rock—this one being Gibraltar! It now sounded very good. What a contrast to the North Wall stuff. I could take the family and even got Pete involved too. Events however were catching up with me: I'd forgotten all about the B.M.C. trip to the Vercors—I'd applied to go on that trip before going to Grindlewald.

I hadn't been back a week when there was a letter saying I'd been accepted on the joint French/British meet. This event wasn't to be missed lightly so I worked things out. The only hassle was that I'd have to leave the French trip a day before everyone else and get back to Gatwick Airport, meet up with the Gib team and fly over on the Sunday morning at 8.00 a.m. Well I couldn't say no, and as we arrived in Presles, in Patrick Cordier's beat up old waggon, I was about to start a fantastic week of rock climbing.

With Cordier, Lauron Jacob (he'd led Separate Reality just two weeks before), Benedict and Xavier, versus Bonny, Janine, Alan, Mark, Fiona, Henry and myself, the scene was set. Although outnumbered, they were playing at home, in the 90s, on 1,000 foot 5b/5cs every day. But we did alright and kept our heads high.

Opp: Dave 'Smiler' Cuthbertson with Don Whillans celebrating on top of the Rock of Gibraltar.

Photo: R.A.F.

Centrespread left: The summit of the Eiger.

Photo: Dave Cuthbertson.



LONDON

MILES

1300

FEET

SICK BAY

Haig
Scotch Whisky

Haig
Scotch Whisky







Apart from the climbing, the scene at Patrick's farmhouse where we were staying was fantastic. He'd converted a huge barn into a palace deep in the woods, close to the end of the Roches de Presles. Good wine. . . good company. . . brilliant days on the rocks doing hard rock routes. . . it mustn't end. But I had to be in Gatwick on time as I had the passport for the family (Gulp).

After the big 'E', getting back on time wasn't too much trouble. I almost got waylaid by the Alpine Sports team in London—something about a party at Tiger Mick's. Not to be swayed I left The Queens in Maider Vale at 10.00 p.m. and got to Gatwick in time for a few hour's kip near the departure lounge.

Everyone was assembled at 6.30 a.m.: Whillans and wife, Ron and wife, Ben and wife, Smiler and family, Ken and Pete. A motley crew indeed! A quick coffee and we were in the air. We touched down, or should I say clawed to a halt, once the wheels were on the runway, the shortest strip I'd seen.

Our host, Major Bonser of the 2nd Battalion Light Infantry, greeted us and we were soon settling into our army accommodation on the picturesque southern side of Gibraltar, overlooking North Africa. In temperatures in the eighties the place was idyllic.

The climbers sussed out the rock face the next day—1,300 feet of white limestone, shattered at the bottom but looking better higher up. We selected three lines which we reckoned would go, the three teams being: Don, myself and Dave, an army officer; Ben, Marion and Adrian, a Gibraltar; and finally Pete, Ron and Ken, our team photographer.

Don and I had been to the Alps too many times to miss the obvious curving line on the left hand side of the face. Ben chose an initial buttress on the right side but the upper section looked harder. Pete's line looked uncompromising throughout, but it was right in the middle of the face.

The afternoon wore on and drinks in a bar followed a little sightseeing and we ended the day feeling content. Back in the hut we sorted out the gear and retired early.

A dawn rise got us to the foot of the face, together with a few photographers, at 7.00 a.m. Half an hour later I set off on our line and fairly loose but easy pitches soon pulled us ahead of the climbers on the right. My original hope of completing the face in one day was quite possible. I based this assumption on the length and severity of

Centrespread right: Mark Savage on the upper part of the Diamond Buttress, Mount Kenya.

Photo: Trevor Jones.

Opp: Looking down the crux of the Diamond Buttress.

Photo: Trevor Jones.

the Vercors routes. If I could do 1,000 feet of 5b in eight hours then we ought to get up this in plenty of time, but I hadn't reckoned on my team.

The line we were on had been tried before by a Spanish team but the attempt had ended in a miniature international incident, when one of the Spaniards fell off and broke a leg. A helicopter lift off provided a relief for the Spaniards and the Gibraltar officials, thankful that the face had escaped the Spanish conquest!

We passed the odd Spanish peg here and there and a key pitch, leading back into the middle of the left hand side of the face, proved to be a 5b clean as you go pitch; quite hard! Slowly the heat of the day wore off but my team was slowing down. Don was doing pretty well considering that it was his first long route for a few years. I don't think that Dave had ever done a route as hard or as long before.

We were miles ahead of the teams over on the right—they seemed to have converged onto one route and the climbing was probably harder than on ours. Even so we were going to be pushed to get to the top before dark. The pitches were easing off more and more and I could afford to run the ropes out while Don brought Dave up. The young officer was very tired by now but Don used all the experience of thirty years of hard climbing and was still O.K. Major Bonser shouted encouragement from the R.A.F. station on the summit. His question about a possible bivouac was given a short, harsh reply. I wore shorts and T-shirt, Don and Dave had long trousers, but I had the rucksack with a handy Whillans bivy sheet sewn in. Around 200 feet from easy ground a gendarme on the approach to the summit ridge proved the killer. In the gloom I groped round it trying to find something solid to abseil the thirty feet or so to the col. After that it appeared, there was one more V.S. pitch then 200 or 300 feet of scrambling to the top. There was little chance and rather than push the boat out we used the final glimmer of light to sort out a rough platform on which to bivouac. We passed the night chatting, shivering, eating our divided portions of kit-kat, more shivering, until at first light, or maybe it was just a glimmer over eastern Spain, the resemblance of light was enough to get me going. Just after 8.00 a.m. I pulled over the man-made section onto the R.A.F. yard, to the welcome of about twenty photographers, newspaper men, army and R.A.F. personnel. The champagne corks popped and I was

soon reeling, happy to be led into an R.A.F. hut where steak, bacon and eggs suddenly appeared. We almost dozed off in the car on the journey back to the hut.

The fortune of the rest of the climbers wasn't so good. Sure enough, Pete and team had merged with Ben, the left hand route being very dangerous. Ben's route, although also loose, provided a line, climbable at least up to halfway, where the well-known tunnels in the rock face provided the six with their ticket to habitation for the night.

As we drove down the mountain we learned that Ken and Ron had retired gracefully, not being quite as used to the standard of the route. Adrian however had been hit by a large rock, which glanced off Marion's helmet and broke his arm—so he was also out.

While my team relaxed, Ben, Marion and Pete struggled on in deteriorating weather and finally reached the top around 6.00 p.m. The job was done and we found that we'd hit the headlines—nothing was too much for us. Drinks with the Governor of Gib. Official reception with the Ministry of Tourism, television and radio interviews, Army Mess parties, R.A.F. Mess parties, and even a trip round H.M.S. Invincible, the world's most modern ship, carrying six jump jets, the pilots of two of these getting drunk with us one night.

Thursday to Saturday followed in a similar glorious fashion, each day usually ending in a shopping trip down 'main street'—no V.A.T. here.

Here I was, saying it again. "It mustn't end." We flew back into a cold, damp London and the weary team hit Llanberis at midnight. Back to work tomorrow; it seems like someone's put the brake on the life in the fast lane. Mind you the year hasn't finished yet!

A GLITTERING DIAMOND

TREVOR JONES

The Diamond Couloir splits Batian and Nelion summits with dazzling white cleavage and hunched up on its left like a sick elephant is the Diamond Buttress. Two thousand feet of something special, which I often thought about going to work on the train, especially when it crossed the Mersey with the low hills of Derbyshire beyond, which paradoxically triggered off longings for the remoteness of Kenya's mountain and its rock temptresses.

When there is a climb or a mountain that you want to do, the route description is read over and over again; so it was with this one with its out of date guidebook and out of focus pictures. An out of focus President looked many times out of the bedroom window and thought of the hideous first attempt when I broke every Alpine Climbing Group rule. This resulted in me lying face down on hard African wooden hut boards after going from 5,000 to 15,000 feet in a day. Tilman said, "Too old at fifty for mountains", I wondered was he right? Certainly it was 5,000 feet higher than I had ever been on hard rock before, but like Menlove Edwards I picked up my pride and went to climb with Mark Savage, the East Africa express—a sort of 10,000 metre runner in P.A.s. Fourteen routes later (with two new ones) after two breathless weeks I had lost half a stone of lard and felt an indefinable flow that shouldn't have been there in January. But the cliffs of Lukenya, Embaribal, Ndaya did the trick and KICHWE TEMBO too, where there was the added treat of a charging hippopotamus which took one look at me and jumped into a river.

From Naro Moru river lodge I went to the meteorological station at 10,000 feet and there felt heart bumps and breath catches which signify altitude—then slowly again into the valley and took Stonewall Jackson's advice, crossed the river and rested under the last few trees. Then up to the aptly named Black Hole bivouac—just two sheets of corrugated iron, wedged under an enormous boulder—a typical Climbers' Club hut.

Late the first afternoon we chopped steps up the three hundred-foot icy approach to the Diamond Buttrass, then felt cold rock and fixed two ropes for the next day. Coming down Mark dislodged a big rock. Bigger and bigger bounces. . .hissing louder and louder. . .and ice chips too. . .A real bone breaker. . .so I kept my eye on it till it was ten feet away and fortunately jumped the right way as it smashed by, a good ten inches (0.255 metres for Peak District climbers. Ed.) from me and clattered angrily into the depths of the bergschrund below.

Back in the bivouac there were agonising decisions to be made. Boots and/or P.A.s? Crampons? Yes of course the sleeping bag . . .ice-axe. . .and torch. The nights are twelve hours long, so gloves as well. . .and. . .and. . .What's forgotten? I wished I'd had Bob Allen's list with everything ticked off, then I worried about being up to the route and its altitude, and then finally a haze and sleep.

Next morning we stumbled into crisp darkness, crunched ice crystals up the chopped ice steps to cold hand-numbing rock which was immediately steep. Finger hacking, then big pulls for a ponderous belly led to roof after little roof. Beanpole Mark confidently levitated up his pitches. Then while hauling the sack it got stuck like a wet sheep under all the overhangs, while straps flapped stupidly as we tugged and tugged. The first part of the route was just under a thousand feet up a big corner like a Dolomite Philip Flamm which just relented but got steadily harder to the crux wall.

My turn and the crux looked hard and intimidating. A crack on the right closed up after twenty feet into blankness. . .No, not that way. On the left an overhanging flake with no footholds which accepted a number three Friend into its juicy depths, then by taking tension on the red rope I felt the good flake edge. It was the sort of flake that hand bites for joyful laybacking. That is if you are at Stanage and two hundred feet above sea level. (It seems that Stanage has sunk some 1,300 feet. Ed.) not at 15,000 feet and gasping. Two moves up the flake and I swung slowly into the line of the flake to a fist jam locked off and a bent left foot. The flake wouldn't take runners either. A line of disconnected, poor handholds made a logical sweep to a grudging groove that opened and shut and barely took two fingers at a time and the rope hung elegantly down in a big curve to the one runner far below.

A sprouting peg only in an inch and just out of reach, so I sweated and wondered if I would fall. The Mountain Rescue would have had to come up and over Nelion, to the Gate of the Mists, down Batian and down the route—only there's no Mountain Rescue in Kenya—so breath holding and up to the peg, which bent as I pulled on it; but a tight rope and an edge five feet right led onto a ledge in the sunshine and safety. The sack stuck again and again and wouldn't move and fingers cramped up with the frenzied tugging until it finally came free. When Mark came up he stopped at the hard bit and didn't like it, but then he isn't a gritstone climber because there isn't any in Kenya.

We felt drowsy and ate some food below a superb unclimbed Anglesey-looking corner. I felt the new route urge swell but Savage wouldn't have it because it wasn't on the route, so mumbling I went up disconnected ledges on the left to a pillar where we couldn't find the route and it became overhanging. Clouds came in, sleet too, as Mark struggled up a vicious overhanging corner that became a gutter down which the sleet poured. It was 5 o'clock with an hour's daylight left; in difficulties and shivering, wet white knuckles tried to grip frozen pegs.

But someone above must have liked us; a big ledge appeared like a Hilton hotel—a good fifteen feet by five feet and the only one of its size we'd seen on the route. Under a large rock lay an enormous, folded plastic sheet left by Spaniards who had done a first ascent two years before (on a route to the left of ours, which touched the Diamond Buttress at the ledge). We knocked a dozen pegs in the overhang above and clipped in the plastic sheet which whiplashed in the wind. The sleet was outside our cosy hovel while in our sleeping bags frozen toes and fingers felt the tingling of re-circulation. I closed my eyes for a few moments and woke up to red streaks in the sky. Ten hours sleep; even better than the forced bivouac on the ice of the Ailefroide Glacier where I'd snored all night and kept everyone awake.

Very faintly and distantly, but quite distinctly, Kilimanjaro was clear, two hundred miles away—the longest line of sight in the world—and memorably unforgettable. We stamped around the ledge and packed up, then Mark went up a steep, easy, snow-covered wall onto steep and sunny slabs; rock with the chill already off. We were level with the final Diamond Glacier with its festoons of

icy stalactites hard up against the Nelion head wall. The slabs kept narrowing until a ledge led to the cold, shadowy west ridge. . .still Very Severe. Open diedres with big blocks supported by gritty pebbles except the odd one that could be pushed off, that seconds later created sparks and sulphurous smells as it angrily bounced down the glacier far below.

Up onto the spiky crest to the sun again and still four rope lengths to the top. Head splitting with pain and mouth parched, I started to lose co-ordination. Then the tired joy of lying amongst the summit blocks of Nelion. . .no more sleet or laybacks. . .or cruxes far above. Adrenalin flowed away and with it went apprehension and fear. There was still the well-named Gate of the Mists to cross—only a Scottish Grade III slope. I carelessly swung the ice-axe which promptly bounced off and sliced cleanly through the middle left finger to the bone, and soon copious blood stuck all the fingers together. Despite this we finally reached the shiny, aluminium Lobonar bivouac on the summit of Nelion where a hissing stove provided warm, strength-giving soup. Just twelve remaining abseils back to the glacier below, then back through the rain forest to the liquid sound of the rain birds.

An account of an ascent of the Diamond Buttress, Batian, Mount Kenya. Graded E.D. it is about 2,500 feet from the bergschrund to the summit of Batian.

FICTIONS

JIM PERRIN

My theme is the complex interdependence between the imaginary and the real. However much we may structure our approaches to experience, from individual to individual the approaches will vary. Likewise the moment when the apprehended is projected into reality will vary in the degree to which we commit ourselves as vehicles of expression. There is a vital dimension of approach. St. Augustine defines it thus:

'Who can deny that things to come are not yet?
Yet already there is in the mind an expectation
of things to come.'

What happens within this dimension is unique in every person, though curious patterns will recur. Let me take one such pattern and ally it to my theme.

It is a matter for very considerable doubt whether Cesare Maestri and Toni Egger climbed Cerro Torre. There is scarcely any doubt that Keith McCallum did not climb many of the routes he reported in 1967. More recently, Gary Gibson's account of *Big Bug* was certainly false. The people concerned have each been pilloried for their claims, but the issue at point is not so simplistic as that of telling lies. Each of these men researched their stories more or less exhaustively, studied their putative ascents from greater or lesser distances and, we must presume, believed more or less in their own accounts. In Maestri's case, the fiction was even re-written and enacted at a later date. In all these instances, the primary stage of the ascent, the imaginative apprehension of the climb, was not at fault. Where the faults occurred, and faults they undoubtedly were, was in the dimension of approach. The 'expectation of things to come' worked upon their minds perhaps in such a way as to inhibit commitment to creating in actuality the ascents of their imagination. Their fictions thus did not through their own actions comprehend reality. In this they came quite close to the collective fictions of inadequacy which each generation of climbing creates in





order to sustain the sport's momentum. Clogwyn Du'r Arddu alone has seen at least three such: the Master's Wall was beyond the reach of Joe Brown, though he probed at it. Peter Crew, of the next generation, climbed it after the fashion of the times, and then created his own mischievous fiction of inadequacy in *The Final Judgement*, the name of which alone strives after Apocalypse. Recently this has been climbed, as *Psychokiller*, by Ron Fawcett, and Fawcett's generation has its own fiction of inadequacy in the right-hand route on Great Wall attempted by John Redhead. Each of these in a sense is a measuring of ourselves against the 'expectation of things to come'. Each poses questions: can a climb exist, fictively, before it is co-erced into some kind of reality? Or indeed, can it ever exist in any sense beyond that of individual fictive consummation? St. Augustine again:

'True then it is that man is purged by none but the "beginning", but this "beginning" is by them too variably taken'.

The process is interesting. We are continually affronted by the exigence of reality. Against isolation, we set partnership; against time, regeneration; against our own inconsequentiality, we set the fiction of heroism. Fictive heroes each of us, asserting our adequacy, our consequence, in the face of loss and decay. Climbing provides an opportunity, a hollow marvel, for this. Let me take an example from my own experience; not a deeply significant or a traumatic one, but more in the way of everyday process. When I first saw South Stack's Red Wall, in the mid-1960's, I did not think at first ever to climb upon it. It filled me with terror when I projected myself imaginatively upon it. But very soon, within weeks or months, I had created for myself the fiction of climbing it. This fiction was, more or less, my way of apprehending the contingencies of a sustained steepness, looseness, difficulty of access, intricacy and exposure beyond my experience in climbing at that time. As the mere fiction it was insufficient, its role being no more than one of imaginative acclimatization. But it was a transitional phase, a step leading across to its own transmutation into a moment of time—something close to Wallace Stevens' concept of a Supreme Fiction—something which I would call a consummate fiction. Which is what I want to consider—the climb as consummate fiction—a fiction made perfect by each one of us in its enactment. And a compulsion to experience,

as I was compelled, within months of first seeing it, to climb on Red Wall.

Time is important to the argument that a climb cannot exist except as a type of fiction. The poetic metaphor's meaning expands in the resonance set up between object and context. For the climber, he makes himself the object, the climb is his context, and memory supplies the resonance. The perspective opens out, the contexts recede, memory drives the point home:

'Truly, though our element is time,
We are not suited to the long perspectives
Open at each instant of our lives.
They link us to our losses. . .'

(Philip Larkin)

I have jumped rather too quickly here from the prologue to conclusion. My thesis is that the fiction, the first stage, is so constructed as to apprehend experience and allow us to engage with it, in the process of which engagement is 'too variably taken', or even not taken at all. In others, perhaps even the majority, the fictionalizing element continues beyond the moments of engagement. We conceptualize about the events which have taken place, we fine them down into more perfect versions than the records would allow. The practice is widespread, and even where it is not blatantly pursued, we still create the conditions for our own fictions—we garden, rehearse, rig, bolt.

And then, we climb. It is so brief, this experience of climbing. When we have primed ourselves with imagination, in which process our imagined ultimate victory is concomitant, when we have waited and plotted, created or happened upon the conditions for a successful engagement, when we have stalked through the dimension of approach and arrived at the central experience, then, in all probability, it distils down to a few crucial moves before the assurance of conquest.

And afterwards, what? Ecstasy? Increased self-assurance? Gratified desire? Or something more nearly allied to post-coital melancholy? Thus Tilman, on top of Nanda Devi:

'After the first joy in victory came a feeling of sadness
that the mountain had succumbed, that the proud head of
the goddess was bowed.'

The proud head, of course, is not bowed. All that has happened is

that, for once, imagination, action, and context have conjoined and we have nowhere left to go. So we start afresh, of necessity. We create new fictions, for their enactment, all too briefly, takes us out of time to fix us in time. Though they compel us, we are to some extent their masters. We sketch out their lineaments, we tailor them to our muscle, we abate their power as our own faculties fail. Ultimately, perhaps, we allow them to move completely beyond ourselves and bequeath them, as fictions of inadequacy, to coming generations. To whom, also the record of our consummate fictions is there to be read. Spots of time, peculiar to ourselves, yet catalogued, accessible to others' re-enactments. Climbs, stories, lies, aspirations, hallucinations, heroic acts:

'The generations of men run on in the tide of Time,

But leave their destin'd lineaments permanent for ever and ever.'

(William Blake)

Out there, in the night, in the rain, the cliffs drip and lour. Their climbs are graffiti on the walls of our minds; attempts to apprehend, to define, to control, to bring solace. Shall the sun shine tomorrow, or shall it be colder? Shall I be strong tomorrow, or shall I be older? Fictions, friends, creations. Thanks for the memory. Transmutations; gold or basic metal, let it at least have been real, etched sharp in every detail, expected, created, lived through, and not forgotten. Each one of them an act of good faith, almost a prayer.

THE ASCENT OF BUNK THREE

GEOFF MILBURN

Only very recently, when the true facts became known, the climbing world was staggered by an unprecedented event which took place in North Wales. Unbelievably Ynys Ettws was the scene of a potentially serious fall during an enforced night ascent of the multi-topped Bunk Peak. On reflection it is extremely lucky that no C.C. member or guest has so far sustained multiple, fatal, or even worse injuries on this harrowing and unprotected 'killer peak'.

Under the prevalent and lethal conditions at the time, which are so typical of the summer monsoon period in North Wales' huts—hot—humid—windless—disgustingly smelly—and in total darkness, such a foolhardy attempt was totally unjustifiable.

This solo, non-sight ascent which was to leave the leading climbers of the day gasping (they say that Ron Fawcett was utterly speechless for minutes on end) was for the record done barefoot, in underpants and without even a hint of chalk. The only actual aid employed on the route was from one of the upright corner posts and the accident certainly occurred only because the left hand upright was not 'in situ' when I unfortunately made a wild and uncontrolled grab for it. Some might consider that a previous daylight inspection of the pitch, although not exactly ethical, might have been advisable.

Having fallen down the East Face Route for some distance accompanied by loud crashings and bangings I eventually landed on a large ledge at ground level. As I fell time stood still and Joe Brown's whole life passed before my eyes. Having reached the present day I had just started on the life of Whillans when the cold concrete floor brought me back to my senses. Writhing in agony I could only marvel that I was still alive and had incurred no legal responsibilities by injuring any other parties during my headlong flight.

It was impossible to move until the string of curses from the indifferent occupants of the room had subsided into more uniform snoring. Cocooned in their expensive down bags the bodies were oblivious to my plight and the only way out was to fend for myself for a change. It did occur to me that a night out even at that altitude might well prove fatal and in desperation I considered feeling around for a female form on one of the bottom bunks so that I could slide in beside her (It is a well known fact that the female body can withstand extremely cold conditions during storms).

Even a cursory glance at the signing in book of that period will reveal who was present on that fateful night and furthermore why such an action on my part could not be contemplated. Imagine the shock and horror of coming to grips with Chris Gibb to say nothing of. . . No I just can't bear to think of it, the pain is just too much. After a further exploratory feel of myself—to make certain that I was still functioning properly—I renewed the attack.

On the second assault I was prepared and while gaining height rapidly fate took a turn for the better, in the shape of a foot protruding from the middle bunk (Note: this foothold has since disappeared!), which provided the means to allow progress to the finishing mantelshelf. As the substrate of the summit pyramid was somewhat loose only a further desperate lunge across to the edge of a deep crevasse avoided another headlong fall. Collapsing in a nervous and semi-alcoholic heap on the summit plateau I managed to regain the safety of my own sleeping bag.

For the rest of the night I slept fitfully and it was only when the first cold rays of the dawn struck the buckle of Sheard's rucksack far, far below that I was able to make a more controlled descent to terra firma.

Now it must be plain that such a major catastrophe, which nearly robbed the climbing world of one of its most outstandingly insignificant figures, must not be allowed to happen again. Consequently until the M.L.T.B. has had adequate time to consider the far-reaching ramifications of this episode, which has multi-national significance and could even lead to a seasonal ban on this much sought after peak (to say nothing of the time needed to argue the toss with the B.M.C.) the Committee has reluctantly implemented a temporary and logical system. Please note that this has copyright and must not be infringed by the FRCC, West Col or

any selected climbing guides.

TOP BUNKS—for the technically proficient may be used by: super stars; old timers who need a training routine (provided that they can second Bancroft 5b); non-drinkers who retire early; anxious virgins of either sex; E1 to E7 leaders and all soloing activists; libbers who don't like to have a man on top of them; smokers who like to get high; Ken Wilson and all magazine editors who aspire to get closer to God; rampant snorers and eccentrics such as Jim Moran who possess noisy alarm clocks; gate-crashers and dossers; last but not least Chris Bonnington and all other high altitude snow plodders.

MIDDLE BUNKS—for the elite include: Committee Members, Guide Writers, Hut Custodians and all Honorary Members; experienced climbers not yet in the senile class; Severe to Hard VS leaders (Very Severe (hard) if FRCC); married hard men with wives and countless children to support; honoured guests and Lord Hunt.

BOTTOM BUNKS—our lowest but safest order includes; all senior citizens, pensioners, Dennis Gray and other BMC officials; has beens; leaders up to V.Diff. and seconds who NEVER lead; sleepwalkers; errant potholers who suffer from vertigo; habitual drinkers who 'needs must' walk in the night; nubile and willing females; peggers and chalk users; streakers and flashers; and lastly all MLC holders who, as such, are neither fit nor sufficiently qualified to ascend any higher.

Al Evans and the Lancashire contingent have advised that permanent belay points should be provided for all top bunk climbers (Rowland Edwards' suggestion of bolts was unceremoniously thrown out), that an abseil rope should be left in position for emergency night descents and that there must be a fixed rope ladder in place for those who are ethically weak. It must be made quite clear that the much talked about recommendation of Doug Scott, our intrepid Himalayan ace, that a set of oxygen equipment should be made easily accessible for top bunkers should now be considered as somewhat out-of-date.

As this new innovation is likely to spread it is anticipated that the Livesey column in C. and R. will become BUNKSCENE. The sleeping problems of climbers will be discussed, the routes in other huts will be reviewed and ethical problems given an airing. We understand that Pete will not be caught napping while on the job

this time. Details of nocturnal first ascents and protectionless night climbs may be sent to Pete's new address which we understand is now somewhere in Bedfordshire.

ON NOMENCLATURE

It was recently reported that the last of the big aid routes in the Pass had fallen to siege tactics by Steve Haston and Leigh McGinley. From its old A2 grade it was to become 'Grind Her' at E5,6b. On further thought it was pointed out that Martin Boysen had suggested that The Wrinkled Retainer at Ogwen (scene of the felled oak tree) should have been called Desecration Crack. The latter name was proposed for the free form of Grinder to point out the number of excessive pegs which had been used by a certain climber in the Pass in the 60s. How devious can one get? Eventually both names were discarded in favour of a punk anagram—Red Ring. We are rapidly getting to the stage where naming the routes takes longer than the actual climbing.

Another juicy bit of scandal concerns a route on Drws y Gwynt which was reported in the 1979/1980 C.C.J. It appears that Paul de Mengel who led the route was naive enough to leave the reporting of the route to one James Perrin. Somehow the latter 'accidentally' changed the grade from H.V.S. to E4, 6b and also gave the name of the route as 'Too Hard for Mongols'. Paul, who was somewhat taken aback at this sly tactic, has assured me that the correct and original name really was 'Too Hard For Jim Perrin'. Another new route on the Cromlech, 'The Grim Jim' has also been named after our illustrious Member.

RIGHT WALL. . . ONLY THE BEST ROUTE IN WALES

MIKE OWEN

It was a beautiful Saturday morning in September 1979 and we were up on the Cromlech again. We seemed to go up there a lot that year. But, that day, it was to attempt the route I'd been working for all year. I was quite surprised at myself having gradually ticked off the harder routes in the Pass and having got so far as to contemplate doing Right Wall.

I spent all that week at work psyching up for my attempt. When Saturday arrived I had no excuses. Elaine and I beat Tom Jones and Stevie Haston up to the cliff. It was her encouragement and the sight of them heading up the scree that made my mind up. However, an hour later I was feeling really cheesed off as I'd chickened out at the crozzly spike. I wouldn't commit myself so I lowered off. Somebody stripped my gear, and gave Tommy the all-clear.

An hour and both sides of 'Bat Out of Hell' later my ego was completely shattered. Yes, Tommy was belayed at the top and was bringing up the bionic boy from London who, when he'd stopped shouting, "It's only the best route in Wales", proceeded to follow it in an amazing ten minutes without using his feet.

That night was of the usual Llanberis Saturday night out variety. Mostly everybody got smashed and many magic mushrooms were swallowed; Strappo had told us so much about them—we just had to try them. Alas, I couldn't let myself go with the swinging celebrations as I wanted to be in a fit state for another attempt the following day. Tom was supposed to be hitching to France the next day and Man, was he going to have a hangover!

Sunday dawned very cloudy and windy after a restless night's sleep, so we all went down to Tremadoc, for a change. I spent the whole morning brooding and thinking I'd made the wrong decision to go down there; surely it was bound to clear up in the afternoon. Anyway, that was what mercifully happened. My team pulled out

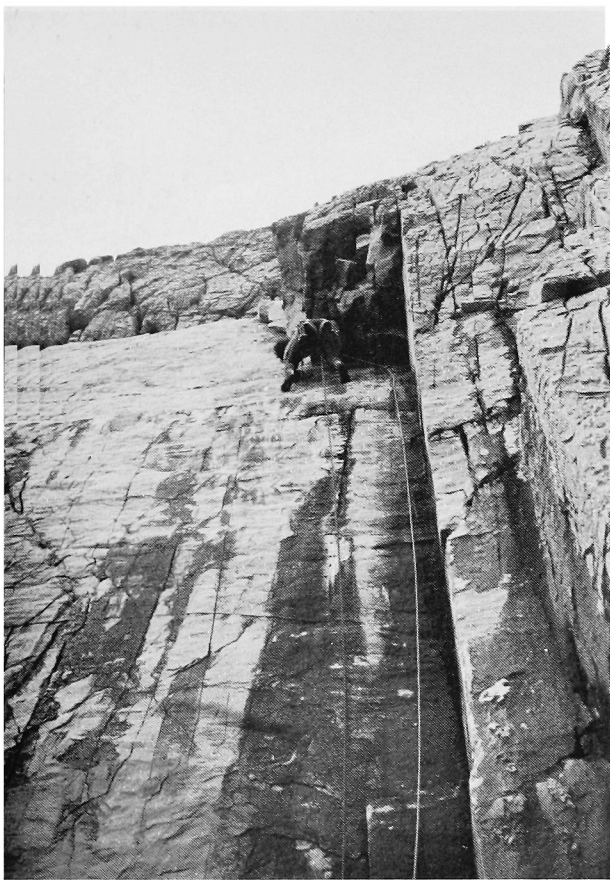




*Left:
Red Slab, Lydstep.
Andy Sharp on the first
ascent.
Photo John Harwood.*



*Right:
Command Performance,
Stennis Ford. Andy Sharp
and Pete Lewis on the first
ascent.
Photo: John Harwood.*



Left:
Pink 'Un, Saddle Head.
Andy Sharp on the first
ascent.
Photo: John Harwood.



Right:
Command Performance,
Stennis Ford. first ascent.
Photo: John Harwood.



and we headed back to the Pass. There we met young Joe Healey who, at seventeen, had done Right Wall a few weeks before. When I said I was *gonna have another go* he promptly announced, "You'll die. . . its got some very hard moves. . . and those above the girdle. . .!"

We arrived at the foot of the Corner after the predictable queue for gearing up space. Hugh was going to do Left Wall with Elaine, but they were third in the queue. Cenotaph and the Gates were taking a steady flow of traffic and we had to wait for the performing abseilers who, for some strange reason, had all decided to come down the line of Right Wall. John got belayed in what seemed seconds and I just had time to ask him if he had a sticht plate, before it was time to start, with much badgering from my team.

After the initial nervousness I soon cooled down and enjoyed the climbing. I was finding it easier than the previous day as I was a lot more relaxed. The first hard section, which is a rightwards ascending traverse on finger pockets after a thin finger change, went fine, despite the fact that it's probably the most serious part, as a fall would mean a 'Desmond Decker'. After that, good runners and a nice ledge to rest on enabled a breather before the crux. I took time to admire the view and noticed the crowd gathering down on the road; what a feeling it was to be on that impossible-looking wall.

I was feeling confident and made the hard balancing moves to the crozzly spike alright, quickly arranged the protection, a tape and hex two and climbed back down for a rest. A deep breath, a shake out of the hands and a dab of chalk, go for it youth, back up to the spike, committed myself and did the moves first time. Everything seemed to flow; a high step, layaway, long reaches on good holds and I was suddenly on the Girdle ledge. The moves were good 5c but quite committing to make, especially as the last runners were on the crozzly. Nagging thoughts of, "I could've done it yesterday".

Another good rest on the Girdle and a couple of excellent hexentrics. I was wondering what the rest would be like—my arms felt quite pumped. John looked very small below, Hugh and Elaine were still third in the queue and somebody was throwing a wobbler on the Gates. I was watching all these happenings in silence when shouts from the road brought me out of my dream—it was Phil, Gaz and Joe. They were all shouting in unison, "*You're gonna die*". I laughed, waved a quick V-sign and started climbing again.

Beautiful climbing on minute incuts took me up to a small niche

fifteen feet above my last runners, where a strenuous layaway on a fingery side hold enabled a high step up to reach good holds and the end of the major difficulties. Above was a hand-traverse, with a good flake for a large tape, which led to the finishing crack near the arete. This felt quite strenuous at the end of one hundred and fifty feet of the best climbing I've ever done.

Hugh was still queuing so he decided to follow; he found it strenuous but had no difficulties. At the top we hardly spoke, it hadn't sunk in yet. We quickly abseiled down and trudged down the scree to the car. John and Elaine congratulated us there. Then Gavin, Strappo and Co. arrived en route for Llanberis; I was elated—it had finally sunk in. Hugh and I glanced up at the Cromlech and smiled, finally relieved. "Yes", we both agreed, "It's only the best route in Wales".

SOME ASPECTS OF THE MALLORY LEGEND

HERBERT CARR

In 1883 W. W. Graham took Swiss guides to India and the history of climbing in the Himalayas began. Previous explorers had penetrated the region as soldiers on military expeditions, with big game hunting on the side, as officers of the Government Survey Department, medical missionaries or members of diplomatic missions.

During the next 72 years, 62 if the war years are left out, to 1955 when the late Professor Kenneth Mason published his classic history of the Himalaya, "The Abode of Snow" (Rupert Hart-Davies, two impressions, though now a quarter of a century out of date, the best book of reference to 1955; fairly expensive in the second hand book market) Mason listed (pp. 346/7) 50 peaks over 25,000 ft., only eight of them had by then been conquered. Surely this speaks for itself and throws the whole pioneer period into true perspective.

On Everest three expeditions were mounted by the British in 1921, 22 and 24, aimed at the N.E. ridge from Tibet.

The achievement of these expeditions was extremely impressive. Indeed 1922, the first full attack, was a triumph for George Finch and his primitive oxygen equipment; in spite of bad weather, he had made an altitude record and had turned back less than 2,000 feet below the summit. In the official record of the expedition Finch wrote a convincing chapter in support of the use of oxygen in Himalayan climbing. He was right in his assertion that it would be used in the conquest of Everest, though this was not a popular view among climbers at that time. However, it convinced Mallory that it would enable him to move faster and thus he was more likely to succeed with it than without it. He made the summit bid from which he did not return on June 8th 1924. On June 16th, Colonel Norton, the leader, was seated in his tent at the Base Camp writing a letter to

Irvine's father. **"In my view, he wrote, they had enough oxygen to enable them to reach the summit: they would have had to descend without oxygen, but this has been proved quite feasible."* In 1922 it had been thought that a man using oxygen at high altitudes would soon collapse and die if and when his supply ran out or failed.

At home Winthrop Young wrote of Mallory "In all probability the first man to tread the world's highest summit". A number of minor prophets raised a chorus of approval. It was so much nicer to believe that victory had come before the fatal fall.

This mood of euphoria did not survive the sequence of failures in the 1930's, and it is easy to see that none of the Everesters present at Tilman's lecture to the R.G.S. in 1939 believed that the summit problem had been solved. Even Odell, who might have been expected to say something about Mallory's chances, seems to have confined himself to contrasting Tilman's Spartan love of cold porridge with memories of the champagne commissariate of 1924. The scepticism is repeated by Lord Hunt in 1953, when, in the early pages of his book, he stresses the great doubt that he and his team faced over the final thousand feet of the climb.

A word was soon in use about Mallory's last climb, which, I submit, should now be used no longer. Mystery. There is no longer any mystery, if we understand by that word, something beyond the compass of the human intellect (e.g. The Mystery of the Incarnation). Since 1953 many climbers have stood on Everest and no relic of the 1924 expedition has been found near the summit. On June 8th 1924 the two men were seen at 12.50 p.m. high up on the N.E. ridge, they did not return to Camp VI. At that date the shelter of a snow hole had not been discovered in high mountaineering. Mason stated that no man could survive a night in the open at great altitudes. They must have died on the 8th, almost certainly by a fall due to exhaustion. Compare the experience of Bourdillon and Evans in 1953 on their ascent of the South summit, a climb of some 3,000 feet, not unlike that which Mallory was attempting.

I must leave it to readers of my book (the IRVINE DIARIES) to examine the grounds on which I base my belief that the summit was not reached in 1924. I could add two pointers. In his letters to his

**Norton had never used the oxygen equipment on a climb and there is no record of any discussion on its capacity to give enough gas for a summit bid. It looks as if Mallory thought six hours would be adequate. No man at that time had any experience of movement at the highest altitudes on Everest without oxygen after a prolonged use of an artificial supply.*

wife towards the end of May, Mallory was clearly uneasy about his physical fitness to make an effective summit bid—and there was also the doubt about Irvine's lack of experience if the route became at all difficult. It cannot escape notice that in the rescue of the porters from Camp IV, Somervell led the very trying and dangerous snow slope below the col which gave success to the operation, this in spite of his acute suffering from a high altitude cough. Norton and Mallory sat below and watched him.

Now in 1981 the climbing of giant mountains has become commonplace: it happens every month, all the year round, year after year, all over the world. It is difficult today to realize how primitive was the equipment, how great the lack of knowledge of those gallant and brave men who were the pioneers of the 1920's.

We now know that the whole of the N.E. ridge (Mallory's proposed route) can be climbed in a straightforward manner without encountering any passage more difficult than those normally found on the popular route from Nepal. It would seem that the second step had been given rather too fierce a character both by Wyn Harris and Laurence Wager in 1933 and by the Chinese in 1975. But the Chinese rope ladder pitch would have turned Mallory back. We now know, whatever the Times and Sunday Times journalists may have suggested, there are no frozen corpses to be found anywhere on the mountain to "prove" that the summit was reached in 1924.

From the start, fate was against the men of the 1924 expedition, but we can now assess their wonderful achievement at its true worth; they were great heroes of an heroic age.

[Note: While on the subject of Everest it is interesting to record that in 1974 a Chinese climber, Wang Kow Po, reported finding an 'English' body in a desiccated form at 26,730 feet. He buried the body and the West did not learn of this discovery until 1979 just before Wang Po lost his life in an avalanche. Leading climbers were certain that it was highly unlikely to be the body of either Mallory or Irvine. Another report said that the Chinese had also found a body at 21,000 feet on their 1960 expedition.]

Even more mysterious was the discovery last year of a woman's high-heeled shoe made of fine brown leather. It was found around 25,000 feet amongst the remains of a British camp along with oxygen gear and tent poles. It dated back to the 1920s/30s. Ed.]

THE GREAT ESCAPE

TONY HUSBANDS

It may seem hard to believe but when I was at Cambridge I never knew there was a Mountaineering Club. I associated mountaineering with people like Smythe and Odell and Mount Everest and not a youth like myself whose only contact with a mountain had been to be taken up Snowdon on a train one very cloudy day.

Robin Plackett was on my staircase but being a year senior I did not really get to know him very well. I hope he will forgive me when I say that, from time to time, someone would mention that he was a climber and this seemed very funny to us. Apart from the fact that it was rumoured he could climb into his room after the gates were locked we couldn't see any point in it. After all it could not be a serious pass time such as rowing was to us with our first boat Head of the River and five Blues in the University VIII. I should have thought it even more of a joke if someone had suggested to me that within five years I would be climbing in the Alps with Robin on a C.C. meet.

Being supposed to have a little knowledge of chemistry and not exactly perfect eyesight I was sent from Cambridge to Runcorn. It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast. Apart from anything else the air at Runcorn had a perpetual odour of leather tanneries and chemicals but there was no point in bothering about that when people were being killed all the time by enemy action.

Paul Burt was one of the chemists. He had been in the C.U.M.C. and was a member of the C.C. As he had no one to climb with he had persuaded John Whittaker to try but they needed someone else as the afternoon shift always caused a problem and one evening when we were on morning, day and night shift respectively they persuaded me to cycle out to Helsby with them.

We did a few easy climbs which I found rather enjoyable and even led a V.Diff. They pointed out a fierce looking crack and said that Menlove Edwards and Colin Kirkus would cycle over from Liverpool and lay back up it. I didn't know who they were but they sounded like super men.

We went again from time to time but they said it was not really like the proper thing in North Wales and John said he would arrange to take me there one week-end if I could get a pair of boots. This was a problem because it meant parting with some clothing coupons for something one could only use a few days each year. Anyway I decided to take the plunge and wrote to Robert Lawrie at Newark to ask if he could help. He wrote back to say that he could make a pair for £4 12 0 (£4.60) and I accepted.

A novice climber was not faced with any problem with regard to equipment. There wasn't any. Lawrie had nailed the boots with something new he had managed to make as nearly as possible like a number 5 Tricouni which he hoped would be an improvement on a clinker. In fact the steel was too soft and they wore down rather quickly.

We were allowed nine days leave each year and on the basis of a 5½ day week (although we always did a full six days minimum 54 hours and 70 hours on the night shift) it meant you couldn't have two weeks holiday a year unless you worked Christmas day and Boxing day which would enable you to have two more days in lieu. Most of us preferred to have one week's holiday and two three day week-ends and one three and a half day week-end. We had a two day week-end every other week-end as the Saturday was taken as the day off at the end of one week and the Sunday as the day off at the beginning of the next week but this wasn't enough time to get to Helyg and back so John and I took a day's leave to make it worth while.

I remember we took a train to Bangor and one from there to Bethesda (who will believe that today?) and after surprisingly managing to get a good lunch at a pub—it should be remembered that food was strictly rationed and 'meals out' were very difficult to get—we pushed our bicycles up the Nant Ffrancon and did one or two climbs on the Milestone before pedalling down to Helyg.

The next day we spent on Tryfan and the day after on Glyder Fawr culminating in a successful ascent of Central Arete (Grade D) which we thought a great achievement considering how desperately cold it

was as it snowed.

After that week-end I thought I ought to try to obtain a rope and there was a rumour that Brigham was occasionally able to supply cotton ropes. Not exactly ideal because to have the necessary strength they had to be about $\frac{3}{4}$ "', say about 18 mm., in diameter but there was nothing else so I wrote to Brigham and he said he would let me know when he could supply one as it might be anything up to a year. I was pleasantly surprised when he wrote about three months later to ask if I would like a 120' rope which would cost £1-15-0. (£1.75).

Glad as I was to have it I can assure younger readers that on wet days it picked up moisture very readily and so it is perhaps not so surprising that when it was wet we seldom climbed anything much harder than Severe because of the sheer weight of the rope at the end of a 100' run out, coupled with the fact that we had no runners. In any case we hadn't any karabiners.

If we didn't feel too happy on wet rocks we sometimes took our boots off and did a bit in socks although this was a last resort as it wore holes in them and that meant using up more clothing coupons to buy new ones. If the rocks were dry we would put on an old pair of gym shoes.

Paul used to say that nice as North Wales was one needed to go to Scotland in winter to get some experience on snow and ice so I put an advert in the North Wales Weekly News for an ice axe. Happily Frank Lockwood saw it and offered to sell me his Simmond for £3 so the next time we went to Helyg we cycled up to his house beside Pen-y-Gwryd and collected it. I still use it occasionally.

We had been working all this time on poison gases and although it was difficult to conceive that there could be anything worse than mustard, which is in fact liquid, rumours were reaching us that there was something infinitely worse and we realised that production was being slowed down although we weren't sure if this was due to the fact that we already had huge stocks and the tanks in the underground stores in the Flintshire hills were getting nearly full to capacity.

Anyway much to my annoyance I was suddenly told I was going to be transferred to Woolwich Arsenal. This meant that I was parted from my friends and put at a still greater distance from the hills and to start off I knew no one.

Opp: Kim Carrigan at work on Cock Block, Clogwyn y Grochan.

Photo: Mike Owen.

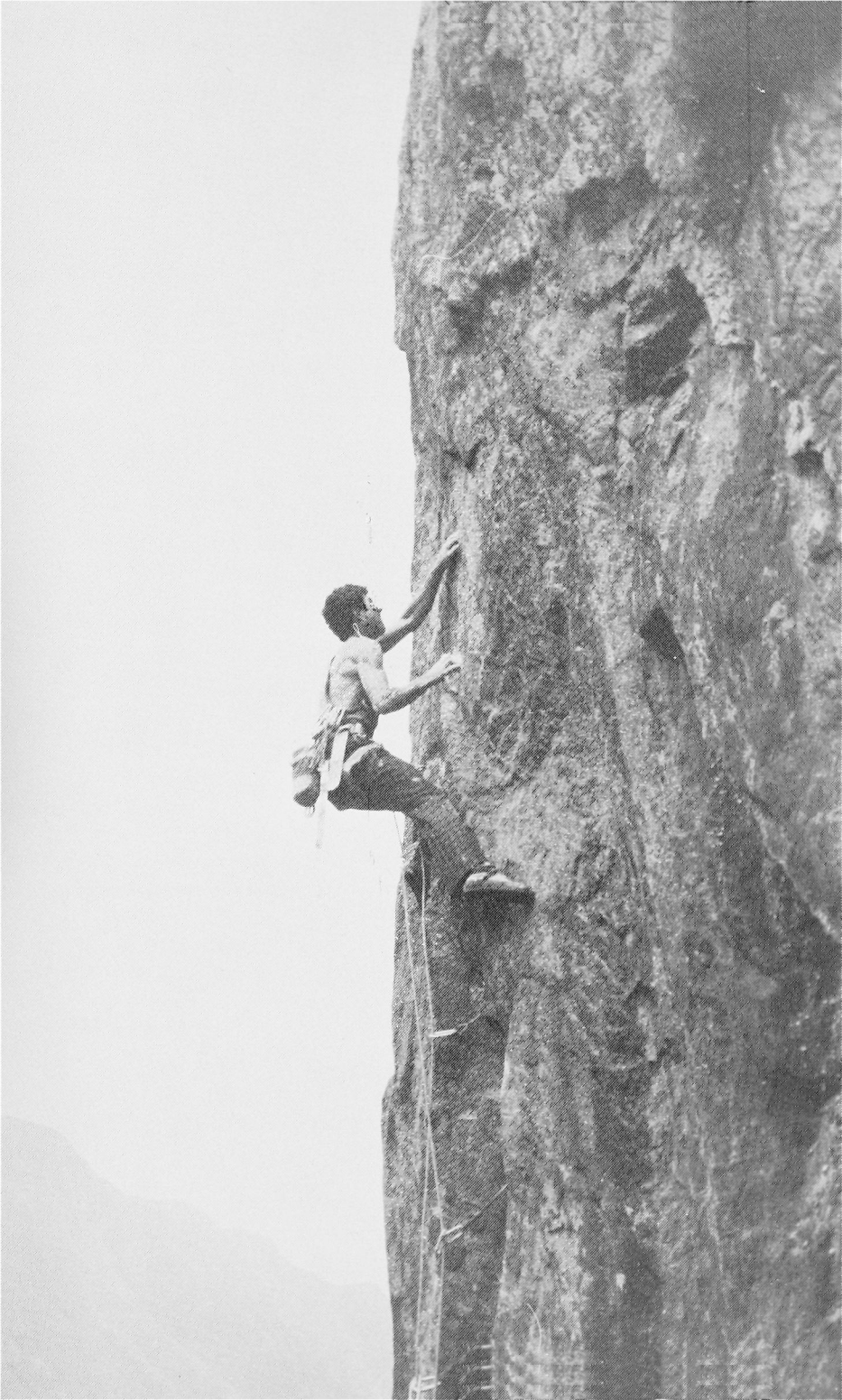
Centrespread Left: September 1948 outside Helyg: Campbell McKee, Tony Husbands and Mike Burt.

Photo: Tony Husbands collection.









However I met John Barford and he took me to Harrison's rocks and by using the night trains we did get to North Wales occasionally. The trains up were not too bad but on the return they always seemed full. We seldom got a seat and had to sit on the floor in the corridor or in the guard's van and on at least two occasions had to stand all night.

Climbing with John was an education because he had one or two karabiners and so could use runners. He also had the ability to make one climb better than one thought one could. Lliwedd was still popular then and on a fine day John used to like to sing on this cliff and I can hear him now singing his way up Bowling Green Buttress and the Sword but his real interest lay in the Pass.

His guide to the Three Cliffs appeared in the 1944 Journal but he wanted to produce a pocket guide to all the cliffs in the Pass and we spent some time checking the lengths of pitches of known climbs and trying new ones. Sadly he never lived to complete the work. He was convinced that the cliffs in the Pass and Cloggy would become more popular after the war and that there would be a need for a hut and we visited the ruins of Ynys once or twice to measure the walls in order to experiment with plans. In spite of the short stays and the deadline of having trains to catch we always allowed time to give Helyg a clean before leaving. John was Secretary of the C.C. from 1939-1946 and the first Secretary of the B.M.C. His death was a great loss to British climbing and not least to all his many friends.

Early in 1945 I received a letter from Paul saying he had had an invitation from the C.U.M.C. to go on their annual winter visit to Nevis but as he had been in the past and hoped the war would not last much longer he didn't think he wanted to use his week's holiday for this purpose and he wondered if I would like to go as he felt sure that if he wrote to Mike Ball and put in a good word for me and said that I repented for my ignorance when at Cambridge, Mike might agree to my joining the meet.

This presented a problem because much as I wanted to go I wasn't sure that I wanted to spend my week's holiday in the winter. As I thought about it an idea occurred to me. I was spending most of the time working on the spectrographic analysis of carbon rods although I had no idea why and we were all on day work but there was one piece of apparatus like a revolving drum on the insides of which were hung strips of metal covered with different types of paint. As the

Centrespread Right: Campbell McKee on Garter Traverse, Lliwedd.

Photo: Tony Husbands collection.

Opp: Kim Carrigan pressing on a bit further.

Photo: Mike Owen.

drum revolved jets of water sprayed the strips for half a revolution and strong light for the other half, in order to try to simulate the effects of weathering. The strips had to be examined every two hours but this did not usually take long and it occurred to me that, with an alarm clock, it would be possible to get some sleep and so work a day shift and a night shift.

One of my best friends came from Kelso so I told him my thoughts and asked if he would be prepared to work my night shift whilst he was on days so that I could go to the Ben and when I got back he would apply to do the paint night shift which I would then take over whilst I was on days so that he could go and have a week's holiday at home. He readily agreed and I had no difficulty in persuading the Chief Chemist to let me do the night shift for the right week. Letters to and from Mike Ball confirmed the arrangements and I duly met the party at Fort William.

There were of course no gas cylinders at the C.I.C. hut in those days and the coal taken up by the ponies in 1939 had long since been used up so it was necessary to take up enough paraffin for the primus stoves for a week and also all the food. The only dried food obtainable then was milk and eggs and as meat, butter, cheese etc. were rationed we had to take up plenty of porridge, bread and vegetables and some of us were weighed down with one rucksack on our back and another on our chest.

There had been drama on the Ben a few days before when Shipton and Tilman had taken a wrong bearing on the summit and fallen down the North Buttress. Tilman broke an arm and Shipton was badly concussed but they managed to get each other down to the hut and Shipton staggered down to Fort William. When Dr. Duff came up Tilman said he didn't want to go down because of all the publicity but after about five days Dr. Duff said he couldn't carry on treating him in such primitive conditions and so Tilman had to leave. Of course there was no telephone line then.

Paraffin couldn't be spared for anything except cooking so when we returned to the hut each day we stripped off our wet clothes and put on the spare set of dry ones. The next morning after breakfast we took off the dry clothes and got back into the wet ones.

Ken Berrill, now Sir Kenneth Berrill, was one of the party and on the first day he suggested that he and I should go and climb Gardyloo Gully so off we went, me with Frank's ice axe which I had

never had an opportunity to use. We made steady progress to the cave pitch where I belayed and Ken went to work. A continual stream of ice particles fell on my head—there were no helmets in those days—and down my neck as Ken chipped away. We were wearing nailed boots of course. In any case we hadn't got any crampons.

I noticed that ice continued to fall on me even when Ken was not using his axe and remarked on this so he suggested we stopped talking whereupon the particles ceased to fall except when Ken was cutting. He did a fine job and we reached the summit plateau with great satisfaction and then shot down number three gully and back to the hut to brew up and wait for the others.

One day we all went up Carn Mhor Dearg and down over the arete and up the Ben. I cannot remember exactly what we did the other days but as I could only stay a week, Ken suggested to me that on my last day we should do Moonlight Gully. This had only been climbed for the first time a few years before and had taken so long that it was only finished in the Moonlight as I suppose everyone knows. It still had rather a reputation then and the others tried to persuade us not to try it. They thought we were far too ambitious and were going to bite off much more than we could chew, and they didn't like the idea of having to come to our rescue but we decided to go ahead.

To our surprise the snow was perfect and we just kicked steps all the way up with an occasional whack from the axe until we came to the cornice which was enormous. Ken was not in the least perturbed and said all he had to do was tunnel through it. We made a suitable stance on which I belayed and Ken set to work. After a while I saw two climbers coming up in our steps and when they got within about 200' they stopped to have a talk. After discussing how easy the ascent had been so far, and in fact they had not bothered to rope up, the elder one who was about 50 said that from where he was it looked as if Ken hadn't much further to tunnel. We certainly had no idea which wasn't surprising as we were so well into the tunnel that there wasn't much light.

The climber suggested to me that if Ken turned his axe upside down and pushed it upwards the shaft might go through far enough to protrude above the snow and when it was withdrawn Ken would then be able to see how much further there was to go. When I reported this to him, because he himself could not hear what the

climber was saying, he thought it a good idea and gave his upended axe a good push whereupon there was a terrific whooshing noise and Ken and a whole lot of snow fell on top of me and whereas a second before we had, as said, been in very poor light, now everything was bright.

Actually about 300 yards of the cornice had broken away and when I had cleared the snow from my glasses I was horrified to see the two climbers being swept down in an avalanche. Fortunately the more experienced one, who was being swept towards some rocks, managed to bring himself to rest just before the rocks and the other one came to a stop soon after the angle of the slope flattened out a lot. We were relieved to see they were alright and waited for them to climb back up and join us on the summit plateau.

We were back at the hut long before the others and they were amazed at what we had to tell them. It was a fitting conclusion to a very happy week, made all the sweeter for me by the fact that I was not only being paid but paid at overtime rates. In spite of the cold and the squalor I was very sorry to take leave of my friends and depart, although fortunately two of them decided to come with me to Fort William to get some more food and paraffin.

About four months later the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The war was at long last over and we realised what it was that we had been working on.

A SOFT MAN'S LAMENT

BEN SMITH

I know why I can't climb. I only have to look in the mirror. There is no massive paunch or, indeed, little evidence of fat or excess flesh. But there is weight, unsupported weight; vast thighs and tops of legs like young oaks. A thickness around the high waist; definitely a figure with feminine undertones. And bone. Fine if you've got shoulders and arms to support it all. But they are not commiserate with a heavily office bound existence.

And it's the same at the start of every season (people like me South of London and east of Brighton have seasons which often exclude November to February). The same old problems confront me: shall I lose weight, do a Charles Atlas course or give it up? If I lost weight, significantly that is, I wouldn't be taking the real me up routes, just a shadow of my former self. A Charles Atlas course requires too much dedication (7 minutes a day on a Bull-Worker is bad enough) and to give it up is unthinkable. I have done an appreciation and there really is no worthwhile alternative—there are things that fit in with it (drinking and loving), things that provide a measure of distraction in distant crag-less terrain but nothing, nothing, to obliterate it from recurring desires.

Of course, I knew the truth a long time ago—on Anvil Chorus. I could have put the broken ankle down to panic or poor technique, but subsequent problems in a similar vein and a later failure to do it as a second brought it home to me: power/weight ratio, the dreaded enemy. I had a classic example recently, in fact. A whipper snapper friend of mine wanted to try Barbarian again, having been rained off it previously. He needed a second, and I was available and willing. Now I can read the guide book like the next man, so I warned him that I might become a liability. And so it was; crouched there in that infernal niche I announced that I simply could not stand up (p.s. I'd got that far by standing in a sling). Having finally been pulled to my

feet, I was confronted by, of all things, a layback, which he was compelled to solve for me with a pulley system.

A man in the Padarn once said it was all in the mind—cock! My mind I have proved to be a freely ranging thing which has all too often exceeded the limits of my physical capabilities.

I knew just what Mr Wilson was about in his Desert Island Crag interview—'locked in the V.S./H.V.S. bracket'—Only it's been worse for me—on the few occasions I've led a H.V.S. it's been with old time aid (like Unicorn or Ivy Sepulchre); or a fringe benefit (like Brant Direct); or the 4c pitches (like Gormenghast and Kipling Groove). And this when things are really going well—on other occasions, I've walked along the base of the Grochan looking for a route I could start, other than Nea and Scrambler's Gate.

You are, by now, asking yourself what this man is doing in your Club? Well, I suppose I got in on the second ticket—one of the less well-able (permanently incapable?) who has nevertheless soldiered on; the also ran who gets a prize for effort; 'The climber in his thirties who never quite made it', to quote an elder statesman.

Despite this, however, I can still identify with the modern hard-man since it's really only a matter of degree. Whilst he or she finds the Right or Left Walls testing, I found the small 'wall' of Slape equally testing (I was trying to think of a more recent personal example, but couldn't). Likewise, I have profound personal (usually chair-bound) confrontations with things like ethics and grading. On the latter subject, I have decided that no single move can be harder than 6b; the only way you can conceivably have 6c and 7a pitches is to have a series of 6a or 6b moves. I can already hear the daggers being drawn, and the not unnatural condemnation from people who think they have been there. Still, if I can have opinions on racialism in South Africa of which I have no personal experience, why not something far less explosive like climbing?

So please don't snigger at every struggler you see on the crags. After all, it could be me striving for the next personal milestone be it generally held to be a piece of piss. Spare a thought for the likes of us as you wrestle with the next ultimate problem. Remember, but for an act of fate, it could have been you. And anyway, I'm better looking than you are!

EVENING WALK—BOSIGRAN

M.S. BINNIE

At nine the air is magic.
From the cliffs of Commando Ridge
Bristles like a dragon's back.
And behind, the sun singes
Into the black, burnt treacle sea.
Pendeen light flickers with
Warning jabs, stabs ships out
Twenty miles. We turn and
Head inland past an engine
House and old shafts, scabs on deep
Cornish wounds. These holes are like
Crushed mouths and tell of the
Agony of miners. Past
All these, onto the moor where
The carns become kopjes, the
Emptiness a sweep of
Africa and up to the
Circle of nine standing stones.
The Nine Maidens. "Why're they called
That, sir?" "Well, once upon a . . ."
And suddenly History
Bites deep as six London kids
Crouch round, spell-bound in the failed
Light by an old legend which
Unfolds to a backdrop of
A rising moon, some fleecy
Clouds and wind tilting the grass.
And when, after the long silence,
After the story has sown its
Seed, but still held by these rocks' spell,
Richard says, "Imagine
Coming to this place, all on
Your own, no one knowing
About it, hundreds of years
Ago, wouldn't it be
Fantastic?"
I know where there is
Magic in the air at ten.

WE'RE JUST HAVING FUN

JOHN HARWOOD

[As Pembroke has been the big news of 1981, as far as the C.C. is concerned, it seemed to me that it would be a good idea to include the following article even though it has already appeared in the 1979/80 M.A.M. Journal. It highlights many of the problems which are encountered on hard new routes on a coastal cliff and should bring back memories to many climbers. Ed.]

Some time ago I remember discussing with a friend the changing aspects of climbing as one grows older. Apart from the obvious conflicting pulls of family responsibilities, work commitments etc., there is less urgency about continually striving to do hard climbs. Even if these factors remain unimportant, the wealth of experience accumulated over the years means (or ought to!) that one's climbing is more in control than before and, in consequence, is bound to be less exciting. This is, surely, not a bad thing and there can be few people who really bemoan the passing of the 'death lead', 'chop route' and so forth. One is certainly able to appreciate many other features of rock climbing as a result. However, once in a while, in spite of all this experience, unforeseen factors can manifest themselves. When this happens, climbing may revert back to the youthful struggle it once was and one can (to use an outmoded word) once more experience an adventure.

The trip began innocuously enough. The first day had been windy and wet but we had found a steep zawn which was relatively sheltered. After abseiling in to try an obvious thin crack-line Pat had failed on the wet rock and since the tide was rapidly coming in, we had been forced to escape up another weakness. Fortunately this was only H.V.S. so the wet rock didn't stop us and we were able to make the pub in good time.









Day two dawned a bit sunnier than its predecessor; Pat was intent on the West Face of Stackpole Head so we parked at the Quay and took the familiar walk past Barafundle to the cliff. Now Stackpole is one of those crags which fits into the same category as Cidwm and Hyll-Drem. . .it was overhanging for its $\frac{1}{4}$ mile length. Moreover, access was fraught with commitment since it was only possible about half an hour each side of low tide and then only when the sea was reasonably calm. These factors explained why I had yet to set foot on the cliff!

However, it all looked fairly peaceful as we sorted gear by the descent and even the boulder-hop between waves failed to 'damp' my enthusiasm. We passed a series of unclimbed (then) lines and speculated on their relative merits before homing in on the driest piece of rock about; a white impending wall next to Heavens Door. Since Pat had put up the latter (a pleasant route according to him—"only E3, 5c and good rock too") it seemed that we wouldn't be in entirely unknown territory. A good ledge thirty feet up was the obvious base for further activities but gaining it was not as easy as it should have been. A black, slimy corner led the way, covered in algae and lichen, and having the frictional properties of greasy teflon. I found the best technique involved elbows, knees and shoulders and by the time the ledge was gained, I was already feeling tired. Just as I arrived so did a storm and the hail sheeted down. However, because of the overhangs above, the elements did their worst a good fifteen feet away and the rock above us stayed dry. Pat was ready to abseil off since the sea was getting up a bit and we would soon be cut off, but, in a moment of enthusiasm, I waxed lyrical about a directissima on dry rock. No sooner said than he was off and I was regretting my haste. He considered going right but, for shame of it, that was a deviation. So back and addressing himself to the direct he committed himself and with a series of grunts and 'watch the rope' succeeded in gaining, after twenty feet, a good hand-jam in a crack. I thought it a bit ominous when he offered to hang a long sling off a nut for me but accepted gratefully. Then he went on. It seemed a routine hard lead for him—the odd loose block or hand-hold thrown down, occasional glimpses of dynamic footsoles and eventually with the majority of the rope gone, presumably, the top.

Centrespread Right: R. Conway on Anyone for Stennis, E2, 5b.

Photo: Chris Jackson.

Opp: Pat Littlejohn on the 1st ascent of Mother Night at Mother Carey's Kitchen.

Photo: John Harwood.

Now I should at this juncture perhaps point out to those readers who have not climbed much on sea cliffs that communication is often a major problem. So it was here, for with the wind getting up and the tide advancing neither of us could hear what the other had to say. Still, after a suitable pause the slack was taken in and I began to climb. It was pretty clear to me that there was some very hard climbing up there and that if Pat had found it desperate I had little more than a sporting chance of getting up. Moreover, because the sea was in, the cliff was overhanging and communication was non-existent then it was probably not a very good idea to fall off. So, in my crafty way I reasoned with myself at the overhang that I really ought to take a very careful look at the next few moves. Thus it was that I leaned out on Pat's next runner to ponder the problem and so it was that two seconds later I was fifteen feet lower down when the runner came out! It was a nice warm sunny day as I gyrated slowly on the rope well away from the rock. But of course an experienced big-wall Yosemite man like myself had no problems in such a situation—it was simply a matter of prusiking up to the next runner thirty feet above my head. Unaccountably there were one or two problems though. In the first place I didn't have a proper harness on and so my diaphragm was being slowly constricted. Secondly I hadn't any suitable slings with which to prusik and hadn't yet learnt how to use a karabiner to help things. Accordingly, after about a quarter of an hour I had prusiked six feet, was very tired and some of the rope had been let out from above to cancel my pitiful progress. Things were getting hectic. I couldn't be lowered off and I couldn't make any progress above. The only good point was that I could have complete faith in Pat up above. My only alternative was to get back onto the rock, and pretty quickly too, before I was completely spent. Eventually, after much swinging and grabbing I managed to regain the belay ledge and have a good rest.

The problem of getting up the climb still remained though. Although I knew Pat's belays above would be good and that he would be able to hold me without problem, I really couldn't afford to fall off again as I was really exhausted. My one saving grace was that I had brought three pitons and a hammer for belaying and I decided to try to use these and the slings I cleaned from the pitch for aid as necessary just to get up. When I climbed back to the overhang and stood in a sling I noticed with some alarm, that the rope was no

longer being taken in. Suddenly a shout came from behind my right shoulder and to my horror I saw Pat. He had tied the rope off and gone along the cliff-top to see what was happening. The rock around my nut was rapidly disintegrating and I could see myself becoming airborne again very shortly. Therefore I gesticulated frantically at Pat until he hastened back to the belay. I rapidly placed a poor peg out left and, praying that it would hold, got off the errant nut. Another poor nut and I was able to reach Pat's dangling sling where I could rest after a fashion. Some steep moves directly above led me gasping to a ledge from which I staggered up a shallow groove. By now I was once more shattered and it became necessary to launch myself up the final impending wall. The rope went diagonally upwards, clear of the rock and, apart from a half-way runner, was obviously not going to be of much use if I got into trouble. Accordingly, I stayed at the top of the groove until I thought I had regained enough strength to make a dash for it. After twenty feet I was exhausted but somehow managed to keep going until, just as my fingers were turning to jelly, I threw my hand into a horizontal jam which saved the situation. A few more moves and I reached easier ground and was then able to crawl over the top to collapse in a heap by a grinning Pat.

Some people have said that is one of Pat's pleasures to burn off his climbing partners. . .and, indeed, there are none that I know who have managed to keep up their end. So far in a series of climbs I had done pretty well so a cynic might be forgiven for thinking that Pat was determined to finish me off well and truly on this occasion, . . .for, with hardly a pause for breath he was bursting for a return bout with the crack we had tried the previous day. I already felt badly about the fiasco of the previous climb so, remembering that I had a pair of ascenders in my rucksack, I could only weakly agree.

Imagine my relief when we made our way to the zawn only to find it full of ocean. I was just looking forward to a pleasant convalescence for the rest of the day when I realised what Pat was doing. He had rigged up an abseil and went down the overhanging wall above the climb in a series of swings such that he kept touching the rock every so often. About twenty feet above the sea he gave a giant swing and managed to grab the rock on his inward plunge. It was a resigned Harwood who realised that a belay was being set up and that there was nothing for it but to follow my intrepid leader

down the abseil.

The raging water below spurred Pat to get to grips with the climb. After a little way he was faced with what used to be termed a 'bete noire'—in this case the place which had stopped him the previous day. The problem resolved itself into changing hands on a two-finger hold in order to move left. This, of course, is bad enough on a slab let alone something like the overhanging wall of our climb. But Pat's blood was up and in that sort of mood I didn't give the rock a chance. He swarmed left, surmounted a protectionless wall, traversed along a soaking wet line back to the thin crack and then charged up the latter.

The whole had only taken about half an hour and was a formidable lead even by Pat's standards. This was just as well for the first wave struck me just as Pat climbed the crux. Belayed well above the sea, or so I thought, I was lifted clean off my feet by the force. As Pat climbed higher I was struck more and more frequently. To say the least I was feeling sorry for myself and desperately tried to keep my camera dry. By the time Pat was belayed, I was frozen and set out immediately, at least, to get above the waves. I was towing a spare rope and kept tied onto the abseil rope as well, so what with the soaking I'd had and the wet rock it was hardly surprising that I couldn't manage the crux. However, this time at least I had my jumars and was able to prusik up to the start of the traverse on the abseil rope. At this point things got exciting for I had to pull myself back onto the rock with the runners, get a hand-jam and then remove the runners in order to release myself back again into the void. I arched out in a great pendulum until I finally came to rest spinning round in a twirl above the raging ocean. Pat's shout of "I'm glad you don't suffer from exposure" was little comfort as I jumared higher until I could regain the rock once more. From there to the top was fifty feet or so of steep crack which I eventually managed to struggle up. With a combined wet weight of what seemed like twenty stones there was barely enough strength in me to stand up at the top.

Thus ended the day. Since that time there have been many and more enjoyable climbs with Pat. But the lessons have been well learnt by me. Jumars are now an indispensable item of equipment when pioneering in Pembrokeshire and, of course, the safest thing would be not to climb with him at all!

A WEEK AT THE LIZARD

Rev. C.A. JOHNS

Early accounts of climbing in Britain are all too few and the Editor was somewhat astonished to read the following article in a delightful little book entitled 'A Week at the Lizard', which first appeared in 1848 and was rarely out of print until 1916. The author, the Reverend Charles Alexander Johns [1811-74] is best known for his books, 'Flowers of the Field' and 'British Birds in their Haunts'. Thanks are due to the publishers, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge [S.P.C.K.] who readily provided information and agreed to let us use the material. Ed.

On the 24th August, 1831, I happened to be residing in Helston, and having heard a great deal of the beauty of the scenery of Kynance Cove, and of the rare plants which grew on the rock there, I was determined to see for myself whether the accounts which I had heard were true. Accordingly, without companion or guide, I started at eight o'clock in the morning on what proved to be my perilous expedition. The weather was unpropitious; there was a good deal of wind stirring, and rain seemed to be impending. The rare occurrence of a holiday, however, and the hope of gathering with my own hands, from their native haunts, a number of plants which I had only heard of, or seen in the herbariums of the curious, encouraged me to proceed in spite of all adverse circumstances. My equipment consisted of a walking stick, a folio book for drying specimens, which was slung over my back, a packet of sandwiches, and a small flask of brandy. Why I am thus particular in my inventory will appear by-and-by. After loitering by the way to collect and examine specimens of several plants then new to me, I found myself about mid-day drawing near the coast. The first point that I arrived at was the head of a valley, which appeared to answer the description I had received of Kynance, and making my way down with what speed I could, I soon found myself in that cove, as I imagined, though, as I afterwards found, I was mistaken as to the locality.

The tide was out, as I expected; I accordingly began at once to explore for Asparagus Island, which, with the imperfect description I had received, I had no difficulty in recognising in a high detached rock to the right of the cove, the top of which was covered with

vegetation. I soon climbed to the summit in search of asparagus, but failed, for the simple reason that it does not grow there. I was, however, well pleased to discover the tree-mallow, which I had never before seen growing wild. A few specimens of this I secured and laid out in my book to dry. All this occupied some time, and on my descent I found that the tide had begun to flow, and that my retreat to the cove was cut off, unless I chose to wade through the water to the depth of a foot. I quietly took a survey of the cliff, and seeing that it was (as I imagined) easy of ascent, I thought I need not be in a hurry, but might as well rest myself after my eleven miles' walk, and to discuss my sandwiches. This done I began to mount the cliff, and at first made rapid progress, there being plenty of grass as a holdfast for my hands, and of loose stones among which to insert my feet.

But when I had ascended some sixty feet, I found myself stopped by a slanting sheet of polished serpentine, on which I could gain no footing, though I made several attempts. I accordingly descended with the intention of making a trial somewhere else, and proceeded yet further to the right. But here I found myself entirely at fault, the sea having come into the very base of the rocks, which were perpendicular. My only alternative was to turn back and regain the cove by wading through the water. I found, however, that I had spent so much time in my ineffectual effort to scale the cliff, that the tide had risen considerably, and I could not now attempt to ford a passage without incurring great danger, and reluctantly came to the conclusion that I was in an awkward predicament. The tide had still four hours to flow, so that I should of course be detained ten or eleven hours. To add to my discomfort, it seemed to be on the point of raining; and recollecting with what difficulty I had found my way out by daylight, I could not lose sight of the fact that it would be yet more difficult to find my way home by night. Yet I had nothing to do but to sit still and wait, a task which I tried very hard to perform, and took from my pocket Johnson's 'Rasselas', in the hope of whiling away the time. I soon found that the 'History of a Search after Happiness' was little suited to the frame of mind to which I was then subjected, and quickly shut my book.

As for sitting idle, it was quite out of the question; so I again climbed the island to explore, but discovered nothing to justify the hope of improving my condition. The only point where there

appeared the least probability of the ascent being made by a human being was that which I had tried and found impracticable. I again descended, scrambled over the rocks to the right and left as far as the tide would allow me, sat down, and endeavoured to compose my mind. Danger there was none, the island being large enough to afford refuge to a hundred men, and I knew very well, from the character of the vegetation on the summit of the rock, that it was never swept by the sea, even in the stormiest weather. An hour and a half I spent in this way, and at last, in spite of all my efforts, had worked myself up to such a pitch of excitement, by picturing to myself the misery of sitting ten or eleven hours in the rain, climbing over the rocks in the dark, and finally groping my way over an unknown country, with whatever vigour of body and mind that I had possessed exhausted, that I resolved to make a fresh attempt where I had before been unsuccessful. I recollected, that when I made the first trial, I thought there were many other ways of ascending, and that I might therefore have been deterred by difficulties which in my present emergency would not seem so formidable.

I accordingly began the ascent a second time, and in a bolder spirit. When I reached the shelving mass of rock mentioned above, I stopped to take breath, and to meditate once more whether the personal inconvenience of spending the night on the spot, and the anxious suspense which my absence would occasion my friends, were sufficient to weigh against the risk I might incur in persisting in my attempt. I had all but decided on returning, when I observed a small stone in a crack of the rock, which appeared to be loose; this I removed, and thus obtained one footstep, but not being satisfied with my precarious footing, resolved on desisting at once. To my utter horror I found this to be impracticable. The book which I had slung across my back so impeded my movements, that when I attempted to turn, the corner pressed against the cliff and forced me outwards, and had I persisted, would inevitably have precipitated me to the bottom. I could not retain my posture for any length of time, resting as I was on one foot, and being obliged to hold fast with one hand in order to do even that; my only alternative was to proceed, but whither, I knew not.

By occasionally making use of my stick to loosen some stones, and to try the strength of others, which frequently peeled off from the rock with a very slight pressure, I contrived to approach within eight

or nine feet of the top. Here, however, I found myself in a situation in which few I believe have ever been placed, except in the most terrific dreams. I had gradually quitted that part of the rock which hung over the sloping grass; I had inserted the end of my stick in a crevice, and, being obliged to use both hands in clinging to the rock, I could not draw it out, and if my foot had slipped I should have glided over a few feet of smooth stone, and then fallen seventy or eighty feet, whether into the sea, or on the shore, I could not turn my head to examine. To add to my distress I found my book much in my way; I was supported almost entirely by the muscular strength of my fingers, and a mass of apparently loose stone projected over my head. These I must surmount; but how? The only possible support for my feet was six feet below the summit of the rock, and not more than half an inch wide. I managed with great difficulty to set my foot on this, snatched at, and caught hold of, the top of the rock with the ends of my fingers, and was suspended as it were between heaven and earth directly over the precipice, when—the ledge under my feet gave way, or my foot slipped (terror prevented me from observing which)—with strength more than natural I clung by my hands alone.

I felt a shudder pass through my frame—my blood seemed to stagnate—and a spontaneous agitation of all the nerves in my body commenced, so violent, that this new horror now took possession of me, that the involuntary motion of my hands might loosen my hold. During what appeared to me a long time, but what I dare say was, in reality, less time than my readers take in following my description, was I in this state, dangling my feet on every side in search of a resting-place, and dreading lest the stones to which I clung with my fingers should give way. Feeling that I could hold no longer by my fingers, I made a violent effort, and planted my knee, I know not how, just below my hands. Still I was not safe—I was now balanced on my hands and one knee on the edge of a cliff—one leg was still hanging over, idle—and my book, which I had not had the means of getting rid of, had slipped round in front, and inserted itself between my body and the rock.

By dint of another effort, however, I contrived to throw myself forward, and was safe! But, alas! I had not yet reached the top, I was scarcely half-way up; but I was resting at full length on a plot of green turf—the scene of as earnest thanksgiving as had ever been poured forth from my heart—and though I was for some time in





such a state of nervous excitement that I dared not look down, much less venture to move, yet the consciousness of imminent danger was gone, and with it all anxiety. Still my limbs were in a trembling state, my tongue was glued to my palate, and though I tried to swallow a little brandy, my throat refused to perform its office; all that I could do was to rinse out my mouth, and to long, as earnestly as a traveller in the desert, for a draught of water that I might do so effectually. I had not even yet accomplished all my task; a large portion of cliff still remained to be surmounted, scarcely, if at all, less precipitous than that which I had traversed. I was resolved, however, to run no more risk, and sat down calculating the probabilities of my being seen and rescued on the next day by a large party, who I knew were coming hither for a day's enjoyment from Helston.

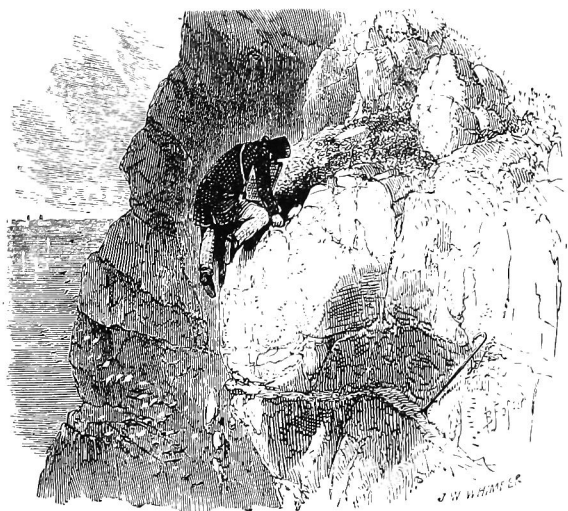
After resting a little while, though I had not yet mustered sufficient nerve to look down, I began to explore my position, and saw behind me a low but steep rock, which not being very difficult I ascended, and to my infinite joy discovered just before me a pathway worn by human feet, leading by a circuitous route from some part of the coast now covered by the sea to the summit of the cliff. It may readily be supposed that I was not long in reaching this. I ran, as well as the nature of the ground would permit, and soon reached the top, and now that I once more had the power of walking on level ground, all that I had before experienced seemed a dream; but the roaring of the waves beneath me, which I dared not, even then, look down upon, the quivering of my limbs, and above all, the tears of grateful emotion which involuntarily rose to my eyes, soon convinced me of the reality of my situation, and of my perilous expedition.

A short time after I had left the coast it began to rain, and continued till I reached home, between six and seven o'clock, drenched to the skin.

The above narrative I committed to writing the day after my adventure, and I believe it to be the reverse of an exaggerated account. I have since, several times tried to discover the precise spot, but have never been able; not because I do not, even now, retain a distinct recollection of the scene, but because, on all parts of this coast where the structure of the rock is not unusually compact, a continual change is going on by the wearing away of the surface, and by the fall of large masses; and to tell the truth, I am so little

desirous of a repetition of the feat, that I have been very careful not to tarry long enough in the vicinity to make a full examination, lest I should find my retreat again cut off. (NOTE: On the 8th of August 1873, forty-two years after this adventure, while sauntering round the coast, I unexpectedly lighted on the exact spot where I made my perilous ascent between Kynance and the Rill).

A word of advice to climbers. It is much *more difficult* to descend than to ascend the face of a precipitous cliff, and therefore, *less dangerous*; and again, it is much *easier* to ascend a place of the same character than to descend, and therefore, *more dangerous*. This will appear to be a paradox, and on that account it will, I hope, be remembered; but nevertheless, experience will prove that the maxim is a sound one. A climber, in descending, instinctively shrinks from climbing down any places where his body would be likely to be thrown off its balance, unless he can secure a firm footing and a good holdfast for his hands; and if he reaches a spot which is impracticable, he can make sure of being able to return by the way he came. On the other hand, in ascending, his body is thrown forward, he can see the nature of the rock which he is climbing, and has a far greater command over his hands and feet; in addition to which he is not likely to become giddy, for there is no necessity for him to look down. But if he arrives, after some laborious climbing, at an impracticable spot, and wishes to return, he may be called on to traverse a dangerous piece of ground, which he scarcely noticed during his ascent, a sloping, smooth rock for instance, or of slippery turf, where, if he loses his balance, or his foot slips, the result must be most perilous. As a deduction from this, let him also bear in mind, that when a descent has to be made with much difficulty, he had better return by the same route rather than attempt another which only *appears* to be easier. He may be tolerably certain that where he got down, he can get up; but if he tries the new route, he may be brought up by some difficulty which he could not descry from beneath, and be compelled to return by a more perilous way than the first, and after all, expend his labour in vain.



ON METRICATION

At a recent Peak District guidebook meeting attended by several C.C. Members it was pointed out that metric units are to be used for the next series of guidebooks. It provoked a somewhat violent response:

“Pretentious and irrelevant.”

“All my schooling was done in metric units—but I still think in feet.”

“Let’s keep it different from those foreign frigging bastards.”

“It’s dehumanising climbing.”

“Let the Executive debate it again (and again if necessary) until they get it right.”

GRADUATION CEREMONY

DAVE HOPE

Grading systems appear to have been in the news again, particularly where the use of E grades is concerned. Livesey, Gomersall, Rod Wilson et al. have been pointing out points, arguing arguments and assuming assumptions. Now, if your assumptions are correct it is likely that your hypothesis is correct. The assumption is that we all want and need the E grades, and the various subdivisions that are continuously proposed, but who says so? Why, the theorists of course. Now it's all very well for these young, hard lads (apologies to Livesey and Wilson for this calumny) to scatter their numericals and alphabeticals around manuscripts like chalk at Stanage on a Sunday but some of us old-timers and old-fashioned climbers find such extravagance difficult to come to terms with. I feel that the time has come to hand out a very severe wiggling to these modern types.

What on earth is wrong with the adjectival system anyway? It has long belaboured us soundly before the present mathematical craze got off the ground. The argument goes that it was far too rigid and that its value had been far outstripped when considering the needs of the modern generation and the generally rapid increase in climbing standards overall. Arrant nonsense of course, for it certainly hasn't outstripped my needs and expectations or the needs of countless other climbers. And I don't feel like being prevented from going on a crag because I haven't got my M.L.C. (Mathematical Linguistics Certificate) and am therefore considered to be incapable of calculating the grade at which I want to climb. The obvious retort is why stop at Hard Extremely Severe or Exceptionally Severe? The adjectival system can be adapted readily to be open-ended and, incidentally, to be far more creative and original than the unwieldy and ugly lists of letters and numbers that now assail us.

So here goes. E grades? Well, that's simple really. These would

have to be restricted to the numerate climber only, with the correct certification and a chalk resistant calculator. These would fall into the Numerically Severe grade and would be essentially artificial climbs when considering the technology required to understand them. Having got rid of these the remaining climbs would fall into two broad groups: Physically Severe and Mentally Severe. Definitions? Physically Severe—no training aloud thus preserving the peace and quiet of the hills thanks to the inactivity of the participants, and Mentally Severe—My God! What am I doing here? A combination of these two broad groups could also be used to give an overall assessment of the routes as the American system does. Subdivisions of the Physically Severe grade could include the following: Rigorously Severe (better than circuit training, could be of use on climbing walls), Grindingly Severe (a special grade for awkward jamming and cracks) and Knackeringly Severe (long, tedious and boring, ie. a traditional classic). Mentally Severe climbs would require a lot more thought and would concern the mental state of the climber as well as what the climb does to him. This would therefore cover a far wider range of climbs, usually with the grade being determined by their seriousness. Touristically Severe (slight, but stupid, injury), Wutheringly Severe (serious injury), Unjustifiably Severe (slight death), Terminally Severe (serious death) and Diabolically Severe and Heavenly Severe (what sort of life have you been leading then?) would all be possible examples. Some likely combinations of Physically and Mentally Severe climbs could be: Orgasmically Severe (a combination of Grindingly Severe and Heavenly Severe—for mixed parties only?), or even Aretically Severe (a combination of Knackeringly Severe and Wutheringly Severe—a fate worse than death for male climbers!).

Other categories of involvement could also exist in such a system. So far I've only dealt with the numerate and the literate climber. What happens if the poor aspirant is unable to count, or is one degree under, or is dyslexic. There is only one grade possible—Tuff! Or perhaps we could use Ard if he couldn't cope with that. To be less cynical we could coin the Lexichronically Severe grade but as he probably won't be able to understand it let alone read it perhaps we'd better stick with Tuff and Ard.

Moving on then we could find the gear manufacturers and retailers taking a hand (they don't leave us much anyway). These

and the popular telly spectaculars for example, would come into the Ultimately Severe or Entertainingly Severe grades. Climbing that involves conservation or environmental interests could be graded Ecologically or Environmentally Severe. (Here I'd like to propose an interesting and original idea which would suit all ecologists and the N.C.C. (supply your own translation). Depending on the importance of the site we could grade these climbs E1, E2, E3, etc., which would give an open-ended assessment of their value thus clearing up a lot of the present difficulties that have overgrown this area, particularly concerning those climbers who don't know a JCB from a hand trowel, thus scything away at one stroke the problems of overcrowding and variability that have caused so many problems recently. I believe that this could well have appealed to JME.)

On other occasions the venue could be treated as the critical grading factor as could also the weather. What a tremendous amount of open-endedness these factors would give. And why not grade the climbers as well? Then everyone would be happy from the old-timers to the modern pile (fibre) and chalk brigade. Bill March proposed a system of grading climbers years ago. I could never understand why the CC and the FRCC didn't incorporate it into their guides—it certainly matched the anachronistic standards that were required then. I did hear that the SMC had rejected it because it was too difficult to understand and the YMC guide editor was heard to ask what was meant by grading so all in all the establishment record wasn't really as impressive as we've been led to believe. Harding also tried such a system but its numerical base smacks too much of modernism and is also seriously limited in its extent. Any modern climber worth his track suit can count to well over ten and in some cases they've been known to reach fifteen.

Let me propose a modification of these personal gradings that was developed by some friends while climbing at Avon in the early seventies. The state of the climber undertaking the ascent was of prime importance. Therefore it needed to be altered at will when so desired and this, I believe, is the most beneficial aspect of the approach. It should start in the Coronation Tap but if you're not in Bristol then some suitable local hostelry will suffice. Once there it depends on the weather. If it's raining you can't do anything else but drink and if the sun is shining you can't do anything else but drink to celebrate the rare event. Assuming that you now understand me I

shall continue.

Malbogies was always a three pint route and Lich Gates was a four pint route. A subdivision was useful for those of diverse tastes, thus Indecent Exposure became a three pint route (bitter) or a two pint route (scrumpy), and depending on the individual's capability (or is it capacity?) the system was completely open-ended—at both ends. The other advantage was that you could grade the climb at your leisure, before or after the climb, or even both if you so wished. However, with Equator at nine pints (bitter), and a whisky chaser, it was advisable to grade it afterwards. And what better grading system could there be for assisting in the lively consumption and discussion of many a well earned pint or climb. Last night's après climbing? Oh, just Mild Alcoholicly Severe.

So the next time you're rain-bound or sun-bound in a pub, start putting your own list together. You'll soon find the Concise Oxford Dictionary totally inadequate to meet the demands you put on it. And the only people likely to complain will be the guide book editors and authors. It's awkward enough to grasp the present inconsistencies from area to area in this country without having to write a five volume appendix to incorporate the above adjectival system as well. Perhaps if we work it out well enough we could devise a handicap system based on weight and number of the volumes carried on the climb. Hold on though. That smells too much of E Bah Gum grades again. Let's keep our quills clean. Long live the almighty, if somewhat atavistic, adjective.

CLAWS

H.R.C.C. and G.M.

‘Crampon—a grappling iron; a spiked contrivance for climbing mountains or telegraph poles or walking on ice.’

Chambers Dictionary 1979

In 1912 Oscar Eckenstein wrote an article for the C.C.J. entitled ‘Claws and Ice-Craft’, and in it he stressed that the term ‘crampon’ should really be ‘claw’.

‘I think that this is the best term to use in English; such alternatives as climbing iron, climbing-spur, climber, crampon, and creeper seem unsatisfactory. The German word is Steigeisen. The French word is crampon, a rather unfortunate term, as it also means a spike; hence it is sometimes difficult to understand in what sense French authors use the word.’

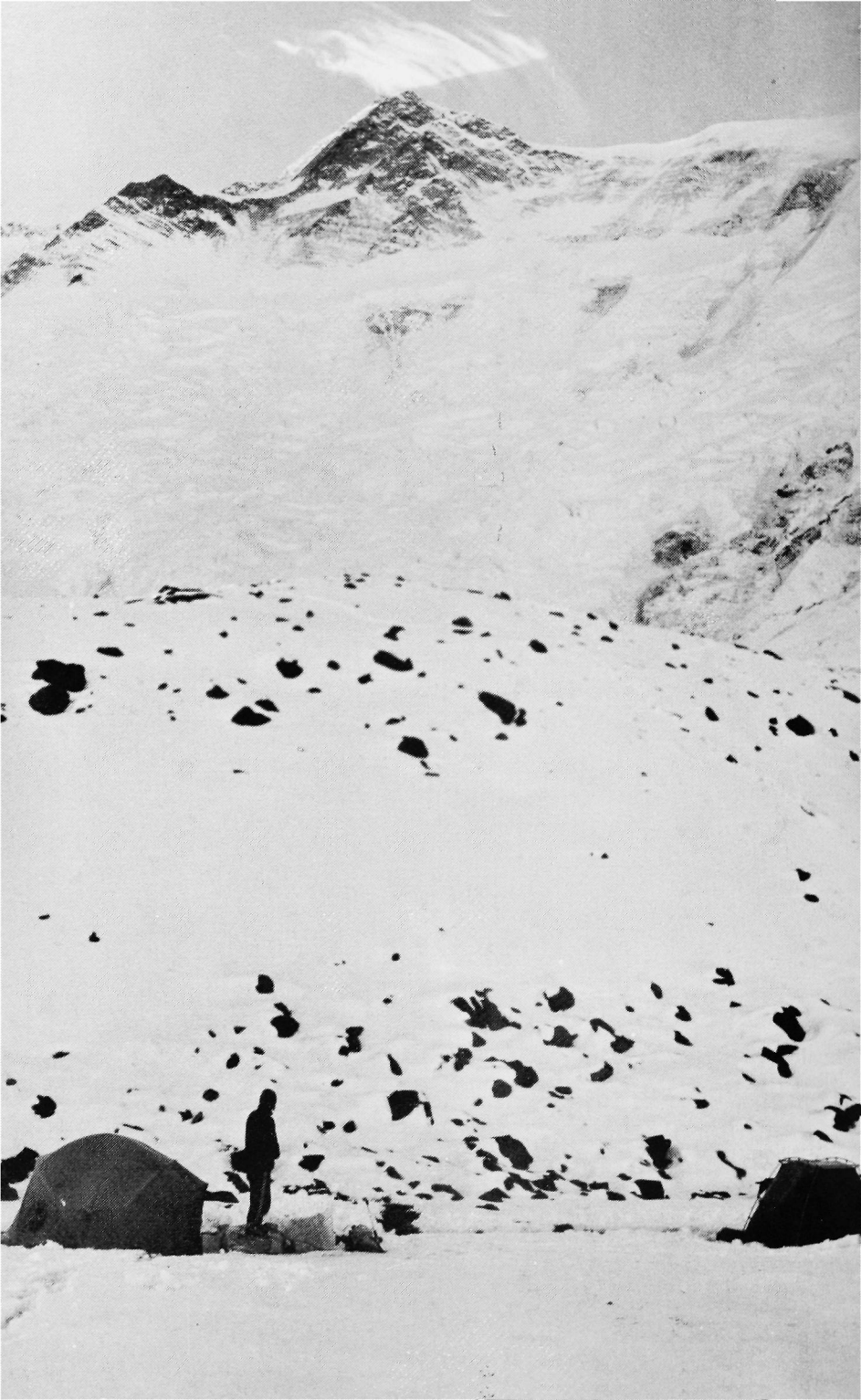
Of the above terms only ‘climbing irons’ was used for some years but it was not long before the word ‘crampons’ was accepted by British mountaineers.

Martin Conway revealed that perhaps the earliest use of crampons dated from the Iron Age (from Hallstatt) and also that they were used by the Gauls in Roman days. A more positive date was quoted by B.R. Goodfellow in the 1968 A.J. when he wrote of the Swiss besieging Bellinzona in 1478.

‘...the Swiss hidden on the overhanging rocks, rolled down massive boulders and fell with fury on our men, attacking them from the front, the sides and the rear. With their feet equipped with crampons the Swiss moved on the ice with incredible certainty, ready in the attack or safe in the defence.’

In the British Museum the Lloyd Collection of 18th century Swiss prints has a rare portrait of the famous chamois hunter, Johann Kleitz. He is seen fully equipped to go high on the mountains with crampons fastened to his boots similar to the type we were able to buy in the early decades of this century. It is likely that both hunters and smugglers, whose work took them above the snowline, had known their use for many years. To quote from C.T. Dent’s









Mountaineering (1892) which referred to travellers, shepherds and hunters:

‘To guard against the slipperiness of the ice, these people are accustomed to tie iron shoes, like those of horses, and furnished with three sharp prongs, securely to their feet, so that they get firm foothold on the ice.’

‘The climbing-irons were well known to the men of Chamonix, having been invented by Chamois hunters for their own purposes. Later they fell out of use in the Western and Central Alps, insomuch that fifteen or twenty years ago one seldom saw them; but in the Eastern Alps they have never gone out of fashion, and the present generation of climbers, having studied them there, appears inclined to favour them again. De Saussure devised an improved model with only three points under the heel, and used it with satisfaction for several years.’

When, after the 1850s, the railway brought a steadily increasing flow of visitors to the Alps every summer, we may ask why the sturdy folk of the Alpine villages, who presented themselves as guides and porters, never commended the use of crampons to their employers. Most of the mountain excursions selected for visitors involved nothing more than simple walking, seldom did the routes chosen demand snow or ice work of any length or steepness. The alpenstock or baton was correct for the amateur. The professional guide was expected to cut all the steps needed with his ice axe; the peasant used to hard manual labour was assumed to have muscular strength beyond that of the normal middle-class patron. When the visitor developed a love of the Alps, returning every summer for an active month or more, the tyro’s alpenstock was soon exchanged for an ice axe, a prestige symbol for the amateur, even more useful in Alpine hotels and village streets than it was upon the mountainside.

In passing we may note that at first ‘scrambles’ was the term used when it was necessary to employ the hands. Whymper wrote of his scrambles in the 1860s; his equipment was fairly standard for that era except for his crampons which were not generally used at that time. It is not until the 1890s that we come to ‘My Climbs in the Alps and the Caucasus’; Mummery bridges the gap between the Age of the Pioneers and the 20th century. In the first 25 years of the Alpine Club almost all the members employed professional guides and did not pretend to possess professional skills. Mummery with two A.C.

Opp: Roy Small on Easter Island, Ilam Rock, Dovedc'e.

Photo: Ian Smith.

Centre Right: Looking at the proposed route with Annapurna IV in the top centre.

Photo: Paul Moores.

companions, would spend two days cutting steps (no crampons, mark you) on ice slopes above Chamonix; he is already the amateur expert—'as good as a guide'.

It is also in the early 1890s that we meet several other references to the use of crampons. Dent commented:

'Crampons do not find much favour with the English mountaineers, and have been spoken of contemptuously on many occasions. They are sometimes branded as artificial aids, a vague term, but implying great disrespect. Among German and Austrian climbers however they find much favour. . . They are made with six, eight or more spikes.'

Claude Wilson in *Mountaineering*, 1893, put a slightly different stress on the issue:

' . . . they have been very generally scouted both by Englishmen and Swiss guides. They are now being spoken of in more respectful terms; and those who have really learnt their use speak very highly of them as time saving appliances. . . They consist of a framework of the best steel, in two parts, hinged together under the instep, and carrying ten large spikes. They will be made to order by the Albion Iron and Wireworks Co.'

Martin Conway, in *Climbing and Exploration in the Karakorum Himalayas*, 1894, refers to the use of climbing irons and at home George Abraham describing an ascent of Slanting Gully, Lliwedd, with its rotten, earthy rock, points out that some of the earlier parties had used crampons.

At the start of the 20th century Tom Longstaff was one of the first to appreciate the possibilities of crampons. In *'This My Voyage'* he gave examples from 1901 and his 1903 expedition to the Caucasus:

'On this day I learned that iced rocks can be safely climbed in crampons, at that time a most unorthodox practice.'

'Our climbing-irons saved time, obviating step-cutting except on the steepest ice.'

It was not just in climbing however that crampons were to prove their usefulness; they were certainly used by the great explorers of the Antarctic continent between 1902 and 1914. The most wonderful story which proved their importance on the frozen continent was that of Douglas Mawson, who led the Australian Expedition, 1911-1914. This is related in his book *'Home of the Blizzard'*.

An article in the *C.C.J.* in 1907, by A.W. Andrews, made it quite

clear that the use of crampons on ice was not an ethical issue. Entitled 'The Use of Crampons in Mountaineering' it was perhaps the first comprehensive account of the use of crampons and the ten-point version illustrated looked surprisingly advanced for that time. As a belaying aid the crampon was superbly described as a 'perambulating piton'. To quote Andrews:

'In conjunction with Prof. J.B. Farmer and Mr. J.C. Morland I have for a considerable part of the last four years in the Alps made experiments with crampons made in England, for the improved design of which we are indebted to Mr. O. Eckenstein. These were made of forged steel, and are stronger and therefore more reliable than the usual patterns obtained from abroad.'

Eckenstein was undoubtedly the genius with sufficient vision to see the vital role which crampons were to play in the future. His 1912 C.C.J. article brought an engineers precision on the constructional aspect of 'claws' and he commented that he had not had to cut a step in ice for twenty-five years simply because he had been wearing crampons. Outdated ideas were brushed aside with a bold approach:

'Most of the articles and criticisms about claws to be found in Alpine literature bear the hall-mark of ignorance. Thus one author says (Alpine Journal, vol. XII, page 474), "The man who has learnt to use crampons. . . might just as profitably have practised walking on stilts, as far as mountaineering is concerned".'

'For many years I have been advocating the use of claws and preaching (albeit in the wilderness) the possibilities of real ice craft.'

It took many years however for crampons to be accepted by the pundits in Savile Row.

Between the wars crampons were eventually used on Everest but they most certainly did not receive instant recognition. Howard-Bury commented in 1921:

'And though crampons afterwards came up to our camps wherever we went they were not destined to help us, and in the event were never used.'

'Ice is far from an insuperable obstacle on Mount Everest, almost anywhere above Chang La crampons would overcome it.'

A year later Bruce wrote in 'The Assault of Mount Everest':

'The great disadvantage of these sorts of boot is that one cannot

wear crampons with them at these high altitudes, for the strap bound tightly round the foot will almost certainly cause frostbite; either different boots or different spikes must be invented if the climbers are to have crampons or their equivalent. It is essential that they should be so equipped to avoid the labour of step cutting. . .'

In 'The Fight for Everest', 1924, Norton pointed out that:

'Here, as well as in the troughs, crampons were of the utmost assistance, and the porters were quick in appreciating their value. Without them, this stage of the journey was always a very tiring and tedious one, and ordinary climbing nails were not sharp enough to grasp the surface.'

He did however also suggest that:

'Crampons—These are useful, and in May 1924 were indispensable between Camps II and III, and desirable from III to IV. They are useless higher.'

By 1932 when Frank Smythe wrote *Kamet Conquered* one might have expected a more enlightened approach but no:

'Crampons—For most Himalayan work these are more dangerous than useful.'

It was in the same year (1932) that two front points were added to the standard 10-point crampons by Laurent Grivel. This revolutionary design was a technical breakthrough but although Germans and Austrians took to it immediately forty years were to pass before it was universally accepted. It did however provide a key, the great Alpine North Walls during the 1950s.

On the 1933 Everest expedition Ruttledge could not obtain crampons in England so Crawford had to volunteer to go over to Austria to buy some from Messrs. Horeschowsky and other firms. Despite the fact that Eric Shipton managed well in nails there were other opinions:

'Here I had reason to congratulate myself for having brought my crampons, which enabled me to walk with ease on a surface which exacted much careful, though not always successful, balancing from others.'

Even by the successful 1952 Everest expedition it was necessary to send off an order to Grindelwald to obtain special crampons for high altitude boots. Crampons had at last been accepted by climbers but there were problems with both design and use and even as late as

1971 we read in Chris Bonington's 'Annapurna South Face':

'The Chouinard crampons were ideal for high-standard ice climbing and had the great advantage that they could be closely fitted to boots, but they tended to ball up badly—this could probably be counteracted by using a plastic sheet wrapped underneath them as recommended by Pemberthy. Salewa and Grivel crampons were also used by members and these were not as prone to balling up.'

In the 1970s there were rapid advances in ice techniques and equipment which led to major ascents all over the world and it is interesting to speculate on the future of crampons. Apart from better metals which will stay sharp for longer periods of time, or perhaps heated spikes it is hard to envisage the next evolutionary trend.

WANTED

The Editor is still chasing a copy of *The Climber* for May 1965 and also a set of *The Climber* pre-January 1964.

I am also after several of the past C.C. Journals: Old Series numbers 2 and 3; New Series 1920, 1923, 1926, 1929 and no. 95 (for 1970/71).

If any Member is about to sell any pre-1910 Mountaineering books the Editor would like a chance to make a bid. Phone Glossop 63954.

KERRY

(A note on South West Ireland)

CLIFFORD FISHWICK

Summer of 1980 was wet. Records now show that it was an exceptionally wet summer and, as the west and south coasts of Ireland are the first to meet the incoming Atlantic weather systems, then—of course—Kerry was at its wettest in August 1980.

I was on holiday there for three weeks and did a number of ridge walks on my own as the family were not persuaded to join me in fighting through the lower slopes of waist high bracken and heather. A visit several years ago had made me determined to return and have a look at the highest mountains in the area and I must say—at the outset—that notwithstanding the obstacle of luxuriant vegetation on the approaches the mountains of Kerry offer very enjoyable possibilities in fell and ridge walking, and great potential for rock climbing, amid unspoilt scenery. The area is virtually trackless and one has the feeling of being an explorer—adding some excitement to output of fell walking energy. I saw only two persons on the traverses which I did during this period although there were crowds at the well-known beauty spots near Killarney.

These Kerry hills seem to be more vegetated than our own particularly as I remarked above—in the profusion of bracken and heather lower down—and with rather less exposed rock on the tops. Frequently the plateaux between summits are boggy, with heavy peat formations not usually encountered at home except, perhaps, on Dartmoor. You have to take care where to put your feet and it can be tiring. The sides of the hills, however, are plentifully endowed with crags of all sizes often wet, very steep or overhanging. The conditions seem ideal for the modern rock climber if not my generation's idea of the right kind of rock climbing for enjoyment. Some of the crags are very impressive indeed and—despite enquiries—I was unable to find anyone who could tell me whether there were recorded routes here about.

One of my earlier outings was in the Beara peninsula group which is not in the heart of Kerry but nearer to Bantry. This was the circuit known as the Coomgira Horseshoe which takes in a peak called

Hungry Hill. This impressive mountain rises from the coast to a modest height of 2,251 ft. but is a fascinating piece of mountain structure with a very secret high cwm containing a large lake which pours its overflow over a steep rock band producing a remarkable waterfall. Beyond and above the lake the mountain proper is guarded by a continuous rock wall of several hundred feet which extends along the whole flank of the mountain.

The major hazard in hill walking through these trackless areas is the mist—known locally as the “fog”. I agree with this choice of words because the fog is, seemingly, denser, more all embracing and persistent than our own mist. The summits are much more frequently covered in cloudy weather than we are accustomed to. The route needs to be studied and a compass is vital as there may not be a clearing in the cloud all day—or for several days.

We are all used to mist on the hills and might be inclined to dismiss the problem but felt it was quite a serious matter in Ireland as a wrong descent—even if safe—can lead to a valley miles from the main road and possibly on the wrong side of a col. Your car could be along way off.

In the main Carrantouil group there are many ridge walks available but the horseshoe—not unlike the Snowdon Horseshoe—is the obvious one for the ridge walker. At Glencar on the south side of the range is a unique base for this group. Called the Climbers Inn, accommodation is in a fairly recently built bunkhouse with facilities very much like our own huts. The conspicuous difference is that it is built on to a pub. The situation is delightful and isolated, lying below the main group of peaks and about a mile from the normal access point. You can be assured of a welcome from the innkeeper, John Walsh who is an experienced mountaineer and, after a day's outing the congenial atmosphere of the inn completes the experience.

Carrantouil (3,464 ft) the highest mountain is a shapely peak which can be reached without difficulty but with some sweat from the Killarney side by the Hag's Glen route, or from Glencar by the horseshoe route which is, of course, a far more attractive expedition. The final ridge between Carrantouil and Beencaragh (the second highest peak) is narrow and barred by gendarmes. There are similarities to the Crib Goch ridge but this one leads right to the final shoulder of Carrantouil and a rocky scramble of two or three hundred feet to the summit cross. By good fortune there was a

miraculous clearing of the fog as I reached the summit and the whole of the south west peninsula could be seen—right away to Dingle and Mount Bandon—an outlying peak of fine classic shape which I have yet to climb. It was on the summit of Carrantouil that I met two girls from Sheffield who had ascended from the Hag's Glen route. Compare this with the summit of Snowdon in mid-August! It follows that one rarely sees an empty can or chocolate wrapper on the tops—a fact which adds to the difficulty of route finding in the fog—but which is, of course, appreciated for every other good reason.

The rock is a form of grey-purple sandstone—hard usually—firm and giving the name of the Purple Mountain group which lies east of the Gap of Dunloe. The Gap is a tourist trap but is, nevertheless a quite spectacular pass with masses of rock within a radius of a mile—and no one climbing it.

I must also mention the coast cliffs and their possibilities. I have only seen some stretches but can say—without hesitation—that the enormous cliffs near Mizen Head are considerably more intimidating than the South Stack Holyhead area which I know so well.

The people in Kerry are very helpful and the farmers seemed to welcome a chat when I passed through their land. If I were younger I would be trying to keep all this virgin rock secret—years ago the information was that there were no real rock climbing possibilities in Ireland at all. Since then we know about the development of areas further north and east but Kerry is still, I believe, largely virgin.

My conclusions are that this is an area quite equal to many of our more popular areas in the United Kingdom yet possessing its own very special and lonely charm. Perhaps Snowdonia seemed like this eighty years ago.

“FAR OUT MAN” or “GEE MAN, YOU ENGLISH ARE SO CUTE”

The new mandatory language test imposed by American National Park wardens on British climbers who wish to stay in Yosemite has caused widespread consternation. Before contacting the B.M.C. to enlist for one of its Autumn crash courses Members are advised to test themselves with the following passage. The ‘pass’ standard is very high and it is incumbent on one to ‘flash’ the paragraph without pausing for a rest.

‘Ben had just **SCRUBBED** his latest new line on Gogarth from a **SLING SHOT**. On the first attempt he tried to **FLASH IT** and after several good **TORQUERS** and the odd **POWERGLIDE** at intervals he was just about to **SHOOT FOR** a good **HANDSLAM** when he **TWEEKED** his forearm (despite having **BIG GUNS**) and got all **GOOBERED UP**. He was way **OUT THERE** and as Rowland (who had been **POUNDING PINS** the previous day) muttered “**THAT GUY’S HISTORY**”, to the hushed group of inactivists, Ben went for a **SCREAMER** from a **BARNDOOR**. Paul watched the **RIPPER** with nonchalant indifference, while **BATMANNING** up after Ron, and grunted a grudging “**NEAT MAN**” under his breath.’

For the un-initiated who wish to make sense of the above the Editor has obtained at great expense a list of some of the new wave terminology.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| ‘FUNK’ | Climbing which involves the use of many and varied techniques during the course of the route. Typifies British climbing. |
| ‘SLINGSHOT’ | To top rope. |
| ‘SCRUBBING IT’ | To clean mud, dirt and plants etc. from a potential rock climb; i.e. gardening. |
| ‘POUNDING PINS’ | Artificial climbing. |
| ‘BATMAN’ | To pull oneself up a rope using a hand-over-hand technique. |

‘SHOOTING FOR’	To move a hand or foot quickly in the direction of a hand or foot hold, hoping it lands and stays there.
‘DYNAMO’	To make an uncontrolled jump for a hold in the hope of making further progress (in fact a whole body version of the previous technique).
‘POWERGLIDE’	The above, but under control.
‘HANDSLAM’	An extremely good, secure handjam.
‘TORQUER’	An extremely good, secure finger-jam.
‘BARNDOR’ (OFF A LIEBACK)	The experience of one’s body swinging horizontally out of control, frequently whilst laybacking (but can happen at other times).
‘OUT THERE’	To be very frightened whilst leading.
‘THAT GUY’S HISTORY’	Describes a lead climber in extremis; i.e. about to fall off.
‘SCREAMER’	The consequence of being history; i.e. falling off.
‘RIPPER’	The above enhanced by the leader’s running belays taking it in turns to pull out of the rock.
‘YABO’	To survive errors of judgement whilst solo climbing; i.e. falling off but living.
‘GUNS’ (usually prefixed by ‘BIG’)	Arm muscles.
‘GOOBER’	An abrasion on the hand often caused by jamming.
‘TWEAK’	To damage a muscle or tendon.

A glossary of American rock-climbing terms supplied by Max Jones while he was recently lecturing in Sheffield. The translations are by Ian Smith. Neat man!

LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES

JIM PERRIN

I leant against an ash tree and looked down on the bridge. On Dartmoor it would have been called a clapper bridge, but this was the head of a Welsh valley. It was nothing more than two slabs of rock, narrow in relation to their length, spanning a point where the stream was channelled between high banks. The natural contours of the slabs were accentuated, hollowed out, though whether by the passage of feet or water I could not tell. It was mid-September. I had been watching a sewin in a pool by a copse of alder downstream. And following it, too, following its quickness, the silvery perfection of its form, until eventually it had arrowed its way out of the still pool and under the broken surface of the faster water, where I had lost sight of it.

So I left the stream to climb up and stand by the ash tree. The keys were hanging in heavy clusters. Some of them were littered about on the grass, and the leaves retained only a tired memory of green in their shrivelled browns. Above the skyline ridge, the clouds were uniformly grey. I was not looking directly at the farmhouse, but looking at it or not, just then I saw a figure come out of the door. I turned my head, puzzled, not quite sure of what I had seen. Nothing moved. Why should anyone have been in that place? It sufficiently aroused me from my lethargy to make me cross the bridge.

As I neared the house, a rabbit rose on its haunches, peered at me, and darted over the cropped turf to a hole in a bank grown with blackthorn. I stepped inside the door. There was a curiously heavy smell, a mixture of elder, fungus and rotting plaster. The plan of the house was discernible. A few slimy remnants of wood poked out from holes halfway up the walls. In one corner a fragment of rock remained, supported on a beam jammed by chance against the leaning chimney stack. I went outside again, shrugged my shoulders, and set off briskly up the valley.

The path slanted steeply back across the hillside from the valley head, climbing round a spur to reach the old quarry tramway. I consciously enjoyed the pain of walking uphill, the heaviness of it, the mechanical labour of lungs and legs. There was a certain grim

satisfaction in its dissociation from the processes of mind. And when it sent my head reeling with fatigue, I could turn on my heels, gaze down, and re-assert a mental ascendancy. I reached the tramway, its slightly sunken course flashing with water. The valley stretched seawards below me. A little patch of sunlight caught the outline of a castle on a rocky knoll by the coast. At the foot of the incline I stopped to piss against a broken column of slate. The wire it must once have supported now rusted in the sedge. I climbed the steps to one side of the incline. In places they had collapsed. For a few uphill paces, you could get into a rhythm, and then a disjunction, a faltering, as you picked your way from one remnant to another. Beyond the incline, a track contoured round a cwm, quite high and separate from the main valley, to slate workings at its head. Beyond that, the bwllch, and a miry path down to the next village. In the bottom of the cwm, under a smooth-crowned and heathery cliff, a small lake had gathered behind the debris of a moraine. Rising trout pocked its surface; the wind rippled over it. Above the lake, stone hut circles and ruined sheepfolds existed in a curious synchronicity. I moved on along the track to the foot of the next incline. Some way up this, a terrace ran off on both sides. Rightwards, below a slope of shaly scree, a quarry hole had been cut down for eighty or ninety feet into the side of a natural outcrop. Its dripping back wall was streaked with brown, and studded here and there with dull mosses or brilliant green ferns. To the left, a tongue of firm packed waste led out across the hillside. A line of roofless, low buildings had been built along it. In front of them, the stonecrop-carpeted belvedere of slate, looking down into the main valley.

I sat on a slab in the window of one of the buildings, my back to one wall, my feet against the other, trying to recreate the lives of the men who had lodged in these barracks. The creatures of my imaginings had not so much reality as a flicker of movement glimpsed by an averted eye. The spirit of their existence was dead to my conscious mind. Such few surviving sons of the men who had built these walls, would now themselves be old men. The thought did not depress me. The isolation of the place, the greyness of the sky, the feel of these cold and starless dog days, all had a numbing effect. I was no more than a figure in a landscape, wherein the failure of my will to imagine did not signify. I thrust my hands in my pockets, walked to the edge of the terrace, and looked up through the gaps of former roof-trees to the bwllch.

To the North-West, the sky was darker. I thought to make the bowlch, and set off up the incline at a rapid pace, stumbling from time to time in my haste. At its top the incline met a second, shorter terrace. A few yards along to the right a parallel incline slanted down. The terrace ended against a little wall of rock, just before which I took a gravelly path which rose through a broad rocky gully to reach the col. A gate in the drystone wall marked the top. I leant against the wall, breathing hard. Another range of hills rose beyond. To both sides, valleys led off amongst hills. A wind blew from the North West; rain started to fall. Looking down the valley in that direction, columnar shafts of luminous grey rain drifted towards me. The rain spattered down more vehemently. I turned up my collar and ran back down the gully.

It was at this point that a terror seized me. From the security of self-consciousness it is easy to suppose how silly you would look, how vain and futile, if you were being watched. But what of the terror that comes with the conviction of being watched? I was near panic, running and skidding down the path. I jumped down onto the terrace, fell, picked myself up, ran to the incline and hurled on downwards regardless of my feet slithering on the wet slate. At the bottom a steep slope of scree. I launched down it, rocks sliding beneath and around me. A large one bound slowly past me, turned on end, almost stopping, then spun off down. It shot out into space. A moment's silence. I stopped myself, scree still trickling around me. A crash as the rock hit bottom. The edge of the hole was only feet away. A squall of hail hissed across the slope. I traversed the edge, my body arched rigid, and scrambled up onto the incline.

At the first terrace I stopped, looked around, shivered as I attempted to regain composure. I walked down, slowly. The feeling grew stronger, not just that I was being watched but that something was following me. The flesh on my back crawled; my scalp prickled with fear. I stopped to listen; nothing, beyond the suggestion of something silently behind me. I looked round. Nothing. I walked on and it followed me, keeping perfect time with me, gaining on me if I speeded up, holding back if I slowed down. Mist was rolling down from the cliff above the lake. Already it had pushed a salient down into the main valley, cutting off the long view. I burst into a run and it followed me, effortlessly keeping pace with my pounding feet and heart. I skittered down the next incline, along the tramway, down the path, and quite suddenly, it was no longer there. The feeling

quite simply ceased. I was trembling at its memory, but no longer felt in the least threatened.

I carried on down, past the ruined farm, across the stone bridge, and along by the stream to the road. The rain fell steadily. I was wet through. Leaves on the roadside trees hung grimly down from the branches. Cattle hunched beneath them. A mile or two down the road, under a soft hillside and amongst the green land on the far bank of the river, the ruins of a large house rose like rotten molars from the encroaching rhododendrons, planted by former owners and now run wild, a demotic curse on the pomp of the place. Coming to the old church as Llanfihangel, I remembered a story told me by a farmer. All the houses around, he said, had been woken one night by the church bell ringing. When sufficient people arrived at the church, they had gone inside, to find it in darkness, the bell still ringing. A light was brought, and they found a ram shaking its head, with the bell-rope tangled in its horns.

I walked down through the graveyard into the church. A grey light seeped in through the leaded panes. The tiled floor was shadowy and the gallery above quite dark. Drops from the trees close by the wall pattered across the roof. I walked up the aisle. The altar was bare. In the pulpit a bible lay open. Climbing the three steps, I began to read. My words reverberated strangely through the darkening church:

“The voice said, Cry. And he said,
What Shall I cry?”

People came in through the door, filing slowly down the aisle, sidling into the pews, gliding along the gallery, silent and numberless, their faces downturned, listening as I read on. Quarrymen and farmers, maids and fieldwomen, shepherds, miners, woodmen, bodies bent and contorted to the exercise of their tasks, faces seamed against all weather—not a child in view, not a young face nor a hopeful face amongst them as they uplifted now to hang on the resonance of a word. Not a face but that expressed a resignation, whether wearied or calm, patient, sardonic, or sad; all borne down under a weight of acquiescence, the Word ringing out over them.

Grey light thickening down to darkness in the deconsecrated church. Outside the rain dripped incessantly. In the river behind the church, a sewin nosed its way upstream. I closed the book and went my way.

WOMEN—TEN YEARS ON

Open Letter, 1971. Come to Ynys Ettws, the slumslime home for misogynists: in this mausoleum are buried the last bones of the C.C. Celibacy. Women are the world's best decoration. This hut is barren and sterile; let's have some fertility rites.

This is 1971 and one ought to realise this. Women are not dirty or private or respectable in the manner which your absurdly deferential shunning of their contact would suggest. This place is half-empty and wholly characterless because of the petty restrictiveness of an inactive minority. This is a key issue in a generation clash and based less on age than values. The C.C. isn't a club for staid stockbrokers who escape from their wives for a Sunday afternoon stroll around Snowdon once a year: it should be a club for climbers (of all ages) actively involved in the tradition of Welsh climbing. . . If the facilities are here why can't our wives and girlfriends use them? . . .

Part of a letter by Jim Perrin

Graffiti, 1981. "Have you heard about the graffiti?"

"What graffiti?"

"On the side of Ynys. Well, it says 'Women are everywhere' and 'Women are angry'—and it's fairly large and legible."

"Can it be seen from the road?"

"Seen from the road! It can be seen from the Wastad."

"It's a police job. Get 'em in straight away."

"But Ken, the women involved are in the club."

"What!!! If wilfully and gratuitously done, then it's a clear expulsion case. Boot 'em out on their ear. What's needed is a special action sub-committee. Make them wash it off."

"It's your fault Ken; you got 'em in."

"I'd like to be informed Jim. Who do you think they might be?"

"Hell Ken, it can't be that hard to work it out. There aren't that many women in the club."

"Did they come from Yorkshire?"

"I protest Ken—that's racial discrimination."

"I'm fairly certain that Bonny Masson had nothing to do with it."

etc. etc.

EDWARDIAN ECCENTRIC

H.R.C. CARR

A talented writer will one day make a selection of the best obituaries in our mountain literature, from rhapsodies in the grand manner of Winthrop Young to plain English in the essay C.F. Holland wrote about Arthur Thomson (see *Fell and Rock Journal*, Vol. 14, 1944/46). It would tell us of men and women long forgotten who, in various ways, made our mountain history. I should like to possess the book.

Thomson, a remarkable man who frequented our British hills in the decade before 1914, had been a victim of poliomyelitis either from birth or in early childhood; the disease had deprived him of a normal human body. His left arm was useless and the clenched hand went over at right angles at the wrist. He often walked with it clasped in his strong right hand. His left leg was weak and he walked with a shuffling gait, dragging the left foot. He had poor control of his mouth and his speech was often indistinct but, to compensate for the deficiency of one side, Nature had given amazing strength to the other. The spirit within the man was a Rolls Royce engine of perfection and he had excellent lungs.

Throughout youth he had to endure the taunts of the hard-hearted (children are very nasty to one another) and the condescending kindness of Good Samaritans infuriated him. Luckily for him he inherited a prosperous private business from which he retired early. He burned with envy of the athlete: but found in bicycling a sport in which he could excel. That was the golden age of bicycling when only steam lorries and the very odd motor car, both stinking and raising clouds of dust or splashing us with mud, warned us of the doom-laden future. When at school I loved cycling and was pretty pleased with myself over a circuit of London through the Home Counties (160 miles) then possible by country lanes—now a great swamp of suburbs. On more than one occasion Thomson rode more than 250 miles in 24 hours, and he exceeded 10,000 miles a year for ten successive years—to quote from Holland's amazing essay. He was far better than I had ever been—his bicycle took him to mountains just as mine did in 1915 and from walking the fells he graduated (as I did) to climbing rocks. To do this he had to find



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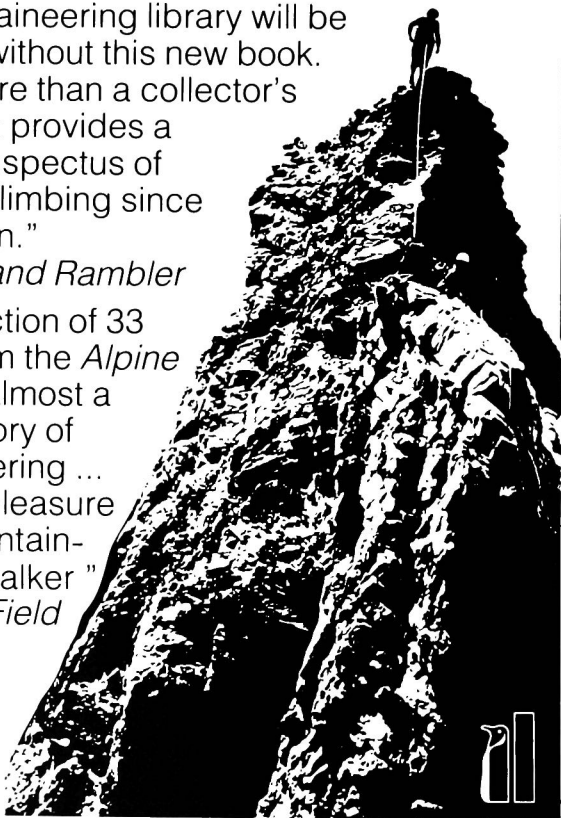
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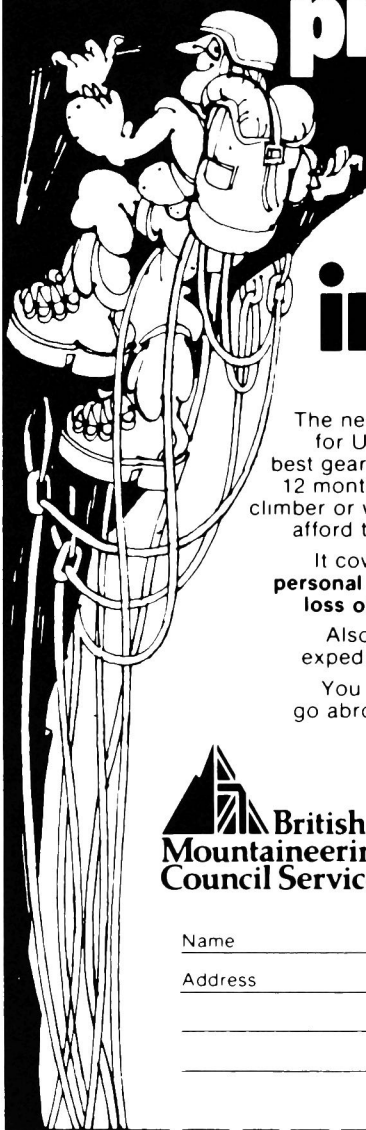


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leaders. I first met him in 1919 and in March 1920 he invited me to stay with him at his home, Lonning Garth, in Portinscale. He had a nice house, a chauffeur and a domestic staff.

I was a novice in the peak bagging stage and said I wanted to bag Skiddaw. "I'll take you tomorrow", said T. without hesitation. It was very cold for March, a strong wind blowing from the N.E.—we faced it. At intervals sleet showers beat upon us and I was amazed how well T. went, though he often stumbled and fell once or twice. I must confess I was rather uneasy about him; should he collapse, what could be done? He was a heavy man. I bethought me of A.E.W. Mason's novel 'Running Water', where the hardy villain puts all his own clothes on his shivering victim when he sees that the game is up. Luckily all was well. It seemed a long way to that cairn with the gale increasing as we got higher and T. staggered like a drunken man. We made it, of course, and turned our backs to the storm. At one point I had suggested retreat and T's anger flared out at me at once; it was "Get thee behind me, Satan. I have faced far worse than this on these fells". I have no doubt this was true. With his uncouth appearance and blunt manner he must have been a lonely man. He enjoyed a quarrel especially with pompous pundits like Solly. He had a quick temper and being a lonely man, did not mind giving offence and picking a quarrel. I remember a hot dispute with a well-known publican in Wasdale. T. wound up the debate as follows: "Right, Whiting, you can send me a thumping bill. It will be the last."

That summer (1920, my first season) he joined us with his two St. Nicklaus guides. It was a wonderful season, everything was perfect and I was in an ecstasy of delight. The half had never been told. T. lent his guides to us for the traverse of the Grands Charmoz, the Grepon and the Drus and the ascent of the Geant. We also did the Aiguille de Tour from the hospice on the Col de Balmes. There was then no hut on the Argentiere Glacier. I have long thought T. was an A.C. member but he was not. He may never have applied for membership and before 1914 he would certainly have been black-balled. In those days the little boxes were always put into use at meetings. Arnold Lunn told me he had, when young, been black-balled at the Alpine Club. When black-balling was abandoned I saved the little boxes from the dust-bin and, after some conversion, they appeared in my antique shop as nice little notepaper boxes or trinket boxes. What happened to the black balls I know not. Perhaps they are still there.

A LOFT OF JOURNALS

DAVE GREGORY

As far as I know the English language has no committee of arid academics discussing its growth or rejecting foreign imports and it grows therefore unhindered. Some recent additions we need, some we could do without. Most climbers try and keep a snug rope, a rack full of pro' and a wide-awake second between them and hospitalisation. The climber and the language can do without that, s or z. I remember someone in these pages arguing a case for the recognition by dictionaries of 'thrutch' for which there was, and is, no accepted synonym. Birtles, in another place; if The Commons speak of The Lords by that phrase, it seems fitting for The Journal to refer to one of the Wilson publications in the same way; Birtles proposed the use of 'udge'. In the vernacular it is well established. It is what one person, taking more than his fair share of a double seat, unwillingly does as he cedes grudging inches to a newcomer. An udge in a narrow chimney is more strenuous. A thrutch with restricted limb movement.

I used to have a shelf full of journals. It became a bookcase and then a few boxes and the problem continues. The domestic bliss of a climbing acquaintance was disrupted for years because he refused to agree to a full loft conversion, dormer windows, mural of the Rockies, the lot, because he knew that the roofspace was already full of subversive literature in the way of F.R.C.C. journals, C.C. journals, Ascent, Descent and the like. She was too large to get through the trap-door into the roof space but she introduced a fifth column, in the shape of a slimmer neighbour, through the hatch and all was revealed. The spy put her foot through the plasterboard and in the set-to it came out that herself had a full set of Woman's Realm at her mother's. Now the loft has wall to wall bookshelves, a card index and a silence notice. Rumour has it that he's into collecting Barbara Cartland, she, Methuen Physics Monographs; that one of their children is dyslexic and the other only reads the Beano.

Our roofspace is fairly well stocked with accumulated house-hold miscellanea. Among them is a pile of carpets, which, suitably

arranged under the light bulb gives a pleasant enough couch upon which to browse through a few old journals. One is supposed to be making a start on putting some floorboards down, but these things have to be thought about. There is a myriad of collective nouns, some merely useful, some onomatopoeic, some evocative. A herd of cows, a gaggle of geese, a charm of starlings. And the punning and the cynical. Is a group of Wing Commanders a flush of W.C.s?; an assembly of college heads a lack of principles? We need some apt pun or evocative word for a collection of what we call journals, a misnomer surely?, since should not a journal be published or written up daily? However, a shelf of journals? a bookcase? a box? a browse? a library? a raffle?

Why do journals contain unintelligible poetry? Has Perrin been moved to poetry? A combination of circumlocutory polysyllabic prose with a phrase or two of Latin turned into poetry, that would fill a few journals. There was an earlier, less famous, Perrin who invented an apparatus for making electrons go round in circles. It just shows how breeding will out.

I have some gaps in my rack (- a rack?) of journals. The S.M.C. number 151 is missing. This contains the article above all others wherein Robin Smith dealt with the meeting of 'The Bat and The Wicked'. Whoever has it, may his Rocks get swage rot. If I see him, with his krabs slipping ineffective from disintegrating wires, I'll have him, if gravity doesn't.

There is a gap in my bookshelf too. Some. . ., some. . ., someone has my copy, original printing, of Nanga Parbat Pilgrimage. He, wherever he is, should be suffering stabs of pain and inexplicable bodily anguish from my nightly ritual pushing of pins into a small wax figure. If he wishes to end his suffering, he need only return it, via the Editor, or, failing that, a few nail clippings or a lock of hair will ensure his swift demise.

Pardon me a moment while I bang a few times on a joist lest the silence of my inactivity be realized by the Gestapo in the kitchen. Now where wa - ah yes. I've stopped collecting S.M.C. journals; they were a shocking drain on the bawbees when I let the J.M.C.S. sub. lapse. Why don't members of the major clubs receive copies of all those clubs' journals? The print run off would be huge, with a much smaller unit cost and the sub. increase would probably be surprisingly small. I have two C.C. journals for some years, the fat

years, the Brown and Whillans years. One has no cover, is dirty, much sellotaped, mudstained and heavily used. Just before it fell to pieces I went through it ticking off the descriptions of the routes I hadn't done and wanted to type out. A local rival borrowed it, thought the ticks were the ones I'd already done, sold his gear and took up fell running.

In the last, double journal, there were some comments which could be construed as critical of the aforementioned Whillans. Now Brown, as a Baron, is pretty high up, but the Don is a god and while lese-majesty is pardonable, lese-divinity is an affront to the righteous. Let the culprits and the Editor beware, the faithful are angry. If no well-honed shafts of wit whistle in from Penmaenmawr there will be no lack of big swings from the floor lying in wait and retribution. An ex-pupil of mine—"Yes dear, I'm just planning it out!"—"I must get some sound insulation on these joists"—was recently charged in Bakewell Magistrates' Court with an attempt on the record for the number of policemen needed to get a non-assisting person into a squad car. He was strictly censored by the magistrates for this laudable attempt but that court hands down some very curious verdicts. My son-in-law, an electrician,—I must get him to put a couple more lights and a heater up here—was fined for sitting in the local launderette watching his trousers spin in the drier, his nether regions being clad only in underpants. The Wye, as he explained to the beak, wets your trousers if you wade through it. To no avail and this at a time when an impressionable public watching the small screen sees our rock stars clad in little more than underpants. I've tried shouting "Come on arms" but it does no good, they still get tired if you lift them above your head. All this 'hang on bone' is overrated too. Your fingers uncurl just the same. A pair of fancy red drawers might be the answer.

Keeping your journals in drawers just isn't satisfactory. The drawers are never the right size and one journal always ruckles up and jams and you have to ruin it to pull the drawer open. Shelves along the wall are the only answer. A shelf of journals?

Could the Editor reprint a botanist 'In Hanging Garden Gully' and borrow Smith's 'Bat' from the S.M.C.? What a contrast in styles. I've never done that Gully, or The Bat come to that. I've probably never been good enough to do the latter and I feel at too great a literary disadvantage to approach the former. Merely to

climb it after Montague's celebrated ascent, polished by his memorable turn of phrase, would not be enough.

Worth another read. Well, well, it's not here. I must have left it in the bookcase in the sitting-room. A case of journals? I think not. I'll give the loft a miss for today. Lofty, lofty, imposing, exalted, sublime. A loft, that's the word. A loft of journals.

CLOGWYN Y WILSON

Ken Wilson has recently outlined his proposals for a man-made mountain outside the Sobell Centre. It will be 65-75 feet high, 150 feet wide and 10-15 feet deep and is not, despite the statistics, a scale statue of Ken himself. It will have various pinnacles along the ridge and will contain numerous problems ranging from a difficult traverse through Nea-Crackstone Rib type problems to Cenotaph Corner/Right Wall type problems.

The Editor has been asked if it is true that Ken has recently been seen about town in a 'dinner jacket' (perhaps en-route to the Yorkshire Ramblers Club dinner). When the Editor rang up to enquire about this matter he was told that, "Ken has just gone to meet the Russians for Dennis Gray". Later it appeared that Ken had been digging a big hole in the garden and 'was busy concreting'. It is not clear whether there is any connection between the above facts. The legend continues. . .

1919—C.F. HOLLAND'S YEAR

H.R.C. CARR

Old people have plenty of time to look back on the past. A diary of one's early days on the hills is of course a help. Here, before me, a page recalls a lovely summer day on Doe Crag with my Father and dear old X. A few pages on I see again the Gashed Crag on Tryfan with the charming Miss Y. Lord! How easy it was to fall in love with that girl. But it did not come to anything: her eyes were for a better man than I. We have both survived to become Vice-Presidents of the Alpine Club in our turn. There's glory for you.

Do you remember what Wordsworth wrote about 1789 on the French Revolution? Well, 1919 was like that for me. I went up for my first term to Oxford (in January); soon I met Holland and became friends with him at once. We went long walks on Sundays and he told me of his climbing in the Lakes and of his friendship with Herford. Severely wounded in the left arm he was determined to climb again and we had a few days together at Ogwen in the Easter vacation. The weather was wintry and we did not do much. But on such climbs as we did Holland found he was better than he ever was pre-war. Perhaps a new burning ambition gave him what the war had taken away—i.e. full use of one arm.

Holland was in his middle 30s. He was of medium height, similar to two other very fine climbers I have followed, Bentley Beetham and Rusty Westmorland. He had taken his degree in 1910 from Keble College, Oxford, drifted into Prep School teaching with its poor pay but easy living and long holidays. He joined up at once in 1914 in the ranks of the infantry. He told me of a kit inspection soon after he enlisted. Each soldier stood to attention behind the neat pile of his equipment. The officer paused in front of Holland. "Have you no blacking?", he asked. "No", was the reply. "NO—WHAT?", roared the sergeant. "No blacking", was the prompt answer. His tongue was sharp as it should be in a schoolmaster—he did not suffer fools gladly. Considering the severity of his wounds, his confident movement in leading on difficult climbs was amazing. He looked a tough man, but there must have been something lacking as

there seems to be a void in the years after 1925 when I lost touch with him. I had in that year helped him for a short time in his small 'Prep' school at Reigate in Surrey. He had by then married, but I never heard of any children to the marriage. He was, when I knew him, always hard up and I expect he had seldom the means to take climbing holidays. At Oxford in Edwardian times two thirds of the students were from families of very modest middle class homes and jobs had to be taken at once on 'going down'.

If I show you an extract from my diary please remember the massive advance of climbing standards since 1919. In that year the very word SCAFELL had almost as daunting a sound as the word EIGERWAND had a decade or so later.

From my diary July 20th and 21st, 1919 (From Burnthwaite). Started 10 a.m. Scafell 12. Fine day but cold in the wind. H. and I did Hopkinson's Gully. The first sixty feet were very hard indeed. We then joined Jone's and reached The Crack by the Waiting Room and the Mantleshelf which I may say is easier than the one on the Needle. I then came down Steep Ghyll and led (my cousin) Jack and Dad up by Slingsby's Chimney and on to High Man to Cairn and back to the foot of the crags by Broad Stand. At 5.30 H. and I went off and did Jones's Deep Ghyll route to the Low Man and into Deep Ghyll by Jones and Collier's climb, then to High Man by Herford's Direct which is very steep though the holds are good. Down the easy way and by Moss Ghyll Direct unroping below Tennis Court Wall which was bone dry and much easier than when I was there in wet weather. The Rake 8.15. Home 9.10.

Next day H. and I left at 9.20; foot of Scafell Crags 11.45. Up Pinnacle by Hopkinson's Direct and on to Low Man by Hopkinson and Tribe's. Down by Slingsby's Chimney and O.G.J.'s Direct route. The Gangway went like a dream both up and down. We left by 1.30 over col under Lingmell and so by path to Styhead to Kern Knotts and up by East Chimney. I then let H. down on a rope, most of Sansom's Buttress; then tea and off to Napes by 4 p.m. Rested at Napes till 5.15 watching Dorothy Pilley and Stobart on the Arrowhead. Then up Eagle's Nest Direct and down by Abbey Buttress. Then up Scimitar Ridge (H's new climb). Down Arrowhead easy way unroped. Left crags 6.50 to walk to Beck Head and so into Ennerdale and then home (Buttermere) over Scarth Gap by 9.0 p.m. A day of days.





H. came over to join me at Buttermere, a visit during which we met Winthrop Young and Cecil Slingsby. We climbed Walker's Gully, bone dry in that wonderful weather. The only wet stretch was the top one which even H. found jolly hard. We also did almost all the climbs then known round Buttermere. Some three weeks later H. joined us at the Post Office, Glen Brittle; with Mary Campbell's Cottage (one large bed, take four if their knees were slightly bent) this was the only accommodation for visitors, camping being only allowed on the beach—there was none that summer that we saw.

Steeple and Barlow, long experienced climbers in Skye, were staying at the cottage. There was one party at Sligachan but we met no others in the three weeks we were about on the ridge. H. pioneered a new route on the Cioch and I remember a day of damp mist when we covered some two-thirds of the whole ridge: the evening cleared and at sunset we had reached the Tooth. As we ran down the corrie to the Belach and so home I saw against the sharp line of the western ocean St. Kilda's solitary finger pointing to the sky. I wonder how many have seen it from the ridge?

Editor's note:

Cecil Frederick Holland was born in 1886, the son of a C. of E. clergyman of very slender means. Consequently the fact that he was sent to Westminster School in 1899 was probably due to a charity award—there were many at that time. It was there, one afternoon of drenching rain, that while poking about in the library he chanced to find a black volume entitled 'Rock Climbing in the English Lake District'. To read this he avoided 'futile games of soccer' and 'braved temporary annihilation from the cane of an outraged monitor' to say nothing of 'imperilling his immortal soul by inventing suitable lies in case his deception was found out'.

The seed had been planted and a short time later he set off for the mountains:

'When the Easter holidays arrived the last cycle tour was performed; it landed me at Ogwen Cottage. I stalked in and announced to the assembled company—it was a wet day—that I wanted to climb and would somebody please show me how. Within an hour Mr. F.C. Aldous was piloting me up the Milestone Buttress.'

After he left school in 1903 he probably took up clerical work

while cramming to pass Matriculation and eventually took a pass degree at Keble College between 1907 and 1910. It was not until three years later that fate was to take a hand in Holland's climbing career:

'...tired, dirty and dishevelled, I climbed wearily into one of the antique carriages that convey one from Bangor to Bethesda. Opposite me sat a tall young man of striking appearance, obviously alien in every way to the quarrymen and suchlike who filled the carriage, jabbering some strange language, presumably Welsh. According to the usual custom of the English under such conditions we did not exchange a single word.'

The ice was only broken when the pair realised that they were both bound for the same destination—Ogwen. The next day the silent young man, who was none other than Siegfried Herford, led Holland up Western Gully on Glyder Fawr. That chance meeting was to be a significant milestone for Holland as a year later in April Holland was to be third man on the rope for the historic ascent of the Central Buttress of Scafell. Although this route was described as 'the biggest single breakthrough in standard in the history of Lakeland climbing' a serious omission has happened with the current Scafell guide. Holland's name has been left off the first ascent details of C.B. This error was made first in the 1967 F.R.C.C. guidebook by Oliver and Griffin but worst of all it occurred again in the 1974 Burbage and Young guide. (FRCC please note!).

Holland's confidence in his companions comes through very clearly:

'I followed Herford and Sansom often thoroughly frightened, but always secure in the knowledge of the infallibility of my companions and the certainty that they would see me safely through whatever dangers and difficulties were to be met.'

After university teaching as a Head Master of a preparatory school at Reigate, Surrey then after the outbreak of war Holland enlisted in the ranks of the 4th Battalion Gloucester Regiment and was soon put forward as officer material. In the great battle for the Leipzig Redoubt, 1916, (Hindenburg Line) he was awarded the Military Cross for daring leadership. During the War he once swore:

'If I get out of this alive the first thing I'll do when I get to England will be to go to the top of Napes Needle and sing God Save the King.'

This was duly accomplished after he had got over a serious arm

wound from an action in 1917 when he received a bar to his M.C.

By 1918 Holland was again ready for the fray and joined Ivor Richards and Dorothy Pilley for the first ascent of Original Route on the Holly Tree Wall at Idwal. Climbing in nails he must have found the going rather hard:

'The end of the first chapter left our party scattered over the face of the cliff, the first two sitting exhausted in the branches of an incredibly prickly holly tree and gazing at each other with a wild surmise. Baffled for the moment we had noticed some twenty feet below a ledge slanting up to the left. It had not appeared to lead anywhere but under the circumstances it was worth exploring; so I descended and crawled along until it came to an end on the face of the cliff. . . '

With Richards he also put up Oblique Buttress on Glyder Fach and in the same year started work on the new routes in Wasdale.

This information was to be the first of many articles for the *Fell and Rock*. Prior to the War, Holland was no more than a very average climber but afterwards it was a different case altogether, and in 1919 he summoned Harry Kelly to Wasdale with the classic message:

'Bring one pound of Capstan and two pairs of rubbers. Holland.'

During the summer this strong team, along with C.G. Crawford, put up six major routes on Pillar, among these were Rib and Slab, Sodom and Gomorrah ('not to be looked back upon!').

It was this same year that Holland met Herbert Carr to climb first in Ogwen and then on Skye where they did Cioch West. Carr later gave a superb description of his friend:

'A short stocky. sharp featured man, with a grin that reminded one of a famous gargoyle on Notre Dame and a laugh that became more and more Rabelaisian after the second or third pint.'

'During the next few years Holland climbed extensively both at home and abroad in the Dolomites and in 1924 as well as putting up Grooved Arete on Pikes Crag he published the first guide to Scafell in the FRCC Journal and was also elected as a Member of the C.C. It was while he was under the Great Wall of the Langkofel with a FRCC party that he broke the awe-inspiring magnetism of the huge face with the immortal words:

'Gentlemen a toast, "Slab and Notch!"'

During the 30s Holland carried on with several fine articles one of which not only advocated getting up early in the day to do 'physical jerks' to get fit for climbing but also recommended boxing as the best form of exercise—not to mention daily dips in any handy expanse of water. Several stories appeal: While descending Eagles Nest Direct the rope wasn't long enough to reach the belay ledge and 'The problem was solved on this occasion by my tying the rope round my braces. . .'. Holland also had some interesting opinions on the use of pitons and falling:

'One thing seems certain; pitons have come to stay. . . One point however, I would stress, and that is that pitons should not be used as handholds to enable parties to climb places otherwise impossible.'

'I have fallen several times, I believe eight times in all, but have always preserved *otium cum dignitate*, and have never tried to save myself. As a result I have never fallen more than fifty feet . . . and have never been hurt.'

'The only occasion on which I hurt myself was when I fell two inches in the Black Chimney on Doe Crag, which seems to show that the secret of a successful fall is to make it a good long one.'

From 1937 to 1939 Holland was a Vice-President of the FRCC and then came the Second World War. It didn't take Holland long to fill in an enlistment form with a 'modified' version of his age but this did not fool Authority and he was never posted abroad. He did however serve as an Instructor Commando at the Mountain Training School which Frank Smythe set up at Braemar in Scotland.

Cecil Holland was most certainly a great character from an era of legendary climbers and although he is no longer with us it is fitting that at long last we should put the record straight with an account of his life and exploits.

TRILOGY

GEOFF MILBURN

Cornish Summer

After a week of fairly bad weather one gets to reminiscing in an evening, after the last feeble rays of light fade gently away, and it is at such a time that Gogarth, quietly but compellingly, calls from afar, so positively that it is hard to ignore the cry. What is there about this strange Cornish coast which makes a climber's inner soul feel so ill at ease?

The wispy, white blanket enveloping this low-lying peninsula for days on end is gentle and caressing—as if apologising for its very presence. Likewise the rain which drifts silently in, as a faint and almost imperceptible drizzle, is there one minute and gone the next. Even the more persistent rain showers which elegantly sail in from the sea, refresh rather than launch an attack and it is hard to take them seriously. The impotent rain is damp but never wet and in the warm, southern air it evaporates slowly and lazily and surrounds one until the sticky humidity begins to sap one's inner energy—creeping lethargy infiltrates every hopeful muscle fibre and the brain is soothed, repressing all enthusiastic hopes and aspirations leaving nothing but a dull and indifferent ache.

The wind remains silent and it touches the cheek gently before whispering a faint message, barely audible to the human ear. Even the sea seems reluctant to converse and the sullen surface hides all bare emotion until in some exposed cove it loses control and finally snaps angrily at a line of taunting surfers.

Fields of contented cattle graze happily on the lush vegetation which carpets this land of rich and plenty. Every field wall is clad with a riot of colourful blooms (purple foxgloves, vivid blue squills and gaudy yellow gorse) which add their subtle fragrance to the laden air, where farm-yard smells hang heavily and almost overpower the senses. In the countless little coves and inlets of this jagged coast silence reigns as if nature herself has been enveigled into a life of casual indolence—perhaps the season of death will never reach out its icy fingers to carpet this garden of Eden with a

wintry coat.

And when at last the sun bursts out, throwing aside the gently-sleeping blanket of cloud, the dazzling rays impale the human race to the coarse-sanded beaches where lethargy strikes the final 'coup de grace'. Faced with this unusually peaceful side to nature how can a climber with a fire in his belly go into battle when the opposition fails to stand and fight? Even the tourists seem listless and uneasy and here there is little sign of the hustle and bustle of normal life. All along the coast the derelict and decaying chimneys of the old tin mines point to man's past battlefields—perhaps man himself has at last given up the fight against his old enemy and settled back to a more leisurely but dis-satisfying way of life.

Overhead a casual gull floats by with wings outstretched scanning the coast with keen, hungry eyes while down below a lone and well-fed cormorant cruises idly across the little bay, rising and falling in time with a gentle swell. Where are the hoards of screaming seabirds which wheel and dive, filling the air with their strident cries?

The hut itself, so close to the cliffs of action, makes a stroll down to set foot on rock hardly worth the while. Perhaps the sun is too hot or the mist is lowering rapidly; the thoughts of a warm drink, a comfortable chair and a night of stories of bygone days are all too compelling and after all there is always tomorrow.

But out at sea, great billowing cloud masses, newly arrived from the Atlantic are on the march northwards to do battle with Snowdonia's ramparts. Clearly there is another side to this sleepy coast and just when one least expects it the sea begins to swell and the first tell-tale choppy waves chatter in to smack against the unyielding rock. A short while later as dusk falls the murmuring wind begins to rattle the windows—gently at first—then angrily as it shakes them harder, as if trying to gain an entry.

The first spots of rain spatter sharply on the pane, heralding the storm's approach and within seconds a wall of driving rain is lashing the land and drumming steadily on the well-slatted roof. In front of a glowing coke fire it is warm and while dozing off, snuggled deep in a comfortable, old arm-chair, it is better not to think of those out there on the turbulent sea.

All night long the storm rages, vibrating and banging the windows and doors, but by dawn the rain dies away as if spent—the battle however is far from lost. The wind which has gradually increased in

strength is driving mountainous seas into the waiting coastline and the constant, booming roar of crashing breakers can be heard inland at a great distance. Disorderly ranks of Atlantic shock-troopers roll in without a pause, breaking far out in the bay, but never expending their whole energy. Each wave in turn curls over in a lazy roll of foaming-white water and then spontaneously explodes skywards in all directions with an angry roar as it collides with some hidden reef, concealed below the surface. Even now there is no holding such a persistent force and a raging maelstrom of instant death boils in to expend itself on the waiting beach where the sand has been churned up to turn the water from a somewhat sickly green to a dirty brown. Further along the battle-line the headland, which juts out proudly into the sea, is taking the brunt of the enemy's attack and colossal waves stretch ever higher as if trying to surround the enemy on its exposed flanks.

And then, just as suddenly as it all started, the waves decrease to an almost playful level and the wind, the cause of all this savage destruction, once more quiets down like a temperamental child whose energy has been totally spent in an uncontrolled outburst of petulance. As the weary helicopter crews continue to quarter a boundless ocean in search of the Fastnet victims and in the remote possibility of finding a surviving spark of life, the splintered wreckage of a once proud flotilla spreads out ever further to distant shores.

Cwellyn April

Tall trees sway against the remorseless wind but at ground level
all is still.

As the banks of coastal rain arrive, they drive almost unseen along
the mist-veiled hillside, but show clearly as they slant across
the darkness of the pines.

The once dull, slaty rock now glistens brightly as the first black
spots strike the greyness. . .grow. . .and merge to complete
the cover.

High up in the canopy overhead tiny birds dart about in noisy
agitation as they prepare for the spring, now ready to make its
long awaited appearance.

Countless ranks of waves fight their way down the elyn broken only by the surface flurries which fan out angrily as squalls strike here and there without prior warning.

The rain has already cleansed the woodland and as the light intensity increases a multitude of subtle shades of green stand out in vivid contrast to the wakening larches whose lifeless branches are about to burst into the most delicate green of all.

As the cloud blanket parts reluctantly, a friendly blue sky shows through—and after the first pale rays, patches of light dance merrily over the nearby hillside.

Distant bracken slopes immediately clamour for attention, like giant jigsaw pieces in some incomplete design.

Previously hidden houses and farms, scattered prettily along the valley, come into view and from the rich pasture of the lowland fields long lines of man-made walls attack the steepest of hillsides to conquer the rounded summits.

The sun has triumphed, but the great, grey and white cloud masses sail above the earth and it is the turn of the shadows to traverse the far slopes.

At last the mist which has so far concealed Snowdon, tears away from the crags and boiling upwards departs from the ridges.

Long runnels of fine, speckled scree descend from a thousand shattered buttresses—which in turn are penetrated by long fingers of snow, fighting to linger in the deepest gullies.

The summit itself is crowned with an icy cap, adding an extra dimension to this lowland monarch.

As a troubled world strives to quench the flames of futile controversies, here in the hills peace reigns supreme—but for how long?

(The above piece was nearly all put together on top of Castell Cidwm during a period of about two hours while I was holding a top rope for Jim Moran who was gardening a new route to the right of Tramgo.)

Opp: R. Conway on 'The Route'. E10, 7c at least(!) and at present a closely guarded secret.

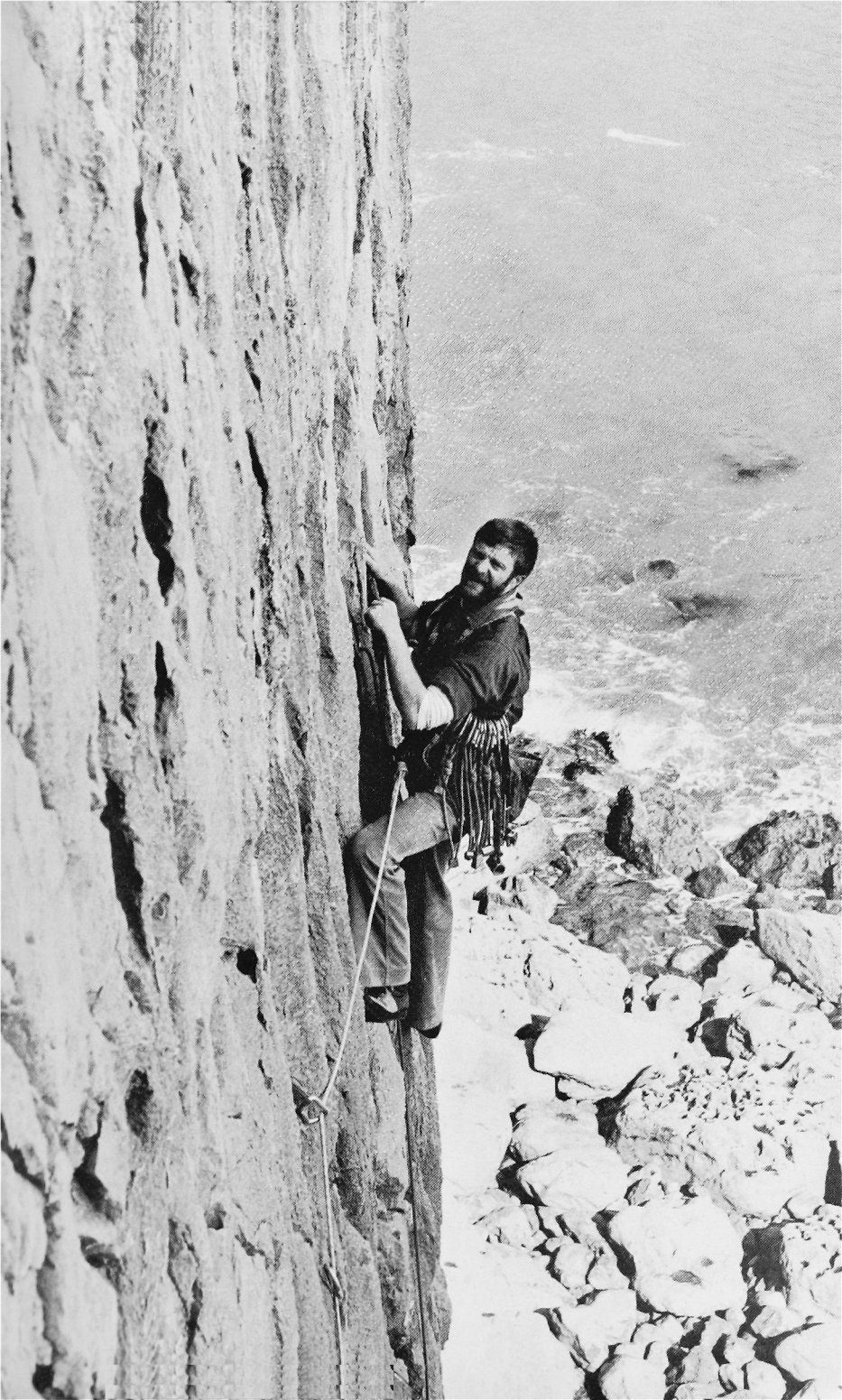
Photo: Chris Jackson.

Centre Left: D. Edwards and W. Wintrip on Mysteries, Stennis Ford, E2, 5b.

Photo: Chris Jackson.









The Enchanted Isle

'We were alone in the inn save for one old man who had returned there to die. His hair was white but his face and bearing were still those of a mountaineer, though he must have been of a great age. He never spoke, but appeared regularly at meals to take his place at a table tight-pressed against the window, alone with his wine and his memories. We thought him rather fine,' Richard Hillary in 'The Last Enemy' prior to Dunkirk. The man was Collie.

A childhood dream of distant lands,
And jagged peaks beyond the sea.
Eternal Skye my far off home,
A barren waste that calls to me.

My thoughts turn north beyond the Dales,
Past Bowes and Brough forever on.
The Lowlands stretch—a hint of wild,
Through Glasgow dour, at last it's gone.

Ben Lomond proud soon points the way,
Past the loch which bears its name.
To Crianlarich and to Tyndrum,
Rannoch wild can't quench the flame.

Ever faster—stout heart beating,
Across the moor the Buchaille stern.
Through the mist the Glencoe legions,
Follow me at every turn.

Round the windswept coast Fort William,
Seagulls scream above the town.
Roar of traffic heading southwards,
Jostling crowds and the Ben's grey crown.

A rain-swept valley, symbolic figures,
Spean Bridge memorial, a reminder stark.
Of wars long gone and fierce battles,
To strive for freedom, a world in the dark.

Opp: Bob Conway on D Day, E2,5b.

Photo: Dave Edwards.

Centre Right: Boyce Cardus on Wraith, E2,5b at Mother Carey's Kitchen.

Photo: Chris Jackson.

From Invergarry once more westward,
Along Cluanie to the lonely inn.
Between great hills and down through Glen Shiel,
Then Eilen Donan—a fortress grim.

The long road ends, the miles have vanished,
Kyleakin beckons across the Sound.
The Isle of Mist so far yet near,
For the climber the hallowed ground.

The ferry swings across the tide race,
A curtain of spray and stormy splash.
The salt laden air, gaunt Castle Mayol,
And once ashore the motorists dash.

Past little crofts round Broadford Bay,
Long bending roads, sea lochs attack.
Until suspense gets hard to bear,
Sligachan Inn—at last I'm back.

Here in isolated splendour,
The last few years I'd like to spend.
To dwell on climbs and endless summits,
Under the Cuillin my life to end.

Not for me a far off land,
An icy grave in perfect peace.
Here my ashes may bring new life,
A restless spirit can never cease.

RESERVE DE NEOUVIELLE, PYRENEES

J.G.R. HARDING

In the Pyrenees "Nothing is for Certain". This year's ski tour reaffirmed the old Bearnaise adage. The original Sport Plan envisaged a traverse from Gedre to Luchon. But the Premiere Etape, as I had first conceived it, did not satisfy Jean-Pierre Leire's sensibilities. During our initial exchanges he had written:— "Je regrette que tu ignore la facile et magnifique region de Neouvielle ...".

Jean-Pierre is a Pau hotelier. He is also a Montagnard of Norman stock and physique massif. His Approach to the Hills combines something of Norse hardihood with Rousseauesque fastidiousness. Such a combination is not easily accommodated. However, as man on the spot and Chef de Commissariat et Cuisine his views are persuasive. The original plan was duly amended.

Actually, this change was not unwelcome. Last year we had always intended to make an exit through the Neouvielle Massif after traversing the three great Cirques of the Central Pyrenees—Gavarnie, Estaube and Troumousse. Bad weather had frustrated that final stage as it frustrates so many Pyrenean undertakings. Here was a chance to assuage an unsatisfied fringe of curiosity. And had not Ollivier, the Pyrenean Guru, given the Neouvielle a special mention?

The Neouvielle is special in several respects. It is, as it were, a reserve within the greater reserve of the Parc Nationale des Pyrenees. Whereas the main range to the South is principally limestone, the Neouvielle is granite. And quite exceptionally for the Pyrenees it boasts several habitable huts although these were not on our original itinerary. Approach to the high Neouvielle is by way of steep valleys, avalanche prone in winter. Thence you must cross the Horquettes or high cols which breach the sharp, containing ridges that lead to the wide upland valleys that run to the foot of the pics themselves. In this landscape pine forest gives way to solitary, dwarf conifers. But

most of all the area is characterised by its lakes. Large lakes such as Oredon, Aumar, Aubert, Oule and Cap de Long: smaller lakes that run up the valleys in steps. In summer like blue beads in a necklace: in winter merging imperceptibly into the landscape. And in winter-time the region is little trammelled by the French and virtually unknown to the British.

Preparations for this tour, my fifth winter foray into the Pyrenees, had been elaborate. In preceding months Jean-Pierre had made four separate food caches along our route including two by helicopter. The scene was set at 09.30 hrs. on Saturday 28th March 1981 when Alan and Janet Wedgwood and myself arrived by overnight Rapide from Paris at Pau station. Thus far everything has accorded to plan. But here we were met not only by Jean-Pierre Leire but also by his friends Jacques and Jean-Claude fully laden and rarin' to go. These were new and unexpected faces but Jean-Pierre is full of surprises. And in Pyrenean tours there is safety in numbers. Jean-Claude hailed from Pau: Jacques from Toulouse. We never learnt their surnames but neither did Jean-Pierre know them notwithstanding a ski tour he had just completed in the Vanoise with Jean-Claude. Both seemed likely lads and Jacques was Guardian of the Cabane d'Oo someway further along the route. The equipe was completed by Colin Chapman fresh from Waterford waiting for us at Lourdes station just down the line. Now we were seven with Colin's the casting Irish vote.

The auguries for this trip had been fair. By January 5m. of snow had fallen at Cauterets: 3.5m. at Bareges. Back home, Alan, Janet and I had planned this first afternoon as a workout on the Bareges Piste. But Jean-Pierre had other ideas. Having stood us an expensive lunch at the Hotel du Parc he seized the initiative. He announced that Jacques and Jean-Claude were essentially weekenders. Accordingly, time was of the essence. We must reach the Hut that very night. There was little time left in which to do it.

As it transpired, Jean-Pierre's information was not quite correct and his appraisal not confirmed by events. Like some guest artist, Jacques was to make exits and entrances as the tour progressed: that same evening another party safely made the Hut 3½ hrs. after us. But with Jean-Pierre at his most irrepressible this was not a time to gainsay. Accordingly, preparations for 14 days that would normally have occupied several hours, were completed in 25 minutes. And all

this in a constricted corridor linking the Bar to the W.C. Not an elegant start but, as they say, it got the show on the road. By 16.00 hrs. our elongated caravan was making way up the avalanche scoured valley of the Glere, Jacques in the role of a Pyrenean Hinault.

Three hours later, give or take a bit, we were ensconced in one wing of a deserted workman's barracks at the head of the valley just below the Hotel Glere. The Hotel was closed for the winter but the barracks open to all. Once it had housed in some style multitudes of workmen for dam construction. Now most of the tongued and grooved pine panelling had been stripped for firewood. Parts of the roof were open to the sky and parts of the floor to the ground by way of 10' longdrops. From the remains of this colossal wreck we salvaged 7 iron bedsteads and settled down to supper. Had it not been for the spindrift douches coming in through the roof at intervals throughout the night, the Glere barracks would have rated at least 1 star by Pyrenean standards.

Our targets for the following day 29th March were the Pic de Neouvielle by the Breche de Chausenque and an abri on the Eastern shore of the Lac d'Oredon. The programme demanded an early start and settled weather. At 05.00 it was blizzarding. By 07.30 it had relented but only at 09.30 did we leave the barracks. As neither prerequisites could now be fulfilled, the original programme was revised en route. The new plan was to reach the Lac d'Oredon abri via the Horquettes de Mounicot and d'Aubert—good enough for a first day.

As if to confirm our decision, the weather remained unsettled throughout the day. But by mid-afternoon we had crossed both cols and retrieved the first of Jean-Pierre's food caches near the Lac d'Aubert. In ascent Jacques had retained the Yellow Jersey largely on his ability to execute effortless inverted kick turns on 40 degree slopes. His route finding was less impressive. As the day progressed older counsel prevailed and the precipitous descent through the woods of the Sapiniere des Passade d'Aumar presaged a reversion to traditional leadership.

A scrambling pitch which required the jettisoning of ski brought the party to better tempered ground. Descending through soft snow, the Lac d'Oredon now revealed itself through gaps in the trees glittering white as shafts of sunlight broke through the cloud. Later,

I would recall a sudden drop: starting up again after a fall and next waking in Alan's arms as if from a dream wondering where I was and what I was doing. Slats of blue sky appeared through the canopy of pine trees. Unfamiliar, silent figures were gathered around. Alan I knew but who were these others. Gradually it began to come back though as if from long ago—the Pyrenees. . . a ski tour. My head felt sore. Evidently I had hit a tree; had been concussed and now had partial amnesia. The others took my sac and ski. We started downwards and crossed a stream. I came round a second time now on the lake shore. The abri was visible barely 15 minutes away. But it was a refuge too far for me that day. Alan made a stretcher from his bivouac tent. In thigh deep snow the seemingly simple operation of carriage to the abri took 1½ hrs.

In summer there is a road to the Lac d'Oredon up the Couplan Valley. In winter the road is blocked for months and the Couplan a notorious avalanche trap. Fabian, the nearest roadhead, was over 10 kilometers away. Jacques and Jean-Claude had set off down the valley for help after my second collapse. Now we could only wait and settle down for the night huddled together on a straw covered floor.

At 01.00 hrs. the following morning 30th March, flashing head torches and hubbub heralded the arrival of a doctor and Captain Fons at the head of six mountain gendarmerie from 29 C.R.S. Lannemezan. Jacques and Jean-Claude has descended the Couplan in 3 hrs. The rescue party has ascended it in 2½. After examination the doctor decided on immediate evacuation. The weather was deteriorating: a helicopter might not make it later. By now, memory restored, I felt fine and rather resented having to be strapped into a blood wagon like a trussed chicken. We left the abri at 02.00 hrs. supported by Alan and Jean-Pierre. Colin and Janet remained to hold the fort.

The upper part of the Couplan narrows to a deep gorge called "Garganta". In unstable conditions the gorge is a death trap but otherwise it is as good a route as any, and for Alan became a voie normale. Captain Fons favoured a higher route traversing steep snow slopes above the upper gorge with the sledge belayed fore, aft and above. There was no moon. Lower down the only landmark discernible by torch light was a line of bollards peaking out of the snow and marking the outer road edge. Above this a precipitous snow bank rose into darkness: immediately below the black void of Garganta. Moving gingerly from bollard to bollard, two men

shouldered the sledge as if on a tightrope. Eventually, to get down to the valley floor, Captain Fons took the fall line of a huge avalanche cone. Descending this, my head formed a prow ploughing through the snow. Feet first might have been more appropriate. Now, on easier ground, the sledge was alternatively hauled by ropes or hoist on two mens shoulders in relays. At 07.15 hrs. we reached a police van parked below the debris of an avalanche blocking the entire valley. I stood on my feet for the first time in 15 hrs. At the Gendarmerie at St. Lary, breakfasting on black coffee and petites beurrés, reality returned. Hereafter, our paths diverged. Captain Fons and his splendid team dispersed. Alan and Jean-Pierre, now 30 hrs. out virtually without a break, had before them the prospect of reversing the Couplan. For me a breakneck drive down the Vallée d'Aure to the Centre Hospitalier at Lannemezan far down in the plain seemed to spell the end of my tour.

Medical treatment at the hospital comprising a battery of tests, X-Rays and a headscan at Tarbes was briskly efficient. Dejeuner and diner were a la carte each with a carafe of wine. But I was less lucky in my wardmate—a wizzened denizen of Vielle Aure. He spoke an unintelligible local patois and responded to my attempts at conversation with studied expressions of incomprehension. Probably I had lost my creditability during that first nursing round when I stuffed into my mouth a thermometer intended for the infernal regions. Suspicion deepened to hostility when I defended British fishing policy after an unprovoked attack from one of his visitors. Thereafter, our conversation was restricted to “Bon Appetit” before meals when invariably he would don a scruffy cap to tackle the only serious business of the day.

On the morning of my third day in Hospital the management confirmed that both brain and skull were still in order. It was April Fools Day. With what I assumed was clearance I explained that I must now get home immediately for both domestic and business reasons. But no-one seemed prepared to authorise my release. Perhaps it was some French joke. Then I tumbled. The excellent mountain gendarmerie make no charge for rescues off a mountain—the Piste is a very different matter. But to get out of hospital you require either the D.H.S.S. from E111 or, preferably, cash on the table. I had no form E111 with me and after a frustrating bargaining session parted with 500 francs on account. The final bill came to 1577.99 francs or £70 a day. It had seemed like months.

Once through the hospital gates I made tracks for the 29 C.R.S. Section Montagne Barracks to repay with gratitude my debt. The going rate is a bottle of Pastis 51. Returning up the valley by taxi to St. Lary I mused that it had taken a highly skilled team of ten men with proper equipment 6½ hrs. to get me off the mountain. Also, for having the dubious distinction of making the local newspapers for the second time in three years. As we drove deeper into the hills my driver soliloquised on the pleasures of Chamoix and La Chasse. At 13.00 hrs. I was booked into the L'Oredon Hotel, St. Lary and a new chapter had begun.

During the dog days in hospital Alan and Jean-Pierre had kept in touch by telephone. My confinement had coincided with three days of indifferent weather. On the day following the rescue, 31st March, the others had descended the Couplan Gorge and spent that night at the same hotel. We had agreed that I should try to find my feet over the next couple of days while they completed some unfinished business. Earlier that morning they had set out again for the abri at the Lac d'Ordeon via Espiaube and the Col d'Estoudou to climb the Pic de Neouvielle (3091m) the following day. I learnt later how Jean-Pierre had excelled himself with a bumper April Fool jape at the expense of Les Anglais. It went like this. Early in the morning he announced that the Gendarmerie wanted the party to test a new route of descent from the Lac d'Oredon. On the way he had picked up a posse of French girls to join in the fun. Over the next few hours there were endless meanderings on and around the Piste at Espiaube. The joke was only sprung late in the afternoon by which time tempers had become frayed and April Fool long past. But there was more to come. It now emerged that Jacques had been summoned from Toulouse to strengthen the French contingent. Jean-Pierre now made a rapid descent to St. Lary to meet Jacques and it was in the course of this seemingly inexplicable operation that I bumped into him in the street.

Next day 2nd April, Neouvielle was duly climbed but not without further incident and the loss of amour propre. Again, Jacques speed was not matched by his route finding. A tricky situation was resolved by Alan's navigation. But when the party was confronted by a bit of climbing Jacques went too far. He presumed to query Alan's method of tying on. Now advice on matters of this nature from comparative youth to long established members of the A.C.G. requires a measure





of tact. It is academic whether your baudrier is of the Parisienne or Toulousienne variety even assuming that it matters. In the event, what followed revealed deficiencies of both temperament and technique and not everyone reached the top.

That same evening Alan and Janet descended the Couplan—Alan for his third and last time—to rejoin me at St. Lary. It was a time for reappraisal. My accident had lost 3/4 crucial days. Janet's allotted time had run out. Alan's new plastic ski boots, half a size too small, had damaged his feet beyond immediate repair. Jean-Pierre's movements over the next few days were speculative. He, Jacques and Colin had stayed on at the Oredon abri to climb the Pic de Campbieil (3051m) via the Lac de Cap de Long and the valley of that name thereafter descending to Aragnouet via the Porte de Campbieil. That would take at least another day: maybe two. What ever its outcome this further extension of the Neouvielle passage finally decided the outcome of the projected traverse to Luchon. It was galling to scrap the traverse after so much preparatory work but inevitable in the circumstances.

Next day Alan and I took a rehabilitating walk through the deep valleys and tangled country that lies between St. Lary and the crest of the main range to the South East. Here there are villages with names such as Estensan, Azet and Ens—the land of Montaillou. Through their narrow streets sheep flocks progressed amidst clouds of dust and the music of jangling bells. In the steep fields around manure was heaped ready for spreading. Already there was blossom on the apple trees. The world of St. Lary with its telesieges, telecabines and teleskis was far away.

Later that evening, somewhat to my surprise, Jean-Pierre and Colin made the hotel. With Jacques they had climbed the Pic de Campbieil but their intended circuit and descent to Aragnouet had been frustrated by bad weather and Jean-Pierre's insouciance. He had decided against the precaution of taking a rope. Its absence had frustrated their descent in thick mist from the Hourquette de Cap de Long. Thus denied they had to reverse their route and hazard a second traverse in late afternoon of the steep snow slopes above the Lac de Cap de Long. Commenting on this passage Ollivier warns:-

“Un plongeon avec skis aux pieds dans l'element liquide
avoisinant zero degrees peut s'averer fatal”.

All this was followed by yet another descent of the Couplan. Never

in so short a space has one gorge been descended so many times by a single party. They deserved their dinner but this was to be our last night together. Jacques had already left for Toulouse, tomorrow, Alan and Janet would return to England.

The field was now left to Jean-Pierre, Colin and myself. A new plan was conceived to complete a circuit of the Neouvielle Massif. Starting from St. Lary we would now explore the Eastern and Northern quarters of the Reserve and end up at Bareges from whence we came.

Next day 4th April after hasty provisioning Alan and Janet saw us off before making their own descent to the plain. We taxied to Espiaube; took the telecabine to the Col de Portet: headed due West and thence turned North up the steep Western slopes of the Crete de Craoues Blanques for the Lacs de Bastan. That same evening we were ensconced in the Refuge de Bastanet before a roaring fire with hail beating down the roof. This Refuge, owned by the French P.T.T., and perched above the Lacs du Milieu is one of the most agreeable in the Pyrenees. Its sister hut, the Refuge de Campan de Clouton is 3 kilometers to the North; the pair making a useful nexus for ski touring.

By dawn the next day 5th April all clouds had cleared. The air was crisp, the prospect bright and leaving the Hut at 07.00 hrs. we reached the Col de Bastanet within the hour. To the South the manifold ridges of the Pyrenees stretched away into Spain as far as the eye could see. There were many fine views on that splendid day when we crossed four cols including the Breche du Contade and Pas de la Crabe. Best of all was that from the Pic du Contade and Pas de la Crabe. Best of all was that from the Pic du Contade (2714m) and the Pic de Quatre Termes (2724m) by its Southern rock ridge. These two Pics form the apex of the Northern Neouvielle from which five great ridges radiate as spokes from the hub of a wheel. The Cabane d'Aygues-Cluses is an old shepherds hut set square in the middle of a vast upland cirque of that name.

Here, on short commons, we spent a comfortable night warmed by a fire of fallen pine.

Next day 6th April the weather was still holding. We traversed the Col de Tracens, suffered a route finding hiccup in crossing the Crete de la Mourele via the Hourquettes de Mounicot which already we had crossed 9 days ago. A half formed plan to climb the Turon de Neouvielle wilted in the heat of mid-day. The snow had turned to

porridge and descent down the valley crossing innumerable avalanche cones a penance. At Lienz the ski station above Bareges we sank innumerable Citron Presses. And here Colin decided to return to Waterford. As a first ski tour and introduction to mountaineering his Pyrenean debut had given him something pour memoire.

And now there were two. That night, at the Chez Louisette Jean-Pierre and I applied ourselves to a gourmand dinner and thereafter slept on the restaurant benches to the somnolent gurgle of the Expresso coffe machine. Reveille next morning 7th April was 04.00 hrs. and an hour later we were skinning up the Glere Valley by head torch bound for the Turon de Neouvielle (3035m) accompanied by the Patron's dog. In the lower reaches of the valley the snow was still slush. Throughout the day the weather looked menacing especially while running the steep gun barrel of the Coume Estrete. At the Col Estrete we were met by a cold wind and ragged clouds racing across the summit of the Turon. This we reached at noon. The dog made a snow burrow. We broke for refreshment then set off down the Glacier de Maniportet to join for the fourth and last time the valley of the Glere. Owing to bad visibility and dangerous snow conditions the descent was an anti climax though the 1465m., hardly gained in 7hrs. earlier in the day, descended in 1½. At Lienz we drank what remained of the Chez Louisette's citron presses and then returned to Pau by bus and train. That evening after dinner chez Jean-Pierre and Martine Leire I caught the night express to Paris.

Thus ended another Pyrenean venture. In the traditions of that Range a tale of the unexpected embellished with many exits and entrances. We had not achieved the original object but had had adventure enough; had ascended five pics; traversed at least 10 passes and got to know something of an enchanting and comparatively little known corner of the Pyrenees that offers much to the ski mountaineer.

(Party: John Harding, Alan and Janet Wedgwood, Jean-Pierre Leire, Colin Chapman and also Jacques and Jean-Claude).

DIGGING IS A HOLESOME PLEASURE. . .

GEOFF BIRTLES

It is a well known fact that the caves of Stoney Middleton are the worst in the country. Indeed, arsehole of the Universe is a perfect description. Not being a real caver myself, I am not an authority. But knowing Stoney Middleton quite well I am prepared to recommend its anal qualities.

Given that one could do underground Stoney Middleton in a good weekend, it was a welcome relief when Streaks Pot was discovered. John Beck, Master Mole of the area located its entrance on New Year's Day 1980 while smoke testing an old mine beneath the cliffs of Stoney West. He did not find the smoke but instead came across a blow-hole at the foot of a small outcrop emitting a strong enough draught to make ivy wave about.

Until this moment, Tom Proctor and myself had spent our caving lives wildly ripping holes out of Stoney Middleton to no avail, a mere three months in which time we had fallen in love with digging. How this wonderful pursuit had evaded our attention before is a mystery. After all it is arduous, painful, uncomfortable and disgustingly dirty. But most of all, digging is buzzy. The moment of breakthrough is emotionally explosive, hard won, with all that going where no man has gone before stuff. On top of that I had a secret weapon—my T.O.M., a noted hydraulic implement in the climbing world. I have only to say 'bone' and he goes at it like a wild alsatian. I do the thinking bit.

With Streaks we had the opportunity to learn from some proper cavers and assisted them with the dig which went amazingly in one afternoon. Basically, high on the hillside in a small outcrop, a narrow crack had been widened by some ancient miner which led down and in for some 25 feet to meet the top of a natural rift about six feet wide and some 45 feet deep. Having gained access, a ceremonial sortie was arranged for the Tuesday night when we three mentioned along with Bill Whitehouse and Phil Brown descended to find a pleasant chamber leading off, big enough in places to stand up. Immediately Phil found a way on from one corner, up and along a narrow rift that led to a collapsed chamber with a high aven. (No

connection with the 'high ovens' previously reported in Mountain World which we are still looking for.) Despite an attempt by Tom to crawl down and under the giant central block in the floor which had no apparent support from beneath we got no further that night nor indeed for several months.

Meanwhile we went to digging holes all over the place for no apparent reason—an instinct which we find remarkably natural. Although by pure fluke and our patent method of suicidal propping we dug out a shaft which led us to discover Toad Hole the biggest chamber in the dale which in turn led to a connection and a through trip with Yoga Cave. Then feeling flushed with beginners luck we asked John Beck if he minded us going for the big choke at the bottom of Streaks. As he was and still is engaged in his 'Hole in the Wall' dig which promises to take him into the next century, he waved us on.

And so, armed only with a 14lb sledge hammer and 20 Rothmans we set to, chasing the draught that came through the boulders. We chose a corner that had at least two solid walls. We were able to make a terraced incline behind us as we removed the debris and descended. One large stone gave some trouble. But a good three hour thrashing finally convinced it to give up and come out with its hands up. We did after all have it surrounded by Tom.

Beneath that we gained access to 20 feet of open rift. This tightened to six inches on one side and was flanked on the other by the underside of the choke which immediately hung menacingly. On the basis that everything else in caving was mega this and mega that, we decided that this was mega-silly. Two weekends digging straight down proved fruitless as the rift tightened. There was only one thing for it and that was to push under the choke chasing the draught.

We had an unconventional idea for propping which involved some four inch diameter timbers about five feet long. Thus armed we made a lean-to, pulling the debris out in front of us and stacking it on top, tight up to the hanging boulders above. The space made enabled more props to be placed and in that manner we moved forward some six feet. Then Tom built an igloo using two thin props for the roof. This alone was daft enough but when he then began to dig out the floor thus removing the foundations for the walls—I mutinied. The dig may have ended there had it not been for another piece of pure luck when during my mutiny the floor fell through.

Tom nearly disappeared as he wrestled to hang on to a large boulder which was pulling him down headfirst. I held his legs. It was an absolute farce where the boulder won, dropping and blocking the way down.

It was time for a meeting. He wanted me to go into the hole feet first on the basis that I was more supple—not being hampered by lots of muscles. I on the other hand had resumed the mutiny. How could I lift a boulder that he could not hang on to? As in all good negotiations a bargain was struck. We would die together. I would go into the hole if he would lie with his head under the igloo.

In the hole we had yet another stroke of luck—a run of which seemed to be hampering my chances of even seeing daylight again. Just off to one side of the hole was a cavity large enough and conveniently placed into which I could roll the boulder. While all this was going on, the whole world that surrounded me kept moving in and necessitated some quick chockstones to be placed in order to keep the hole exactly where it was.

Beneath my feet the rift was clean and in a few minutes I had cleared enough rubbish away to enable me to slide down to a sheltered spot some 30 feet beneath Tom. As I regained my breath and composure I suddenly heard running water. We were not going to die under tons of boulders after all—we were going to drown. Tom came down and squeezed down the last 10 feet to a muddy bottom. Minutes later we slid along a dirty tube to an aven where we stood up in an active stream passage.

Discovery was upon us, a moment of pure joy when we shook hands and grinned a lot. Open passages went off in all directions and potentially we had found the water that fed the upstream sumps of Merlin Mine. We had done enough for one day and being in dryish grots were not prepared to lie in any streamways. So we went out and found Beck. Despite attempts to hide our pleasure he knew from a distance that we had found something by the swagger of our walk.

On the Tuesday John Beck joined us, all now clad in wetsuits and we ventured off up passages galore discovering one aven with a cascade of water pouring down and another so high that three lights together could not illuminate its upper reaches. Further trips offered more adventures as others, privy to the discovery, joined in. Phil Burke attempted to entomb himself in what is now called Burke's

Special. At the far end of Donkey Dong Passage, Tom and I had lessons in amateur drowning when we rediscovered the laws of displacement in what is now called Archimedes Principle. We put smoke down Donkey Dong and traced it to surface. And in an attempt to trace a bottom entrance while some of us dug in from surface Tom and John Middlemist (Mouse) went under to try to make contact from within. In the event they dug up a short tube and hit another 1,000 feet of open passage.

It was down an off-shoot to this discovery that traffic was heard which led to another daft enterprise. On a Thursday night I took Bob Dearman and Bob Toogood through Streaks and to the end of the Traffic Tube. At a pre-arranged time John Beck, Bill Whitehouse, Johnny Morris and Phil Brown began banging round on surface where they thought we should be. Remarkably, contact was made, a dull thudding at first then shouting until a normal conversation could be held in little more than raised voices. It was going to be a glorious night, the discovery of a bottom entrance and a quick way to the pub. But it was not to be and we had to slog out the hard way. That bottom entrance came into being the following weekend.

Downstream we were stopped by a sump that never lowered throughout the wet summer of 1980 even though the sumps of Merlin became static. Maybe Streaks will go direct and all the way to join the projected but undiscovered master cave that takes the water from Waterfall Swallett. So far Streaks has some three thousand feet of explored passage and it is still going.

That is what is so buzzy about digging—discovery—if you are lucky.

'TOP ROPING IS NOW A SOUTHERN DISEASE. . .'

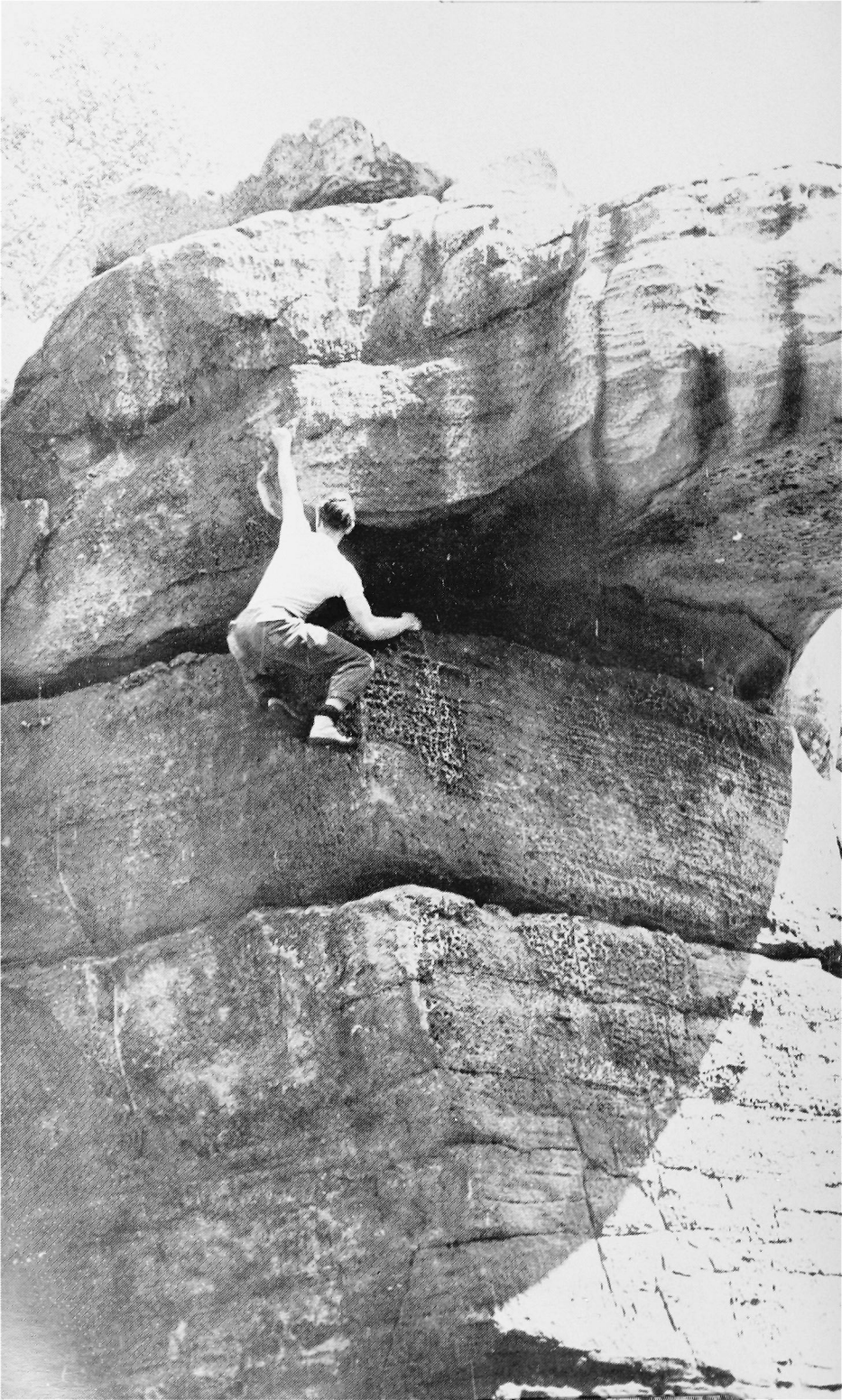
LES HOLLIWELL

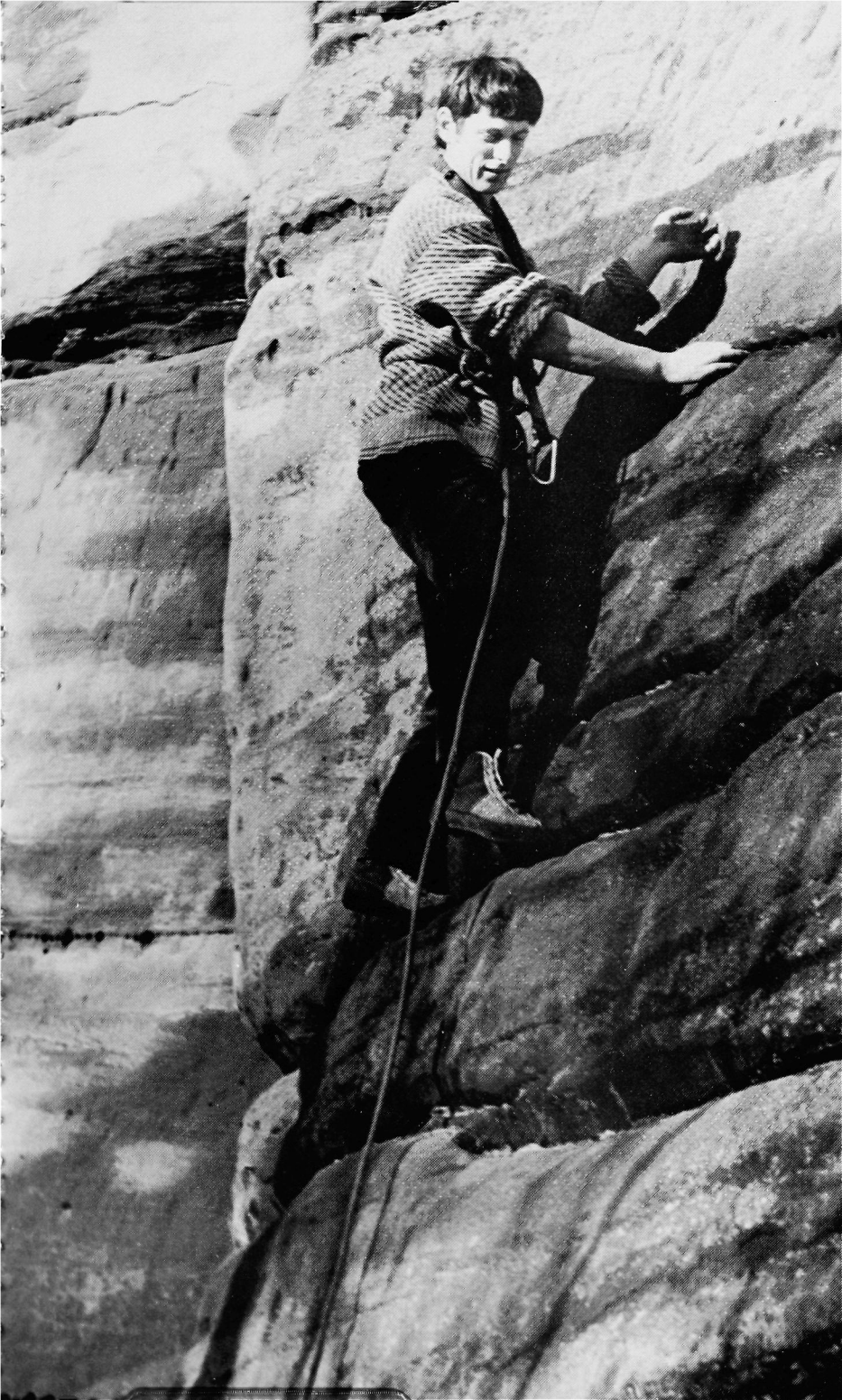
During the preparation of the new Southern Sandstone guide-book, I was consulted in my capacity as an old retainer, who knew these rocks well in his youth. Bob Moulton, our guide-book editor, had been prompted to contact me by a letter from the ever provocative and controversial Ken Wilson. It is his quotation which heads this article. This prompted me to review the proper attitudes which should be fostered with respect to the balance between top-roping and soloing on Southern Sandstone. What follows is largely derived from a letter I wrote to Bob outlining my objections to Ken's rather harsh criticisms. It also provided an excuse for me to blow the dust from some of my early climbing memoirs and refresh my fading recollections.

Looking through marked guide-books and diaries that I kept during the sixties I have pieced together a few items which may be of interest. In '64 or '65 Lawrie was climbing and soloing a wide range of 5b's and 5c's, as was Robin Harper. We each developed our own repertoire of solo routes. I recall soloing most of the routes on the 'Block' at Harrisons, very regularly (with the exception of Wailing Wall and South West Corner); along with routes on Unclimbed Wall and those between the descent gully and Vulture Crack (which Lawrie first soloed in about '68 or '69). He had sized up both Flakes and Coronation Crack, with a view to soloing them shortly before his death—climbing with five feet of slack. But he did not achieve this objective. Had he lived, I have no doubt that he would have done so. As early as '64 we regarded sandstone as a form of training for the hills, and this was before we had climbed anything above Hard Severe! It was in '65 that we made our 'break through' and I have evidence that a wide range of 5b's and 5c's, and a few 6a's (e.g. South West Corner) were soloed in that year. I also recall that we used to solo numerous low grade routes, many of them 'on-sight'. We'd only put a rope on, say, a 4b or even a 5a after it had repulsed several spirited attempts, or towards the end of the day when fatigue took its toll.

Whilst the achievements outlined above are distinctly unremarkable by modern standards, the important point here is the









attitude which prevailed; the greatest merit was awarded for a solo ascent. Far from being considered foolhardy or posing unacceptable risk, it provided the ultimate objective—doing a climb on the rope was quite gratifying but soloing was 'real climbing'. In all we used to solo about thirty fairly hard routes regularly and another twenty or so less often; but once a route had been soloed (with rare exceptions) we kept on soloing it, after all it saved time putting the rope up. We also used to have competitions to do the maximum number of 'respectable' routes in a day or an evening. Twenty-five to thirty climbs of 5b and above was not unusual. We reckoned at 25 feet a time we ought to aim at a total of 7-800 feet at a good standard and top it up to around a thousand with lesser routes. So you can see that we had in mind stamina training. I can remember in the early days when we had an old Morris 8, the passenger had to use both hands to apply and release the hand-brake on the return journey, because the driver had such fatigued fingers that he could not release the ratchet spring with one hand. I also recall some pretty spastic after-Harrisons dart playing in the pub, with fingers and arms failing to respond to sensitive directions.

I do not recall many people outside our clique who were soloing regularly during the mid-sixties; however, I believe that some years earlier the old Sandstone Club members often practised routes with a view to soloing them and knocking-off the N.L's. This is evident in the earlier editions of the guide-book. I remember Frank Quigley and 'Jug' Jarvis commenting on the fact that many of these able performers at the outcrops, had limited success in transferring their skills to the mountain areas (There were obvious exceptions such as Martin Boysen), but this was the exception rather than the rule. In this respect it is probably fair to claim that we were the first generation of sandstone climbers to cultivate a deliberate policy of developing skills at the outcrops specifically for use in the mountains. Clearly, this practice was the accepted norm in the North of the country and probably elsewhere.

It is interesting to note that we were initially inept with protection as sandstone provided no experience in this crucial art. On our first few visits to grit most of the routes were soloed by the leader; we then felt free to bring three or more up on the same rope. On one occasion at Froggatt, Robin and Lawrie were vying to climb Dead Bay Crack and Groove. Ultimately they gave up trying to arrange protection—

they both soloed both climbs! There were similar situations in North Wales and I recall lengthy debates in the early days which attempted to resolve the conflict between the degree of risk experienced by the virtually unprotected leader and the comparative safety of his second. The fact that such a discussion could take place is an indication of our gross ignorance of both protection techniques and the ethos of the sport. We definitely tried to transport our Harrison's mentality to other areas, often with gripping results. So, contrary to what has been suggested by some people, sandstone can impart both skills and attitudes which are beneficial elsewhere. The fact that it seldom does seem to engender appropriate attitudes is I believe much more a criticism of the practitioner rather than the practice. I doubt very much whether either Lawrie or Robin could have reached the standard that they did without sandstone soloing.

Now to focus on the top-roping controversy. Whilst I can, and do, sympathise with Ken Wilson's criticisms of southern climbers and their general lack of enthusiasm for soloing on sandstone, it is grossly unfair to isolate these characteristics. Out of context these criticisms infer 'southerners' lack some crucial honourable quality (a genetic defect perhaps?) which is readily and freely available in a northern culture. Such notions cannot surely be taken seriously? The reality is, of course, that southerners are very restricted in their choice of climbing medium and they do have to overcome a kind of folklore inertia, which allows the faint-hearted to avoid the risk element. This is surely an accident of geology not genetics (or culture). I have always believed that climbing is essentially a risk business and that climbing without risk (i.e. 'safe' climbing), is an anomaly. The serious exponent is in the game because of the risk not despite it. Nevertheless, when this argument is taken to its logical conclusion it gets well mired in the degrees of risk that are deemed 'acceptable'. It is very clear that no-one, other than those intent on suicide, is going to deliberately court a situation in which they personally consider the risk to be unacceptable. So, in the final analysis soloing on sandstone, as elsewhere, becomes a matter of individual assessment, and I would never wish to see it otherwise. There is surely no place here for coercion, intimidation or collective stigmatisation; which is really what Ken's arguments are condoning, if not encouraging. If I understand him correctly, he wishes to create a social climate and ambience in sandstone climbing circles which is

conducive to soloing and discourages top-roping. I would simply reverse the emphasis and tolerate the latter as a fact of life and encourage those who would prefer to solo. Despite the similarity of our intended ends, there is a fundamental conflict in the means to achieve it. To ignore the fact that southern sandstone is widely viewed as a recreational facility which serves needs well beyond the conventional boundaries of climbing as we know and understand them, may be convenient but it is also dishonest. And, I propose to analyse the problem in the broad context.

One of the unique aspects of sandstone which does provide a genuine reason for particular caution is its unpredictability under stress. During the preparation of an earlier edition of the Guidebook, I soloed a large number of routes (mostly of a low grade) 'on-sight', and I took several undignified and occasionally painful tumbles due to holds breaking off. The quality of the rock varies enormously and I know of no reliable technique for assessing the structural properties of holds short of committing my weight to them. It is of course possible that those who advocate universal 'on-sight' soloing have more sophisticated methods of predicting the load bearing capacities of holds. Granted that holds on popular climbs can be assumed to be tried and tested whilst top-roping remains common practice, but if top-roping were to cease this convenient checking system would also go. Increasingly the higher holds on the most difficult climbs would be subjected to the least use and consequently arouse the most suspicion and doubt about their structural properties. What concerns me is that if we overdo the emphasis on soloing we will alienate the bulk of current users (and incidentally Guidebook purchasers), with little impact upon the nature of the use. Soloing is, as I see it, a desirable end to be encouraged and gently fostered, and is not something which can be dictated by arbitrary authority. A 'disease' top-roping may be, but if the cure 'kills' the patient it is unlikely to be popularly acclaimed.

In practice individuals ultimately make their own risk decisions; ethical considerations and cultural inhibitors are simply factors to be weighed and waived in a crisis, or for some, according to whim. Surely no-one is trying to suggest that the penalty for miscalculation should be serious injury or even death as a premeditated policy? After all, most people do use ropes, belays and runners of increasing sophistication, none of which are of much use to the solo climber,

albeit on a lowly outcrop. I cannot imagine a situation in which Southern sandstone would be exclusively soloed as this would automatically restrict its use to a tiny minority; and it might reasonably be argued that the talented few depend for their very existence upon a vast reservoir of less-able mortals from which the next generation of 'masters' will emerge. The arrogant and superior attitude of some of the pundits, depends for its sustenance in argument upon the existence of several strata of less-able performers, many of whom appear quite content to observe and wonder at the antics of the 'gods' without any serious aspirations or intent to emulate them. The premier league does not exist in a vacuum or even in some rarified atmosphere populated by an elite corps; it depends for its status upon the adulation of lesser performers prepared to acknowledge their achievements and recognise them as deserving certain privileges. No natural laws demand that a certain status should accrue to people who are proficient in ascending difficult pieces of rock. These are matters of custom and ritual, symbolic rather than reasoned.

Now, to expose some (more?) of my own prejudices. I must confess that I believe that the crucial ingredient which distinguishes the extraordinary performer from the ordinary one in the climbing context (and elsewhere), is largely concerned with commitment. Many potentially very able climbers of my acquaintance have lacked this essential spur; the conviction that conquering the next five feet of rock is, without comparison, the most important, vital issue in their existence—quite removed from considerations of urgency contingent upon an immediate dilemma. The really good climber believes passionately that overcoming the next obstacle is the only important issue—not 'if' but 'how' is the question. The personal, private ignominy of defeat or retreat is so unpalatable that once a decision is made to attempt the route, all subsequent decisions concerned with realising that objective are subservient. This is the very essence of the risk business. That kind of commitment is totally abdicated by the top-roper and, in my view, demotes the achievement to that of a training exercise or preparation for the 'real thing', or alternatively, light-hearted play or temporal entertainment—all of these practices are apparent on any sunny Sunday afternoon at Harrisons Rocks. Once again we are back to stressing the perceptions of the individual. Social conformity in climbing circles tends to be orientated to small groups and has little

cohesion in the wider context. Consensus, however, will not condone death or serious injury as a deterrent for impropriety on the crags or outcrops. In a crisis the accepted code of conduct is disregarded along with pride and a certain amount of dignity. Nobody really believes that people deserve to die or to be injured in the event of them making an unwise or ill-informed decision; on the contrary we speak of people 'being in trouble' or 'needing to be rescued', rather than deserving punishment—the embarrassment of failing and the admission of defeat in seeking help is regarded as sufficient chastisement.

Climbing ethics, intrinsically embody a tacit understanding that the 'rules of the game' have finite application. Cheating, however that may be conceived of, may result in 'disqualification' so far as the ascent is concerned, but is nevertheless condoned in certain circumstances; where the alternative is injury or death for example. The balance between 'acceptable' risk and unacceptable outcome is constantly changing and being modified, usually to coincide with a rather woolly and unstated 'consensus' generated by leading climbers, tempered perhaps by a little wisdom from the elder 'statesmen'. It is in this context that the approbation of top-roping must be examined.

At first sight top-roping appears to sanction cheating in circumstances of modest risk and results in a nil risk, which largely destroys the alleged purpose of the game—the conquest of fear under calculated stress. Whenever climbing has tended to become too safe for the elite corps the reaction has been to devise methods of putting back the risk element, thus adjusting the balance and redefining 'acceptable' risk. The dominance of the sport's leaders in this process is always apparent; they appear to believe that they have an uncontestable 'right' to re-write the rules as acknowledged masters of their art, and evident guardians of the 'faith'. It is this kind of background assumption of responsibility which gives those who protest so vigorously their self-acclaimed legitimacy to readjust the 'rules' without any attempt to resort to even the crudest democratic principles. Top-roping poses a threat to one of the sacred tenets of climbing; it devalues and detracts from the heroic deeds of sub-groups who depend for their status upon the maintenance of rules that they have helped to devise. The upper stratum in the climbing hierarchy assume that all participants share their perceptions and priorities, and that they are best informed and

most able to define the current version of 'acceptable' risk. However, we all know very well that many casual and occasional climbers are quite content to bumble-about the crags and outcrops on pleasant summer afternoons without getting committed to a great philosophical debate about ethics; and, they won't spend the next seven days in sackcloth and ashes if they just happen to pull on the odd runner or 'heaven forbid' knock in an extra peg in a crisis.

It is axiomatic in the above argument that the fundamental function of climbing is to identify worthy heroes through the medium of self-imposed ritualised exposure to a graduated scale of fear. The balance is between the risk of physical mishap and peer group acknowledgement of mastery. However, it is also apparent that rock climbing skills can be, and are, recognised as worthy when judged by quite different criteria. On a very well protected route the risk of injury to the leader may barely exceed that experienced by the top-roper, yet his skills and athleticism are still considered to be praiseworthy. Furthermore, the arrangement of protection is regarded as an honourable skill in its own right—the person who is injured as a result of failing to arrange adequate and available protection is criticised for incompetence. Here again we are forced back to an inadequate definition of 'acceptable' risk. Top-roping is really one end of a continuum of graduated risk from which people select their test-pieces, it is not essentially in a different category simply because it eliminates risk, there are other dimensions within the framework of criteria on which it can be assessed without transgressing the ordinary protocol. The only threat is to those whose status depends upon the risk ethos—which I just happen to share.

I'll conclude my ramblings as devil's advocate, by suggesting that there is an increasing divergence of interests between the super-tuned athlete utterly devoted to mapping out the ultimate limits of human performance and the casual weekend climber who is content to measure his progress against his own modest achievements, and perhaps those of his immediate associates. This is not simply a difference of perspective but a difference in purpose. When Ken Wilson and company deplore top-roping, they deplore it *per se*, not conditionally, because it breaks the rules and threatens to dilute the pure strain—the pedigree which serves as a goal for the aspirants to the elite stratum. What is really at stake is the defence of the 'boundaries' of a meritocracy in which merit accrues to the most

able within the framework of the rules, which are themselves evolved by the elite and dispensed to the aspirants. The formula is prescriptive, it allows no place for pretenders and those who wish to devise different rules, perhaps oblivious of the 'official' version. Unlike many other sports, disputes in 'play' cannot be resolved by recourse to some central authority or weighty tome delineating the finer points—no such universally recognised authority exists in climbing and few would wish for one. The typical Sunday afternoon Harrison's top-roper is not usually an aspirant to the climbing elite, he or she is simply playing an innocent and usually unpretentious game; they are not cheating themselves or anyone else.

Perhaps the time has arrived to distinguish between 'serious' climbing and 'casual' climbing. The principal distinction would be concerned with intentions rather than perceived behaviour, which might be very misleading. Then, those who declared their intentions to become 'serious' climbers could be judged by one pattern of behaviour and those who admitted to only a casual interest by another set of criteria. A key factor in such a distinction would no doubt rest with perceptions of the role of 'risk' as a motivational element, and the conquest of fear as a goal.

It is absurd to suggest that the imposition of a code of conduct, which has no effective sanctions beyond collective disapproval, would be universally accepted and adopted in practice. We may all feel aggrieved that a sport (if not a religion?) to which many of us owe a life-long commitment, is devalued by the activities of others who do not share our devotion, but it is surely foolish to expect to impose our values upon those who in all probability do not even comprehend their existence let alone their substance. Forebearance and tolerance are, I suggest, called for, along with a measure of persuasion. Surely a 'true' climber would be shamed to repair his ways by the example of old veterans like Ken Wilson and I soloing past them on their top-rope? Let's present soloing on sandstone as a very reasonable and attractive alternative appealing to the individual's better nature.

OBITUARY

LORD 'NICK' PIERCY 1940-1981

Lord 'Nick' Piercy, a Member of the Climbers' Club since 1940, was killed in a motor-cycling accident on 22nd March 1981, aged 62. He was born at Burford, Oxfordshire, on 23rd July, 1918, son of the first Lord Piercy C.B.E., who was noted for financial and economic work for the U.K. in the U.S.A. during World War 2. He was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, where he graduated in Economics (B.A. 1940; M.A. 1944). His war service was as R.N.V.R. Lieutenant in the Fleet Air Arm. He succeeded his father in 1966, living at The Old Rectory, Elford, Tamworth, Staffordshire, having married Oonagh Lavinia Baylay in 1944; they have two sons and three daughters.

In 1939-40 he was a member of Cambridge University Mountaineering Club at a time when, as the 1941 C.C. Journal states, a renaissance of Welsh climbing was chiefly caused by the activities of the C.U.M.C.; Nick attended meets at Helyg, and also in the Lake District, Ben Nevis, and Skye. His chief climbing companions were D.F.H. Biggane (later killed in action over Germany, flying with the R.A.F.), A.J.W. Woodroffe, and H.I. Ogilvie (later killed while climbing in the Cairngorms), and he may have climbed with Wilfrid Noyce and John Barford. Besides leading up the Devil's Kitchen in North Wales, Central Buttress on Scafell and North Climb on Pillar in the Lake District, Nick Piercy took part in the following first ascents:

Hawk's Nest Buttress, Glyder Fach (December 1939)—variation finish.

Milestone Buttress, Tryfan (June 1940)—Rope Wall direct finish.

Ben Nevis Tower (1940)—a new route between Pigott's and Macphee's.

Clogwyn du'r Arddu, Curving Crack (July 6, 1940)—direct start, which Nick led—'a very strenuous twenty minutes'—The 1941 C.C. Journal, page 47, describes this as 'a tour de force of no mean order'; it was done eight years after the route was first climbed and the direct start had defeated a very strong party.

When he was climbing, his long limbs and elegant balance made him a delight to watch, and his sympathy and humorous help to his





followers made climbing with him happy and memorable occasions; our performance, too, improved from his insistence on good style.

I first met Nick Piercy in 1941 when we were on the same Fleet Air Arm observers' training course, flying in Trinidad; we continued war service together to R.N. Air Squadron 836 with Swordfish aircraft in Jamaica, various air stations in the U.K., and aboard aircraft-carriers, H.M.S. Biter (maiden voyage from New York) and the first M.A.C. ship (Merchant Aircraft Carrier) Empire Macalpine on North Atlantic convoys. His keenness and skill in air-navigation, radio and radar, with hilarious relaxations in the ward-room, helped to build up a fine squadron spirit which was rather wryly noted by the 'establishment' for its cutting of red tape. Perhaps mountaineering was in the back of Nick's mind when at an impromptu talk by our chaps on anti-U-boat techniques, he told how our (secret) radio weather forecasts came 'from Spitzbergen or somewhere'; unfortunately we had few encounters with our Nazi enemies, but our work succeeded by keeping the U-boats down and thus less able to attack the convoys. In July 1942 from Hampshire he took me to North Wales—war-time transport difficulties required us to take bikes by train, and at Bethesda Nick out-talked the police who tried to stop our progress without lamps (we reached Helyg at 2 a.m.). We climbed for three days on the Gribin Facet, Milestone Buttress and in the Devil's Kitchen—although I didn't perform very well he kindly sponsored me for C.C. membership. Later he persuaded a squadron pilot to attempt to land us at Glen Brittle's mountain-girt strip on Skye—this was cancelled when three of our Swordfish made a spectacular crash in fog at Campbeltown Harbour (Nick wasn't in that, though I was!). Nobody was badly hurt, but our transport to Skye was no longer possible.

Since the war-end in 1945, I don't think Nick did any climbing, having devoted his time to bringing up a fine family, and to a deep interest he developed with a small team working for I.C.I., which amongst other successes managed to obtain many tanker-loads of sulphuric acid (important in many basic industrial processes) at a time of international shortage. When I.C.I. disbanded Nick's group in 1966, he tried hard but unsuccessfully to find similar employment for his energy and organisational ability. He obtained some sort of compensation by riding powerful motor-bikes (solo), and speed-boat driving at rallies and competitions both in the U.K. and on the Continent, sometimes accompanied by his younger son Mark aged

about twenty. He also regularly attended the House of Lords, served on his parish council, helped with preservation of local buildings and footpaths, and was keen on photography, gardening and caravanning. Locally he was a well-liked and colourful character, and would even appear at Westminster on his motor-cycle; finally it was a brand-new 750 c.c. machine which skidded on a wet road near his home and led to his almost immediate death.

Lady Piercy was able to be joined by all the members of her family at the time of the funeral; our sympathy for their loss can be accompanied by the pride, which Nick also had, in the unity of this family.

Jim H. Palmer.

GORDON TINNING

1977-1981

Just as the Journal was about to go to the printer news came in that during the dry spell there had been a slap-up storm in North Wales and that teams had got caught on Cloggy and other cliffs. Over on Llech Ddu Gordon Tinning, who was climbing with Leigh MacGinley, fell while an abseil was being arranged and his death came as quite a shock as he has been a familiar figure on the North Wales and Lakeland climbing scenes for several years. Gordon, a confident and very powerful climber, clocked up an impressive tally of routes and although he did not really bother about new routes he made first ascents of Blue Remembered Hills and Another Roadside Attraction at South Stack, Gogarth. In addition he had freed Gondor on Pillar and Lungfish on Craig y Rhaeadr in the Pass. His solo ascent of Lubyanka on Cynr Las struck me as being particularly necky.

Gordon had his own brand of dry humour and was always excellent company in the pub, although at times it was hard to tell if he was still poking fun or had become serious. The subtle grin usually told its own story. During guidebook work Gordon was one of the few people I could rely on to give me a straight answer without having to wonder if he was shooting a line like so many others. Gordon will be missed. . .

Ed.

R.D.S. CARPENDALE
1942-1975

Dick Carpendale died in 1975 aged 67 and despite an obituary in the 1977 Alpine Journal the details were only recently appreciated by our Club. He served in the R.A.F. during the last war and farmed first in Essex and later in Somerset where he settled down after his retirement. Dick began climbing in the '30s and visited Wales and the Lake District fairly regularly for over twenty years and also between 1939 and 1954 he had quite a few successful seasons in the Alps.

H.D. GREENWOOD
1926-1980

With the death of H.D. Greenwood we have lost one of our oldest Members who served on the Committee from 1944-45. The Editor hopes that a full obituary will appear in due course.

ROGER SINGER STOKES
1980-1981

Roger had been a member of the Club for less than a year, when he fell and was killed while leading at Avon Gorge on February 1st. He must, however, have been known to a large number of members. Crag and climbing pubs were full of his acquaintances and, unlike some of us, he remembered their names. Although reserved himself, he was gregarious, interested in anything to do with rock climbing and above all interested in climbers.

Despite being born in 1933 he had been climbing for only 16 years. To begin with, he climbed mostly with a small group based on Maidenhead, being one of the two founders of the Maidenhead Canoeing and Climbing Club and also a member of the Reading Mountaineering Club. Family responsibilities limited his scope at first, but in later years he managed to climb three weekends out of four, and his standard rose dramatically. Many people have him to thank for getting them out climbing; in the early days he used to run a mini-bus for no other reason than to get his young and impecunious friends to the hills.

For about a year before he died, he and I formed a somewhat elderly rope, with ages totalling 100 or so, on most Club meets, and it was Roger who led the hard pitches. He was an admirable companion—cheerful, reliable, the sort of man who promotes confidence in his leader and enjoys the confidence of his second, fun to climb a classic with in poor conditions, or to lead through on an unknown hard route. He was also good at encouraging the house-bound and the garden slave to drop everything and go climbing.

He was reticent about his alpine achievements, but had visited the Dolomites, Ardennes, Kaisergebirge and Maritimes as well as the Western Alps in summer. In recent years he had also taken up skiing.

He was something of a connoisseur of real ale, and indeed appreciated the more civilized things of life—wine and good food and above all music. He was well read, thoughtful and interested in affairs, but owing to family circumstances had not been able to take advantage of higher education. When he died, he was company secretary for a small engineering firm in Maidenhead.

The numerous friends and acquaintances with whom he kept in touch will miss him very much. Although some of us had known him for only a short time, his friendship was valuable to us and his death leaves a very big gap.

M.H. Westmacott

DAVE EDWARDS
1980-81

It was with a great sense of loss that we learned of the death of

Dave Edwards on Sunday the 13th of September. Dave aged 36, was tragically killed in a motor-cycle accident near his home in Sheffield, while returning from Stanage Edge.

Dave's climbing career spanned many periods, probably starting with his involvement with the mountain rescue while serving in the R.A.F.

After leaving the R.A.F. in 1968, Dave joined the North London Mountaineering Club, and, along with Alan Heppenstall and other members of the N.L.M.C., began to rapidly improve his climbing standard, developing a reputation for long unprotected run-outs. He made ascents of such routes as Coronation Street, Hell's Groove and Central Pillar on Esk Buttress among many others; standard routes these days but in the late 60s still considered to be serious undertakings.

In 1970, teaming up with Ben Wintringham and Nigel Helliwell, Dave was involved in possibly the sixth ascent of the Troll Wall in Norway.

During the early 70s, Dave was inevitably involved in the Development of Baggy Point in North Devon, along with other members of the N.L.M.C. This was a time of some of his most memorable climbing experiences. To Dave's credit are such futuristic routes as 'The Great Beast', the Girdle of the Promontory (with Ben Wintringham) and 'Multiplator', with Alan Baker. Epics seemed to have been the norm, and Alan tells of a heroic lead by Dave with a cut rope knotted together, which progressively pulled the runners out as Dave gained height. He also accompanied climbers such as Tony Wilmott and Mike Spring on several other first ascents. It was around this period that Dave met his wife to be, Marilyn. They were married in 1974, and in 1976 moved to live in Sheffield.

In Sheffield Dave joined a local climbing club, the Parnassus, and later was admitted to the Climbers' Club. Still active, Dave climbed widely, from the Buggaboos to the Alps and the Verdon Gorge with his friends from the P.M.C.

During his varied climbing career, Dave made a very wide circle of friends and it was often a source of leg-pulling that no matter where he climbed, Dave would always meet someone he knew. I think this fact alone tells of his popularity and the ease with which he made and kept friends. He's going to be sadly missed by us all.

Chris Jackson.

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EDITORIAL

1981 has seen the start of a new presidential era with Mike Westmacott handing over the reins to Trevor Jones a very active Manchester based climber who has been in the club now for nearly a quarter of a century. The changeover comes at an important time for the Club with several vital schemes to be steered through the many pitfalls and our thanks go to Mike for all his hard work over the last three years.

During this year the Officers of the Club have spent a great deal of time and effort trying to organise the buying of a Pembroke hut. Several factors seem to be critical: the size, condition, cost and the distance from the crags, habitation and above all a good pub. So far a deal has not been settled but we are hopeful of success in the not too distant future.

In the year of Prince Charles' wedding it was noticeable that a royal tent did not appear outside Ynys Ettws (or any of the other huts for that matter) and HE evidently must have gone elsewhere for his climbing holiday/honeymoon. Imagine the notice which might have been pinned to the tent—'H.R.H.—Do not disturb'. Perhaps Prince Charles does not like camping after all and it does seem somewhat incongruous to conjure up a picture of solid gold billy cans, silver tent pegs and the Royal Midge Swatter. I suppose that he wouldn't have been turned away with the phrase, "Sorry mate, the site's full". Imagine the Club receiving the Royal seal of approval—C.C. By Appointment! . . .

One of the longest standing Members H.D. Greenwood (1926) passed away during the year and four other Members, Lord 'Nick' Piercy (1940), Gordon Tinning, Dave Edwards and Roger Stokes have all died in tragic circumstances.

The year started well with the driest March on record but freak gales and a snowstorm in April deposited snow which lingered in the Peak until May. During June it was frequently overcast with the sun being conspicuous by its absence, but by July there was a return to decent sunny weather—a welcome change after the last two atrocious summers.

Financially it has been an excellent year for publications after the race to get the new Pembroke guide to the shops for Easter. It has been well received and is selling like hot cakes. The Llanberis Pass update came out in July and at last we are now incorporating technical grades into the text of our North Wales guides. It also introduces the 6c, 7a and E6 grades to our area although the E7 grade was reserved for the 1981 Gogarth Supplement which also came out in July. For this supplement we have experimented with colour shots for the covers and the printer has done us proud. Hopefully in future it will not now be necessary to convert good colour shots into black and white prints. At the time of going to press Southern Sandstone, Ogwen and the Carn Gowla Supplement have not yet appeared and further delays seem inevitable. Our Members have also played a prominent role in the production of the recent Derwent Valley and Staffordshire Area guidebooks.

Since writing the last Editorial there has been plenty of action in that Smiler Cuthbertson after making his long planned ascent of the North Face of the Eiger went on to another public arena for an ascent of the Rock of Gibraltar with Don Whillans and Ben and Marion Wintringham. Don has also recently gone on an international expedition to the Gangotri region with Doug Scott. Trevor Jones celebrated 1981 with his success on the Diamond Buttress on Mount Kenya during the first British ascent.

Of the other big expeditions, the attempt on the West Ridge of Everest in winter was finally unsuccessful after a hard fight. The team which included Al Rouse, the Burgess twins and Paul Nunn gave up at 24,000 feet. The Burgess twins however were more successful on Dhaulagiri which they did by the normal North East Ridge. A team which managed to get into China included Michael Ward and Jim Milledge but the successful team of four which reached the summit of Kongur, 25,325 feet, after bad weather and illness had struck, was composed of Chris Bonington, Al Rouse, Joe Tasker and Pete Boardman. Not a bad performance when the Daily Telegraph refers to Chris as 'The veteran mountaineer'! In the same news column the paper also reported that snow had just fallen in the arid Kalahari Desert. Lastly, at the other end of the world, the strong team of Phil Burke, Tom Proctor, Brian Wyvill and Geoff Birtles was successful on Cerro Torre where they climbed the East Face—except for the slushy summit mushroom.

This year the Journal has been produced with far less heartache than usual and this is entirely due to those Members who have readily helped without having to be prompted at frequent intervals. It is almost possible to look forward to the 1982 Journal without that horrible sinking feeling.

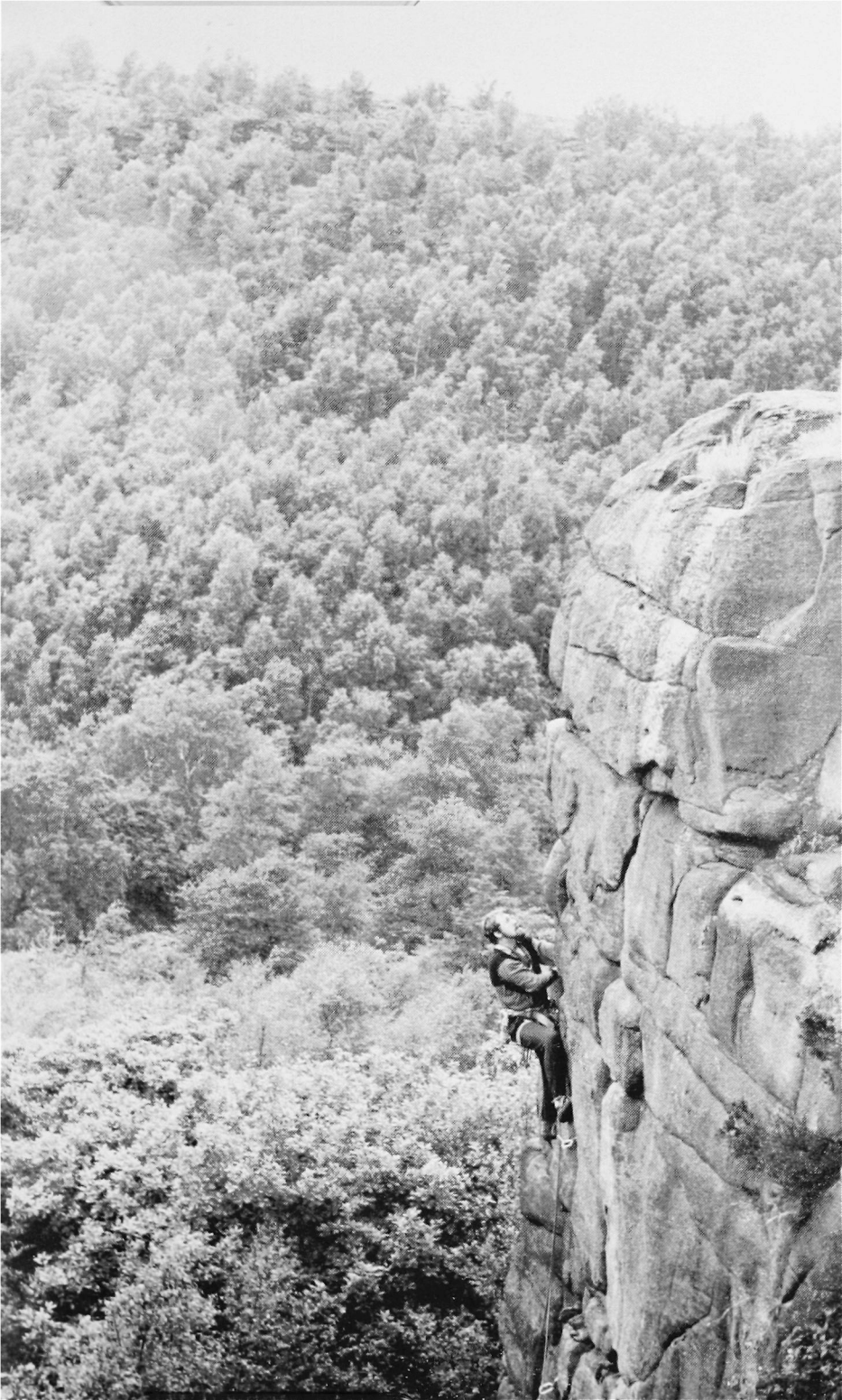
Geoff Milburn

Opp: Roy Small on Nowanda, Gardoms Edge.

Photo: Ian Smith.

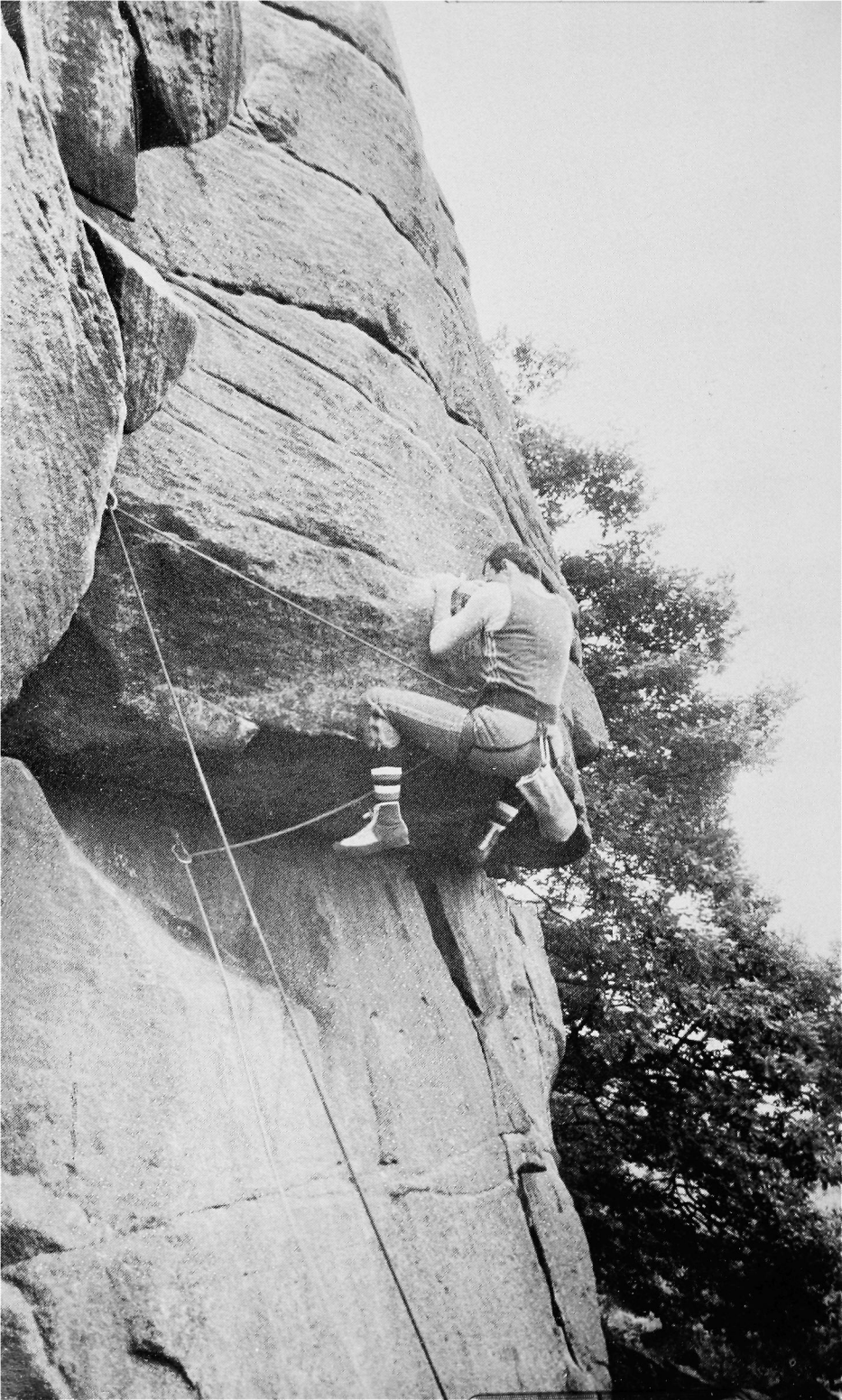
Centre Left: Dave Edwards.

Photo: Chris Jackson.









REVIEW

Pembroke by Pat Littlejohn and Mike Harber

£5.50

This is a long-awaited and much needed guidebook. It is also, with over 700 routes, one of the biggest produced by the C.C. Before I launch into a detailed appraisal of the guide, let me say, first of all, that Pat Littlejohn and Mike Harber faced a daunting task in preparing the manuscript. No-where was this more true than with the explosion of development in the Castlemartin region (100 routes in two months in 1980!). So the authors were faced with collecting descriptions from numerous climbers who had been doing routes that they weren't sure were new (there is little vegetation to give the game away in Pembroke), on cliffs which were called different names by different people and whose relationship to existing climbs was unknown! In view of all this it is a wonder that we have a guide at all, let alone one which is really very good.

The general order and certain of the more traditional sections are based on the original Mortlock guidebook. However, the whole book has been given the neat and serviceable format of other C.C. guides with its cover photographs, waterproof exterior and E grades. In the Introduction the authors point out that it has been impossible to check all of the climbs and that 'descriptions (and grades!) are often those of the first ascensionists'. This point is well taken and gives Mike and Pat a convenient let-out for complaints from the reviewer and future climbers! I think that it is a pity that some stars couldn't have been allocated to the best routes although I appreciate that it would have been speculative to have done so in some cases. There then follows an important section on access restrictions. Climbs which are out-of-bounds at certain times of the year due to nesting birds are also indicated in the text. I think that this is very useful and important—I, for one, don't want to spend any more time around the negotiation table! In fact, the (R) symbols to indicate restrictions are doubly-useful in the case of Mowing Word where the notes on page 161 state a smaller restricted area than they should. It might also have been useful to have put (TR) with certain climbs on Mur Cenhin to indicate a 'temporary' restriction since there is a danger that some climbers may not read the introductory sections.

The Historical sections are both interesting though I ought to admit that a bit of poet's licence was in evidence when describing my encounter with the 'Commandant' . . . it was probably just as well it was only a Captain or there might have been a real incident! Both Historical sections end with the sort of provocative statements that seem to be automatically included in guides these days in order to attract everyone in the U.K. to put it out-of-date as quickly as possible!

The general lay-out and format of the text is excellent and I could find hardly any printer's errors. Where there are mistakes or ambiguities then these can almost always be traced to the difficulties in assembling the information referred to above (not to mention the 'two line descriptions on beer mats!'). For example, the descriptions of The Demon and other climbs in relation to the first crack of Toil and Trouble don't seem quite right and it is difficult to relate Footloose and Fancy Free to the other routes on Crickmail Point. I was disappointed to see the old description of Gypsy Lane appear intact since I have failed to find the climb over the years and was looking forward to being better informed! Although the text belongs to the Kirkus

simplicity style rather than the roundabout scholasticism of an Edwards, I found myself smiling at quite a few phrases. More than once seconds were advised to belay to the side to avoid falling rock! The Mepic description states that 'a sling may be required for aid' . . . whatever that may mean! I was surprised to see that the 'dubious-looking block' of Sea Groove was still there—it nearly gave me heart-failure in 1974! Some of the old climbs have changed out of all recognition. Lydstep Point Maze, for example, which used to provide an entertaining (and V.S.) traverse is now only described with the final pitches. I can imagine some leaders getting a thorough fright if they try and solo the old approach! But, in general, the descriptive notes are good and particularly so in the Lydstep area—not an easy place to describe at all.'

The list of first ascents is only partially complete and, as might be expected, has quite a few mistakes with wrong leaders (or no alternate leads mentioned), wrong dates and wrong climbers listed. One mistake in particular surprised me when Pat had he and I climbing The Big Sleep, Quitter and Wet Threat in the same day. I had been so exhausted by The Big Sleep and so pounded by the waves on the euphemistically-named Wet Threat that I felt more like quitting (sic) than doing a third climb!

Finally the descriptions are complemented by a series of diagrams and photo-diagrams. In general these are excellent—particularly the diagrams which should orientate newcomers without any problems. A few of the photographs have not reproduced very well which lessens their usefulness and it would have been better if all of the diagrams had been in chronological order.

So, in summary, let me take my hat off to Mike and Pat who have done an excellent job, especially when one considers the circumstances. True, there are some mistakes and a little room for improvement but the provision of a guide for all those great routes in Pembroke has been a real boost for climbers. Make no mistake, this is a quality production for a quality sea-cliff area which, as might be expected for an 'in' place, is already (May) thirty routes out-of-date.

John Harwood

Llanberis Pass by Geoff Milburn

C.C. £4.50

This is the latest guide to one of Wales most popular areas. With the incorporation of E grades and tech. grades in the text now established practice, instead of having them tucked away at the back of the book, the C.C. seems to be moving with the times and climbers can see at a glance what they are up against. E6 and 7a have arrived, and Milburn has prudently extended the grading system to include them.

Several routes have been upgraded to 6a:—Corruption, Mural, Leftover and Quasar on the Grochan, plus Foil and Resurrection on the Cromlech, and I'm glad to see that the old favourites Slape Direct and Erosion Groove Direct merit 5c once again. On Dinas Mot, the top pitch of Direct Route quite rightly gets 5b for a couple of thin moves to reach a jug. Two other routes which could well have been upgraded are Ivy Sepulchre to 5b (where there is a very hard move to pass the peg) and

Cenotaph Corner to 5c—I know some climbers may disagree here but I have seen many leaders stand on the top peg to save themselves a flying lesson. The route description mentions 'leaving the niche strenuously (crux)', when in point of fact, the crux is pulling into the awkward polished crack at the top on thin jams, definitely a 5c move unless the aforementioned peg is used as a foothold. Another little quibble is in the introduction to the Corner where it says, 'Excellent protection can be arranged without resorting to pegs which would only destroy its perfection', a bit out of date in this age of R.P's, Rocks and Friends don't you think?

Other routes undergraded are Rosy Crucifixion, 5b instead of 5c; Lubyanka—the penultimate pitch has a good 5c move up a tricky little corner on it; and Times Past, where the start to the third pitch involves very strenuous, technical and precarious 6a climbing over an overhang, to get established in a groove. On Dinas Mot, The Link and the holdless little corner on Ten Degrees North are rather harshly graded at 5b and there is also a good case for upgrading Lorraine Variation to H.V.S., 5a, as it is certainly as hard as Diagonal.

On the E grading front, the serious Epitaph gets E3 as does nearby Left Wall. The latter route, although well protected is often ascended with yo-yos or rests on nuts and is easily the most fallen off route in the Pass.

Looking through the star grading system, Diagonal, Direct Route (Mot), Cemetery Gates and Main Wall are the only three star routes under Extreme. Whilst it is generally true that the harder routes enjoy better situations, I'm sure that a Severe leader would find Nea worth the full three stars. Indeed, according to the guides, the route has improved dramatically over the past few years. In the 1974 guide, Nea was described as being, 'a very popular route and justifiably so', in 1978 'a magnificent route' and in 1981 'a magnificent route of great character', so surely it could have had that extra star this time. Other climbs worth one more star than listed are, Brant Direct, S.S. Special, Black Belt, Sabre Cut and Little Sepulchre.

Next we come to the Historical section which is fairly accurate, although the bit about Paul Williams 'luring unsuspecting climbers up to the Cromlech even in the most foul weather conditions' is pure fantasy, a case of the guidebook writer getting 'carried away'—and so he should be. I don't climb in the wet, Geoff, and as for the bit about 'luring', well, I prefer to eat my jelly babies myself nowadays—enough said.

On a sterner note, there is no record of what events occurred after the 'Cromlech blitz' of 1980, apart from the Littlejohn/Lewis routes on Craig Y RHAADR. A distinct lack of interest seems to have been shown by Milburn concerning activities during this period, a year in which the talented John Redhead came to prominence. Redhead's Cockblock (E6, 6b) has become a test-piece and his second ascents of Lord of the Flies, Hall of Warriors and Precious with a new direct start (ALL ON SIGHT!) are a remarkable achievement surely worth recording. Perhaps if Mr. Milburn had visited the Pass more regularly during the past couple of years and abseiled down these routes [Hear, hear! Ed.] he might have been able to place Redhead's efforts in their true perspective.

Also during this period, Steve Haston and Leigh McGinley freed The Grinder, an enormous roof pitch on the Mot, another brilliant performance which has also been omitted.

In the 'Minor Outcrops on the North Side of the Pass' section of the guide, Haston's series of routes in the Vivian Quarries (especially the very fine Comes The Dervish, E4, 6a) are not included; only Legs Akimbo climbed in 1978 is described.

Perhaps oversights such as these might have been avoided if a couple of North Wales activists had been allowed to proof read the final manuscript. Even a blind man should have spotted the biggest howler in the guide—when climbing Right Wall, Geoff, you move RIGHT along the Girdle ledge not left. The Right Wall description is confusing, with climbers being told to traverse left on the first resting ledge to two good pockets instead of, climb diagonally left. [Thinks. Was Pete Livesey off route on the first ascent? Ed].

Another confusing description is that of Precious. It starts in the wrong place (it should be 15 feet further right) and it tells you to move left to a large pocket when it should say FROM a large pocket. By the way, has anyone lately seen the peg from two thirds of the way along the Resurrection crack? To my knowledge it went A.W.O.L. at least four years ago and hasn't been heard of since.

Just across the way, Lord of the Flies is now reckoned to be 6b rather than 6c although climbers operating at that standard will probably 'know the score'.

A printing error has resulted in Too Hard For Jim Perrin on Drws y Gwynt being in the guide as 5a instead of 5c and Haston's Pus, E3, 6a on the Grochan is now rated 6b/c.

Generally the guide comes up to a very high standard. The excellent cover photos and the maps inside are sharp and clear. The route descriptions are for the most part very accurate and concise with an occasional humorous touch which complements the text. Tucked away at the back once again is a Graded List, always the source of much comment. This one seems spot on with Right Wall just retaining its E5 status. A few pages further on a new Cromlech Centre Spread reveals all, showing quite clearly where the 'modern horrors' go although I found the shading a little confusing.

With nearly sixty new routes included in this latest C.C. guide a lot of climbers will fork out £4.50 to find that they are getting very good value for money.

Paul Williams

SITUATION VACANT. Wanted one gullible climber to update the 1981 Llanberis Pass guidebook which should sell out by 1984. Ability to climb above 7a useful but not essential. Can you grade accurately (2b or not 2b that is the question)? Current incumbent has recently PASSED on after an acute attack of 'reviewers pen' diagnosed as Perrinitis crewiosis with the complication of Jepsonia williamsii. Come back Pete Hatton, all is forgiven. Ed.

Gogarth 1981 by Geoff Milburn

£0.95

The new Supplement (we need it to help sell the main 1978 guide which won't sell out before 1986) has now appeared complete with E7, a graded list to the whole of Gogarth and last but not least coloured photographs on the covers. It is not quite so cheap and nasty as the last version, being in our standard house style. The Editor is

still holding those hounds of hell—the reviewers—at bay. Undoubtedly in due course a review will appear on the walls of the toilet at Pete's Eats.

Great Langdale by M.G. Mortimer

F.R.C.C. £4.75

The guide makes a good initial visual impact. The bold red cover with its simple title proudly written carries for me an impact greater than the fussy photograph covers of guides to other areas. It has moved with the times, having the tall page format, technical grades, E grades and stars as an indication of route quality. It maintains the Fell and Rock tradition of solid dependable quality. The paper is stiff and substantial. The space on the pages is well filled and the text is justified at both margins, a touch of class which other guidebooks have lost but which one hopes may return as the word processor is made more use of.

It leans heavily on its two immediate forerunners to the valley and therefore on Allan Austin, stalwart forebears all. The style is much in line with Austin's guides although a slight abridging of the prose has occurred and the many short pitches on older routes run together in line with modern practice. This journal's editor will be pleased that now it is the climber who starts or climbs and not the route. I prefer to see all a climb's pitches described rather than an easily missed blanket reference to a number of climbs starting from part way up another (as occurs here in the case of Paladin etc.). The route descriptions happily still include an introductory comment which gives the guide a readable quality for the armchair and the user a lead as to the quality of the routes which the stars, though useful, cannot fully give.

I have some grumbles, directed properly not at this guide but at the house style. Could not the Very Severe (hard) have been changed into Hard Very Severe. I would like to see the diagrams in among the text near the routes they help to describe (A remedy necessary in publications nearer home than this.). Could not the routes be numbered in the text and the same numbers used on the diagrams? Many of the Langdale crags have complex structures which are hard to describe and draw. Some of the diagrams admit defeat by being grey and fussy, lacking in clarity.

Is the collection of the route names under their gradings of any use? If it is to be done cannot some attempt be made to put them in a ranking order of difficulty or is the presence of this particular list just to allow the F.R.C.C. to challenge the C.C. for the Guinness Book of Records entry for the most silly lists at the back of a guide?

I would like to see the Mountain Accidents section given greater prominence and not tucked away in the lists at the back.

The Peak and C.C. print the title on the spine in the other direction and conformity with them would prevent our scanning our bookshelves like metronomes to the detriment of our vertebrae. Furthermore they are at variance with Wilson. How dare they run counter to the Pundit of Publication.

The O.S. references to the crags don't have the letters to make them unique.

Most guidebook publishers have trouble with the action photographs. The quality of those chosen here is about average for the genus and they give an adequate expression of the atmosphere of the routes. I would like to see the photograph caption at the foot of the photograph or its facing page.

Personally I like the policy of having the histories from previous guides included as a build up to the modern developments as it gives the attitudes of previous eras' writers to the developments of their time. Although Austin did not refer, in his history, to his having omitted some routes because of his disapproval of the mechanics of their first ascents, Mike Mortimer puts the record straight and the routes are duly included. Would that every climbing area and first (free) ascent were so Persil white.

After this pot-pourri of praise and criticism I must reach some conclusions. Mike Mortimer—well done. House Style—needs to do better. Judged overall this is a good guide and the criticisms a pedant's nit-picking. I bought a copy for myself and shall be glad to have it in the back pocket of my tattered breeches as I struggle per ardua ad Astra to the call of The Ragman's Trumpet.

Dave Gregory

Derwent Valley by Jim Ballard and Ernie Marshall
edited by Dave Gregory

B.M.C. £4.50

I was sitting in Stoney cafe one wet day, mindlessly looking for isolated triangles in the table top pattern. A thought struck me; I was from one of the luckiest generations to have climbed in the Peak District. To have battled with High Tor's aid routes in the 'bang n' dangle' days, then to be still around to enjoy them as free routes.

The long awaited Derwent Valley guide confirms the new state of play on Britain's best outcrop. It takes over the Southern Limestone and Chatsworth Gritstone guide areas with the exception of the Dovedale and Manifold valleys which are hived off to the new Staffordshire guide. The result is a guide covering the South-Eastern portion of the Peak District and a marriage of gritstone and limestone—considered unholy by some.

It is ten years since the two previous guides came out, both bulky volumes totalling 530 pages. The new guide has been condensed into a slim, exciting 240 pages, a remarkable effort considering the number of new routes climbed in that period.

All the expected descriptive tools are there; technical grades, E grades and star ratings. A new one springs on the scene, a † or dagger which is used to indicate an unchecked or suspicious grade or description. This could start a new perversion, 'dagger ticking', for those who have done everything else. Rumours that the symbol is applied to all of Gary Gibson's routes are unfounded.

Access problems, approaches and route descriptions are well presented and accurate by current standards but there are one or two annoying faults which occur time and time again. The most blatant is the 'Route A is 10 feet left of route B', 'Route B is fifteen feet left of route C' form of route location. It is acceptable, indeed preferable that the individual sub-editor should project his own 'personality stamp' onto descriptions etc. What is still in evidence here is that those idiosyncracies extend to gradings and star ratings. One would have hoped that lessons have been learnt since the disastrous days of the last Froggatt guide.

The High Tor section has been well written; grades and descriptions up to E3 are accurate except in one or two cases. Darius should possibly have been E2, 5c and Lyme Cryme pitch two 5b. A number of belayers who have had to dodge falling blocks and leaders from Searchlight might think E2, 5b somewhat lowly.

My sympathy is with the editor in attempting to grade at E4, E5 and E6. Opinion as to the difficulties of such routes as Supersonic, A6 and Tales of Yankee Power seem to change with every ascent and it will probably be years before any form of consensus is reached. Two brilliant diagrams of the Tor by Phil Gibson and the number of 'stars for quality' point to many a happy experience there.

Wild Cat and Willersley are not so well covered however. The diagrams are poor and there are a number of historical inaccuracies. Amongst others, 'Timing X' and 'Endgame' have been publicly claimed before. Both crags are more attractive than the guide would have them appear and another sprinkling of stars wouldn't have come amiss.

The new Birchens section is a revelation; those baffling Severes are now V.S.—seven of them anyway. One route has been upgraded from V.S. to E2 and two all the way from Diff. to V.S.! It does seem that Ernie Marshall who had a hand in both the old and new guides to this area missed one or two; Midshipman must be more than H.V.S. Perhaps grades in this section were based on the assumption that you have a fifi hook clipped to your harness and know the routes intimately!

The rest of the gritstone portion appears less controversial. Shorter descriptions are given for poor routes and some attention has been paid to the coverage of boulder problems. These are often ignored in other guides, to their costs, for they pack a lot of entertainment into a small amount of space.

Photographs have been included despite previous failures in Peak guides. Poor reproduction was to blame before but this time the originals were lacking. There are one or two of interest however. Phil Burke's pose on Castellan looks fantastic but is it doing him any good? There is even a rare climbing shot of Jim Ballard, the other co-editor.

This guide like others in the series represents good value for money at £4.50 or 0.3p per route. It sets high standards for accuracy and conciseness as professionalism creeps in. I hope that in future guides it will not be at the expense of entertainment.

J.C.H. Codling

Staffordshire Area by Mike Browell, Steve & Brian Dale and Nick Longland;

edited by Geoff Milburn

B.M.C. £4.50

This exceptionally well-produced guide (Volume 6 of Rock Climbs in the Peak) embraces the area within a ten mile radius of Leek. There are nearly 250 limestone routes in the secluded Dovedale and Manifold Valleys, and well over 1,000 gritstone problems stretching from the Churnet Valley to the traditional areas such as the Roaches, Hen Cloud and Ramshaw Rocks, crammed into its meaty 268 pages—a feast of climbing.

A prolific amount of activity has occurred in Staffordshire since the last guide appeared and it has all been 'faithfully' recorded, along with the older climbs, although looking through this edition some of the grades seem rather fierce—is Slippery Jim really V.S.,4c?—is Chalkstorm only 5c?—isn't Foord's Folly worth 6a?

With over forty maps and diagrams it is very easy to locate most routes, no detail however small seems to have been overlooked—even boulder problems are described on some crags. The text (with E grades and tech. grades included) contains many

little puns and witticisms which make it a good read as well as a guide; e.g. Electric Chair, Hen Cloud, is described as, 'Strenuous in Execution'.

The cover photographs are both very good as are the ones in the centre, particularly that of Aquarius. However my favourite is the one by Tony Moulam of Ramshaw Crack inside the rear cover, a classic shot. [In fact although not mentioned in the guidebook the photo Paul mentions is of Joe Brown making the first ascent. Ed.].

In summing up, it can be said that Staffordshire has been blessed with many superb limestone and gritstone classics, all found in the pages of this, the best so far in the Peak Guide series. So if you want to grapple with The Black Grub or Adjudicator Wall; take a trip to Easter Island or A Short Trip To The Transylvanian Brain Surgery; get to grips with Whilly's Whopper or Pete's Backside (watch out for the queerish move to gain better holds!) then this guide is a must, and at under £5 it represents very good value for money.

Paul Williams

Yorkshire Limestone by Mike Bebbington

Y.M.C.

Far, far away, far beyond the great Cambrian peaks of Perrin, but not quite as far as Rab Carrington Vale in the waste wilderland of the Hobbit Hamilton there lies the dreaded Desolation of Bebbington, in the unspeakable principality of Ye Orc Shire. There after many long years of 'shy talk, night orc' an elvish script has been forged in the dark, dusty caverns of the great mansion which lies hidden deep in the Dennis of the Gray Dale. The script is branded proudly with the great seal of ye Orcshire Mounting Eerie Ring, least powerful of all the rings, entrusted only to the Goblin Anu, who alone can speak wisely from his rectumal cavern known as 'Sauron' (previously known as Sore In). The ring itself peculiar to the Lie Stone (from which limestone is but a corruption) or Get the Facts Wrong District has restricted progress in the Shire for many eons now.

For a long time now the days have past slowly and wearily and many of the dwarves (such as Bilbo Berzins, Fili Fawcett and Mortimer of Morin) have spent all their time compiling and de-grading routes and Thorin bade them eagerly to look for routes in every corner of the Shire—but not too quickly. For he said I will be avenged on anyone who finds a route and gives it a technical grade.

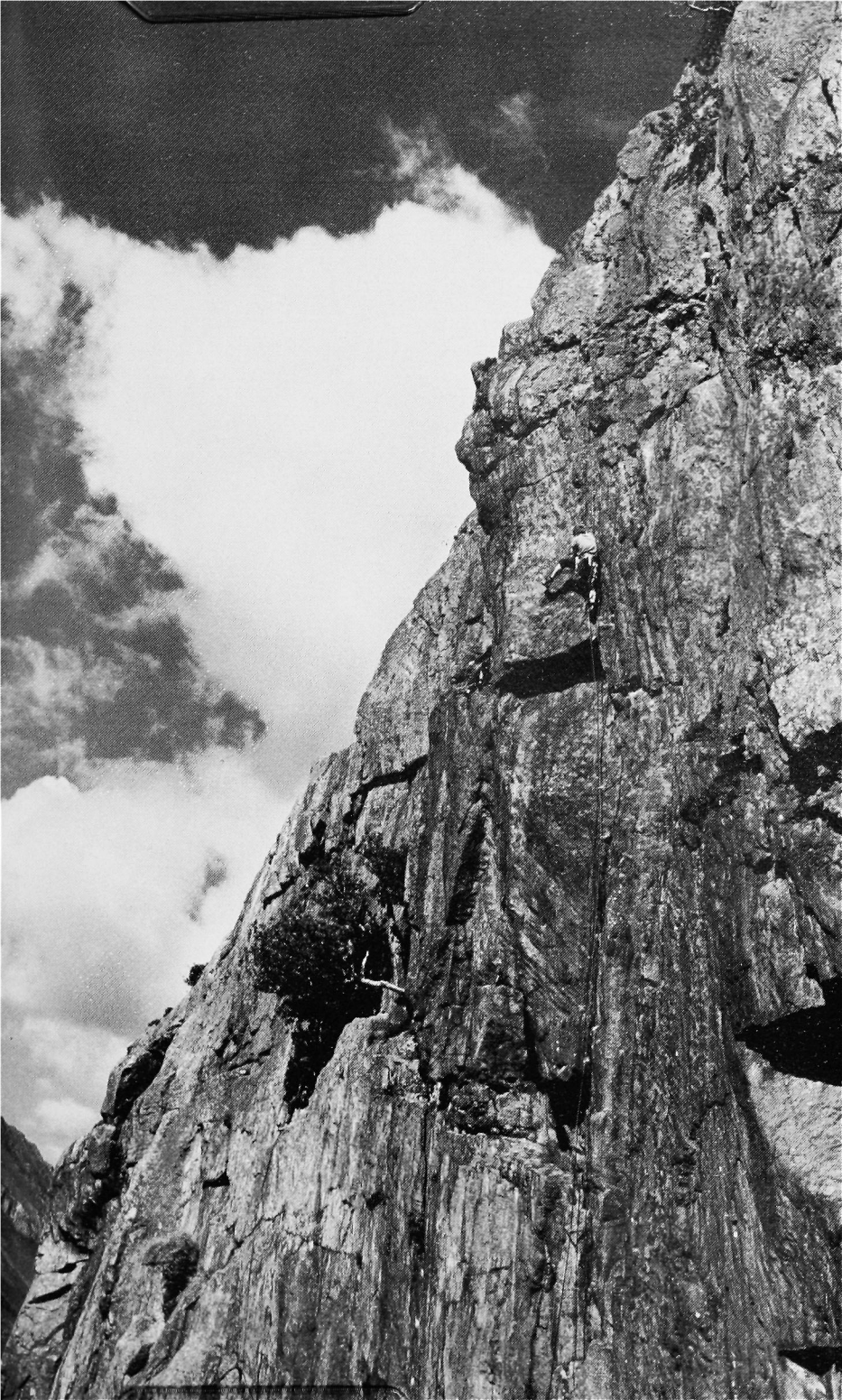
Legolas Liveseyo heard these words and he grew afraid, wondering what would happen if his grades were ever found—he kept them secretly wrapped up in an old bundle of Mounting magazine oddments with which he used to stuff his pillow. When his most heinous crime finally came to light the Wizard Bebbington cast him down the great cleft of Trollers Gill to face the Bane of Durin—most terrible of all the Y.M.C. monsters. And what of the crime itself? It transpired that Liveseyo the Gnome had been busy under his little bobble hat and had used the much maligned elfin 'E' grades to shed a little light in the land of darkness.

And after the publication of the Mounting Lie Stone comic there was much mirth and hilarity in the halfling cafe at Stoney Middleton Dale where Birtles Baggins and Silmaril Stevenson along with their little pixie friend Elrond Evans of Al held court.

And when the great migration to Orc Shire took place there was much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. The younger Cropper nearly came one when he spent

Opp: John Codling on the superb pitch of Stroll On, Clogwyn y Grochan.

Photo: Mike MacDonald.





some seven hours on the Jenny Wren which had been crowned with the lowly equivalent of an Elfin grade I on the outlanders scale.

And at the elfin feast held by the C.C. in the inn temporarily occupied by the Fairy Frost and the cook, one Green of Gondor, there just happened to be a muttering which grew and grew until it had the stature of a conspiracy. With a sly wink and a nudge of the say no more variety Beorn Browell took one last sip of his best Lie Stones Ale and leaning forward confidentially said to Milburn of Mordor (most blessed of the Boddington tribe and who shamefully has to admit that he too is a native of Orc Shire), "What sayest thou old friend shall we earn much gold and silver by re-writing the script of scraps?" And the seed was planted, and a pact was made to drive out the Orcs from the Shire to purify once again the land of the misty mountains.

And so ends the tale, as it has come to us from the Orcs, and no more shall be said of this book about the days of old.

Ed. [But not he of the skyhook]

Note: The club archivists will report later when the Yorkshire guide has been fully translated into modern English.

Avon Gorge by Steve Monks

Dark Peak £3.95

Having waited a long time for this guide, the relief and anticipation of its arrival were somewhat affected by a closer perusal of its contents and style. As well as some welcome features there are also some very unwelcome ones.

The presentation is crisp and attractive, the now usual plastic cover illustrating well the older classical Avon climbing as well as the modern, although the photograph of Central Buttress suffers from an unremarkable camera angle. The typeface is clear and easy to read though there are lots of printing errors. The photodiagrams are good, showing one feature that other guides could well follow, that of using both black and white lines to show routes thus avoiding clashes with light and dark areas of rock. The dotted lines took a little working out because they were'n't included on the key and having identified them as variations it was still necessary to refer to the text to identify exactly which climbs they were variations of in some cases. Minor faults include the awkward juxtaposition of the photographs of the Unknown Area and its route key, and the photodiagram of Suspension Bridge Buttress includes Clan Union in the key but not in the photograph. The photographic reproduction is fair but I suspect that they do not do full justice to the originals. The photographs of the Main Wall Area seem rather small and I would have preferred to see them spread over a double page. Of the two maps included, that on page one is just scruffy and an insult to the otherwise generally good appearance of the guide, and the other does its job without being outstanding.

At long last thea gradings appear to have been sorted out with some much needed rationalisation having been attended to. The use of E grades has obviously made life a lot easier, a very definite improvement on the discrepancies of the last two guides. The odd personal quibbles still remain, though this will always be a personal affair between the climber and the climb. I do have an ethical criticism but this will be dealt with later. One final mechanical point to note is that the glueing of the cover onto the

Opp: The other Dave Cuthbertson in a fine position on Foil, Dinas Cromlech.

Photo: Paul Williams.

end paper does not appear to be very good and reports of covers parting company from the main guide body have filtered through, although my own seems to be standing the strain fairly well.

However there are some very serious criticisms of this guide, which I feel need airing, that rather detract from the achievement of its publication.

Basically these develop round the problems of inaccuracy and omission. This is not a criticism of the route descriptions (more on those later), but concerns the other aspects usually found in guides and I'm not referring to geological notes or other such material. I know only too well how difficult it is to research historical and factual material for a guide and have felt also the critical barbs that fly both before and after publication and so my sympathies usually lie with the author. The criticism here though lies with the mistakes which are only too easy to correct for the information is well documented. F.G. Balcombe is under the impression that he climbed Piton Route with Jack Sheppard and not solo as is recorded in this and past guides. The development of Amanita Muscaria is not as vague as suggested, Captain Swing's first ascent is inaccurately described in the aid used, and the first ascent details of Wombling Free are missing. All this material was documented at the time in Rocksport (Cynics may detect a note of personal sour grapes here—I was on the first ascent of Wombling Free). The route Blue Horizon (first ascent given as 1975) is surely the same route as that described in Wyvill and Evans' guide as the traverse line under the main overhangs finishing at the top of Malpractice? It had received at least one complete ascent in a day, in 1972, to my knowledge. Such information as outlined above is surely easily available to anyone concerned with getting the facts straight.

The most serious complaint of the first ascent list though concerns the abdication of all responsibility to keep it accurately. To say that because some dates are unknown is a good enough reason for not publishing it as correctly as possible is hardly satisfactory. The repetitive printing of the year thus appears unnecessary as well as irritating. To just give an approximate chronological order of ascents also seems pointless. Why not just print an alphabetical index and do away with a first ascent list altogether. The treatment here is poor because it deprives many first time climbers at Avon of much of the history and, as a consequence, of much of its atmosphere. Not so, you might say, what about the historical section?

History is important. A dogmatic statement, yes, but when reading the historical section of this guide I got the impression that it was a very different Avon Gorge to the one in Bristol. Gone are the numerous details of the past. Gone are the many tales and folklore, so lovingly cherished by many, concerning the characters and the events that have played an important part in the development of the Gorge's character and atmosphere. Possibly it was for reasons of efficiency, or space saving, or cost cutting (and at nearly £4 this guide is not cheap for what it offers). Or perhaps it was just the 'nobody wants to know about bicycle rides down slabs/handstands on the Pink Wall spikes/passing suicides dropping in at Suspension Bridge Buttress', argument. And gone with these too is Avon, *The Avon*. Or at least all that is left is a grey, empty husk devoid of life, a drained skeletal framework of bare details and route networks.

The debilitation continues. In the introduction to his 1972 guide, Ed. Drummond stated; "This guidebook aims to provide an accurate account of *every* route on the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge and it has been written for *everyone* and not solely for the climber of the harder routes". In my view any guide author (and publisher) has a

duty to the purchaser. This duty is a composite one: it should provide a service to all; it should be to establish the facts; and it should be to preserve the history and hence the character of the area, although admittedly the history is not the whole character. It is not always possible or reasonable to expect all these points to be adhered to but this guide fails on all three counts. The factual and historical ones have been dealt with briefly while accepting that the routes have been accurately described. The service factor requires a more detailed consideration.

Many climbs have been omitted from this guide for reasons of illogicality or of 'not being worthwhile'. Of particular note are those on the Exhibition Slab and the Fir Tree Slab areas. Gone are the original 1964 descriptions so hopefully immortalised in Drummond's guide. Remember Fingerrip and "a strenuous pull on a minute flake which has now disappeared"; or Fir Tree Slab, 'itself named after the fir tree seen at its top left hand end which has now disappeared'? So much for immortality! These are not just pieces of whimsy indulged in by a particular author but are an integral part of the feel and charm (yes, charm!) of Avon. And now they've been dispensed with as clinically as are the route descriptions. To write them off as being easy and easily found is never strictly true. Those who can only do easy climbs are not likely to have the skill and judgement necessary to venture onto unknown rock without the benefit of a description.

Omitted for not being worthwhile is The Trip, highlighting the perennial problem of what constitutes quality. The Trip is long (410') but wandering. It compensates for this with spectacular positions and some entertaining rope moves. I think it is worthwhile. The guide does give us however, Stretcher, described as being rather pointless; Eros, 'hardly worthwhile'; Venereal, 'a poor and vegetated route'; The Quartz Hedgehog, 'a poor pitch'; Wormlands, 'a thoroughly unrecommended route' and also described as 'futuristic'. The logic escapes me if the modern trend is seen to be to go for futuristic, totally unrecommendable routes. I think I'd prefer to be archaic on old fashioned quality routes. . . Other routes are also included in similar vein to the qualities extolled above. Omitted on the grounds of being wandering and being superceded by later more 'logical' routes is Titan's Trail. I would argue that if a route has been done, and if it gives climbing of quality, then it should be included irrespective of whether its line is wandering or not. The only grounds for non-inclusion (onto the block with my head) should be those of poor quality of climbing, and most of us have a reasonable idea of what we mean by that indefinable essence, and lines which cover little or no new ground. One is tempted to ask (tongue in cheek) whether Titan's Trail was too hard!

Some might argue that a guide also has a fourth duty—an ethical one. If so then this one could be viewed as being contradictory. When a climb has been led surely that is the way it should be described. To recommend top rope inspections is therefore unethical. If safety first is the motivating reason for doing so then surely the E grade should be the way of designating seriousness? Those climbers who have the ability to do the route, and the judgement also, should have no need of a top rope inspection and hopefully would eschew it if they have any self respect. Because the guide indicates it though, it gives the impression that the practice is ethically acceptable. Not giving E grades for the routes concerned would also seem to be generally inconsistent with the grading used throughout the guide. Secondly, the mild criticism of Slender Noris and Low Profile seems to be inconsistent with the way in which one of

them is described. We are told in the description that there is not much rest yet on the first ascent, resting and yoyoing are 'dubious'. The presumption is that the climb had been climbed clean before publication but we are also told that this is not so??? I wonder if the full tale is yet to be told. Both these points are minor ones perhaps but to a certain extent all guides are guardians of ethics in one way or another e.g. the use of pegs, and therefore the points are worth consideration.

And so to my final and most serious criticism. To give an example let's look at pitch 4 of Gronk:

'Up behind the tree to another. Up the groove above, moving left around the overhangs then up rightwards to finish.'

Two points. First, the grammatical usage is appalling. On average one sentence(?) in every three does not include a verb, the adverb doing duty (incorrectly) in that position. To be fair to Steve Monks this is a disease becoming common in recent guides but here it's almost in its terminal stage. Secondly I find the terse, shorthand newspeak style of description to be ugly, drab and formless. It can be done reasonably well if correct grammar is applied (see the Lakes North and South Area guides) but here even when the climb is recommended as good or excellent you could be forgiven for wondering if the description you've got is actually the correct one. The routes are described efficiently enough but it's as boring and enticing as reading the minutes of Avon County Council meetings. Anyway, it's not just poor style that creates this but mainly the fact that it's wrong! And one is derived from the other in this case. The author does attempt to enliven the prose from time to time with the odd anecdotal titbit but the result is like painting concrete grey to give it some colour; nothing results but an increased awareness of poverty of the prose quality.

The Climbers' Club is guilty here too—look at the latest Cloggy guide. As one of the major clubs responsible for guide publication it too has a duty, as do the F.R.C.C. and others, Dark Peak included. It must maintain linguistic standards as well as quality of writing style. I don't think I'm being pedantic in pursuing this (although some no doubt will) but I do feel strongly that if we treat ourselves and climbing in this fashion then we risk much of what makes climbing one of the worst valued and valuable aspects of our lives. We've just had a trauma in the club because we don't seem to be able to write anymore—I would also suggest that it is not only the Journal that needs close inspection.

It should be clear by now that I could be easily criticised for a lack of objectivity in this review. For that I make no apologies. Get hold of the guide and judge for yourselves. I have obviously used the review as a vehicle for discussion on general points concerning guidebook production but all apply to this production. It is without doubt an efficient and attractively presented guide and one that has been needed for a long time. It is also an important guide because of the issues it highlights. But as an interesting, lively and atmospheric guide it is a failure. It is a corpse with post-mortem style descriptions in a murdered language, a casualty of what appears to be a rush job after an eight years wait. Dark Peak have not made an auspicious entry into the guide publication arena and they will have to produce much better service than this if they continue. No doubt the sales will show the guide to be an outstanding success but after eight years any old mess would have been likely to sell. If this is the way the modern generation wants their climbing the same success argument would hold, but as for me? Give me back my past and let me mourn it decently on routes

that have personalities and pleasure in living.

'May others come to do the work better.'

Ed. Drummond (1972)

We're still waiting.

David Hope

[Thinks—Am I relieved that I sneaked all those verbs into the new Staffordshire guide at the eleventh hour. Oops; sorry Dave, Nick, Mike, etc. I tried to keep that one quiet and hoped that no-one would notice for a while. Ed.]

Messner's Style

Having just finished reading the first of the Everest books I suppose I am rather out of date where Messner's writings are concerned. And yet it is perhaps unimportant; for the interest is not so much in Messner's feats as in the personality and driving force of the man himself. This is usually the case. Feats in mountaineering are bound to be less interesting to the extent that they are inevitable. We see a natural progression in what is achieved and by and large it is reasonable to expect that to continue. What is interesting is not so much that Messner climbed Everest without oxygen in 1978, but that it was Messner rather than anyone else who made the breakthrough. Much the same can be said of many of the highlights of mountaineering history; to pick two examples more or less at random, Mummery on the technical rock climbing of the Chamonix Aiguilles and Heckmair and party on the Eiger. Mummery, perhaps, had greater imagination vis-a-vis what might be possible than his contemporaries, as well as a very forward looking attitude generally to question like danger and the rationale of climbing. Heckmair succeeded by a combination of superb preparation, mental sobriety and a technical innovation—twelve point crampons. So with Messner. Other men—many other men—will climb Everest without oxygen; but why Messner first?

One of Messner's most attractive characteristics is his respect for past greats. In particular his interest in the early Everest pioneers is well known: a not inconsiderable part of the book is devoted to Everest history. This is right and proper. Progress is not the result of some magical improvement in man's ability to climb, it is the result of improved equipment, and greater experience in the widest sense. This was true for Messner, as it is equally true that when the South West Face is done without oxygen the climbers will draw enormous psychological strength from Messner's 1978 feat. However consummate he may be at impressing his public—and he is—Messner knows full well he can never be the greatest mountaineer of all time. Only of his own time.

But however important the psychological breakthrough of Everest without oxygen, Messner symbolises more than the purist superstar. Historically he symbolises also the removal of the centre of alpine-style climbing from the European Alps. He is the first of those who had really outgrown them. Comparing him with Bonatti (who, I have always felt, went rather wild in his doom-laden prophecies that Messner was the last hope of romantic mountaineering) we can see Bonatti's as one of the last great alpine careers; Messner's as the first great alpine-style career played out in the greater arena of the Himalayas. Bonatti climbed outside the Alps,

and importantly, but the centre of his climbing, and his important influences were in Europe. But by Messner's time things had progressed too far; he cut his teeth in the Alps, made his career in the Himalaya.

That career had consisted of a series of increasingly impressive climbs—things so unlike most people's experiences that explaining in expedition books just what goes on becomes a formidable problem. And here, I think, his books never succeed; perhaps it is an impossible task. How can one explain something as different as this to someone who has never done it themselves? Mountaineering is all about doing something yourself; vicarious adventure is a poor second at the best of times. However well written, one can't help being reminded of this when reading Messner. One gets only the haziest idea of what climbing Everest without oxygen would be like. This doesn't prevent the book selling of course—one realises that something very impressive is going on, and there is the usual crop of arresting photographs. But personally I found myself forgetting where we were on the mountain—the Lhotse face, nearing the summit, even the descent. It is so foreign it is very difficult to differentiate; for the non-climbing public, even more so, surely.

Where one is struck by something which really brings home the fantastic effort, and the willpower which lies behind it, it tends to involve Habeler. Habeler, who for all his superb ability, is nevertheless not of the dedication of Messner, but caught up in the momentum Messner generates. He seems altogether more human, and yet must be equally unusual in the degree to which he can put up with things. His never-ending altitude headaches; as on Hidden Peak the evening before they are due to begin the climb, when he is tortured by a particularly bad one. He can hardly speak, hardly even breathe, and he faces the appalling prospect of ascending from 5,900m to 8,068m over the next two days. And yet he goes on. (Related in Messner's 'The Challenge').

To me the storyline of Messner's books lacks one essential feature that all the best adventure stories have: accessibility. And so it is in what they tell us of the man himself, not his adventures, that the interest of the books really lies. Messner's are typical of many of the modern autobiographies; Relatively candid and revealing as compared to the more classic material. Inevitably, therefore, one wonders about his philosophical 'classification'. He must be a student of Nietzsche; Perhaps Lawrence and others of the lost intellectuals too. There is this terrible appetite for life, which can never be satisfied under 'Normal' conditions:

'... am I some crazy European who returns again and again in a desperate effort to find some deeper purpose to his life?'

(Everest: Expedition to the Ultimate.)

The summit is that purpose, however much he may try to persuade us in his writing that the summit has become unimportant to him as compared with the style of the attempt. After the summit the reward is different, and decidedly Nietzschean in its overtones. At a glacier stream:

'Unlike on the march-in, I no longer asked "How will we get across?" We simply crossed it. The uncertainty that dogs the start of a venture and is so hard to dispel, was no longer a problem . . . Obstacles were no longer obstacles; they were merely things to overcome.'

And again:

'I could go on like this for years, on and on forever.'

But whatever the eventual rewards, the motivation behind any climbing at this sort of standard is competitive, however much Messner pushes the self-discovery thing. In all this there are echoes of Bonatti—as well as of a former member of this club whom I am often reminded of very strongly when reading Messner. Ed had the same intenseness about him, and again, a phenomenal ego—without, of course, the same ability as a Messner.

With Messner's more recent solo ascent of Everest in mind one inevitably wonders where he goes from here. For some time now every expedition seems to have been dubbed the last: and in the past one has been right to be sceptical. The kinds of needs which expeditions satisfy for him are too deep to be easily laid. They are not merely insistent, they are also recurrent. There is something, if not sad at least not particularly enviable about this. One wonders if his interest in Lhotse South Face—solo, presumably might not have been recently rekindled by the attention it's receiving from some other very strong climbers. Competition once again.

Phil Bartlett

F.R.C.C. Journal 1981

edited by A.G. Cramm

The 1981 Fell and Rock Journal celebrating the club's 75th anniversary is a high quality, professional-looking job which at first sight made me green with envy. Not only is it 'posh' but it cleverly papers over the jagged cracks of Journal production—an ever present problem that nowadays faces every club. Curiously dated as 1981 it leaves a two year gap for the years 1979 and 1980. To fit in with the compromise of a biennial pattern there should have been journals dated, 75-76, 77-78, and 79-80. The recent one seems to have been dated solely for the year of publication and one might well compare our own problem where the 77 C.C.J. did not come out until 1979. As to the annual or biennial issue I would contend that it is better to keep up an annual journal, however thin, even if it means using slightly inferior paper, rather than go for a more lavish journal at less frequent intervals.

It is obvious from this Journal that photographs do not give their best except on glossy art paper but in most of the cases they are perfectly adequate for their purpose. Why don't we incorporate a shot of the current President in our Journal? Just think of a full frontal of Trevor! Better still why not have a shot of the whole Committee to preserve for posterity?

Of the articles it is clear that there is always a problem to get the younger generation to put pen to paper, but at least Bob Berzins helped to redress the balance somewhat. Harry Griffin's article, 'Nostalgia for Nails' is particularly interesting although Wood Johnson's article albeit short gives a unique insight into another era.

'My shoulder belay of fishing line felt safe . . .'

'There was a small knob which I thought would just about take a downward pull.'

As an ardent bookworm Muriel Files' account of The Library fascinated me and renewed my resolve to scour the far corners of the second-hand book world for the odd remaining gem which might have escaped the sticky fingers of the book dealing sharks.

John Wilkinson's article on the risks of mountaineering has intrigued me for days and even sitting on top of the Marmolata under a blazing sun all I could think of was:

'The risk of death from rock-climbing for 90 seconds is 1 in a million.'

It was a good job that I was sitting on snow at the time!

In Memorium is always an interesting read as, unlike the C.C., the Fell and Rock DOES keep accurate records of when people join the club and there IS always someone around to write an obituary. How many C.C. Members have sadly departed without a last farewell?

The reviews of books are, as ever, extremely well done but the reviews of guidebooks can only be described as superficial, ill-informed and abysmal. One often gets the impression, as with the Alpine Journal, that they are being written by ex-climbers. One reviewer has 'water resistant flexiback covers' on the brain and clearly needs a 'tap on the head' to relieve the blockage. Mike Mortimer deserves our sympathy as the reviewer couldn't find the tech. grades in his guide. Did he get a faulty copy? To the rescue Mike. And even worse, when we come to Steve Bancroft's Recent Developments Supplement we read, 'on its own it is virtually useless . . .'. Of course it is—it is a Supplement. And PLEASE will reviewers stop using such hackneyed terms as 'the now familiar adjectival system'. The female skeleton alone is very unappealing; let's have a bit of provocative flesh to whet our appetites.

On the whole though this excellent Journal carries on a great tradition and I envy any such club which has a willing Journal team to pull together to produce a final product which reflects well on the club as a whole.

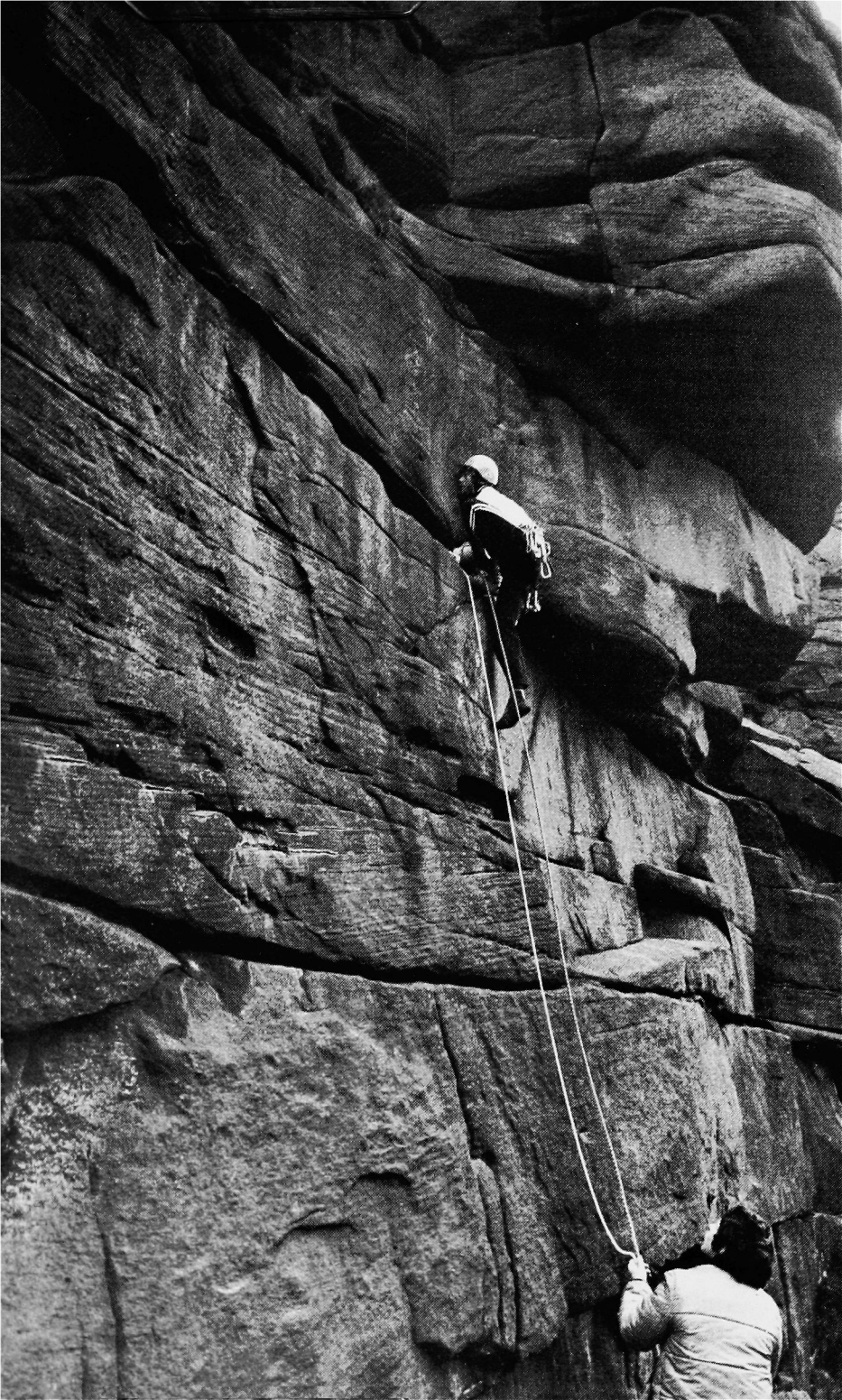
Ed.

JOURNALS OF KINDRED CLUBS

The Editor acknowledges receipt of the 1981 Fell and Rock Journal, the 1980 Cairngorm Club Journal and the 1980 Alpine Journal.

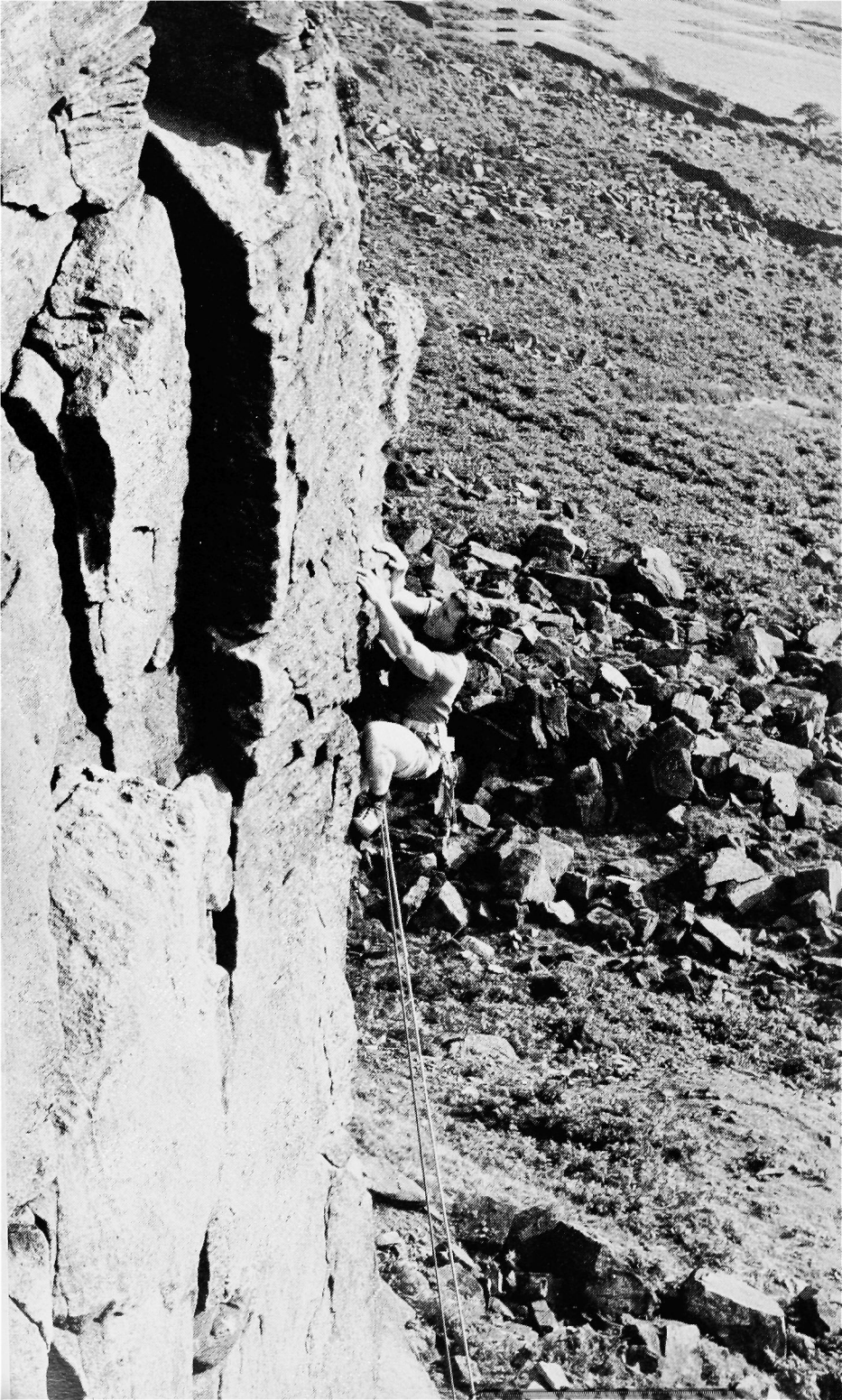
*Opp: Mike Browell and Jerry Frost on the 1st ascent of Tsetse Fly, Gardom's Edge.
Photo: Ian Smith.*

*Centre Left: Bob Bradley in mid-flight from Septisme Metacarpal, St. Victoire.
Photo: M. Browell.*









EXPEDITION & AREA NOTES

British Makalu-Kangchungtse Expedition—1980

Makalu lies twelve miles S.E. of Everest on the border of Nepal and Tibet. It is at 27,805 feet (8475m) the world's fifth highest peak. There have been fourteen ascents of the peak since the first by the French in the spring of 1955. Our expedition was fortunate not to have any other expedition on the mountain and to be able to choose our route after a thorough reconnaissance. We were all in agreement that whatever route we chose we would attempt it in Alpine style and that we would patiently fully acclimatise on lesser peaks before attempting Makalu. To this end we were given permission to climb a number of minor summits and also the 25,066 ft. (7640m) Kangchungtse, sometimes known as Makalu II.

Between us (Roger Baxter-Jones, Georges Bettembourg, Ariane Giobellina and Doug Scott) we have ascended many Himalayan peaks, such as Bardaka (Hindu Kush), Pic Lenin (Pamirs), Broad Peak (Karakorum), Changabang (India), Kangchenjunga, Jannu, Kussum Kangguru, Nuptse (Nepal) in Alpine style and have come to realise that small groups like ours can climb high with minimum support, equipment and organisation. Not only is this eminently satisfying, because all the team are totally involved on the mountain, but it is also relatively inexpensive and the impact made on the Himalayan environment is minimal. The inclusion of Ariane in the climbing team was, for us, a new departure. The 'experiment' proved highly successful, providing a balance that the usual all-male expeditions do not have.

On the 6th September, the expedition flew to Tumlingtar and reached Base Camp at 15,748 feet (4800m) on the 16th September after a mostly-wet and leech-infested walk through the late monsoon season. The fifty porters returned to their homes, mostly around the environs of Sedua. One additional local Sherpa, Angsering, was retained to help with wood gathering, mushrooming and portering to our second Base Camp. At this stage we were accompanied by a guru who was making a pilgrimage to holy caves in the area and a herbalist from Sydney, Australia, both of whom left after a few days.

Between the 18th and 28th September, we established another Base Camp at an altitude of 17,717 feet (5,400m) on a bend where the Chago Glacier meets the Barun Glacier and amongst grass and flowers. From this camp we climbed Pt. 6170m, Pt. 6250m, Pt. 6350m and a southern peak of Chago at 6,600m. From these vantage points we had excellent views of Kangchungtse and Makalu West side as well as superb views of Lhotse and the East side of Everest which should prove useful for future projects.

KANGCHUNGTSSE: We left Base Camp (17,717 feet) on 1st October and had our first camp at 19,000 feet (5,800m) on the medial moraine of the Chago Glacier. Our second camp was at 21,000 feet (6,400m) where, unfortunately, Ariane was forced to descend due to a severe throat infection. Georges and I accompanied her down on

skis, to the moraine and then she made her own way down to Base Camp. That was on the morning of the 3rd October. During the afternoon Georges, Roger and I pushed on up to camp the night at about 22,000 feet, where Roger and I thankfully left our skis. The next day we broke trail to the Makalu La 24,029 feet (7,400m), with Georges laboriously pulling his skis up behind. On the 5th October we left camp on the col and climbed up a fairly steep (60°) gully to the west of the ordinary route and reached the summit ridge which was heavily corniced. We scrambled along the airy, ½ mile ridge to its second summit, possibly the highest at 25,066 feet (7640m). Georges had left his skis at the south end of the ridge and from there proceeded to ski down difficult snow on the eastern side and round to the Makalu La, where we had a second, very windy night. On the 6th October we descended to Base Camp after a very satisfying climb. Georges skied down a mixture of powder, crust and ice, all the way from the Makalu La to the moraine, thus making the first ski-descent of the peak. Roger and myself, a comparative novice, skied down from 22,000 feet. We thought the skis were more trouble than they were worth. Ariane was at the Lower Base Camp, where the doctor from the Japanese Baruntse Expedition had kindly given her medicaments for her sore throat and a fever she was running. She decided to walk out early with Sailor and await our return in Sedua, where she would recover more easily.

MAKALU SOUTH EAST RIDGE: After some discussion as to choice of route on Makalu, we decided upon attempting a traverse of the mountain via the S.E. Ridge and down the original French (N.W.) Route to the Makalu La. The only information we had was from the Dyhrenfurth article in Mountain Magazine, which told us that twenty Japanese, helped by thirty-two Sherpas had climbed the ridge in 1970. Six years later a Spanish Expedition repeated the route. The only other information as to route, etc., was from Angsering, who thought both teams had got onto the ridge half way along, via one of Makalu's southern glaciers. Our plan was to climb all of the ridge from our Base Camp at 15,748 feet, which would give a very satisfying ridge climb. We left camp on the 14th October, during indifferent weather, hoping it represented the tail-end of the monsoon and that by the time we were crossing the summit there would be a lull in the wind systems. Our sacs averaged 27 kg.; they were carried for us up the initial grassy hillside to the ridge by Nima Tensing, Angsering and Angphurba. We shook hands and they scampered back down to Base, leaving us to plod on up into the mist and along the snowed-up ridge. We camped at 21,000 feet.

The sun came up over Kangchenjunga on 15th October, climbing on the snows of Lhotse and Everest. We crossed over peak 6260 and 6825 during the day and descended to the col at 22,300 feet (6800). There had been dense mist, high winds and during the night about three inches of snow fell. On 16th October we slowly climbed up to a flat boss of snow at about 24,250 feet (7400m). Harsh winds and heavy sacs slowed our pace and the wind blew in fierce gusts all night. The next day, after about 1500 feet of difficult mixed climbing, we reached a point below a huge black Gendarme. The wind here was particularly savage and we were unable to move along the crest of the ridge. We therefore dropped down the northern side and into Makalu's very isolated eastern cwm. We had great difficulty wading through thigh-deep snow and battling against fierce winds and snow blowing down the cwm. We set up camp below point 8010. On the 18th we continued up the cwm for about a mile and climbed directly up towards the summit slope. We pitched camp at 26,500 feet,

in very high winds which came through the col between Pt. 8010 and the Summit, accompanied by cracking sounds. We were pinned down in our Holubar 3-man tent for the whole of the 19th because of the turbulence and dense mist and snow reducing visibility to a maximum of twenty yards. By this time our food, mainly tsampa and Granola, was running dangerously low.

The 20th dawned no better. We were in Makalu's plume, with the winter winds now blowing from the west. There had been no respite as expected and we had no alternative but to retreat the way we had come. This was particularly unfortunate as it would have been less trouble for us to have gone up and over to the Makalu La from our high point than to spend, as we did, three days reversing our route to the Col at 6,800m and then to find our way down a steep unknown and heavily crevassed glacier. After a dreadful night on the 20th, at 25,500 feet, up all night digging massive drifts of snow off the tent and repairing several guy ropes, we arrived back at Base Camp on the afternoon of 22nd October to rest up and to savour those delicious few days of clear head and returning strength. For me it was the end of the expedition, with a 'plane to catch back to family responsibilities. I walked out to Tumlingtar in four days with half the gear, sending back porters for the rest which Georges, Roger and Ang Phurbàs staff brought down from the Second Base Camp.

Whilst awaiting the porters from the 26th to 31st October, Roger took advantage of bright, clear weather to attempt to climb Makalu on its West side. From the top Base Camp, where Georges and Ang Phurba waited in support, Roger hiked up to the moraine camp and the next day ascended a rib to bivouac at the foot of the prominent gully that bounds the left side of the West Face. On the 28th he climbed the gully at 50° and reached the North West Ridge some 500 feet above the Makalu La. Here the winds were met and the ridge was now wind-blown ice. He retreated back to Base the same evening, after a very bold solo bid up untrodden ground.

Doug Scott

British West Karakorum Expedition—1980

The British West Karakorum Expedition 1980, which left Britain towards the end of July, was planned as a lightweight venture with three members: Dave Wilkinson, Steve Venables and myself. Dave did the initial organisation and secured permission for our objective, Kunyang Chhish in northern Pakistan.

In the West Karakorum, Kunyang Chhish (25,780 feet) is surpassed in height only by Distaghil Sar, to which it is far superior as far as mountaineering interest is concerned. The north-west side of the mountain is particularly impressive. This was our objective.

The north-west face, falling directly from the summit for some 9,000 feet, looked attractive on photographs, but on close inspection proved to be less so, as there is no real line. The obvious route was the north ridge, reached by a subsidiary ridge which joined it at a height of about 22,500 feet. This proved to be technically easier than we had expected, though there was considerable avalanche risk. For these reasons it

seemed best to solo the route.

The climb was brought to a halt solely by bad weather—unusually bad by all accounts. The summit push from the foot of the final ridge was twice foiled by four to five day storms which put down some two to three of snow each time. Contrary to what we hoped, there was no improvement in the situation at the beginning of September, and we returned to England on the 14th.

Porter costs continue to be a major headache for expeditions to the Hispar Glacier area. The going rate is £5 per day and a day's march is 5 miles at the most. With Afghanistan now closed these are probably the highest rates anywhere but there seems no solution to it. The available labour is quite happy to do without the work rather than lower its price.

Phil Bartlett

Annapurna 11—1979

The aim of the expedition was to climb the mountain as a team of three climbers in 'Alpine Style' (that is without the additional aids of oxygen, high altitude porters or fixed rope). Previously this mountain had been climbed three times, but always by large teams of climbers using oxygen, high altitude porters and thousands of feet of fixed ropes—a method which tends to destroy the uncertainty and challenge which is always present in Alpine Style ascents.

We flew to Kathmandu, in Nepal, on the 29th August and spent the first week buying local food and organising the twenty-five porters who would help us carry our loads up to Base Camp. After a nine day walk-in beginning in the jungle at 2,000 feet we arrived at 11,500 feet where our Base Camp was set up. The porters were dismissed and from this point it was between the three of us and the mountain. The next three weeks were spent in the essential process of acclimatisation. We surveyed the North Face of the mountain looking for the possibility of a new, more direct route to the summit. This idea was crushed when one morning we witnessed the largest avalanche any of us had ever seen sweep the line of our proposed ascent. This avalanche destroyed our Camp 1 taking away a certain amount of our food and equipment—we were all at Advance Base Camp at the time.

We then changed our line of attack to the route by which the mountain was first climbed. On the 6th October we began our ascent. We carried with us fifteen days food and fuel and hoped that this length of time would allow us to reach the summit. After ten days of climbing, often harassed by high winds and new falls of snow, we reached a point on the final ridge at a height of over 21,000 feet.

Paul and Adrian were going strongly and hoped that with luck the summit could be reached in two to three more days. Alan who was troubled with a severe stomach and bowel infection was becoming weakened by the day and decided not to go any higher. On the 18th October Paul and Adrian left the camp at 5 a.m. on a bid for the summit. At 11 a.m. they were at 23,500 feet but had to turn back in the face of the terrible winds that threatened to sweep them off the ridge. The whole team began the descent, the same day realising that the presence of such high winds were the first signs of the

arriving Himalayan winter. On 20th October we began our journey back to Kathmandu.

Although we did not reach the summit of the mountain the expedition could not be classed as a complete failure. An objective of such magnitude attempted in such a lightweight style requires not only skill and endurance, but a certain amount of luck with the weather and conditions. When a team of friends pit themselves against heavy odds the measure of success is in the knowledge that all gave of their best and could have tried no harder. The summit was not reached but the peak of effort was.

Paul Moores

Nanga Parbat Expedition—1980

On the evening of 9th July, Adrian Burgess, Alan Burgess and Paul Moores settled into sleeping bags at 25,000 feet to get a few hours rest before the attempt on the summit 1,600 feet above. Reflecting on the progress of the expedition we were forced to accept its changed nature. At this time we were the only climbers still operating on the mountain with no-one between us at 25,000 feet and base-camp, 12,000 feet lower down.

On May 30th the expedition of six climbers, the Liaison Officer and cook arrived in the meadows of Tap Alpe and began to establish a comfortable base camp at an altitude of 11,700 feet. The other climbers were Graham Drinkwater, Jon Jones and Randy Morse. Our Liaison Officer was Major Sadje Hameed. The weather was good, and after making a reconnaissance an advanced base camp was established at 14,000 feet, at the foot of the S.S.W. glacier. The immediate difficulty of the ensuing ice-fall meant that local porters could not be used in the carrying of loads as first expected.

On June 5th Camp I was established at 15,500 feet. The first crisis struck on June 6th when it became apparent that Graham was suffering from High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema. Everyone descended to base camp and began his evacuation. Jon returned to Gilgit with him and put him on a flight back to Rawalpindi. On June 9th, Alan, Adrian, Randy and I moved up to Camp I.

The next section from 15,000 feet to 20,000 feet was the crux of the climb and involved climbing steep icy gullies and a final rock buttress. Rope was fixed on this section and Camp II was eventually reached on June 22nd by Alan and I. The following day Adrian and Jon arrived at Camp II with the news that Randy had dysentery and had left for Europe a few days earlier. With only four of us remaining, Adrian and Jon arrived at Camp II to stay on June 24th. The four of us were now in a position to consider a summit attempt. Unfortunately, a typical Nanga Parbat storm blew up and after two days of holding the tents down, we decided to descend to base camp and await better weather.

On June 29th we started to re-ascend, and reached Camp I. After a day of bad weather at this camp we climbed back up to 20,000 feet and dug Camp II out of the freshly fallen snow. The weather was still very unsettled with one day of good weather

followed by two or storms. This remained the pattern for the rest of the ascent.

On July 3rd, loads were carried to 22,000 feet and deposited on a wind-swept snow ridge. On July 4th the final disaster hit when Jon announced that he did not feel strong enough to continue and would return to base camp. The three of us remaining moved up to 22,000 feet. During the next few days a storm blew up and put the small tent in danger of being blown away, including its occupants.

July 7th saw us moving up a thousand feet despite strong winds and blowing snow. A small ice-cave was dug as a precaution, should the wind suddenly destroy the tent. The following day a steep snow slope was crossed and steepening rocky ground led to Camp IV at a little under 25,000 feet. From this point the summit could be seen along the ridge to the North East.

The intermediate ground looked quite straightforward and the summit seemed at last to be within reach. July 9th was used as a rest day and offered an opportunity to acclimatise. All three of us suffered from severe headaches as a result of the rapid ascent, but were very hopeful for the following day.

At first light on July 10th we left Camp IV taking with us the bare essentials for the ascent. A tent was carried as the weather still appeared stormy and unsettled. After descending a short rock wall a snow basin, some 400 yards across, was traversed to reach a slabby rock buttress descending from the ridge. The problem was to find a weakness in this buttress that would allow a traverse to the easier ground beyond. After attempting three different possibilities we came to the conclusion that the route must follow a higher traverse line just below the ridge. The sun had by then softened the snow and a decision was made to return to Camp IV and come back the next day.

Back in Camp IV a difficult decision had to be made. The three of us were more tired than we had first realised after our day's exertions, and we did not have enough food to wait around for another attempt, especially if the weather proved to be at all fickle. The only answer was to retreat, at least as far as Camp II and to reverse the final decision until that time. During the night the decision was made for us when the weather broke. The following morning the storm was raging and gradually increasing in intensity.

The retreat began. With no support between 25,000 feet and base camp the descent was a hazardous business, the slightest accident could have proved fatal. Back in base camp, heavy rain and strong winds indicated that the monsoon had arrived with a vengeance and prohibited any more attempts on the mountain. Base camp was left on July 14th and the expedition returned to Rawalpindi. The summit of Nanga Parbat was not reached but we did climb the 'Rupal Face' the largest rock and ice wall in the world and all expedition members returned safely.

Paul Moores

South American Notes

As a change of scene from Pembrokeshire Mike Harber joined the 1981 South Wales Andes Expedition and climbed the South-West Ridge of Huascaran (22,205 feet) with Tim Oliver. They believed the route to be new at the time, but subsequently learnt that the ridge had had an ascent in 1973 by some Austrian and American climbers who joined forces to make extensive use of fixed ropes, and who failed to

reach the main summit of the mountain albeit that they completed the ridge itself. Harber and Oliver climbed the route alpine-style in three days, taking a further two days to traverse the main summit and descend to Base Camp via the Garganta ice-fall. The pair had earlier climbed a new route on the West Face of Nevada Perlilla (18,437 feet) in a one day return from the Oopap Plateau.

M.H.

Pembroke Notes

Since publication of the C.C. guidebook at Easter there has been intense interest in rock-climbing in Pembrokeshire with as many as 100 climbers crowding into the Vicarage campsite at Bosherton at Bank Holiday weekends. Approximately 150 new routes have been recorded, virtually all of which are in the Castlemartin area, and many of the blank spaces shown on the photodiagrams published in the March issue of *Crags* have now had lines pencilled in. A list of new routes may be obtained from *Mountain* magazine on provision of a S.A.E. The wet autumnal weather may temporarily curtail development, but if the exploration rate seen this summer continues next year then an early production of a guidebook supplement will be essential to establish some order out of the chaos.

On a more ominous note, Pembrokeshire's previously unblemished accident record has been marred by two serious accidents, one of them fatal. These incidents will hopefully serve to remind visitors not to underestimate the seriousness of the sea cliffs, whether they are attempting new routes or not. An additional consideration is that the accidents provoked a hysterical anti-climber outburst from the local press, which is a disturbing sign in an area where access is still very much in the balance.

Mike Harber

Peak District Notes—1980

1980 has been 'the year of the gaps', and also 'the year of the side runner.' Both have been predominant in the new route crop of the first year of the decade, and the side runner style in particular poses yet another question of ethics which has caused much local comment. The use of side runners is an interesting technique, and has already developed its own ethical structure. Certain routes are traditionally led with side runners and attract no criticism, indeed *Withering Edge*, *Heartless Hare*, *Gypfast* and *Scarab* are well accepted. Others attract ridicule; *White Wand*, *Ulysses Bow* and *Downhill Racer* being examples. It is locally believed that side runners are here for the short term, at the technical and mental extremes of difficulty, but will soon be disappearing with as standards rise.

Hold chipping has not entirely disappeared, often not by the first ascensionist but by some other hopeful. It is said that *The Shape of Things to Come* isn't what it used to be. . .

Development at the new route end of the game has been split equally between gritstone and limestone; without exception the best additions have been in the higher E grade categories. The usual crew have been responsible for most of the action, comprising Phil Burke (phenomenal output), Ron Fawcett now resident in Derbyshire (singularly desperate and bold lines), Steve Bancroft (spasmodic appearances) and Gary Gibson (a number of future classics among a plethora of lines and non-lines). Also featured in the cast have been the evergreen Pete Livesey, Jim Moran, Messrs. Codling and Jones (keeping up the Staffordshire end) and local brilliant performances by Jonny Woodward, Tim Leach and Chris Hamper. The up and coming Loz Francomb has had a whole area to himself, as have Nick Colton and Con Carey, proving the point that development does not progress evenly throughout the Peak District; backwards experience occasional bursts before quietening down for another decade.

Hard climbing began very early in the year, after a pathetically mild and wet non-winter. Several thousand tonnes of low grade iron had been seen to rise and fall in gymnasiums around the Peak District, and the pay-off was seen in the climbing arena throughout the year.

Curbar was the first crag to be hit, and by the end of 1980 was seen to be staggering punch-drunkenly after an amazing bout of new routes. Ron Fawcett eventually went *One Step Beyond* (E5,6b) to the right of *Avalanche Wall*, and not to be outdone, his arch-rival Phil Burke pointed the way of *The Shape of Things to Come* (E5,6b). Shape's wall lies to the right of *Peapod*, and has been one of the most coveted walls on gritstone, inspected by everyone since Drummond's initial cleaning. With a rare strong tendency to self-preservation, Phil placed a very high runner in *Peapod* and caused a storm of protest. Ron similarly placed a side runner on *Avalanche Wall* to protect his ascent and although its function may have been only psychological, nevertheless attracted much criticism. It was quickly argued that side runner protection is not part of the game on gritstone (How many have climbed *Heartless Hare*. . .?) and that this rock has traditionally been the forcing ground for a high level of commitment; see such long established traditions as *Great Slab*, *Cave Wall*, *Brown's Eliminate*, *Hairless Heart* and *Linden*. The allegations made were that the first ascensionists were too greedy, and there may be some ethical truth in this.

Notwithstanding the criticism, Ron Fawcett quickly put things to rights by soloing *The Shape of Things to Come*. Touché.

Curbar continued to be assaulted. Ron turned his attention to the groove right of *Profit of Doom*—yes, there is one—and climbed *Rigid Digit* (E5,6b), not yet repeated. Up and coming Leeds wall trained rock athlete, Tim Leach, sieged the faint line left of *Maupassant*, taking several short falls and breaking two No. 1 stoppers in the process. *Moonshine* (E6,6c) is technically stiff.

Froggatt saw little new route action other than Phil Burke's *Brightside* (E1,5b), taking the painfully obvious wall right of *Swimmers Chimney*; another much fancied line. *Narcissus* saw a notable repeat by Nick Postlethwaite, who did NOT practice the moves on jumars before leading; a necky and remarkable achievement.

Stanage received a number of fill-in routes, and in particular *The Unnamed Route* by Martin Boysen and Phil Burke, taking the left arete of *Cave Eliminate*. There are now estimated to be well over 100 new routes on Stanage Edge not listed in the present guidebook, and plans for a revision in 1982 are well advanced. Jonny

Woodward brought his considerable technical talents to the Stanage area and succeeded in eliminating the bolt on *Plague* at Rivelin, at 6c. He then climbed the right arete of Higgar Tor as *Pulsar* (E5,6c) which effectively completes the new route potential on this overhangin... block.

Up in the wilds of the Chew Valley area Laurence Francomb and Paul Cropper continue to churn out new lines, although as yet no-one seems to be taking the trouble to repeat them. At Shining Clough, *Saucius Digitalis* (XS,6a) and Tintwistle's *Non Carborundum Illigitimum* (XS,5c) are the best offerings. Also at Tintwistle, Steve Bancroft freed *Banshee*. Both crags are excellent but are separated from main-stream Peak District climbers by a thirty minute walk. Similarly on Kinder, where Nick Colton and Con Carey have had the new route development to themselves and have climbed numerous lines from HVS onwards.

Down in the deep south, southern gritstone has continued its last minute development by guide fieldworkers. Jonny Woodward freed *Fun Traverse* (E3,6b) and added the problematical *Pseudonym* (E4,6a) at Black Rocks, whilst across at the Roaches, John Codling, Dave Jones and Nick Longland have continued to fill the gaps. As has Gary Gibson. Of his many routes, some have already achieved classic status, especially *Licence to Run* (E3,5c) and *Carrion* (E2,5c). Others will undoubtedly be forgotten.

Phil Burke claimed two major overhangs on the Roaches Upper Tier; *Gilted* E3,5c left of *Sloth*, left everybody gasping, and the frighteningly loose *Simpkins Overhang* (E4,5c) now sporting slightly more stable and improved holds which were apparently prepared by persons unknown. On the Lower Tier he climbed *Sidewinder* (E4,6a), up the left side of the Valkyrie Buttress.

Moving onto Limestone, an equally impressive tally of routes has been produced, and surprisingly, not by Tom Proctor who went underground—literally—higher up the Dale. His major breakthroughs in local caving will be reported elsewhere.

Appropriately, with Tom out of sight, attention at Stoney Middleton was turned to his latest crop of desperates, and to see if he'd missed anything. The protective aura was eventually broken by Chris Hamper, who cleaned the peg move from the top pitch of *Menopause* at 6b and then proceeded to make the second ascent of *Circe*. This turned out to be long overdue, and once the mystery and legend were laid bare, *Circe* received a whole series of ascents in a matter of weeks. *Four Minute Tiler* was destined to be the next decade's test piece, and Ron Fawcett tested it, pronouncing it mean. What more could be said?

In Stoney Quarry, Steve Bancroft climbed the line that Tom left, *Emotional Rescue* (E4,5c), up the horrendous wall right of *Damocles*. It would be fair to say that no-one was expecting an ascent of this bit of rock. Nearby *Oliver* saw a number of surprised failures, the crux hold having been shed and now substantially harder at 6b.

The scoop of the year took place on Chee Tor. Several strong teams had inspected the line left of *Apocalypse*, but it required Pete Livesey to stick his neck out on *Golden Mile* (E5,6a), having assured his rival Fawcett that he was going to Blackpool. *Apocalypse* itself was singularly avoided until Pete O'Donovan's ascent early in the year. Pete spent a considerable time at the top of the flake fitting a poor

stopper, and consequently became quite tired. His subsequent fall locked the stopper securely in situ for posterity, and the news spread rapidly. Within three months, *Apocalypse* had dozens of ascents, the sting having been removed and the E6 label being especially attractive. It was quickly regraded at E4, the first pitch as 6a being found to be considerably harder than the 5c top pitch. Nearby, John Fleming forced a particularly fine route between *Hergiani* and *Sergeyenna*; *Heart of Darkness* (E3,5c) and left again Livesey climbed *Blind Alleys* (E2,5c). Up the dale on Two Tier Butress, Fawcett climbed *Spizz Energy* at E5,6b, left of *Mad Dogs*.

Another notable Proctor legend was laid to rest in Water cum Jolly. *Behemoth* was repeated by Tim Leach and quickly received further ascents. Jim Moran continued his dominance of Central Butress first freeing *Behemoth Direct Start* (E2,5c) before climbing a free version of *Basilisk* to give *Yankee Dollar* (E5,6a). He also freed *Midnight Cracks* to give *Timewarp* (E3,6b). Of his existing routes, *War* has been avoided, whilst *The Alien* repelled repeats having lost a crucial hold and is now closer to E5,6b.

An enormous amount of bullshit has been written about the existence or non-existence of a free climb called *Cream Team Special* on Raven Tor. Attempts in 1980 include one by the Livesey/Gomersall team which involved a belay on the crux and a certain amount of controlled falling to a lower line of holds. A pure ascent has yet to be achieved.

At High Tor repeats of existing hard routes were the news of the year. *Tales of Yankee Power* was oft-frequented and the gear tested by John Codling who took a thirty footer nose dive from the crux. *Supersonic* saw repeats, as did *A6* and *Castellan* several times. New routes include one absolutely tremendous line by Ed Cleasby, *Tumbril*, mercilessly labelled E4,6a but probably E5,6b, up the approximate line of *The Happy Hooker*, right of *Bastille*. Arnis Strapcans personal memorial, appropriately on the same crag as *Robert Brown*, was a superb new diagonal, *Decadence* (E4,6a,5c), which sweeps across *Bastille* and *Tales of Yankee Power* as a rising traverse.

Pete Livesey, determined to add his initials to this impressive wall, contrived a technical series to eliminate connections between existing routes. *Musical Women* (E5,6b), takes in sections of *Tumbril*, *Decadence*, *Flaky Wall* and *Tales* just for completeness, and to do this involves a bit of downhill climbing!

At Wildcat, Gary Gibson has had the place to himself, and claims dozens of new climbs, some of which must be worthwhile.

Finally down in Staffordshire, notable additions have been made by John Codling with *Temptress* (E4,6a) on Raven Tor, and *Budgie* (E4,6a) on Beeston Tor. Phil Burke and Rab Carrington climbed the aided section of *Black Alice* and the impressive top overhang of *Beeston Eliminate* to produce *Double Top* (E4,6a,5c).

Peculiarly, situ protection on hard routes has attracted a personal vendetta by Pete Livesey, who has taken on a single handed battle against fixed gear. Several years ago he caused a storm of protest by flattening the crucial protection peg on the crux of *Flaky Wall*, and argued afterwards that it hadn't been there for his ascent and therefore no-one else should have the psychological benefit. In 1980 he removed it, at about the same time as his ascent of *Musical Women*. The mystery thickens. Similarly, on Chee Tor at the same time as his ascent of *Golden Mile*, Pete Livesey removed Pete O'Donovan's stuck stopper, and at a stroke stopped ascents of *Apocalypse* dead.

On the good news front, perhaps the best information for climbers was at the Roaches, where the new landowners, the Peak District National Park, allowed free access to the Lower Tier. The occupant of Rockhall Cottage has remained quiet during the past year, and this peaceful relationship has been assisted by some conservation work to minimise erosion adjacent to his property.

Generally, 1980 was a poor year weatherwise, and climbing activity was curtailed by continuously wet weather throughout the summer. This kept many Peak District climbers active locally, but cut down trips farther afield. And as always the mid-summer period was especially quiet, the scene having shifted internationally from Stoney Cafe to Camp 4, Yosemite Valley.

Mike Browell

North Wales Notes

Climbing and cricket are about equally subservient to the weather. 1981 was a very good cricket season, despite early rain and a dearth of Boycott centuries: it was a very bad climbing season. Perhaps climbers are easily dispirited. Certainly, when the rains came in May 1980, they stopped play in any but the most sporadic sense until late into the summer of 1981. By then nobody seemed terribly bothered. In a war of attrition, the rain had won.

A glut of new routes at Anglesey or Tremadog might have been expected. It didn't happen, though there were the inevitable few. Perhaps Gary Gibson had lost his binoculars. It is always interesting to know where the new lines lie. On Anglesey, Red Wall yielded up a couple of lines. *Blue Remembered Hills* (E3, 5b) went to Gordon Tinnings and Paul Trower, whilst the Wintringhams climbed a route to the left of *Television Route* which they evidently wish to forget about. I would happily acquiesce in forgetting about anything to do with Red Wall. Elsewhere on South Stack, John Redhead repeated *Ludwig* with a point of aid, finding it desperate, E5, and Leigh McGinleigh later free climbed past the aid point only to take flight higher up. Stevie Haston, at last coming to the fore after winning the uncoveted Mountain W. lers Promising Young Performer of the Year Award for the past seventeen years running, free climbed *Obelisk* at a very high standard which he is not prepared to categorize until someone else comes along and agrees with him. His other achievements of the year have been a "cruised" ascent of Redhead's *Cock Block* (E5, 6b), the right arete of *Brant Direct*, a sort of direct start to *Hardd* on Carreg Hyll Drem at 6a, and a free ascent of the old aid route of *Grinder* on Dinas Mot, with Leigh McGinleigh, at E5 6b, which adds a very hard and completely new top pitch. Rumour had it that this was to have been named *Desecration Crack*, but it turns out to be called *Red Ring*. All very anagrammatic.

At Tremadog, Redhead led an enormous team of geriatrics and general incompetents up *Hitler's Buttock* (E5,6c) (Even incompetents are seconding 6c these days,) but was then beaten to Tremadog's last, I cant' bring myself to use the word, problem, by the latest boy wonder, Leicester's Jerry Moffat. Moffat further immersed himself in the mire of fame by claiming the second ascent of the as yet non-existent route between *Bananas* and *Cream* on the Vector headwall. Redhead has made the most persuasive attempt on this to date, failing in an ethical manner

just short of the top. For this, and other supposed misdemeanours, he has been mocked and castigated in an extraordinary series of ill-intentioned asides in the most ill-informed of our mountaineering magazines. No wonder that under the weight of such blackballing Redhead has flagged somewhat this year, and his latest attempts on the right hand route on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu's Great Wall have failed to reach his previous high point. His best effort of the year has probably been the repeat ascent, with a new direct start, of Fawcett's *Precious*, which he considered at least a grade harder than the nearby *Lord of the Flies* (E6,6b). In Ogwen, he seconded Chris Shorter-Herbert on the first ascent of *Cobalt Dream* (E5,6b), the old aid route across the huge roof of Drws Nodded in Cwm Tryfan.

Two very localized campaigns deserve mention. Firstly, that of the seventeen year old Andy Pollitt, from Dyserth, who has churned out an enormous number of high standard routes on North Wales limestone over the last year, as well as repeating certain of another party's routes from several years ago which, behind their virgin aura, concealed difficulties seriously at odds with the given grades for the routes. Lastly, 'Moelwynion' Mel Griffiths has climbed scores of high quality lines on the cliffs around Blaenau Ffestiniog, many of which seem destined to become future classics of the area. His contagious enthusiasm has ensured repeat ascents already. It is rumoured that Griffiths makes up for his lack of height by a very advanced jumping technique. Certainly, he seems to be the only climber around at present who can do a double back somersault from standing, or a reverse crucifix on the rings. But then, what else is there to do on rainy days in Wales? (Answers to the editor, please).

Jim Perrin

South-West Notes

Not so many cliffs fell down this year, so devotees had to be content with established cliffs. Nobody found, or at least has let on about, any major new cliffs.

To start the ball rolling let's look at Avon where the city council has finished the tunnel and has decided to leave the cliffs alone for the time being. The hottest new line was *Pinkginsane* which takes the wall to the left of *Think Pink*. Having been featured on the front cover of 'Craggs' it was only natural to expect something of an onslaught. Nipper Harrison took the initial honours, grading the climb E4, 6b. Kim Carrigan subsequently led the route on sight without putting runners in *Think Pink* and has claimed the first free ascent. There are no doubt a number of conflicting opinions about this which should keep the Bristol climbers at each others throats for some time. Nipper also free-climbed the high girdle of the Unknown Wall called *The Trip* at E3, 5c. Steve Ball added *Kilb*, E3, 6a on the wall between *Desecrator* and *Bilk*.

Dick Broomhead has been the most active ivy-stripper seen at Cheddar for some time. Using Victorian photographs of the cliffs without their recent coating of ivy he has been able to pinpoint lines of weakness in a short space of time. These photos are probably kept in a safe-deposit box in Bristol. Most of these routes are located at the top of the Gorge in the Reservoir area. Nipper Harrison free-climbed *Satori* to give an extending route at E4, 6b; he also free-climbed the old aid pitch of *Warlord*

at 5c. Undoubtedly his major achievement was to climb the wall left of *Crow* to give *Stone the Crows*, E5. This route has four 5c pitches and a final 6a pitch. This had been a long-standing problem.

Going South to Swanage we find that the small team of local enthusiasts has produced a number of hard lines. On Boulder Ruckle the team of Nick Buckley, Kevin Turner and Steve Bartlett has been responsible for the free-climbing of *Barracuda*, E3, 5c and *Dog Watch*, 6a. These had attracted the attention of a number of teams in the last few years. At Fisherman's Ledge they added *Crackers*, E2, 5b up a groove and roof right of *Squid*. Also here Gordon Jenkin added *Limited Edition*, E3, 5c in the Scorpion area. At Guillemot Ledges John Godding removed the aid from *Electric Sheep* at 5c/6a.

Devon has had a relatively quiet year compared to the last two. At Torbay's Berry Head Mick Fowler continued to explore the area above the Great Cove with *Lip Trip*, X.S., starting as for *Depth Charge* and crossing the lip of the cave to join *Dreadnought*. Further left Pete O'Sullivan and Dick Swinden added the rising traverse of *The Long Goodbye*, E1, which starts as for *Moving Target*. Fowler climbed the white wall above the grotto at the end of *Magical Mystery Tour* to give *Bismark*, E1. Elsewhere in Torbay, on a blank slab called Saddle Rock Paul Dunwell added *Mass Murderer*, E2, 6b, which has 3 bolt runners in 50 feet! Perhaps this can be rationalised in the near future.

The only other development in the county has been on the North Coast. At Exmansworthy Martin Corbett added *Decadent Days*, E1, 5b, to the wall to the right of *Cat Burglar*. He returned later to add another route at E2, 5c between the two. Pete O'Sullivan girdled the seaward slab to give *Rasta Collie*, a line at one-third height at E3, 5c. O'Sullivan also climbed the think crack below the second pitch of *Dresden* to give a 5b direct start which much improves that route. At Smoothlands near Hartland Point Roger 'Strappo' Hughes added *Flight Path*, E2, 5a up the centre of the cliff, a line that the local lads had tried some years ago. Pat Littlejohn made a rare appearance on the Culm Coast to climb the arete of the great slab at Dyers Lookout at E4, 6a. It should be remembered that Pat's previous route here, *Earth Rim Roamer*, fell down after two ascents.

Further west Mick Fowler and Mike Morrison added another route to the tottering mass of Bukator. The line takes the centre of the wall right of *Private Worlds* and Mick only grades it X.S. so there is a remote chance that someone might repeat it. Other activity in Cornwall has been centred on the granite of West Penwith. A visit to Bosigran by Kim Carrigan resulted in the free ascent of *Vulcan* which weighed in at E5, 6b—something of an undertaking. Kim came close to doom on his first attempt when after getting established on the wall he flicked his ropes and the eyes of all the pegs he had clipped into snapped off and left him facing a horrific fall. Luckily he managed to escape and make the ascent the next day. Rowland and Mark Edwards continue to add good climbs on the South Coast. At Pordenack Point they added *The Immaculate Crack*, E3, 6a which is up the wall to the left of *Nothing Much*. With Mark leading they produced *Great Gig in the Sky*, E2, 5c which is up the ridge on the east side of the descent gully finishing over a six-foot roof. At Chair Ladder they added *West Face Direct*, E1, 5c which takes a direct line up Bulging Wall. Obviously the pickings are still good in this part of Penwith for anyone with an eye for a line and a little initiative.

I was about to finish here but I have just remembered Lundy and though it is

placed out of sequence here at the end it makes a fitting conclusion to the area sitting as it does in isolation yielding brilliant lines. Gary Gibson has produced some fine routes including *Controlled Burning*, E3, 5c which takes a crack in the wall left of *Stringray*. On the diamond-shaped slab in Squirés View Zawn he has added *A Widespread Ocean of Fear* at E4, 6a and *Smear or Disappear*, E3, 5c. Steve Keeling added *Venus Flytrap*, E1, 5a to the wall right of *Wolfman Jack*, which could become a classic owing to its grade. Gibson forced a line between the two previous routes to give *Silent Storm*, E4,6a. These additions mean that this wall is reaching maturity and this is borne out by the fact that Gibson has girdled the wall.

No doubt next year's Journal will include a large number of fine routes. I've got a few ideas which should keep me gripped for some time.

Pete O'Sullivan

(Velly old Chinese climber with binocular vision (named Isee Ahline) once sayeth, "Better one true route than a paddy field full of bogus routes. But even the stunted seedling may one day grow strong and produce fine fruit." See Jim Perrin's article 'Fictions'. Ed.)

NEW CLIMBS

NORTH WALES

I CARNEDDAU AREA

CRAIG YR YSFA

Amadeus E4

A superb and unrelenting pitch with surprisingly technical jamming.

1. 50 feet. 4c. As for Agrippa to a ledge with two pegs.
2. 6a. From the left end of the ledge climb the thin crack for a few feet then gain a reasonable ledge on the left below an obvious roof. Make some hard strenuous moves left to an obvious crack and climb it to a constricted ledge in a V-chimney. Bridge up out of the chimney and gain a spike. Ascend direct to the perch stance of Mur y Niwl.

First ascent: August 25, 1980. G. Gibson, P. Gibson.

Gettysburg now FREE at HVS, 5a.

Almost certain to have been freed before this.

First Free Ascent? August 1980. P. Gibson, G. Gibson.

Turn the Centuries Turn 150 feet E3

A superb route up the corner and wall left of Aura. Start 20 feet right of Plumbagin just as the gully takes a steep drop. This start is directly below the upper pitch of Plumbagin.

1. 150 feet. 6a. Move out right to a jammed wire then pull up and leftwards to a good ledge at the base of a groove, peg. Move up the groove to a thin horizontal break. Finger traverse right to a thin crack. Climb this to the girdle and a jammed wire. Climb the wall directly above and left of Aura to a diagonal jamming crack which leads to Aura's belay. Scramble off.

First ascent: April 16, 1981. G. Gibson, D. Beetlestone.

BRAICH TY DU

Georgie Boy the Bricklayer Extremely Severe

- 5c. Climb the overhanging flared chimney on the front face of the buttress just right of Widdershins.

First ascent: 1981. P. Thomas, N. Shepherd.

2 OGWEN

IDWAL SLABS

Tapestry Very Severe

Start up the Slab Eliminate pitch of Hope, then go up the corner above, moving left over the overhang at the top. The last pitch traverses left to the arete then goes up to the ledge below Holly Tree Wall.

First ascent: 1981. R. Whitaker, L. Hardman.

BOCHLWYD BUTTRESS

Waltz in Black 130 feet E1

An immaculate little climb. Start just right of Bochlwyd Eliminate.

1. 130 feet. 5a. Climb the slabs to the traverse of Wall Climb. Go up a shallow groove to join the Eliminate. Climb the wall on the left trending slightly left to a small overlap. Step left then go straight up the wall to the top.

First ascent: April 16, 1981. Claimed the same day as Turn the Centuries Turn on Craig yr Ysfa(!). G. Gibson, D. Beetlestone.

GLYDER FACH—MAIN CLIFF

Gryngolet 240 feet Hard Very Severe

A good route taking the full length of the buttress to the right of Oblique Buttress (onto which Errant Route briefly errs). Start by scrambling up to a grassy ledge in the right hand branch of Oblique Gully and below a short crack left of the toe of the buttress.

1. 60 feet. 5a. Climb the crack for a few feet then move up right and go up the rib to the right-hand end of the next grassy ledge. Continue up a groove on the rib until a foot traverse leads across right to the grassy ledge below the twin cracks of Errant Route.

2. 50 feet. 4a. Climb the cracks to a grassy bay.

3. 80 feet. 4c. Move up into the corner on the right and climb it until it steepens, when a diagonal traverse leads up left to a crack in the centre of the face. Follow this to a large ledge.

4. 50 feet. Finish easily.

First ascent: August 24, 1980. H. Banner, J. Yates, M. Yates

DRWS NODDED

Cobalt Dream 100 feet E5

1. 100 feet. 6b. This vicious line is a completely free version of the old aid route Hanging Down, Swinging Free.

First ascent: 1981. C. Shorter, J. Redhead.

Opp: Rowland Edwards attempting the main roof crack of what was to become Gig in the Sky.

Photo: R. Edwards collection.

Centre Left: Tony Carver leading American Dream, E1/2,5b, Zawn Kelly. The Screw takes the pillar to the right.

Photo: R. Edwards collection.









3 LLANBERIS PASS

CLOGWYN Y GROCHAN

Walk On By E2

5c. Climb the thin crack and groove between Slape Direct and Brant sentry box.

First ascent: 1981. T. Mitchell, M. Dennis.

DINAS CROMLECH

Tess of the D'Urbervilles 150 feet E5

Fills in the gap between Memory Lane and Left Wall.

1. 150 feet. 6a. Ascend between Memory Lane and Left Wall until where Memory Lane goes left. Instead move right and go up diagonally to join Left Wall. Go up diagonally left to join Epitaph then after a few feet go up diagonally right to finish as for the direct finish to Left Wall.

First ascent: August 1981. D. Jones, G. McLelland.

Note: the locals claim that this is not the beautiful, sustained route worth three stars which the first ascensionists believe. Instead it is said to be very contrived.

VIVIAN QUARRY

Comes the Dervish 120 feet E4

6a. Climb the obvious slab on the second tier with an overlap at two-thirds height, and follow the obvious thin crack.

First ascent: 1981. S. Haston and partner.

Four Wheel Drift 60 feet E3

5c. Climb the crack in the block which sticks out into the lake.

First ascent: 1981. S. Haston and partner.

Wendy Doll 280 feet E2

5b. Take a line up the back wall of the quarry.

First ascent: 1981. S. Haston and partner.

DINAS MOT

The New Girdle 205 feet E2

Start on some ledges on the left side of the Nose, level with the undercut traverse on The Cracks.

1. 30 feet. Step across the gap and traverse round and down to the stance on The Cracks.

2. 85 feet. 5b. Move down and traverse easily right to a rib. Move onto this and go up

Centre Right: West Face Direct with Mark Edwards seconding pitch 3 on the 1st ascent.

Photo: R. Edwards collection.

Opp: C. Bryan on Astral Stroll, Carn Gloose.

Photo: R. Edwards collection.

to a flake. Move down across the Direct to some spikes on the arete. Reverse Crosstie to Zeta and follow Zeta to the Diagonal stance.

3. 50 feet. 5a. As for Diagonal pitch 3 to a stance on the break.

4. 50 feet. 4c. Traverse right along the obvious line to West Rib.

Move round to a pocket and go up the wall rightwards to a large ledge overlooking Western Gully. Either finish up Western Slabs or escape into the gully.

First ascent: June 1978. P. Burke, I. Caton(AL), W. Parker, D. Hilling.

CRAIG Y RHAEADR

Sphagnum 370 feet E2

A line between The Mushroom and Botany Climb. Start midway between the starts of the above two climbs.

1. 40 feet. 4c. Pull over a slight bulge onto the steep wall. Climb this to a large ledge. Belay on the left.

2. 130 feet. 5c. In the middle of the wall above the ledge are some undercuts (fairly obvious). Climb up to these, then make some hard moves to reach a block where the angle eases. Continue up slabs keeping left of a shallow groove to reach the left end of a large grassy ledge. Climb some short cracks above to a small stance and high spike belay near the foot of the groove on Botany Climb.

3. 140 feet. 4b. Climb the right edge above to a runner. Move out left onto the slabs and continue to a spike belay some 60 feet below the top. Or:

3a 40 feet. 5b. Above and left of the belay is an undercut flake. Reach this and go diagonally left to easier ground. Continue up the slab to join the original pitch. A better alternative.

4. 60 feet. Go easily to the top.

First ascent: June 1, 1981. C. Jones, W. Parker.

CLOGWYN Y DDYSGL

Simulid 140 feet Hard Very Severe

A short but interesting and varied route up the wall to the left of Fallen Block Crack. Start just left of Fallen Block Crack.

1. 140 feet. 5b. Climb the obvious series of flakes to reach the top of a detached pillar. Follow the obvious traverse right to reach the foot of a steep groove. Climb this past a ledge, moving out right just below the top. Step back across the top of the groove to belay.

First ascent: June 27, 1981. W. Parker, N. Raeside.

4. CLOGGY

Death and the Maiden 180 feet E2

5c,5b. Start up Shrike then follow the left hand arete of the main Shrike wall.

First ascent: Easter 1981. C. Shorter, J. Shorter.

6. TREMADOG and the MOELWYNS AREA

CRAIG Y GESAIL

The Little Burper 130 feet Hard Very Severe

5a, 5a. A line to the right of Astonall.

First ascent: 1981. S. Martin, C. Jones.

Apples and Pears 110 feet Hard Very Severe

5a. A line up the tower to the right of the top pitch of Javelin.

First ascent: 1981. C. Jones (unseconded).

CRAIG Y CASTELL

Cheap Trick 130 feet E1

A good climb on clean rock.

5b, 5a. Climb the smooth looking buttress 150 yards left of the main crag.

First ascent: 1981. K. Telfer, P. Dickens (or N. Gough 1968).

Lonely Edge 100 feet E2

Claimed as a good route which is hard to find.

1. 100 feet. 5c. Climb the lonely arete 20 yards right of Cheap Trick.

First ascent: 1981. G. Gibson, D. Beetlestone.

Bigger Bug 200 feet E4

This 5a, 6a invention (July C. & R.) by Gary Gibson is the thin crack in the slab between Wasp and Pellagra.

Note: Bearing in mind that the original 'dubious' Big Bug which Fawcett and Redhead found hard to believe (and was renamed Penicillin as it kills big bugs) is still being debated, one must also take this route with a pinch of salt until the facts are known.

Jackdaw On The Edge Of Time E3

5c, 4c. Start as for Salix then climb the overhang direct where Salix goes left.

First ascent: M. Crook, D. Farrant.

CRAIG PANT IFAN

Wringwraith 140 feet E2

5b, 5b. A line between Helsinki Wall and Olympic Slab.

First ascent: 1981. M. Griffiths, M. Crook.

Creature Variation 170 feet E1

5b. The thin crackline left of Stromboli to finish through an overhanging V-groove.

First ascent: 1981. M. Griffiths, M. Crook.

Hitler's Buttock 75 feet E4

1. 75 feet. 6b/c. A short and intimidating pitch between Sexual Salami and Stromboli.

First ascent: 1981. J. Redhead, J. Perrin, J. de Montjoye, P. Williams.

Cardiac Arete 80 feet E4

1. 80 feet. 6b. The arete right of Sexual Salami finishing direct.

First ascent: 1981. J. de Montjoye, V. Thomas.

Pengo's Eliminate 120 feet E3

5c. The wall and obvious groove right of Curved Air.

First ascent: 1981. S. Haston, M. Griffiths.

Dune Child 140 feet E4

6b, 5c. The roofs and the side wall to the right of The Toit.

First ascent: J. Moffatt, M. Griffiths.

Life in a Day 90 feet E2

1. 90 feet. 5c. The wall to the left of Vulcan. Not THE line.

First ascent: 1981. G. Gibson, D. Beetlestone.

Psyche and Burn 90 feet E5

6c. The line up the impressive wall to the left of Vulcan.

First ascent: 1981. J. Moffatt.

CRAIG BWLCH Y MOCH

Poison Dwarf 50 feet E2

1. 50 feet. 5c. Climb the overhang and shallow corner to the left of Venom's final pitch.

First ascent: K. Telfer, P. Dickens.

Gwaed 170 feet Hard Very Severe

5a, 4c. Climb the corner roof and slab 20 feet left of Chwys.

First ascent: M. Roberts. Mr. Jones.

Endgame 50 feet E2

1. 50 feet. 5c. Start from the oak tree at the top of pitch 2 of The Brothers and climb the overhang and shallow corner above.

First ascent: 1981. K. Telfer, P. Dickens.

CARREG HYLL DREM

Hardd—Direct Start E3

6a. The obvious but difficult line.

First ascent: S. Haston, G. Tinnings.

The Weir Pig

A direct line up the bouldering wall.

First ascent: 1981. S. Haston.

CRAIG Y LLYN

Marshall Hearts 145 feet E3

5b/c, 5b. Climb the wall right of The Moon, starting from the foot of the groove of Terra Nova. Finish up a groove left of Wailing Wall.

First ascent: 1981. S. Cathcart, M. Cameron (AL).

Danger Days 120 feet E3/4

1. 120 feet. 5c. Start as for Marshall Hearts but climb the wall further right to join Wailing Wall. Then climb a steep slab to cross Marshall Hearts and finish up a groove to its left.

First ascent: 1981. S. Cathcart. P. Stott.

CRAIG Y CLIPAU

Return of the Horseman E4

6a. A left to right girdle of Crimson Cruiser wall.

First ascent: 1981. M. Griffiths, M. Crook.

CRAIG RHIW GOCH

Big River 120 feet Hard Very Severe

1. 120 feet. Climb the rib to the right of the pinnacle from which Mur Dena starts. Finish up Congl.

First ascent: 1981. D. Cook, C. Hoyland.

7. GOGARTH AREA

Seeyerlater 250 feet Hard Severe

Start 20 feet right of Initiator at the short corner.

1. 30 feet. Climb the corner to a large ledge. Belay on the right at the foot of a crack in the wall.

2. 50 feet. Climb the crack to a bulge and mantleshelf directly over this (crux) to the stance of Initiator.

3. 70 feet. Climb straight up above the stance onto a slab and then go slightly right, following a gap in the bulge above, onto slabs. Climb slightly leftward up these to a bay. Climb its left wall to a flake belay.

4. 100 feet. Scramble up grass to a flake at the foot of Sulcus.

First ascent: July 26, 1981. S. Reid, W. Parker.

Mr Seal 100 feet Very Severe

Start between Miura and Mustang at the obvious ramp/groove.

1. 100 feet. 4c. Climb the groove on the ramp, on excellent holds at first until a few awkward moves bring one to a ledge. The small wall on the right is crossed to go up onto a triangular slab. The groove at the back provides a finish. Poor protection.

First ascent: August 25, 1981. A. Newton, A. Howells, C. Parry.

Toiler on the Sea 200 feet E2

A superb line giving fine climbing on magnificent steep rock. Start as for Britomartis.

1. 120 feet. 5b. Tiptoe out left just above the barnacle line to the arete. Climb this slightly leftwards to a junction with Spider Wall below a tremendous straight crack. Climb this direct to the Britomartis stance.

2. 80 feet. 5b. Climb the thin crack directly behind the belay to a ring peg. Move up left then back rightwards, crux, across the cleaned upper slab to easy ground and the top.

First ascent: April 3, 1980. G. Gibson, D. Beetlestone (AL).

Pitch 1 had almost certainly been done before by other parties.

Vendt 180 feet E2

Steep, sustained and strenuous but with huge holds. Start as for Gobbler's Arete.

1. 120 feet. 5b. From Gobbler's Arete swing left onto the wall right of Britomartis above a small overhang. Make a bold move to gain huge holds at the base of the line of 'craters' going up leftwards. Climb this line up left to the base of two cracks 15 feet right of Britomartis. Climb these to the left end of a large sloping ledge.

2. 60 feet. Move right and climb a steep finishing crack.

First ascent: April 4, 1980. G. Gibson (unseconded).

Peasant in the Big City 200 feet Hard Very Severe

A filling-in route taking an obvious space with the odd good move.

1. ? feet. 4c. Start to the left of Blanco and climb out of a niche. Continue direct to a shallow groove. Climb it to the top.

2. ? feet. 5a. Move up and slightly left to gain a sharp V-groove. Climb it to be a belay on the arete.

3. ? feet. 5a. Step right and follow a thin crack to the top.

First ascent: May 27, 1979. G. Gibson, J. Walker (AL).

8. CWM SILYN and QUELLYN**LLECHOG—EASTERN CLIFF**

On May 4, 1980 Hugh Banner and Mike Yates made what was probably the second ascent of the hardest route in Wales—in September 1911! The original description was completely overlooked by subsequent guidebook writers: handwritten notes by the authors of the 1950 'Quellyn Area' guide indicated the route to be on the Western Cliff near Black Rib. In fact, a careful examination of the original list of route-descriptions reveals it to lie on the Eastern Cliff up to the right from Central Rib, i.e. between that route and the Central Couloir.

The Mallory—Porter Groove 280 feet Very Severe

A very natural line obvious from the top of Snowdon or Cloggy: 'A narrow gully—very notable with one very good pitch. The most interesting route on the Llechog. (Easy to discover if it be remembered that slabs come down steeply to the easier ground for some distance east of it and that these are conspicuously marked with black.)' The slabs mentioned are those of Central Rib. 160 feet.* Typical gully climbing for 160 feet until the bed steepens and becomes a groove curving up to the left. Possible belay. The groove gives sustained bridging increasing in difficulty to grassy ledges at 120 feet. Scramble to belay. (4b/c). 120 feet of typical Llechog slabs and grass climbing remain.

First ascent: September 1911: G.H. Mallory, H.E.L. Porter.

*C.C. Bulletin, Old Series, Volume 1, page 40.

Slopey 100 feet E2/3

A very sustained pitch, precarious and poorly protected. It is the obvious break slanting leftwards up Trinity Buttress C. Start at the top of pitch 1 of Slab and Groove on the narrow ledge below the main sweep of the buttress.

1. 100 feet. 5c. Climb the left hand of the twin central cracks for about 40 feet to a horizontal crack where it terminates, then step up right to gain the continuing right-hand twin crack. Follow this then go up and slightly right to the horizontal crack near the top. Step back left and go up a short groove to finish on the terrace.

Either descend one of the slanting gullies or follow one of the other buttress routes to the top.

First ascent: August 2, 1981. H.I. Banner, C.E.M. Yates.

LLECHOG—WESTERN CLIFF**Blood on the Tracks** 440 feet Hard Very Severe

A natural line up the left side of Trinity Buttress B. Start at the foot of the obvious rib at the lowest point of the buttress.

1. 110 feet. 5b. Go straight up the rib by shallow grooves and enter the single groove which breaks through the smoothest and steepest section (crux) to ledges on the left. Continue up the final groove landing suddenly in the large grassy haven on the right.

2. 50 feet. 5a. Follow the central groove through the bulge above then swing left and up the rib to more ledges. Easy ground for another 100 feet leads to the final wall.

3. 80 feet. 5a. Gain the ochre-coloured scoop slightly left of centre then follow it with one delicate move to easy ground.

First ascent: May 29, 1978. M. Yates, H. Banner (AL).

NORTH WALES LIMESTONE

A new guidebook to Forwyn and the Ormes is being prepared by Andy Pollitt (Published by Dark Peak) and as this is now due out the new routes to this section of North Wales are not included here.

PEMBROKE

Since the production of the C.C. Pembroke guidebook at Easter 1981 routes have continued to appear regularly. As over 100 have now been done since the guide it would be a major task to collect and publish them all. It is most likely that the club will produce a Pembroke Supplement in 1982.

THE PEOPLE'S CLIFF AREA**Rave from the Grave** 165 feet Very Severe

A varied route taking the easiest line up the parallel-sided bastion just north of The People's Cliff. Amenable climbing, large stances, a south-west-facing aspect and a grandstand view of the established routes hereabouts add to its attractions. A 160-foot abseil from an iron stake at the top of the cliff just reaches a non-tidal ledge at the base of the route. Alternatively the People's Cliff abseil can be used at low tide. Start at the base of the slab that forms the left flank of the bastion.

1. 130 feet. 4b. Climb the slab for 90 feet to gain a ledge on the right arete (possible stance). Continue up ribs and grooves, move right and then go up to a large ledge.
2. 35 feet. 4a. Mantleshelf onto the ledge on the right, traverse left, climb a groove and step right to a bracket and the steep final wall.

First ascent: April 20, 1981. K. Wilson, R. Carter (A.L.)

CORNWALL—WEST PENWITH**BOSIGRAN****Paradise** now FREE. E2, 5c.

F.F.A. 1981. A. Pollitt, Mr. Bailey.

CARN KENIDJACK

On an un-named crag 200 yards to the north are two routes:

Great Central 75 feet Mild Severe

The obvious crack up the left of the slab.

First ascent. S. Salmon, D. Hannigan.

Seadreams 75 feet Hard Severe

The obvious large corner to the right of Great Central.

First ascent. S. Salmon, D. Hannigan.

Longbow 120 feet Hard Severe

A pleasant girdle of the main crag following the obvious curving weakness at one third the height of the cliff. Start above and to the right of the huge block in the zawn bed at a small niche.

1. 120 feet. 4b. Climb the left wall of the niche for a few feet to reach the obvious fault/crack line. Follow this pleasantly, gradually rising to meet the upper section of

Gneiss Gnome. Cross this and continue up the fault up an overhanging groove to finish.

First ascent. June 17, 1981. D.T. Roscoe; D. Weaver, M. Abel.

SENNEN

Slight Pause 100 feet Hard Very Severe

The thin crack in the back wall of the Black ~~Z~~awn between Norge Corner and Slippery Chute. Start as for Slippery Chute.

1. 70 feet. As for Slippery Chute.

2. 30 feet. 5a. The crack is climbed by a series of awkward layaway moves into a slabby scoop. Finish up the left wall of this.

First ascent: June 11, 1981. A.D. Newton, D.T. Roscoe.

Gillian now FREE, E3, 5c.

F.F.A. 1981. A. Pollitt, Mr. Bailey, H. Clover.

LAND'S END

Day Tripper 130 feet E3/4

A superb, technical and sustained route. Some of the rock needs care, the top 15 feet is loose and a rope from above is useful or one can abseil back down the route. Start below the obvious overhangs to the right of Tide Race.

1. 35 feet. 5b/c. Climb the righthand side of the wall below the overhangs to the first overhanging V-groove. Go up this and the one above to the roof. Swing left over this onto the wall above the roof. Belays higher up.

2. 75 feet. 6a/b. Climb up to the roof, step right and climb up to a finger crack. Climb up to a horizontal fault. Make some difficult moves up to a small triangular ledge, pocket. Move left to a thin crack which is followed to a good ledge. Large nut belays.

3. 20 feet. 4b. Very loose. Climb the wide crack on the left.

First ascent. April 4, 1981. R. & M.R. Edwards.

Split Minds 95 feet E1

Good climbing in a fine position on the overhanging wall to the left of Johnstone's Route. Start below the wide off-width crack left of Johnstone's Route.

1. 25 feet. 5a/b. Climb the crack to the ledge.

2. 70 feet. 5b. Climb the wall behind the belay to reach the hand-jamming crack on the left. Follow this to a good ledge. Step left across the steep wall and climb the steep cracks to the top of the pinnacle. Follow the ridge and belay at the large block.

First ascent. July 16, 1981. R. & M.R. Edwards (AL).

Atlantic Ocean Wall 245 feet E4

A tremendous route, very serious but with superb climbing. Where pegs have been used as runners, stainless steel bolts have replaced them—or will be when they

corrode away. Approach at low tide as for Yankee Doodle.

1. 20 feet. Traverse below Buffalo Gorge, descend slightly and climb a steep short wall to a good ledge.
2. 35 feet. 5b. Climb up the left corner for a few feet to the first horizontal break. Traverse this making some hard moves, past a wet patch of rock to gain a sloping ledge on the right. Bolt belay.
3. 80 feet. 6a/b. Climb the roof by the thin crack to a horizontal break. Move right following this to gain a steep red-coloured wall. Climb this to a small roof (peg runner/bolt). Climb over this and climb the steep short wall (bolt) to the foot of a steep crack and narrow corner. Go up this to an undercling below a hanging flake with a poor resting position. Traverse left by underclings which turn into laybacks to reach another flake runner. Traverse right across friable but easy rock to a narrow sloping ledge and belays at the foot of a groove (pegs/bolts).
4. 100 feet. 6a. Climb the groove to a roof, peg runner/bolt. Make some hard moves right, peg/bolt, into the continuation groove. Follow this to the next roof. Move left up a short wall and go over a small overhang into a narrow groove. Climb this to the foot of a larger crack which is taken to the top.

First Ascent. August 1, 1981. R. & M.R. Edwards (AL).

Lucinda 110 feet E1

1. 110 feet. 5a/b. Climb the rib and groove to the right of Buffalo Gorge.

First ascent: 1981. E. Cleasby, R. Matheson, Mr. Lynch.

Cormorant's Ben 90 feet E2

1. 90 feet. 5b. Take a direct line up the cracks and wall to the right of Cormorant's Slab.

First ascent: 1981. S. Dougherty, M. Nicholson.

PORDENACK POINT

Friends 70 feet Very Severe

A pleasant crack climb. Start as for Wrist Climb at the foot of a quartz chimney.

1. 70 feet. 5a. Climb the chimney, pull round the short roof on the left and continue up a crack to a small roof. Pull round on the right to finish up a flake.

First ascent: February 3, 1981. M. Edwards, S. Peplow.

Tower Direct 45 feet Hard Severe

A short chimney giving pleasant problems. Start at the base of the Fingered Ridge at a tower opposite the 'Trough'.

1. 45 feet. 4b. Below the inland facing face in a small ditch stands a short groove. Climb this for 15 feet until a move right round an overhang can be made to a wide crack. Climb this to the top.

First ascent: November 26, 1980. M. Edwards.

Gig in the Sky 95 feet E2

A good strenuous roof climb. The route can be seen from the top of Green Face. The

ridge on the right descends to the sea and has a large perched block on it. The route is below this. Descend the gully as for the lower climbs then traverse left until under the nose.

1. 25 feet. 5a. Climb the wall and belay on a small ledge.
2. 50 feet. 5b/c. Climb the wall to the small roof, move left then back again onto another short wall. Go up to the roof and jam out across this. Make some very hard moves to get onto the ledge above.
3. 20 feet. Climb the crack then scramble over the top.

First ascent: January 8, 1981. R. & M.R. Edwards.

Immaculate Arete 115 feet E4

A superb climb on perfect rock. Start six feet left of Nothing Much below an overhang at the base of a gently overhanging wall.

1. 100 feet. 6a/b. Climb up to the right end of the roof, pull over this into the steep cracks and follow these slightly leftwards until they end in a steep blank wall. Make a long reach left to another crack and follow this to a horizontal fault (peg runner now a stainless steel bolt). Climb onto a ledge on the left. Go up then right onto the arete again and climb up this on large holds to a good ledge below a corner.
2. 15 feet. 4b. To the right of the corner is a steep slanting crack. Climb this to the top.

First ascent: January 10, 1981. R. & M.R. Edwards.

Endless Rhythm reported in the 1979/80 C.C.J. is in fact the same route as Cain.

FOX PROMONTORY

Sport's Plan 95 feet E2.

Start at the base of The Nose at its lowest point below a faint vertical crack.

1. 45 feet. 5c. Climb up leftwards following a faint crack to the start of the vertical crack. Follow this to the belay ledge of The Muzzle.
2. 50 feet. 4c. Climb the thin vertical crack on the right to the first roof. Move right go up onto a good ledge round the corner. Climb the crack on the right to the top.

First ascent: April 18, 1981. R. & M.R. Edwards, F. Smith, R. Barker.

Hallucination 95 feet E2/3

A good steep and technical crack. Start on the left of Sport's Plan below the rightwards slanting crack.

1. 50 feet. 5c. Climb up into the small sentry box on the left. Move right to the crack which is followed until just below the ledge where a move left is made to reach the ledge.
2. 45 feet. 4b. Climb the corner for a few feet then traverse right onto the outside wall. Climb this to the top.

First ascent: June 25, 1981. R. & M.R. Edwards.

FOLLIES COVE

Follies Groove 100 feet Very Severe

Start on the Foxes Promontory side of the cove on the left side of the black wall below an obvious groove.

1. 100 feet. 5a. Climb the groove until it steepens then move right onto the arete. Climb up onto a slab and go up this to the foot of a corner. Follow this to the top.

First ascent: June 22, 1981. M. & R. Edwards.

CHAIR LADDER

West Face Direct 210 feet E1

A very good route which takes a direct line up Bulging Wall on superb rock. Start at the base of a thin crack to the right of Pegasus.

1. 60 feet. 5c. Climb the thin crack then follow the leftward slanting slab to belay as for Seal Slab.

2. 35 feet. 5b. Climb up to the overhanging cracks in the bulging roof above the belay, and to the right of Seal Slab corner. Climb up these moving right at the top then back left to belays.

3. 75 feet. 5a. Climb up to the steep arete, to the right of Seal Slab layback crack. Climb the arete and ascend rightwards to a good ledge. Climb up onto the slab on the left and go up this to a ledge and belays.

4. 40 feet. 4c. Climb up to the crack in the roof and pull over this to a ledge. Climb the steep wall to the top.

- 3a Variation. 4c From the good ledge at half height, move right to the steep crack and climb this to the same belay.

First ascent: September 10, 1980. M. & R. Edwards (AL) A. Sheards.

Gingerbread Crack 160 feet Hard Very Severe

A good crack climb. Start below Seal Slab and Overhanging Chimney.

1. 70 feet. 5a. Climb straight up the wall to below the crack which splits the narrow buttress left of Overhanging Chimney. Climb the crack, difficult to start, to a good ledge and belays.

2. 90 feet. 4b. Climb the crack in the wall behind the belay and continue up the slab to finish up two steep cracks.

First ascent: March 15, 1981. R. & M.R. Edwards.

The Surfboard Hard Very Severe

5a,4b. Follow the variation of Diocese to the roof, pull over the lip and finish up Spire.

First ascent: 1981. A. Pollitt, P. Bailey, H. Clover.

Calibran now FREE, at about 6a/b.

F.F.A. 1981. J. de Montjoye, T. Whitehouse.

CARN GUTHENBRAS

Livinbras Severe

Opposite the start of White Rib, climb cracks in the short wall to a slab. Climb a crackline and a groove on the right.

First ascent: 1981. S. Salmon, D. Hannigan.

Cleavage Hard Severe

Climb the obvious V-groove to the right of Dracula.

First ascent: 1981. S. Salmon, D. Hannigan.

TATER DU

Pregnant Pause Severe

The obvious corner to the right of Sentry Box. Pass a square overhang on the right then go back left to a ledge. Traverse left a few feet above the overhang into a hanging groove.

First ascent: 1981. S. Salmon, D. Hannigan.

Fat Panda Severe

Just left of pitch 1 of The Ramble at a square cut groove left of a deep chimney. Go up a groove and arete on the left to finish.

First ascent: 1981. S. Salmon, D. Hannigan.



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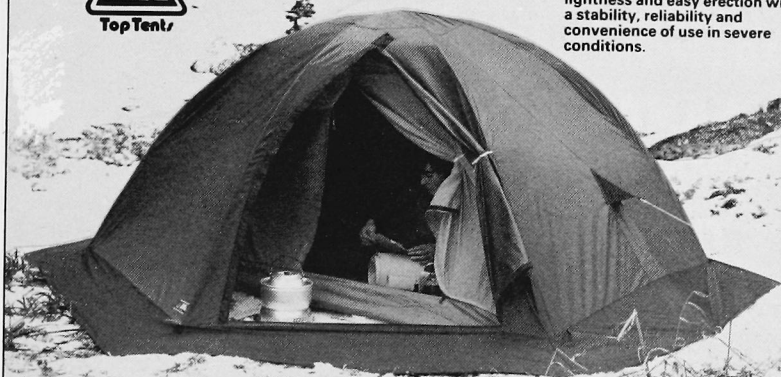
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CLIMBERS' CLUB GUIDEBOOKS

OLD SERIES

- Cwm Idwal (1974) by Ken Wilson and Zdzislaw Leppert. (Out of print)
Tryfan and Glyder Fach (1966) by Tony Moulam. (Out of print)
Lliwedd (1972) by Harold Drasdo.
Cwm Silyn and Cwellyn (1971) by Mike Yates and Jim Perrin.
Snowdon East (1970) by Tony Moulam.

NEW SERIES

- 1—Carneddau (1975) by Les Holliwell.
3—Llanberis Pass (1981) by Geoff Milburn.
4—Clogwyn Du'r Arddu (1976) by Alec Sharp.
6—Tremadog and the Moelwyns (1978) by Mike Mortimer (Out of print)
7—Gogarth (1977) by Alec Sharp.
 Gogarth 1981 Supplement by Geoff Milburn.
 Bosigran and the North Coast (1978) by Ed Hart.
 Chair Ladder and the South Coast (1975) by Robert Moulton and
 Terry Thompson.
 Lleyn Peninsula Supplement (1979) by Trevor Jones.
 Pembroke by Pat Littlejohn and Mike Harber (1981).

IN PREPARATION

- Southern Sandstone by Tim Daniells. Due out 1981.
2—Ogwen (Idwal and Tryfan) by Tom Leppert. Due out 1981/2.
 Tremadog and the Moelwyns reprint by Leigh McGinley. Due out 1982.
 Carn Gwla Supplement.

