

**THE  
CLIMBERS' CLUB  
JOURNAL**

**1986/87**





# **THE CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL**

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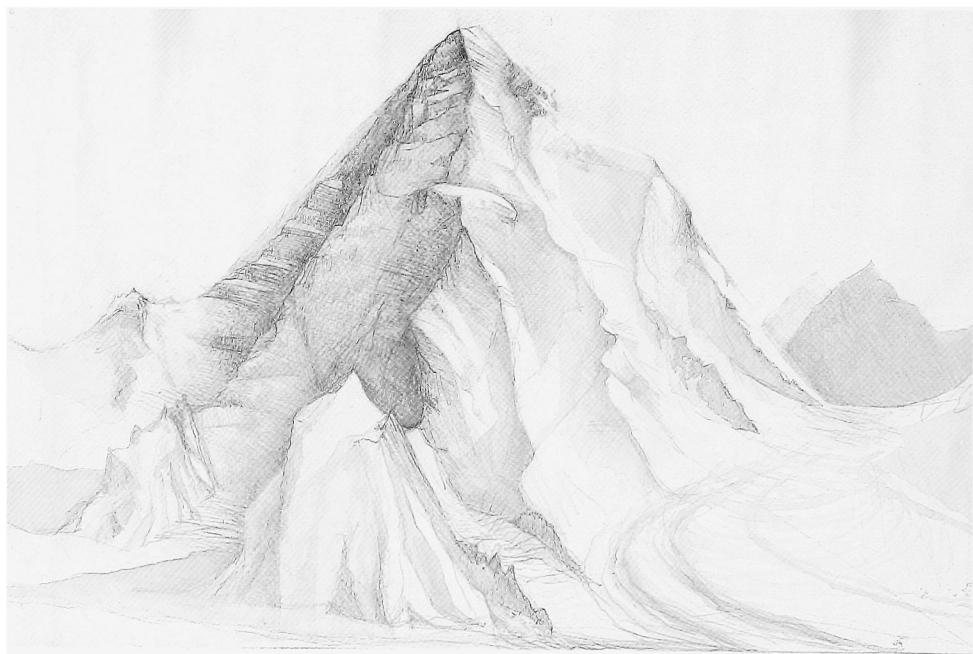
# THE CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL

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## CONTENTS

	Page
K2 — Success, Storm and Sorrow on the Savage Mountain .....	Jim Curran 5
The Downfall of St. Valentine's Day .....	Terry Gifford 21
Two North Faces in Two Days .....	John Sumner 26
The Club .....	The Rt. Hon. Earl of Fulwood, D.G. 31
A Cure for Insomnia .....	Geoff Milburn 35
The Cottage .....	Dave Gregory 40
From Solid Gold to Outer Space .....	John C. Wilkinson 47
A Peak District Winter .....	Al Churcher 55
1986 Revisited: A Personal View .....	Keith Sharples 60
Hook In and Hang On .....	Mike F. Browell 68
No Match .....	Graham Parkes 71
Climbing Kangtega with the Boy Scouts of America .....	Alison J. Hargreaves 75
Night on a Bare Mountain .....	John Hart 82
The Connection .....	Bill Wintrip 86
Dolomite Deja-vu .....	Trevor Jones 90
Obituary: Noel Odell .....	95
John Poole .....	101
Keith Lawder .....	102
Wynford Vaughan-Thomas .....	105
H.G. Balfour .....	107
A.R. Edge .....	108
E.H. Marriott .....	109
Andrew Brazier .....	112
Alan Rouse .....	115
Brian Chase .....	121
Editorial .....	124
Officers and Officials of the Club .....	125
Reviews .....	126
Harry Resco Solves Revelations .....	Mike F. Browell 166
Area Notes .....	168



*K2 - by Jim Curran*

*The following is an extended version of an article published in the 'Observer' Magazine, December 1986.*

## **K2 — SUCCESS STORM AND SORROW ON THE SAVAGE MOUNTAIN**

**JIM CURRAN**

"Hallo Camp 4, Hallo Camp 4 — this is K2 Base Camp calling — do you read me? Over." No answer from the radio but the hiss and crackle of static. The wind tore at the big frame tent and a dusting of powder snow blew under the zipped door. It was the evening of August 5th, 1986. Somewhere in the driving snow and murk, ten thousand feet above, twelve climbers were desperately fighting for their lives. Only three Polish climbers had maintained radio contact, the other nine, including one of my oldest friends, Alan Rouse, remained silent. All the hallmarks of an epic tragedy were unfolding and there was nothing to be done but wait and pray for not just one but a whole succession of miracles, if everyone was to return safely.

Two months earlier it had been very different. On May 23rd the British Fullers K2 Expedition had arrived at Base Camp at 16,500 ft, on schedule, having completed the gruelling 100 mile approach march through the valleys and glaciers of the Karakoram in Northern Pakistan. Our objective was the unclimbed North West Ridge of K2, which had previously defeated two strong expeditions from America and Poland. We had high hopes of success, a strong team of experienced climbers, Brian Hall, John Barry, Al & Aid Burgess, Dave Wilkinson, John Porter, Phil Burke, Al Rouse and myself, and no illusions about the challenge ahead. At 8,611m K2 the second highest mountain in the world is also the hardest and steepest of the 14 "8000m" peaks. Our proposed route, which actually ascends the frontier ridge between Pakistan and China was not just hard but long. So long that after four weeks at Base camp with very variable weather, the lead climbers had only reached Camp II at 6900m.

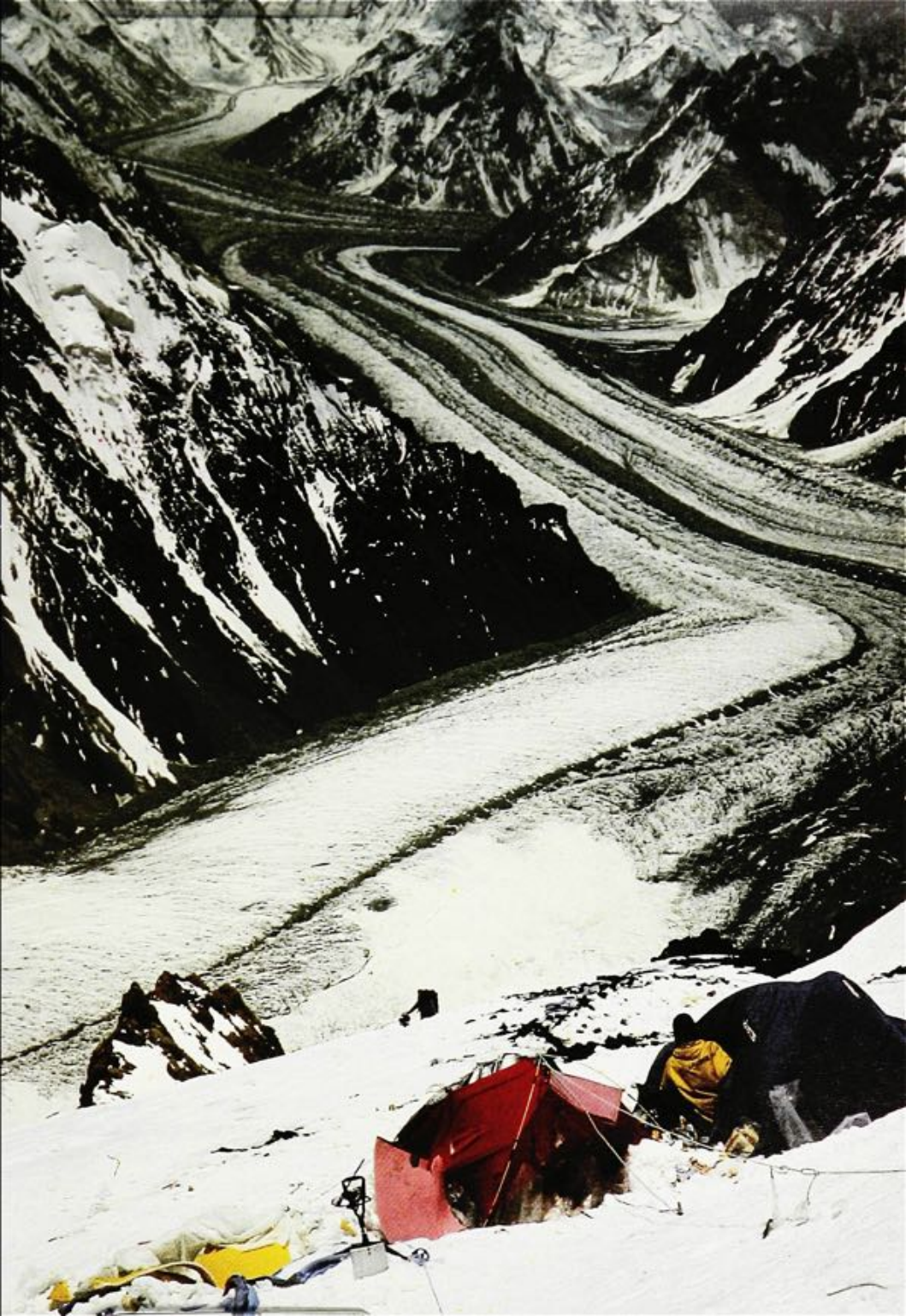
Other expeditions including French, Italian, American and Austrian had arrived, and on the long glacial moraine, ten minutes walk away from our Base Camp, a small village of multi-coloured tents was growing, giving the stark surroundings an almost carnival atmosphere. Between our four or five day stints on the mountain we developed quite a varied social life, doing the rounds of different nationalities making new friendships and renewing old ones. A sort of high altitude Olympic village formed, but with everyone competing in the same event.

On the evening of June 21st everything was looking good. The weather had been brilliant for three days and high on the ridge John Porter and Alan Rouse were making steady progress. But then those of us in support at Camp I received a chilling message at the end of our scheduled radio call to Base Camp. A subdued

and hesitant Alan Burgess told his twin brother Adrian that two Americans, Alan Pennington and John Smolich had been killed in a huge avalanche on the unclimbed South Pillar of K2. Alan's body had been recovered and buried at the Gilkey memorial just above our Base Camp.

Two days later we were all back at Base Camp as the weather had again broken down and almost immediately more bad news filtered through. The well known and respected French couple Maurice and Liliane Barrard were missing high on the Abruzzi Ridge of K2, the route by which the mountain was first climbed, and probably the easiest way up K2. Together with Michel Parmentier and Wanda Rutkiewicz they had made a successful ascent, (Liliane and Wanda being the first women to climb K2) but the Barrards had failed to return to the top camp. Wanda apparently was on her way down but Michel had waited in vain for the missing couple and now he was trapped on his own in a storm and whiteout at 8000m. In close radio contact with Base Camp we listened in stunned silence as his panting, ever weakening voice asked, still with impeccable French formality for advice on the best line of descent through chest deep snow. French climber Benôit Chamoux directed him down with all the coolness of an airport controller talking to the pilot of a stricken airliner, and eventually Michel's voice crackled over the radio to announce amidst cheers from Base Camp, that he had found a urine stained patch of snow. This discovery meant he was on the right route. Two more days and both he and Wanda returned to Base Camp, their emaciated faces showing more than words could tell.

The weather remained variable, ie. ranging from mediocre to foul, but in early July our second good spell arrived. This time after five days effort even the Burgess twins, who are as fit and talented a pair of climbers as any, could only make a single rope length's progress before the inevitable realisation that given the weather pattern and the ever decreasing manpower available (Brian Hall and John Porter had already had to leave through injury and pressure of work and more were about to), the game was up as far as the North West Ridge was concerned. This left a dilemma for all of us, for to simply pack up and go seemed, after all the fruitless effort involved, a total anti-climax. A lightweight attempt on the Abruzzi ridge was again foiled by bad weather. Just as the climbers returned tired and disappointed to Base Camp, they were greeted with the harrowing news that the distinguished Italian mountaineer, Renato Casarotto had fallen into a crevasse and was badly injured. Help was urgently needed. Casarotto had spent the summer plugging away in an attempt to solo the South Pillar. Three times he had almost made it, to be thwarted by storms just as he was poised for a memorable triumph. Finally he had given up, radioing to his wife Goretta at Base Camp that he was on his way down for the last time. Unbelievably, with only ten





minutes on the glacier separating him from safety, he had walked into a huge crevasse and fallen 40 metres. He was still conscious and was able to radio Goretta again, pleading for help but realising that he was probably dying. Kurt Diemberger and Julie Tullis (who were filming with the Italian team) managed to extricate him from the crevasse but by the time we arrived in the middle of the night, there was nothing more to be done. A shocked and saddened group of climbers descended to Base Camp each wrapped in his own thoughts. Death in the mountains is something that comparatively few climbers ever have to deal with, now we had experienced five in quick succession, very shortly to become six when we discovered that Tadeus Pietrowski the doyen of Polish winter climbing, had also been killed descending from the summit of K2.

With the porters ordered to arrive at Base Camp on July 28th for the return to civilisation Al Rouse was determined to hang on beyond that date for one last attempt. He had been here before in 1983 with Doug Scott and had already failed once on K2, though he did climb Broad Peak, an 8000m mountain directly opposite our Base Camp.

He was going to team up with a young Polish woman climber Dobrosława "Mrufka" Wolf who was part of a larger team also attempting the same climb as Casarotto and the ill-fated Americans. She must have felt that her chances of success were minimal on that route and a quick light-weight ascent of the Abruzzi Ridge was the best bet given the weather patterns. It was to prove to be a costly judgement.

Although I knew I had no chance of climbing K2, I decided to stay on for a variety of reason: my dual role as documentary film maker and sender of I.T.N. news reports was important, as was my friendship with Al; all combined with a vague desire to see the whole thing through one way or the other.

On July 28th, the porters duly arrived in ones and twos. At the end of a chaotic day packing loads, only Al and I were left, gleefully pouring paraffin on a huge bonfire of rubbish. "I feel like a headmaster after the school has broken up." Al eyed me dubiously "You look more like the caretaker." For the first time in weeks Al visibly unwound: the strain of leading what had proved to be a team of strong willed individualists had been immense. Now Al was fired again with a boyish enthusiasm, to do what he had always been best at, a fast lightweight ascent unencumbered with the logistics and trappings of a big expedition. "Four days up and two down" he announced confidently. He and Mrufka spent the next day packing and planning, preparing to leave Base Camp that night and travel via Advance Base and onto the Abruzzi before the sun had softened the snow. For the weather had started improving almost immediately the others had left. Indeed



I half expected some or all of them to hot foot it back up the glacier, but once homeward bound it is very hard to turn back.

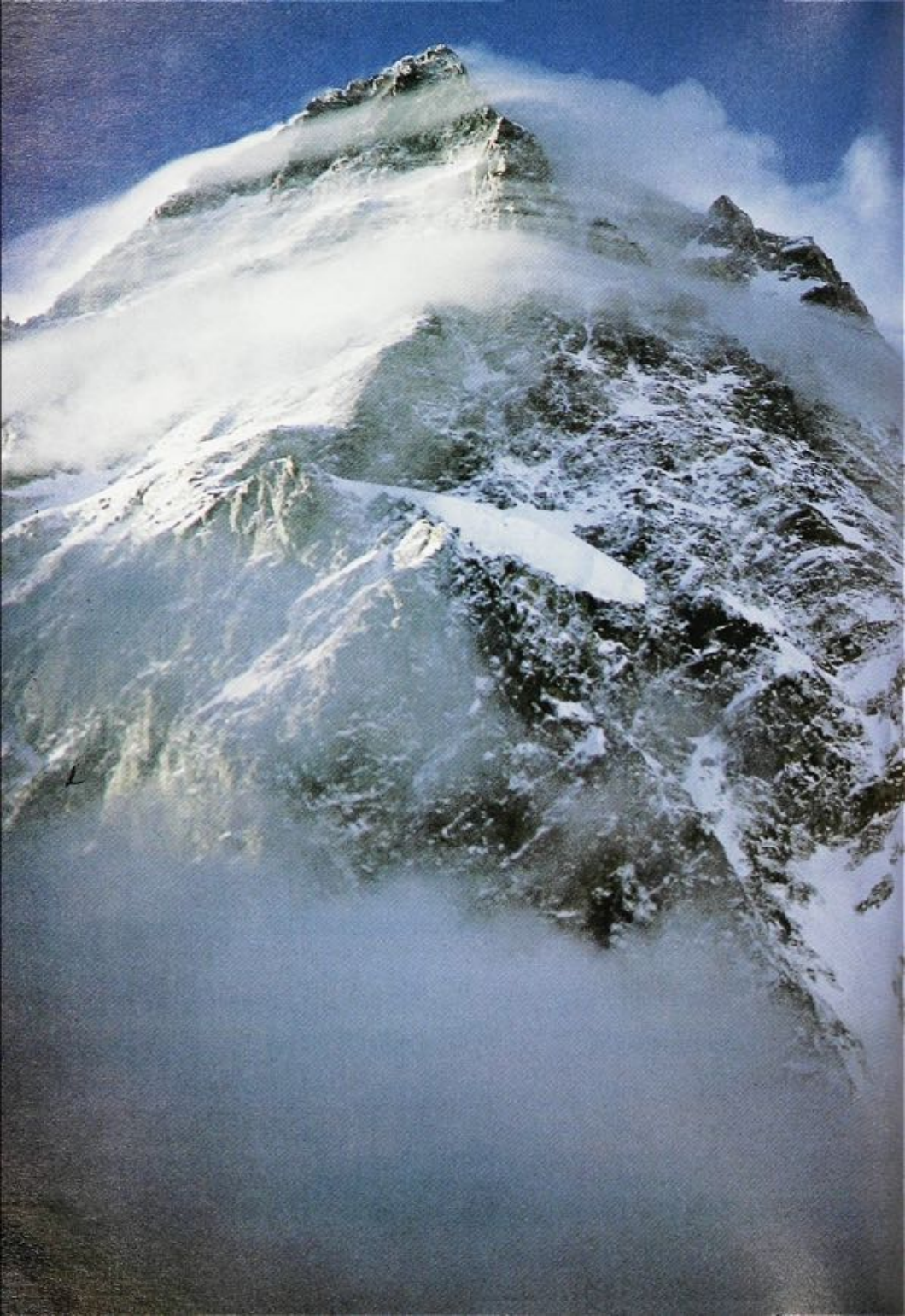
After a huge evening meal with the rest of the Polish team who were also setting out that night for their own last attempt on the South Pillar, Al and Mrufka went through their last minute preparations, discarding, adding and re-packing their rucksacks as everyone always does before a big climb. After several false starts they were ready "Good luck Al — take care, see you in a few days." A shy hug from Mrufka and they were off into the night, their light from their head torches bobbing over the stony moraines towards the foot of the Abruzzi about two hours walk away. I watched them go with optimism. Surely after all the setbacks and disasters they deserved one bit of good luck? My only concern was for Al's physical condition. We had both been at or above 16,500 ft. for over eight weeks. I felt increasingly run down but Al said he felt fine — "Anyway if I'm knackered I'll know it very quickly — we'll jack it in and try and catch the others up on the walk out."

Base Camp was very quiet for the next four days. The Poles asked me to keep radio contact with them, which gave me a reason for existence and I also had to complete a long list of shots for the film, so I was able to make the time pass reasonably quickly. Also at Base Camp were several other parties, for the Abruzzi Ridge was positively seething with climbers. A large well organised Korean expedition using oxygen, was poised for the summit, as was an Austrian team. So were Kurt Diemberger and Julie Tullis who had set off in indifferent weather to film, but now must be taking advantage of the weather change to make a summit bid. Would the presence of so many disparate groups cause a "Tower of Babel" syndrome? Or would it mean safety in numbers? Or would it have no effect at all on the outcome?

By the afternoon of August 2nd I had become increasingly tense. If Al was on target he would be topping out today, but the Koreans at Base Camp in radio contact with their own team had no news. They were due to make their summit attempt the following day. I couldn't help the first shivers of apprehension running down my spine even though there was no logical reason to be scared.

The morning of the 3rd August dawned with a cloudless sky once more but with the strange silvery luminosity in the atmosphere that had previously heralded a weather change, though sometimes not for a couple of days. But surely by then, with or without the summit, Al and Mrufka should be well on their way down?

The day wore on and I was gripped. The three Koreans were moving even closer to the summit and three of the Poles as well, on their much harder route, were actually visible through a giant telephoto lens moving almost imperceptibly towards the top. But still no news of the seven climbers below them who should



have been taking advantage of the Koreans oxygen assisted progress by following in their footsteps, effectively hitching a ride to the summit. What was going on? Surely climbers with the experience of Al and Kurt knew that a rest day at 8000m was of dubious worth? for not only does the body deteriorate increasingly quickly at high altitude and any 'rest' would largely be negated by the strain on the body by staying there, but a whole day of food and even more important, fuel was being used up. Al on his own reckoning must be very low already. Had they given up? The day wore on until just after four the Korean camp erupted with joy as their radio burst into life with the news that the summit had been reached. I joined in their celebrations out of courtesy, but felt great waves of apprehension flooding over me, made worse with the news that no-one had followed the Koreans to the summit.

I was also worried about the Polish teams who had split up on the South Pillar. The three lead climbers were almost on top but below them Janusz Majer, Krystyna Palmowska and Anna Czerwinska still had at least two days of hard climbing before reaching the summit. I had lost radio contact with the leaders, but talking to Janusz I realised that they were sounding increasingly tired and incoherent, I hoped they would make the sensible decision and retreat.

Early next morning, 4th August, I was awoken by Captain Neer Khan, one of the two remaining Army Liaison Officers. "Jim there is some bad news." Instantly awake, heart pounding — "What's happened?" "One of the Polish climbers, poor chap has most unfortunately perished in the night on his descent from the summit — the other two are now in topmost Camp on Abruzzi Route." The Peter Sellers voice and language didn't conceal his very real concern and worry for his charges, even if he found it hard to understand their motives. At eight I opened up the radio to hear subdued Polish voices; the two survivors had at last made contact with Janusz and the girls. But I couldn't understand their conversation and failed to make contact to find out exactly what was going on at Camp 4. I just hoped that everyone would now abandon the mountain as the weather was all too clearly breaking down. Great feathery plumes of cloud were blowing in from the south and above that, were huge banks of "mackerel" cloud formations. Across the glacier Broad Peak's twin summits were hidden in a sinister sausage of cloud, though K2 remained clear.

The day passed somehow with one bit of reassuring news that Janusz and the girls had decided to retreat. No more news of the others but I prayed that the two Poles descending the Abruzzi would have left their radio at Camp 4 for Al and Mrufka to use. But I could get no response that evening, nor the next and it was not until the afternoon of 6th August that there were any more developments. By now the storm had moved in with a sustained ferocity that I had not seen

before, even at Base Camp. Inches of snow fell every night, above it would be continuous, and the constant roar of the wind high up was like the distant sound of the sea breaking against the shore. How could anyone survive? The arrival of the two Poles on the afternoon of the 6th and the subsequent descent of Janusz, Anna and Krystyna the following day, were times for genuine joy and relief. It didn't matter who got down or what had happened; they were alive and safe. But underneath a great well of sorrow was building up, for I now knew that Al had last been sighted going for the top in front of the other five climbers (one of the Austrians had apparently given up very shortly after leaving Camp 4). What had happened? Had they all been avalanched? It seemed a bit unlikely. Or had they all failed to return to Camp 4? Again not very plausible. Were they all trapped and sitting it out at Camp 4? In which case they would be out of gas and food. Any attempt at descent in the storm would be doomed to failure, but after 4 or 5 nights at 8000m their survival chances seemed minimal.

On the 9th, with all hope almost gone, I went up to Advance Base with a young Austrian climber, Michael Messner (no relation to his famous namesake Reinhold). One tent, that of Kurt and Julie still stood. Michael returned but I spent a lonely night there scanning the ridge in the twilight and again in the dawn, for any signs of life.

Through a large pair of binoculars Michael had left I could see great walls of powder snow slamming horizontally into the rock buttresses and pinnacles of the ridge. Tearfully I said my farewells to Al, Julie, Kurt and the Austrians and returned slowly to Base Camp, pausing frequently to search the avalanche debris below K2 which was already a poignant rubbish dump of gear that had been swept down from above. Bits of old tents, sleeping bags, an ancient broken ice axe that could have been silent testimony to some previous disaster, even on one grim occasion a human femur, all ended up on the glacier. But there were no signs.

That afternoon a Pakistan Army helicopter arrived. Not as we hoped, and had requested, to search the lower section of the Abruzzi (the helicopter's height ceiling preventing a comprehensive search), but to buy clothing and scrounge equipment from the Koreans. No amount of pleading made any difference, and stacked with booty the helicopter clattered off towards civilisation, leaving everyone boiling with rage and frustration at combined Pakistani intransigence and Army inflexibility. I felt the last ray of hope disappear.

As dusk fell there was a sudden commotion outside the tent and a porter sprinted past — what on earth ...? Looking out a figure was just visible, silhouetted against the glacier stumbling and swaying towards Base Camp. Heart bursting with hope and apprehension, I rushed with everyone towards him. It was not Al and I felt guilty as my heart sank, it was the Austrian Willie Bauer. He was



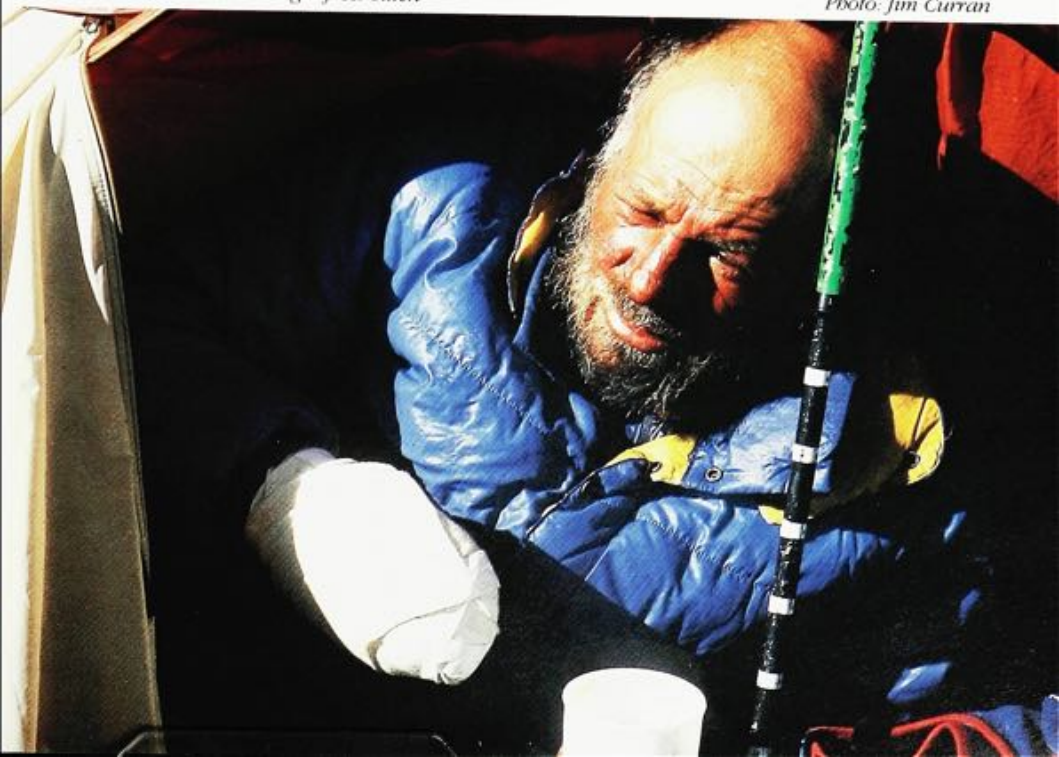


*Above: Alan Rouse*

*Photo: Jim Curran*

*Below: Kurt Diemberger frost bitten*

*Photo: Jim Curran*



speechless with exhaustion and dehydration, and quite literally on his last legs. He was helped to a tent and fluids were poured into him. At last in a whisper he managed to tell us that Kurt Diemberger was somewhere behind him and that Mruka had left Camp 4 but had fallen behind. Julie Tullis was dead, Hannes Weiser and Alfred Imitzer had collapsed almost immediately they had left Camp 4 and poor Al, delirious and drifting in and out of consciousness had been unable to move at all. All the information was fragmentary and obviously incomplete, but immediately Janusz, Krystyna and I got ourselves ready to go to Advance Base and see who, if any, were still alive, while Michael Messner and Polish climber Przemyslaw Piasecki prepared to leave later to climb to Camp 2 in search of Mruka.

We arrived at Advance Base at 11 p.m. and while the others started putting up a tent, I went off to collect melt water and to look up the first long snow slope of the Abruzzi Ridge. It was a moonless night but the clouds were thinning and a few stars were appearing in a gusty sky. Above me a repetitive noise could have been a loose rope end flapping or melt water dripping, or someone descending. There was no sign of a light but I set off kicking steps in easy angled frozen snow, my head torch by now very dim. The noise grew louder. Suddenly I almost bumped into Kurt, climbing down with painful slowness. "Kurt — it's me Jim — you're OK — you're nearly safe." He turned uncomprehendingly towards me. "I thought I saw lights but I am imagining things" — then simply, "I have lost Julie."

The next day was spent getting Kurt down the glacier to Base Camp. Twice I thought he would die only hours from safety. Both he and Willie were horrendously frostbitten but Kurt's whole metabolism seemed about to fail. I took his pulse at his request and announced it to be seventy, which cheered him up. In fact I couldn't feel it at all. Later he tripped and fell full length on the flat ice of the glacier. I thought he would never get up and it took all my strength and persuasion to help him. At last more help arrived from Base Camp and on an improvised stretcher Kurt was carried the last mile or so, having undergone with Willie one of the most incredible survival ordeals in mountaineering history. Mruka however failed to make it down and must have died somewhere between Camps 2 and 3.

Unbelievably the helicopter failed to arrive the next day, or the day after and Kurt and I talked for hours about what had happened; how he and Julie had bivouaced below the summit after reaching it late on the evening of the 4th August, how Julie had died ("softly" as Kurt put it) in her sleep on the night of the 6th, how he, Mruka and Al had survived until the morning of the 10th by which time Al's condition had slowly deteriorated and he was quite beyond help — it all came out bit by bit. One detail escaped me. I had somehow formed the impression that Al had failed to reach the top. It seemed a trivial, almost insensitive

question to ask, but Kurt suddenly volunteered the information that Al had been the strongest on the 4th and had broken trail almost all day before the Austrians had caught him up just below the summit. Incredibly, one hundred years after K2 had just been surveyed by an Englishman, it had received its first British ascent twice on the same day, first by Al and two hours later by Julie Tullis. Both had perished in their triumph.

The next day our few porters arrived, and after the usual insane scramble to get their loads packed and carried, Kurt called me over to his tent to say goodbye. (It was to be two more days before a helicopter arrived for Kurt, Willie and the Korean doctor who was looking after them so well.) Tearfully we embraced. Above, K2 now free of cloud and brilliant in the dawn sun, towered over us. As I left and started the long walk back, the mountain loomed compellingly behind me. Strangely it appeared to grow as I walked away. But as I stopped and turned for the last time at Concordia where the great glaciers of the Karakoram meet, cloud once more covered the summit. As I looked, the clouds parted and impossibly high in the sky, the black summit rocks momentarily appeared, then slid away into the mists.

*Jim Curran's book "K2 Triumph & Tragedy" published by Hodder & Stoughton examines in detail the tragic events on K2 in 1986. Another book of interest is "Alan Rouse — A Mountaineer's Life" compiled by Geoff Birtles and published by Unwin and Hyman. All profits from its sale will go to the Alan Rouse Memorial Library Fund, in Sheffield.*

## CRACKS

The gate squealled shut as off we sped,  
our thoughts already dancing up the rock.  
The morning sun scarce reached us,  
and the others lay in bed.

Above the shade, sun lit the face  
of Dinas Mot's grey crag  
and over stream, and up the scree,  
each other we did chase.

Alone we climbed whilst others slept;  
up slabs of sun-warmed rock,  
up chimney, cracks and mantleshef,  
to where the crux, till last is kept.

John Fairley

## MOUNTAIN DULCIMER

"I am on a lonely road and I am travelling,  
Looking for something. What can it be?"  
Castle Naze hanging in the haze somewhere  
Above the lanes leading away from Manchester,  
Bursting out as we were from that cloistered  
Conference, two Daves and me singing with Joni:

"I want to be strong. I want to live long.  
I want to belong to the living."  
First route, last long pull on the pinnacle's  
Top edge, singing strong in just shorts,  
Back bare to the sun. At that chill moment  
The top block rocked back with me.

"Alive, alive, I want to get up and jive.  
I want to have fun, shine like the sun."  
I wanted to get down, breath again on the ground,  
Re-start nervous on The Nithin, do The Fly Walk.  
And back by the car, Joni's dulcimer strumming  
Above fields and farms, we, all three, danced.

Terry Gifford



## SNOW SLOPE

What's this? An intruder crosses my flawless, white surface  
 mars me with his arrogance, cut an ugly path of grey,  
 quickly changes direction and scars me with a line of pin-prick holes.  
 I sense his power  
 Climber! He debases my days of fleeting beauty. I try to throw off the  
 daggerlike form, but the climber holds,  
 daring me,  
 laughing, surprised by his own gracefulness, refusing to surrender  
 as I claw desperately at his ankles with white fingers  
 of crystal and shudder, hoping to shake him off.  
 He only smiles at this greater challenge, finally escaping  
 in a swift kicking movement as I disintegrate  
 exploding and rushing down the face  
 caressing the rock, softly melting from existence  
 dying in agony, whilst  
 the climber is a king!

Dennis Gray

## FALLING

Texture of the wind crashing  
 Into a million facets of  
 me;  
 Am I making the wind?  
 Or was it always there  
 Can I catch it?—  
 Get ahead of it into the stillness?

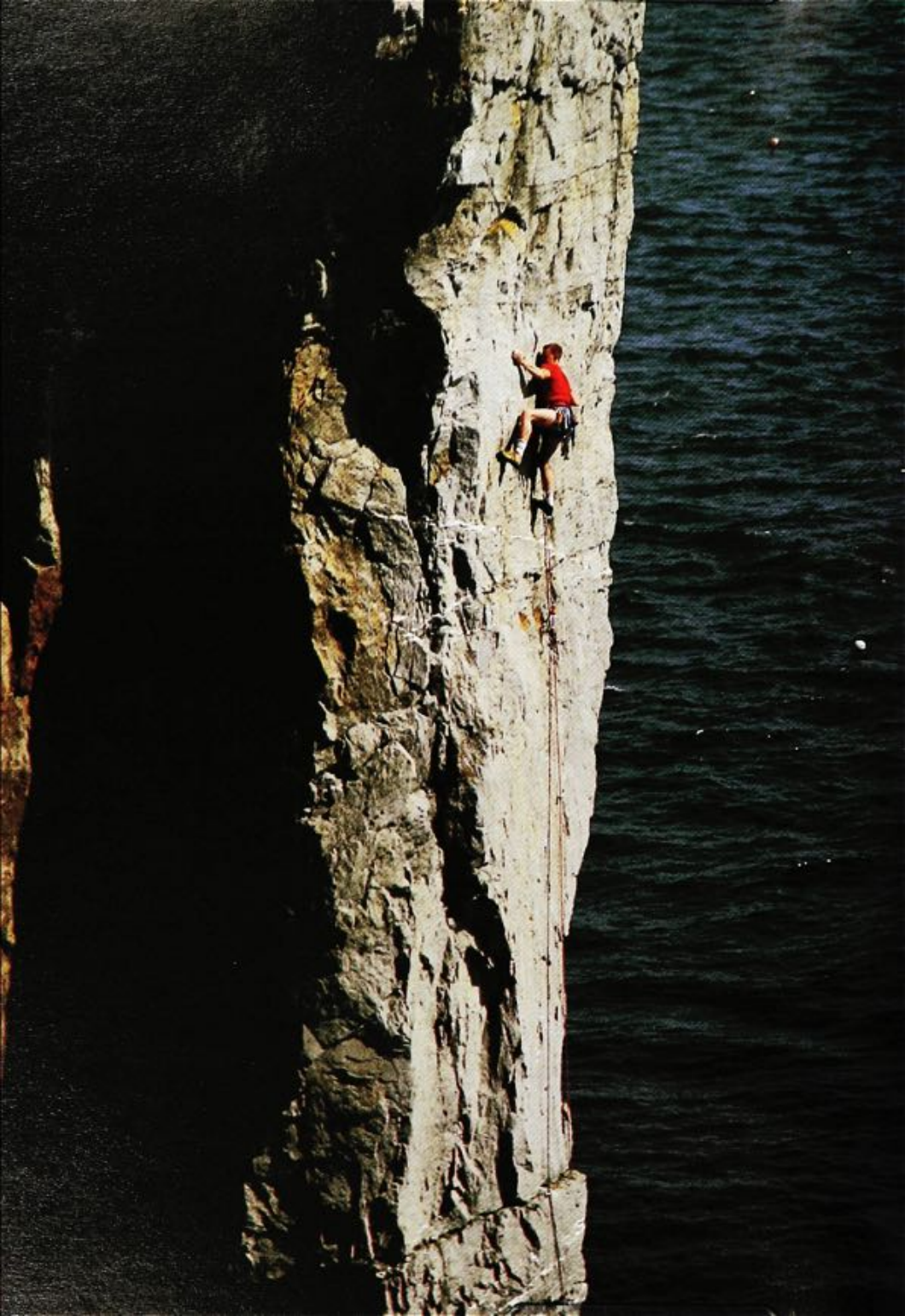
Dennis Gray

*Overleaf left: Gary Gibson making the first ascent of "The Mighty White" E5 6b Stackpole Head*

*Photo: Hazel Gibson*

*Overleaf right: Marc Twight below the headwall on Kangtega*

*Photo: Alison Jane Hargreaves  
 (see article on page 75)*









# THE DOWNFALL OF ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

TERRY GIFFORD

She had been with me for days, the goddess, dogging my heels in her quiet but almost tangible way, on journeys from Sheffield to Buxton and back to the Snake. Solid enough places, named like that, and it was the solid ice that she somehow coincided with in a most unlikely and revealing way. But this is to anticipate my small discovery. I should concentrate on convincing you that I am not mad, a legendary Sweeny astray in the Peak. No, not astray, neither mentally nor physically, far from it. In fact, the Feast of St. Valentine I celebrated only yesterday in the familiar February cold of Kinder.

It all started with that series of solo runs along Stanage at dusk. With the New Year I'd got into the habit of driving into the setting sun and parking just at the point where it came into full view suddenly at the edge of the land. So from here I got the easiest incline up to the Edge and then a downhill jog, jiggling round rocks littering the path to this particular boulder I'd found just before knacker point (or in deep snow just after it). Undercut at its base, and with a hidden jug on its top edge just to the right, it is ideal for pull-ups. On the painful last pulls towards twenty I concentrated only on the detailed grain of the grit. It was on the return leg, in what would be called darkness in the city, that I first noticed her, waiting, as it were, at the highest point. I couldn't hang around too long. I had to get down. But there, suddenly, was her exact image in the rocks just over my shoulder as I descended.

Then it was towards the end of January, as I was warming to the glow from the heart-shaped range on the upper floor of John and Joan's house in Bakewell, when John mentioned Imbolc. I'd never heard of it, but as he told me about it, somehow she was really the reason for my enthusiasm. Imbolc was the second of the four quarter days of the Celtic year. It was always the first day of February and was the first festival after the Celtic New Year's Eve at Hallowe'en. On Imbolc two people could be married by walking towards each other and kissing. This bonding could be broken only on the following Imbolc by walking apart. As soon as I sat down to write that night I knew why she had been at Stanage:

## IMBOLC

She stood waiting in her sheepskin  
Looking down the long dripping line  
Of the black gritstone edge,  
The bowl of its back sifting snow  
Under a wind from the east quarter.

The sun had probably set  
Behind that snow-dark sky.  
She had probably missed him  
Passing through the sacred rocks  
On separate tracks to the high point.

Walking on to keep warm  
She remembered the sun orange  
On orange bracken last Hallowe'en  
When he first showed her  
The high cave, its tunnel and balcony,

First whispered that they be Imbolc wed.  
Now the nerve of that amulet charmer  
Had probably failed. "Walk no further!"  
She turned. Panting, he threaded through  
Boulders of snow, paused. They walked forwards

To kiss the kiss that binds  
But knows the changes of the seasons,  
The length of a life.  
As their heads parted she smiled,  
"How short the shaman has left your hair!"

Two crows passed above, silent,  
And she hoped that next year  
She would not be here for  
The walking apart. They could last,  
For all his lateness, beyond the trial.

Now, looking back from a place at the edge  
He showed her her head profiled in stone,  
Pointed nose and delicate mouth facing west.  
Together they ran down towards the tribe where  
She would light the great Imbolc fire.

Well, in the second week of February the second snowfall of the winter halted the country, but as the temperature dropped the snow stayed dry and blown and useless. Ice was in the air so I dropped the sharpened tools and supergaitered boots into the back of the car when I drove over to Buxton for a meeting. As I

came round the corner above Miller's Dale the shaft of ice in Priestcliffe Quarry across the dale hung from its cliff with a slender promise of just touching the ground. Waterfall Swallet above Eyam would be an easier bet for the return journey. So, later in the day I came to be walking from the road into the sunken delph rather hoping to be surprised by the owl that came out from the limestone wall last time I was here. But if you expect it, it never happens. The only sound was of water running behind the ice. I approached the waterfall of ice in the spirit of one still learning the language of icefalls.

Only later did I realise that *she* was responsible for my learning — not teaching directly as Wordsworth claimed. My senses were opened and I was relaxed since I was stepping onto ice without urgency and on my own terms. The pillar of ice forming the righthand side of the waterfall was made up of hundreds of individual pillars, mostly fused together but in places leaving slots between them. I'd fallen onto the rope here when seconding two years ago because I'd not learned that my curved levers out of slots but will hang hard in the ice of a solid pillar. Blood was frozen in the centre of one pillar. A waxworks lesson.

In the centre of the waterfall the ice was like stacked cheeses with glass knobs on. The ice above was still absorbing spots of water falling outside it, as well as behind it. Here you had to break through the laced veil to the solid stuff beneath. The left wall of the waterfall was a hanging garden of frozen greens — the darker the greens, the thicker the ice — and surprisingly good it was if you tried again after the pretty effects of dinner-plating round the axe tip.

But it was not on this day that I fully understood what it was she gave to my experience of ice. After all I was only bouldering off the ground in the bottom of the Swallet, not soloing a little icefall above a big drop. Which brings me, with a smile, to the ice of St. Valentine's Day a few days later. Now so far as I'm concerned St. Valentine's Day met its downfall years ago. Sending those cards is 'greasy kids' stuff and in thinking so I suspect, to be honest, that I am perfectly normal for an average married man of my age. As I drove up the Snake Pass it was simply another brilliant day and the path up to Fairbrook Naze pulled like a straight white thread of irresistible perspiration. Enchanted, at the river crossing, by the delicate patterns of white lacework through which the river still unreeled itself I nearly fell through a gap in the boards of the bridge.

As I rose towards the Kinder plateau, where the snowy folds of the land met at its lip the rushing cold air of a blue sky, I began to appreciate her company. I looked above me. Blown billows of thin clouds caressed the hard edges of higher, finer, ice-static stratas held in the blue. This is one of my favourite winter walks, but it had never been quite like this before. Even the mountain hares fitted into the landscape, invisible. Unlike her.

No footprints followed the main clough back up through its drifted snow and

sheltered winding into the heart of the plateau. Ankle-turning frozen peat hag took me down to the sudden flatness of the hidden Kinder river, solid white in black gritstone jaws through which, with gathering joy, I'm always drawn to the sudden gasp of Kinder Downfall, the coldest place in the Peak.

I crossed its top to the right. In the undercut lee of a boulder, feeling the force of the sun, coffee completed my toasting. If I had brought an offering, a votive pot perhaps, with unfired glaze in brown layers like peat, I would have pulled it from my sack. The short rock descent lay to the right of a tower just below the edge path. Further round and down was the glistening tumble of smooth hard ice that in a banking of snow is usually a crampon walk. Today it was two vertical moves to the first step, then a foreshortened further few falls and bulges of water-ice. As I strapped on crampons with the extra tough pulls of one psyching himself up a little I grew aware of the steep grass and vertical rock dropping to the black lake below. She had disappeared, though the sun sparkled the ice to a perfect challenge.

I stepped up, and back down. The length of the curver pick made it difficult to avoid frightening leverage on the thin placement. A leader across on the Downfall itself was whooping across the upper traverse, following the rock-climbing route on its ice-coating. I played tentatively again, two feet up, paused too long, then down, arms beginning to ache. A lad walked backwards over the undercut lip of the Downfall in a cramponed abseil. I reconstructed my feelings for the day so far and she reappeared, smiling warm as the sun, mouth delicate as the curved edge of the amphitheatre, hair fine as the stratus, and the suggestion of a round mole on this neck of the moor. The goddess of the place taught me to love the ice not to kill it.

The axe tips thudded home firmly first time as the rhythm of pull, step, place, lifted me up towards the final placements in the level pool of ice patterns at the top. She was there, of course, the goddess. I don't know if the passing walkers saw her or felt her presence. But I've avoided the word 'presence' all along because I haven't wanted you to think of her as a mystical abstraction, or that I'm some madman, some 'grey-beard loon' obsessed with this tale about the Downfall of St. Valentine's Day.



## HIMALAYAN LEGEND

Then into the night  
Across the ranges of hills  
Like stepping stones misting  
Each other came the woman  
Travelling alone again, carrying  
Little into the great basin  
Of peaks drained by the glacier  
And moraine for a tent.  
No-one knew she was there  
Alpine-style and alone  
In her frail shell under  
The big moon again, drinking  
From her favourite cup, steaming  
Against the livid chill. Before light  
She would go with the old gear  
And new patches, hand sewn,  
As far, this time, as she could  
With food for two weeks and pills  
For some physical failures  
Unplanned but expected like  
The morning, and the return  
Against past stone huts and dogs,  
Unphotographed, knowing but unknown.

Terry Gifford

# TWO NORTH FACES IN TWO DAYS

JOHN SUMNER

My secret weather forecast phone number wasn't working! Good spells which had been forecasted hadn't materialised and we were left down in the valley on good days and up in the huts in the muck. After two weeks of frustrating up and down from huts in white outs with the odd discouraging glimpse of our North Face, the Petit Mont Collon, black streaked with rock fall scars, not the white face shown in the Alpes Valaisannes book, a certain despondency was starting to take over.

At long last a good spell seemed to be on its way, and a rush to the Vignettes hut with two days food was accomplished in double quick time. The usual clag descended in the evening and doubt once again set in but a quick look out at 3am next morning revealed stars and a frost. Everything looked good as we cramponed easily across the Col de Chermotane to the short but steep little North Face of the Petit Mont Collon.

The bergschrund was taken through a deep avalanche gutter. Always a nasty feeling, and to be on the safe ground quickly was what mattered, even on a safe route like this. Luckily the placements were excellent and pleasant pitch after pitch was accomplished, with good belay pegs, to the first rock outcrop. Above this point the face steepened and for one or two pitches the ice deteriorated. We persevered with the direct line and for the last three pitches perfect snow/ice again took over. We finished bang on the summit.

What a superb little route, any deviation would obviously be harder. I was impressed with the steepness of the last section, I would say a touch more than 55°. Still completely on our own and now in mist, we descended the so called easy South Face on appalling rock following a line of suicidal abseil slings down steep rubbish shoots to the glacier. This was followed round the mountain to join the main glacier D'Otemma and up to the Col de Chermotane in a zombie like plod in the heat of the day. Back at the hut for about 2 pm, later than we should have been we had taken longer on the descent than on the face.

Eating was the order of the day and we just about finished off most of our grub. The clag rolled in again in the evening so again no views. Nobody in the hut seemed to be going for the North Face of the Pigne d'Arolla next day, so we would probably have it to ourselves.

Incredibly at 3.30 am the clag rolled back to show stars. So the usual rush ensued to get out. A three hundred metre descent from the hut in worsening snow didn't do anything to raise hopes, especially as the stars had gone and the thick clag was just visible in the early dawn racing towards us.

As we approached the initial couloir which led up to the ridge under the face,

two lights could be seen near the top of the couloir. So we weren't the only climbers on the face! The couloir was fairly steep and the snow poor, and we reached the ridge in decidedly worsening weather and it was cags on. I decided that as soon as it started to snow we would turn back, so with that in mind we continued up the broad rocky ridge passing the odd nasty verglassed section.

The ridge levelled out at a big curving corniced edge and it was here we caught up with the two German climbers who had been above us in the couloir. The face looked impressive with the upper half in swirling clag. The wind was causing some spindrift but not enough to worry us. So on with ropes and the face attacked, we were obviously fitter than the Germans so we took the lead. The climbing was easier than the Petit Mont Collon, the 'schrund overcome on perfect snow/ice and this continued to the upper rocks. Visibility was now down to about 50 metres. I could only just make Stewart out. It was getting very cold, ice plastered round my glasses wasn't helping.

The face now looked more interesting, a traverse right beneath the first rocks, then a steepish couloir, then weaving through more rocks brought us to the final summit snow slope. Again a brilliant little route with the ice in excellent condition. A stumble down the easy descent track brought us back to the hut for about 11 am. We had done the route in good time and felt very chuffed, with two good north faces in the bag.

*An ascent of two small north faces in the Arolla district on 1st and 2nd August 1987 by J.A. Sumner and Stewart Grant.*









# THE CLUB

## THE RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL OF FULWOOD, D.G.

There is something very leisured about lounging in a leather arm-chair; an air of luxury, an air of well-earned but illicit well-being, the more so if somewhere, preferably not too near, there is a considerable quantity of pressing, unfinished labour, waiting for the lounge to re-attain the industrious vertical. Our armchairs are a touch on the chintzy side, the wife's choice you know, so that I don't really get a good laze at home even when she's out so that last time I was in town I trickled along to the Club to indulge in a spell of recumbent leather.

I was a touch unlucky. I could only find *The Guardian* and a few moments of that is more than anyone can stand, so I arranged it roofwise over the old bonce, carefully arranging that the editorial page was well hidden, after all one doesn't want that sort of piffle diffusing through one's skull in one's sleep. One might wake up voting Communist.

I was just floating in that pleasant half-sleep stage when a pair of newspapers in chairs behind me began a conversation, or perhaps continued one, for they had been there when I sidled in.

"Saw Clawson this morning."

The other newspaper merely said "Hrrmmph."

One should not be too critical of this as a reply. What alternatives were there? "Had he cleaned his teeth?" "Doesn't he come out in the afternoons?" "Had your eyes open then?" "Had your eyes closed then?" "Sober?" "Drunk?" All not very helpful. "Hrrmmph" is perfectly adequate and as Aristotle or some other one of those old Greeks should have said "When a man speaks you can be sure that he is using his mouth muscles but not his mind."

"He got out last month."

"Didn't know he'd been inside. Where?"

"Wales."

"Didn't know there were any gaols in Wales."

"Who said anything about gaols?"

"You did. You said he got out last month."

"No, he got out on the hills — in Wales."

"Oh."

"He told me all about it."

"He would, wouldn't he." And so Mandy Rice-Davies' quip passes further into the language.

"Fellow's an idiot."

"Went to Pembroke."

*Opposite: Unknown climber on "Star Wars", Pembroke.*

*Photo: Keith Sharple's*

"No hills in Pembroke. Proves it."

"He says the C.C. have got a cottage in Pembroke. May Cottage."

"May Cottage! God! The C.C. are going downhill. Be Pansy Lodge next."

"He went on spec. Met a group of climbers there. Three of 'em, young he said, too young to be experienced, but keen, keen. They'd been climbing as a three but he said he'd join in with one of them and make it two twos.

They had to make him abseil down. He insisted on taking his sack of gear down to the bottom. Abseiled down, old-fashioned, burnt through the crutch of his knee-breeches. Left his spare gear on the rock platform at the bottom, fastened in a big plastic bag in his rucksack. Really enjoyed it he said. Bags of aid all over the place. Pulling on slings, standing in stirrups, just like the old days. With the sea rushing in, and sunshine. Told me I ought to get down there and get a piece of the action."

"Where does he get his vocabulary."

"From the younger generation, he says. They have a vital vocabulary. They are vital, energetic."

"They'll need to be to stop him driving them mad."

"Oh, they were. When he got to the top his rucksack was floating away like a purple bubble. Had to abseil down again. They wouldn't let him use the old-fashioned way. Made him use a figure of eight."

"Figure of what?"

"Eight, eight. Four twos, two fours."

"I can do times sums, but what is it when you've finished multiplying?"

"A descendeur. It is, I quote- "a device to safely expedite rapid descent."

"Does it?"

"Not for Clawson it didn't. He shot down the first 100 feet like a South African cheque."

"He bounced then?"

"Not half. They had him tied off on a safety rope. He came up twenty feet on the spring. Cracked his helmet on an overlap. They lowered him into the sea like a damn great whale."

"The prophet Jonah climbed in Whales."

"This one didn't, it splashed about like a hairy octopus until it got its sack back."

"And then he floated out to sea?"

"No such luck. The three of them pulled him up, sack and all."

"Did he have anything to say?"

"Said it was a good route."

"Route? Rout? What did he do for an encore?"

"Wanted to do some more climbing but the next day was Sunday."

"What was the hindrance? Is Pembroke dry?"



"No, but his leader said he wanted to go to church, to pray, to get a good credit deposit in the bank in the sky. He said he thought he might need it."

"Did it work?"

"Must have. They never came back from church. Operation P.U.F.O."

"Where do you get your vocabulary from?"

"Clawson."

"Must be catching. How did you get away?"

"Said I was going to meet you."

"How did that work?"

"Said he couldn't abide you. Boring old fart, he said."

"Cheeky sod, old Clawson."

"Hrrmmph."

The newspapers moved and rustled. The chairs creaked and emptied.

"Going anywhere special?"

"Thought I might trickle along and buy one of these figure of eights."

"What on earth for?"

"Thought I might go down to May Cottage for a few days. Probably someone there to climb with."

"Might be Clawson."

"Might," I thought ruefully, as they staggered rustily out, "be me."

At least I could use The Telegraph as a shade now that they'd gone.



# A CURE FOR INSOMNIA

GEOFF MILBURN

Blisters! They were huge and getting bigger and it was all my fault, but the lad wasn't going to let them stop him from finishing what he had started. Somewhere in the male line of the family there is a pure streak of sheer cussedness that defies logic. It had all started during a brief conversation some years before when my son had thoughtfully enquired when I would begin to treat him as a responsible 'grown-up'. "When you've completed the Derwent Watershed Round", I had replied promptly thinking that that would be an end to the discussion. A year or two later, and equally out of the blue, at the age of 15 he suddenly declared that he wanted to go for it. Once my bluff was called the only stalling tactic was to remind him that it was between forty and fifty miles, but the die was cast. In due course Kinder and Bleaklow were defeated but the upper Derwent Edges finally sorted out Alan's soft untrained feet and he had limped slowly down to the Derwent Arms for a break.

With only a minimum of money in my pocket I settled for a well earned pint as the day was hot but all the lad wanted was stoking up with food. He had already consumed a large proportion of the sandwiches on Kinder and then had polished off the rest during the Bleaklow crossing. It was rather like trying to satisfy the insatiable appetite of a racing steam locomotive. Where on earth did he put it all? In the pub bar it was seething with lunchtime car-trippers from Sheffield and somewhere along the line the bar-maid got the order wrong. Using her body to great effect she jostled her way through and paused for a split second in front of us, but that was long enough. A pair of hands snaked upwards and a head craned eagerly forwards, then the bar-maid moved suddenly and was gone with the plate — not fast enough however. During the ensuing uproar in the far corner of the room all I could hear were the words, "But there's teeth marks in it. I'm not eating this. Take it away." Alan said nothing, but swallowed hard, eyes gleaming and with a wry little grin he wiped away a few tell-tale crumbs from the corner of his mouth. By the time order was restored Alan had homed in on the correct snack, done a record breaking disappearing act and was off through the door before the villain of the sketch could be identified and reprimanded.

Declining my offer to abandon the remainder of the round Alan insisted on pressing ahead and the last miles along the ridge overlooking Edale were taken at a grim snail's pace. Late in the afternoon as the shadows lengthened we stumbled down from Mam Tor and trying to control some deep inner emotion I stretched out a hand and gave a nod of approval. "You've made it." A mutual look was sufficient, but it spoke so much that could not be said even between father and son. And time passed.

After 'A' levels my son had a conversation with a fitness fanatic in Manchester and a lengthy argument ensued. In the kitchen at home he thoughtfully remarked that he hadn't done much walking and would like to find time to do a few tops. "You know dad I haven't even been up Snowdon ... or Scafell Pike ... or Ben Nevis. Could we do them? ..." In the lengthy pause that followed I had time to reflect how little we had done together on the hills and what the future might hold — and then he completed the remainder of the punch-line. "... in a day." "Yes, why not" I casually retorted, without really considering any of the implications. "Well, my mate says it can't be done." "Oh, it has, I'm certain, but I can't remember who or when." Vaguely I recalled that a team had once done a route on the Ben, one on Scafell and one on Cloggy — all in a day, but that was all. "Let's go for it. I'm game."

And then came the doubts and a host of questions and thoughts. How far is it between Snowdon and the Ben? Must be all of 5 or 600 miles. I'd only driven more than 500 miles in a day on one previous occasion, going from near Vienna to Calais, and had been shattered at the end of it. What is more, with a couple of stops it had taken over twelve hours mainly using motorways. What about the twisting roads round to Wasdale or should we go from Langdale with a longer walk? Two problems dominated my thoughts: firstly is there any difference between doing the three peaks during a day and doing them in under 24 hours? The latter eventually seemed preferable, but as it was only to satisfy ourselves it was no issue. The main problem turned out to be the order of the peaks as for some obscure reason I subconsciously ruled out the idea of messing about with torches in the dark and didn't relish the thought of tumbling down into the evil depths of the gully which cuts into the Ben's summit plateau. Snowdon on the other hand could be negotiated on a pitch black night without too much fear of breaking one's neck. The final factor which eventually swayed us was that it was so far from Manchester to Fort William that if we had done the Ben first then we would have felt committed, whereas if the weather had turned foul after Snowdon or the Pike it would have been relatively easy to return home. Once that was settled I returned to the worry of driving non-stop without sleep and whether or not to get fit for the jaunt.

Perhaps Alan would cry off from the venture and forget about it. Before he left for a three-week tour of Germany I casually asked if he was still game as I wanted to make plans well in advance. He was suspicious, and rightly so. Being no fool it had occurred to me that it was over ten weeks since I had been over Helvellyn to grab the last photos for Bob Allen's book and since then the slavery of book-publishing had kept me hard at work. It was my sly intention to train hard nightly while Alan was away but somehow the jobs kept piling up and the phone demanded more and more of my limited time. In the event Alan rolled up at home one day and I had done precisely nothing to get fit. Perhaps the Fitzgerald

'I'm a sick man' ploy would work to my advantage.

With a 1,000-mile drive in front of me the idea was to idle down to Wales, stroll up Snowdon as gently as possible to conserve energy and then start the clock. With bad weather lingering as part of the third foul summer in a row we put off starting for 24 hours but got edgy while hanging about. Finally we decided to ignore the weather and take what fate might throw at us — a foolish impulse. Once in the car the lemming instinct took over and the accelerator pedal nudged closer and closer to the floor as the Cortina arrowed the coast road through persistent drizzle. Pete's Eats was winding down for the night and while the last of the diners drifted off for a quick pint we gulped scalding drinks, traversed the chip brigade along the main street then headed up towards the mist.

In the half-light we squelched at a trot through a field using clumps of rushes as stepping stones. Perhaps trainers for the first summit was not the best footwear to have chosen, especially as we had both taped up well with zinc oxide plaster to prevent sore feet. Once on the railway line we established a steady pace using the sleepers, but it must have been the muggiest night for some time as we were both running with sweat in no time at all. Higher up in the mist as a dense dew settled on our clothes Alan bemoaned the fact that without windscreen wipers on his glasses he was almost blind. The pace was hotting up and we even speeded up on the steep section above Cloggy. A red gleam penetrated the cotton-wool cloud and slowed us up as we speculated on U.F.O.s but it was merely the dying embers left from burning the summit hotel's daily rubbish. The summit cairn loomed large but there was no incentive to hang about. The fact that we had raced up in an hour-and-a-quarter was of no importance. This was merely the starting line. No gun fired but at 10.30 p.m. a large dog close at hand barked suddenly and made us jump causing us to scurry back down to the railway.

To descend quickly in the dark we had thought up several ideas, the most sensible of which seemed to be to keep one's feet either side of one of the rails. Somehow this technique made one walk stiff legged like Frankenstein's monster — a most irritating sensation. We reverted to the sleepers hoping that they were where they ought to be. Occasionally they weren't and after the odd protruding spike and boulder it's a wonder that both of us didn't measure our length all the way down the mountain. What with trying to spot the gleaming of the rail and sheep flitting about like spectres it was quite a unique descent to the mean machine. An hour down exactly and at 11.30 p.m. on the dot the engine roared into life and we turned east up the Pass.

The next target was Wasdale, a mere 228 mile drive through the night, and for the first hour all went well. Although he would not agree with me, and insists that he didn't get a wink of sleep, Alan kept nodding off and gentle snores that I could hear above the purring of the engine only served to remind me that I was fighting sleep. Queensferry was behind and the M6 was ahead but it was to

be a long haul as the Manchester signs reminded me that my bed was less than half an hour away. More signs ... Bolton ... Preston ... and eventually Lancaster. It was no use I had to pull off for a rest and a wash. My young co-pilot was more concerned with his stomach and headed for the cafe. Junction 36 came as a great relief but it was getting harder to concentrate and I longed for another driver to share the work. Newby Bridge ... Duddon Bridge ... and Bootle receded only to be replaced by the twisting horrors of the road leading to Wasdale.

We crunched on gravel to stop at 4.30 a.m. and after putting on some water to heat I tried to grab the sleep that I was craving. A grey dawn was little encouragement and the mist was boiling angrily to welcome us, so we slid silently past the sleeping campers at 5.30 a.m. and forged up towards Brown Tongue. Instead of becoming easier the angle seemed tougher than usual and we began to stop for a rest at frequent intervals. With visibility at a minimum we groped about below the face of Scafell to reach the ridge below Broad Stand before the last pull up to the Pike. We couldn't believe it, but we had dawdled away two and a half hours and it was already 8 a.m. It was bad news and we turned downhill mildly annoyed until I suddenly realised that we were not going down to the first aid box. After several uneasy minutes I concluded that we had come down the normal way to the north and it was only when I saw Wastwater far below that I was absolutely certain where we were. With relief we shot off down and reached the car in under three-quarters of an hour. For some reason my left knee was giving me problems and reluctantly I revved up the engine at 9.25 a.m. and headed into the rain.

This was the last chance to admit defeat and with a nagging pain in my knee I wasn't too happy about the 275 road miles in front of me. We finally agreed that it didn't matter if we didn't make it and if the worst came to the worst we could always rest overnight and go up the Ben in the morning. Whereas I couldn't think beyond Carlisle, Alan was looking ahead to a square meal. It helped when we crossed the border and I was able to grab a hot coffee at Gretna Green, but torrential rain beyond Lockerbie began to make driving difficult. While Alan refuelled in a transport cafe I slept for twenty minutes with the constant roar of traffic in my ears. Northwards to Glasgow began to be painful and I tried to stretch out my left leg to rest as much as I could. My brain was in a whirl; go west into bad weather and face delays along Loch Lomond, or go for good weather up to Stirling then cut across through Callander on the fast A84. I was getting impatient and went for dry roads on the east side, putting my foot down hard whenever the chances came. By Crianlarich I was driving back into the rain like some automaton, only returning to reality to grumble at infrequent traffic lights where the road was under repair. Going down Glencoe was good fun but I dreaded the thought of the Loch Leven detour — until I tumbled to the fact that there's a bridge nowadays. What relief! All of a sudden it was Fort William and

within a few minutes we were sliding to a halt at Achintee. 4.15 p.m. and decision time.

It's amazing what a hot brew can do and by 4.45 p.m. I was swinging on a sack again. Even if we had to spend the night on top we were going to finish if it killed us. It didn't help that everyone else was coming down. Half of Europe seemed to have been up the mountain that day and being tired they didn't seem to want to get out of our way; just like every car on the road that I had tried to pass. With driving, my left leg had gone stiff and I swung it in an arc at every other step. Were we going to be beaten after all? The path steepened and it struck me that wearing a cag was not much use when sweat was pouring out of every pore. Rounding the big gully I realised that there was a diversion going way out left. It was bound to be a lot longer but I was too tired to argue about it or make the decision to ignore the signs asking walkers to keep off the eroded section. There were even people ahead. By then they would have to get a move on if they wanted to be off the mountain by dark. Two American girls commented that they were doing nearly as well as we were — but couldn't take in what we had already done.

Those infernal (eternal) zig-zags! They just didn't give up and we resorted to making jokes about how long it would take if we stopped for two minutes every two minutes. All bad things sometimes end and Alan suddenly realised that what I had seen in front some distance earlier was in fact snow. He couldn't believe his eyes and wanted to go tobogganning on his cag. I was impatient and in no mood to mess about. We were close to success and I wasn't going to do this escapade again in a hurry. In the mist and light drizzle the plateau could have been mistaken for a lunar landscape but there was enough light left to make out the snow banks which still overhung the biggest of the gullies. Snow buntings scurried about like sparrows in a city in search of crumbs and I was reminded of a derelict bomb site as I gazed round the summit area. It was cooling fast on top and while donning several layers of clothing we realised that we had made it.

It was 7 p.m. which meant that we had made better time up the Ben than on Scafell Pike. Ridiculous. We were tired and our brains were working slowly and it took us some time to work out that it had taken us twenty and a half hours from Snowdon summit to the top of Ben. It could have been done a lot faster given a fast car, a driver, empty roads, fitness, and a burning ambition to prove something or other, but that wasn't why we had done it. Not since I took my dad up his last peak have I felt so good while in the hills, only this time all I could think of was Butch, the bulldog, in the Tom and Jerry cartoon — "Dat's my boy" In fact Alan had the last word on the way down when he thoughtfully commented, "You know dad, I've done them all but I haven't seen them in this weather. I'll have to go back and do them all again." I just hope that someone else will call HIS bluff.



# THE COTTAGE

DAVE GREGORY

Of Helyg much has been spoken and written, particularly in the last, commemorative year. That each man should have his own favourite location and that the favourite location of many men should be the same is understandable. The friendly roof from which they strode to conquer and under which they now gather to celebrate those blue remembered hills is not that for me, for I have never liked the place. I have, in fact, never entered its doors and would not admit to the indefensible admission had I not recently read in "Menlove" that the writer felt of "Cwm Glas Cottage", the scene of one of Edwards' suicide attempts, that "If houses can be said to have atmospheres this one's is not of the happiest. I have stayed there alone myself and felt unnerved and depressed by the place." Here, I feel, the wish is father to the writer's thought and afterknowledge used as evidence for I too have stayed in what we both call the Cottage and a friendlier place never gave shelter.

My first climbing journey to Wales, those thirty five years ago started in good weather and comfort but as the Black Vinny wheels rolled on the sky darkened and the pillion seat hardened. As we approached Ogwen the deluge came in earnest and Tryfan's dragon back was lost in grey wrack and the sheets of rain swept over the bowed, lashed, twisted, torment of the trees surrounding the wretched hovel. The depression of the sodden journey deepened the malevolence of that Grimm residence. Home it could have been of any number of wicked witches and hollow-fanged princes of darkness.

Our residence for the week was in fact even less salubrious. A hexagonal blockhouse, a machine gun post from Hitler's war standing just above the Ogwen shoreline in the line of seepage from the slopes of Pen yr Oleu Wen. As the week passed, with the drain blocked, the water level rose and the squalor grew, but Helyg stayed its inferior, for here brave spirits throve and there, the unknown evil lurked in its yew-green fastnesses.

The fashion for Ogwen was dying and with the hordes I thronged the Pass and my acquaintance with Cwm Glas began. Triple staged it has been; illicit, official guest and member.

The sun always shone in the illicit days and from its sunny terrace one could trace the many ways up the more than Three Cliffs, as Menlove may well have done. One evening from the grandstand wall we saw a team rope up under Brant Direct as the yellow sun dipped towards Caernarfon. The leader struggled as the light fell and by dint of spraying gear over the cracks and ribs he reached the V chimney and struggled rightwards to the tree. His second started as the scarlet cannonball was extinguished in the sea and made a fruitless effort in the growing



dark. At least eight pieces of gear they left and by six a.m. we had the lot.

There were and are disadvantages to staying there. One is apt to find the place alive with Cadet Corps pongos; the table a molecular model or rows and layers of bone domes; the dorms a resonance of far-back falsettos.

I have contributed my share to cramming the Cottage with adolescents. I planned a weekend once — four adults in the hut and sixteen forth formers in tents around it. The weather was ill. From noon on Friday the heavens wept. The hillside ran with water two inches deep. It came through the kitchen wall, across the lounge and out across the terrace. No water graced the taps however and what we needed we ran for, wellied and shirtless, to the toilet block. The wind flattened every tent we put up and, the floor awash, we slept everywhere else. Two deep in the window bottoms. Top to tail in the bunks. I was cajoled to lash the smallest member of the party to the bookshelf, but Will refused the adventure. A night with Wolf Solent might have been more water than he could have stomachached. *Mirabile dictu*, the Sabbath dawned fine, if windy, and they all made it to the top of Snowdon. On the journey back they all swore they'd enjoyed it and one of the window sill sleepers went up in my estimation. "What a smashing little cottage" he said. What a smasher indeed.

I was there again that winter. J.P. had decided to emigrate to Tasmania and wanted one last breath of Wales. Just the pair of us there were in The Cottage and the weather was hill perfect. Cold and clear to the sea, Passwards. The tops around so sharp you could reach to grasp them as handholds.

We were the first in the Pen-y-Pass car park and the Miners' Track to Llydaw was deserted. The minor noises associated with putting on crampons and unstrapping the axes seemed as sacrilegious as shouting in church and disgust at the racket made by a squad of the soft and barmy who caught us up drove us early up Central Trinity. There were four inches of powder for the leader to pull down onto the second but hard snow underneath and we were quickly up to the railway ridge and the summit.

There were more people there than watch Sheffield United most Saturdays. The sight would have warmed the cockles of the gear-shop owner's heart (were such an organ capable of so human a response). The slopes were covered in parodies of magazine advertisement models, fibre pile and Goretex teddy bears all sweating in the hot sun. Brand new crampons bought in the flush of enthusiasm in the spring of '79 were seeing snow for the first time, tripping up their owners and punching holes in those lovely gaiters.

Purple Alpinists were laid by every bulge on the summit cone. Ice axes of every colour, length and droop decorated the hill like a United Nations urinal. A few minutes of this was too much and we crunched off down the slope and round

to Crib-y-Ddysgyl, over Crib Goch and back to Pen-y-Pass. Two people only we saw and the weather held perfect.

A day to remember.

And the next day dawned as good a day, with one blemish. John's heels were a fair imitation of a pair of steaks and not far above Cwm Glas Mawr he packed up and hobbled over to the foot of Craig Rhaeadr to watch a pair yo-yoing on the ice flutes. I plodded up the path beside Cyn Las and sat on a boulder in the upper cwn to soak up the view before strapping on the crampons and following some innocuous gully by the side of Cryn Las to the ridge. Down the ridge a spell looking for a gully to break down towards The Cottage. There was no sign of any passage on the higher section. The snow was powdery still and little compacted beneath. Negotiating the rock steps was tricky. Facing inward and scraping down the rock. The gully fingers held sufficient harder snow to face out and stride down relying on the thrust in axe for support and part way down one of these were the first hare tracks.

For a hundred feet or so as I looked ahead for the easiest way down, the hare had already found it and our tracks coincided. I guessed he knew the mountain better than I did and gave up trying to find my own way and followed the hare. Faultless it was, the old jack rabbit, and went along thread of snow and down gully picking out the easiest line in immaculate fashion. Its trail of prints ran up over the blunt ridge by The Cottage and across its snow-covered terrace. I wished it well, a long pellet and fox free retirement, and went into another evening in front of The Cottage fire.

At Easter that same year Will and I spent a few days at The Cottage looking to get him started on the easier Pass classics. He had been a member of the water polo party, one of the smaller sardines and was a slightly unwilling companion, expecting the Pass to be a deluge above and below. It was dry and clear however and although it took some hard persuading to get him up the Everest of the slope to Flying Buttress, once reached the rock won four star status. We compounded the bliss by climbing the Spiral Stairs to heaven.

The next day we made our pilgrimage to Crackstone Rib and met there another old man showing a youngster the ropes. The Brown and Alan McHardy. Who was looking after whom? Will was thunderstruck. Two legends on one rope. On our return to the crag foot there was The Master sitting on Will's rucksack. The sandwiches were a bit squashed but who cared? Has Joe Brown sat on your rucksack? I'll bet not. I had made him the sack to fit him just before and since then I've had to lengthen the straps and move their fixings so that he can still wear it. It's half the size of mine and won't really take all his gear but it has a cachet that outweighs those disadvantages.

A watershed for him that weekend at The Cottage. He was hooked and for him and for me Cwm Glas Mawr is not just a cottage but a gateway to the hills. I suppose that I can no longer go there now without thinking of poor tortured Menlove but it still remains my favourite mountain shelter. Helyg? I suppose I shall have to stay there sometime, but do those dismal evergreens still harbour the powers of darkness?











# FROM SOLID GOLD TO OUTER SPACE

JOHN C. WILKINSON

That day we were not climbing well. We decided to shift ground. Before putting on my Fires I tried out the initial move of our new climb, and stuck my trainer into a crevice. Something hit the rubber turn up over my big toe, something that was exceedingly angry to judge by the extraordinary noise that ensued. Up to then I had only seen a rattlesnake safely dead and stuffed in the tourist shop at Dallas airport where we had made an unscheduled stop a week earlier because someone had forgotten to close the boot of our aeroplane properly.

As a result of that delay we, that is Simon Donowho and myself, arrived at 1 a.m. on a Thursday at San Francisco and kipped on the airport floor. The Frenchman in the sleeping bag under the next vending machine said it was snowing in Yosemite. It was, so we continued on to Joshua Tree and spent the second night somewhere in the Mojave desert. The following afternoon we started climbing with a route that our selected climbs said was the must of the area, *Solid Gold*. It set the tone for our holiday.

Joshua Tree is rather like an overgrown Fontainebleau. The massifs are scattered around the desert in clusters of granite blocks. Our campsite was in the middle of one of these. Each place, furnished with a barbecue, table and seats, would be a full "camping" on the continent: in addition we had a celebrated boulder problem nearby where the local experts entertained us whilst we supped our Budweisers. The only snag in this otherwise idyllic scene was that the nearest water was fourteen miles away. But that presented the excuse to go into town (Yucca Valley is much more lively than Joshua Tree itself) and try the Mexican food: and with petrol, sorry gas, at about 60p a gallon, so what!

Our projected three day stay prolonged to eight: the unseasonable cold weather, indicating poor conditions further north, provided the excuse. During that time we accumulated 76 stars, mostly in the (5.10) grade. The quality of climbing is outstanding, incredible friction with tiny incuts permitting real fly-on-the-wall stuff; in contrast there are also big juggy overhangs, continuous cracks and, for those who like that sort of thing, offwidths. For the most part the routes lie within a short walking distance of the road but until one gets to know the geography of the area, problems can arise in identifying the various boulder fields and ridges, particularly in the outback. Our three hour cast around to find the Astra Domes on the first day was surpassed a few days later by an interminable four hour fight through cactus and up and down boulder strewn canyons before we eventually found the entrance to the Big Horn Mating Grotto on Diarrhoea Dome: yup, those are the real names. It was worth it for the splendid overhanging

*Dangling Woo Li Master* (also *sic*!) but rain (Californian weather is fraudulent) put an end to further exploits that day. But in general, we found four climbs made an adequate day, even though they were rarely more than one pitch. Perhaps this is because they feel bigger than they are. Routes like *Dog Day Afternoon* (5.10b) and *Heart and Sole* (5.10a) are so varied or, as in the cases of *Illusion Dweller* (5.10a), *Run For Your Life* (5.10b), *Quantum Jump* (5.10c), such long pitches of so sustained a quality that they feel like proper "expeditions", as the old British guide books used to say; and the sheer pump of cracks like *Taxman* or *Exorcist* (5.10a) make them seem much longer than they are in terms of footage.

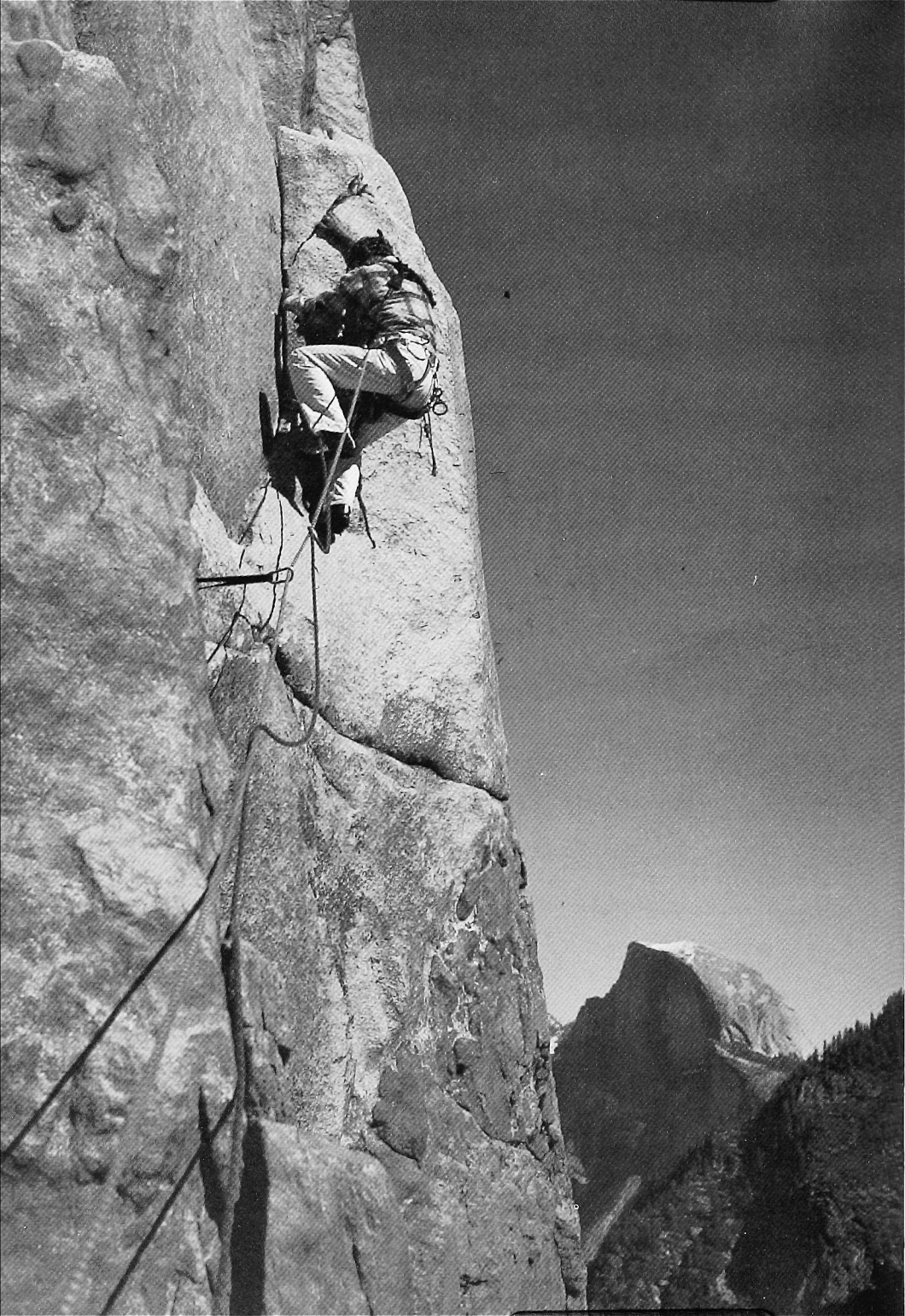
Of the other routes we did *Poodles are People Too* (5.10b), *Clean and Jerk* (5.10b), *Watanobe Wall* (5.10a), the *Wolseys Papa* (5.10b) and *Mama* (5.10a) should not be missed. At the lower end of our grade, I particularly recommend *The Flake* (5.8) on Intersection Rock for its variety, whilst at the other end Simon thought *Course and Buggy* (5.11a, unseconded!) superlative. A visit to Quail Springs Well will also please those gritstoners who find anything over 30ft too long. But for real thrills, throw in the odd rattlesnake.

Midday Saturday we decided it really was time to return to Yosemite and we set off up the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada, much more picturesque than the other side, which we had to take on the way down because snow had closed the Tioga Pass. It was clear from our views of Mt. Whitney that the snow was still down low and it was freezing when we camped at about 5000ft. So we simply admired the Tuolumne scene *en passant* and continued down to the valley floor where we ticked off the popular *Nutcracker* in the afternoon, although somewhat held up by the Sunday crowd, notably a sack-hauling party immediately ahead of us! Next day we did the *Central Pillar of Frenzy* but I did not really enjoy it. The Joshua Tree rock had spoiled us and Yosemite felt smooth and polished by comparison. So much so that the previous day I fell off the direct start to *Nutcracker* without the slightest warning. Simon too had some difficulty in adjusting and the *Good Book* remained closed after its first two pitches.

The trouble with Yosemite is El Capitan. I was not prepared to go for one of the main routes, although I had hoped we might do the North Face of Half Dome. In the event it was too cold and the weather too spooky for that. The small routes in the valley are fine, correction superb, but the trouble is that wherever you are, you cannot escape from that fantastic piece of golden rock. I tried to convince myself that I'd rather look at it than climb it, but I knew my argument was specious: I've always said the same thing about the Matterhorn, but I went back and climbed that for the third time this year. But failing the *Nose* or whatever on the main cliff, you can't do better than the *East Buttress*, a fine route of some twelve pitches of incredibly varied climbing, chimneys, offwidths, overhangs, friction, cracks

*Opposite: Nick Hallam seconding 3rd pitch of "Serenity Crack", Yosemite*      *Photo: Keith Sharples*





and chicken heads. Even the easy pitches are gems and in no way detract from the continuous quality of the climbing. It was a pleasantly warm day and we were able to climb in tee-shirts, but on the way down we had a rain shower (by the way, the guide book is quite misleading about the descent, there is a 500ft cliff equipped for full length abseils). Since the next day the weather was again beginning to look dubious, we decided to move off on the final stage of our tour, to Colorado. We returned the hire car to San Francisco airport and dossed the night on the carpark, did downtown in a couple of hours next morning and set off at midday on a Greyhound bus. Thirty one hours, a third of the way across the States, was an experience not to be missed and as 'ethnic' as any bus ride I have done in the Himalayas or Andes. But when we began to run into snow and found the best part of a foot on the ground at Denver, I began to wish we had stayed on the West coast. My feeling was reinforced by a visit to the cliffs next day; everything was covered by ice and the temperature of the wind never rose above freezing. Fortunately, we were staying with another climber, Mick Harris, who had just taken up a research post at Boulder and so were not camping; and I had brought some work to get on with. But the weather recovers quickly in Colorado and we only lost two days of potential climbing. So in view of the fact that we had not missed a single day between arriving at Joshua Tree and leaving Yosemite, the break was almost welcome.

Eldorado Canyon is a must in any climber's life. The quality and steepness of the rock quickly take one into the realms of space so that even short two pitch routes on cliffs like the Bastille feel spectacularly exposed, whilst the longer four and six pitch routes give the pleasure of a major climb without the worry of fighting the clock. Our introduction to the longer routes on Redgarden Wall was a combination of *Touch and Go* followed by *Anthill Direct* with its own Direct Finish. This provided nine well worthwhile stars in the 5.8-5.9 range and gave us a closer look at the *Naked Edge* which Simon later did with Mick. I had a moment of excitement when I pulled over the overhang on the crux of *Anthill* and found myself jammed solid, having hastily clipped my last runner on the wrong side of the crotch loop of my Whillans harness! Next day we moved on to more serious stuff with *Rosy Crucifixion* which I did not enjoy. Although obviously a super quality climb, I found the overhanging traverse above a horrifying drop, much too exciting, whilst the continuation up the steep crack was far too strenuous for my ageing limbs. But the agony was made up for by the ecstasy of *West Buttress* (5.9) on the Bastille, a route which along with its twin, *Hair City*, simply cannot be missed. Nor, too, *Yellow Spur* which is everything the guide book says it is; beautifully varied it feels more like a mountain experience than a pure rock climb.



By now the weather had become so pleasant that we decided to try the granite buttresses higher up at Estes Park. But our temerity of climbing in tee-shirts at 3000m nearly cost us dear for the weather rapidly started to change on the climb, whilst once we got down our late start forced us to more-or-less run the three miles back to the car so as not to get locked into the Park overnight. But at least we saw the Rockies and managed to catch a glimpse of the Diamond on the way back.

For our last route Mick joined us in doing *Outer Space* (5.10) on the Bastille in Eldorado Canyon. *Werk Supp* (5.9) seemed a good way to get to it and we decided to complete this climb for the sake of its hilarious finish, a peapod crack which yields only to vast inputs of energy, whether lay-backed or jammed. We climbed back down to more serious things as the weather really began to clag in. By the time we had done the next pitch, it was raining and we had two more to go. The terrain however, was so overhanging that this seemed immaterial and my winge for opting out by the last possible escape was rightly ignored by the other two. So Mick started to inch out towards the edge of the sensational void, retiring frequently to *terra firma* as he tried to lace up the outer edge of space. Suddenly he launched himself upwards and outwards into the fourth dimension and disappeared. By the time Simon and I joined him on the tiny hanging stance, 250ft above the road, the rock above was soaking and I began to wonder if we were now encapsulated in a climber's black hole. Fortunately the final pitch turned out to be only gently impending and a line of weakness wandering dementedly back and forth across the cliff allowed return to the normal world.

I arrived on the summit as a red ray of evening light broke under the wintery pall that had engulfed the sky for the last three hours. It was a remarkable conclusion. From *Solid Gold* we had climbed virtually every day for three and a half weeks to the limits of *Outer Space*, bagging a collection of routes in the HVS to E3 range of a quality which must be unsurpassable. By going late in the season (24 September - 18 October) we had gambled with conditions and paid by having consistently cold weather and shortish days, thereby losing out at Yosemite. But we also lost the masses and that, in these days of overcrowded climbing, is a price well worth paying.







# A PEAK DISTRICT WINTER

AL CHURCHER

My winter in the Peak began on the 29th December with a walk over Kinder. For several days an area of high pressure had been firmly fixed over England, and the resulting hard frosts had left the peat like iron and any surface water frozen right through. The downfall was disappointing; with little precipitation during the last week there were just a few thin runnels of ice. But the Kinder River exceeded all expectations — the frozen pool just above the downfall was a source of great delight to the children hurling themselves across its smoothness before slithering down a funnel of ice between boulders. As we followed the path beside the river its glassy surface reflected a cloudless blue sky — a sinuous line of mirror glass on some giant model landscape. So smooth was the surface that when we came to cross it we could only just keep our footing. An almost perfect two miles of unbroken ice awaited anyone with the foresight and imagination to carry a pair of skates. A skating-traverse of Kinder — that would be one for the Guinness Book of Records!

A week later I was back. The Downfall was reported to be in good condition and with an early start we were at the foot of the ice by a little after nine. But the weather had changed and a trickle of water running over and under the ice steadily increased in volume as we waited for a party of five to complete their ascent; watching in some dismay as the last pair systematically set out to destroy the last of the ice. Not wishing to baptise a new pair of overtrousers by perforating them with crampons, I decided to tuck them inside my gaiters. The predictable result was an efficiently water-cooled climber, for as I raised my arms to alternately place ice-axe and hammer in the steep ice above me, the water cascaded down the sleeves of my cagoule and thoroughly soaked my upper body. At the same time, that running down my overtrousers was diverted inside my gaiters and into my boots!

The rise in temperature was the forerunner of the year's first heavy snowfall, and as we squelched back along Ashop Clough to the Snake the talk came round to X-country skiing. Jim had purchased a cheap set of gear a couple of years before, and as he was unlikely to use them for a few days I was welcome to try them out. By the time I dragged myself away from his warm fireside (and a teapot that seemed to magically replenish itself), there was at least two inches of snow on the streets of Sheffield, and as soon as I'd garaged the car I was off exploring the untracked snow of surrounding suburban streets.

The next afternoon saw my first venture on to the local golf-course. By now the snow was well over a foot in depth and making progress on the flat was hard enough — but going downhill was little short of disastrous. With nothing to hold

*Opposite: Al Churcher making tracks on Win Hill*

*Photo: Jill Churcher*

the heel down the light fragile skis had a mind of their own, and usually ended up either crossing themselves or sliding into painful voice-raising splits — at this rate I would soon become the world's first 40 year old boy soprano! But this was the beginning of an obsession, and for the next two months the skis became a permanent fixture in the back of the car. At least two nights a week I would hurtle off from work ready to explore some new area close to home — at first the evenings were so short that I kept to variations on local streets and golf courses — invariably returning by light of a head-torch. I soon learned to watch out for several objective dangers — white painted chains across greens at a shin-snapping height, and hidden bunkers were the most obvious; but no less dangerous were the house-holders who used ashes instead of the more usual salt and gravel mixture upon their paths and drives. Whereas the latter melts the snow and is clearly visible, the ashes soon blend in with wind blown snow so that the first warning is when your skis come to an abrupt halt beneath you, before depositing you in a painful and undignified heap upon the pavement.

But as the evenings grew longer I was able to venture further afield — up to Stanage Pole, along Burbage or out to the Headstone. With the prevailing low temperatures even short solo expeditions a few miles away from the borders of Sheffield took on a slightly serious air — but it took a trip around Burbage to really bring that home to me. I was off work with laryngitis — one of those frustrating ailments that leave you feeling perfectly fit apart from the fact that you can't speak — and that's pretty important for a teacher. Well, I caught up on my reading, prepared a few lessons and generally enjoyed the rest for the first two days. But two days of sitting about indoors is more than enough for me, and when on the third afternoon the sun came out and the snow began to sparkle ... well that was it. The skis went into the back of the car and I was off for Burbage, justifying myself with the thought that I really ought to take some pictures of these freak winter conditions to show future classes.

The road from the Norfolk Arms to Burbage Bridge had been impassable for some weeks (and was to remain so until Easter) so I drove round to the Fox House car park and was soon skiing up towards Carl Walk. The snow was fine until I reached the top of the ancient hill fort — on the other side the snow changed to wind-glazed plates of hard ice and skiing with no steel edges was a nightmare. Still I pressed on, and made it to the top of Higgar Tor. By now a mist had descended, but it was not far to the road which I could follow to Burbage Bridge and then take the Green Drive back to the waiting car. But where was the road, and since when had there been snow-fences under Higgar Tor? It took me some minutes to realise that these were the wire fences on either side of the road. Wires that were hidden several inches beneath an encrustation of ice that



varied from an inch to two inches in thickness. As for the road — what road? There was simply a white expanse of snow littered with huge snow crystals as large as boulders, and ridged with drifts wind-glazed into icy barriers. After a few minutes of little progress over this lunar/arctic landscape I decided to cut my losses and cut across Burbage Brook to gain the Green Drive on the opposite side.

I didn't need a compass, after all I knew the area like the proverbial back of my hand as I must have walked or run this circuit at least a dozen times. It seemed a little further to the brook than I recalled, but it was the icy walls bordering it that first set off the alarm bells. By now the snow was falling steadily and the wind was getting up, and I certainly didn't fancy the uphill struggle back to Higgar Tor. With my sticks hanging from my wrists and using the skis as ice-axes I kicked steps carefully down to the boulders in the bed of the stream. So far so good. The bank opposite was only about 15 feet high and should present no difficulty, I'd soon be on the Green Drive and back in the warmth of my car. But the opposite slope was undercut at the base, and every time I tried to kick my way up the slope the snow simply slid away underneath me, depositing me back in the stream bed. Eventually I found a slightly higher boulder, and by planting my skis as high up the bank as I could reach was able to pull myself over the awkward start. Not that it was all over yet, my flexible boots were no stiffer than trainers, hardly the thing for kicking steps up steep snow and ice, but after one or two minor backward slides I was up.

But my problems were only just beginning. In the fifteen minutes or so that I'd spent slithering about in the sheltered stream bed, the wind had steadily increased until it was now little short of a blizzard. And the edge was nowhere in sight. I'd put on my spare clothing some time before, and my rucksack was empty but for a piece of flapjack and an apple — not that that would keep me alive for long. Exposure bag, duvet jacket etc. were all at home in the cupboard. You don't carry things like that on Burbage — Burbage was shorts, T-shirts and a chalk bag soloing easy climbs on summer evenings, or a pleasant easy walk for not very active visiting relatives. It wasn't the sort of place you could die. Or was it? I could just imagine the headlines; 'Local Climber Dies in Blizzard on Burbage'. What a stupid way to go! Getting rescued would almost be worse — I'd never live it down — *and* I was supposed to be off work ill!

While this was running through my head I'd been following a beaten path towards the bridge, but as the blizzard increased I found I was walking straight into it. I was getting colder by the minute and the edge was still nowhere in sight. It was time to reason it out — if I walked directly up the slope I was bound to strike the Green Drive. As long as I kept going uphill ... A few minutes later the

edge loomed out of the mist and soon after that I was on the Green Drive. A tractor or Land Rover had been down, leaving two deep tracks with a raised bank between them. The snow in the ruts was beautifully compacted, and with a layer of fresh wind-blown powder on top it was a perfect skiing surface. The wind was directly behind me now, effectively turning the near-flat mile back to the Fox House into a magical down-hill run which took little more than two minutes. Needless to say a packed rucksack containing full survival gear joined the skis in the back of the car for the rest of the winter!

The last days of January and the first two of February had brought the last heavy snowfalls of the winter — although this was to remain on the ground until well into March. By mid-February the local shops were running short of cross-country gear, but not before Chris and Sue Jackson and Bob Conway had decided to equip themselves for snow-bashing, and with Roy and Marilyn Small on ski-mountaineering skis it was a motley crew that set out from Hathersage up the snow-covered road to Stanage one Sunday morning. It was the typical 'peasoupier' weather so often associated with snow on our hills, and we were right under Stanage before we could see the edge. Not that much of it was visible, for a steep bank of snow reached almost to the highest rocks, where cornices of windblown snow had half-thawed and sagged over like melting ice-cream from an overfull cornet. Further on other cornices had broken right away, and great blocks of snow were left from the resulting mini avalanches. Almost all the familiar features were obliterated, and we waited some minutes for Roy and Marilyn to catch us up before we realised that the overhang no more than a foot above my upstretched arm belonged to the Tippler. Drifted snow across corners and gullies had been wind-sculpted into strange caves and grottoes, and the trees of the plantation were enormous milk-shake lollies looming up through the mist.

Traversing down to Bamford edge the more exposed snow was once again hidden beneath a thick layer of wind-glaze, and this was to become a familiar sight upon the high gritstone moorland of the Dark Peak. Not only did it make ski traverses of Kinder and Bleaklow virtually impossible, but the effects on sheep were far more serious — in some exposed positions they were found standing with their feet frozen into the ice. Miraculously some recovered after their feet had been chipped free. We soon learnt to choose routes sheltered either by trees or drystone walls and, perhaps surprisingly, it was often the limestone moors that provided some of the best tours — a day on Shatton Moor (between Hathersage and Bradwell) was particularly enjoyable. Our last trip took Jill and I up through the trees on the side of Win Hill bordering Ladybower Reservoir. It was the 29th of March, but the snow on the sheltered rides was still in perfect condition, and when we stopped for lunch in a sunny clearing we could have easily been in Sweden or Finland.



But perhaps the memory that will stay with me the longest dates from the previous week, and one of the many trips around Burbage. Various chores meant it was almost three o'clock when we parked the car on the still snow-blocked road above Ringinglow. A slight dusting of new snow had frozen over the old icy covering, and as we skimmed effortlessly over Burbage Moor it was hard to imagine that the surface beneath us is normally a morass of heather covered peat bog. Before us the setting sun dipped in a red glowing ball over Stanage, and as if we were the fulcrum of an invisible axis, the full moon climbed up behind. Snow crystals swirled in a devil-dance across an Arctic landscape that seemed, like time, to go on for ever. Perhaps we'd never pass this way again, but for now it was enough to be a part of it all.

# 1986 REVISITED: A PERSONAL VIEW

KEITH SHARPLES

It was August and it was raining. Nothing new in that I hear you say, not in Britain anyway. Laybacking up the final groove it felt amazing. The groove was gently overhanging but it felt like a slab in comparison with what lay below. The situation was impressive; it was like climbing up the inside of a cooling tower. Actually I was on *The Overlap* on Kilnsey's North Buttress, but some better writers (and climbers) than me never let the truth spoil a good story. The final few moves were still hard and there was yet another roof. Above this was the abseil point. Abseiling off to belay Nigel (Slater) from below, I regained the ground 8 metres out and 15 metres to the side of where I had started.

For me the 1986 season had begun slowly from the depths of winter. During the winter months I concentrated exclusively on home life and repairs (some would say rebuilding) to our home. It also meant an hour in the gym two or three times a week. I can remember the first session as though it was yesterday. I can remember the last session; it was yesterday! Since those early days the faces have changed but the motive stays the same. Eventually the spring came and during the longer breaks in the rain, Horseshoe Quarry was the place to be. Like everybody else I was working through the card at 'insitu city'. Fast drying and bolt protected, the climbing was ideal for jaded minds and muscles.

Easter was a wash out in Pembroke. Only Dougie Hall seemed unaffected by the weather. Other mortals just struggled. Eventually we went home and I sulked. April for me was like January, February and March; spent indoors preparing for professional exams. As soon as they were over, Liz and I were off to the hotter climes (and climbs) of the continent; but that as they say is another story.

Europe soon passed by and it was back to 'good old blighty' The weather in June was a real turn up for the book. The sun shone incessantly and slowly the crags dried out. A couple of visits to the Chew Valley gave me a chance to visit some different crags. It never fails to amaze me that climbers from Sheffield (myself included) don't travel to the Chew more often. Many of the routes are well worth the effort.

Circumstances forced me out more and more on my own and I remember one evening in particular. Soloing on the Intermediate area of Stanage on a superb Friday, I enjoyed myself immensely. Soloing for me is restricted to gritstone and to 'Division Two' routes at that. Every once in a while I have a spell when I feel that soloing is ok, but it is only a brief incursion in an otherwise cautious climbing style. *Archangel*, *Brush Off*, *Oedipus* and *Downhill Racer* aren't hard solos by today's standards but that's the secret of soloing, doing a bit at a time and knowing when to break off. 'A man's gotta know his limitations'. I don't

want to leave 1986 for ever; not until December 31 at any rate!

Nobody likes ringing the changes when enjoying success and so I stayed with gritstone for a while longer. Acting on information received, I had previously abseiled down *Hathersage Trip* at Stanage. Returning for a midweek sortie, the guidebook's parachute was replaced by a succession of better-the-higher-you-get runners and the myth surrounding yet another grip-trip was shattered.

A new Borrowdale guidebook from the F.R.C.C. heralded a long overdue visit to the Lakes in July. As usual though the weather turned foul. Still, an afternoon on Reecastle Crag for *White Noise* and *Penal Servitude* was some recompense for the drive north. A change of venue was obviously needed to escape the dour penetrating veil that had resulted from the overnight rain. Leaving Borrowdale, we headed for Malham. We must have driven there fast because when we arrived it was still raining; but anybody who knows Jerry (Frost) knows that he only has two speeds, flat out or stopped. Over the next two days Jerry forced me to lead everything and I unashamedly enjoyed some of the best routes at Malham.

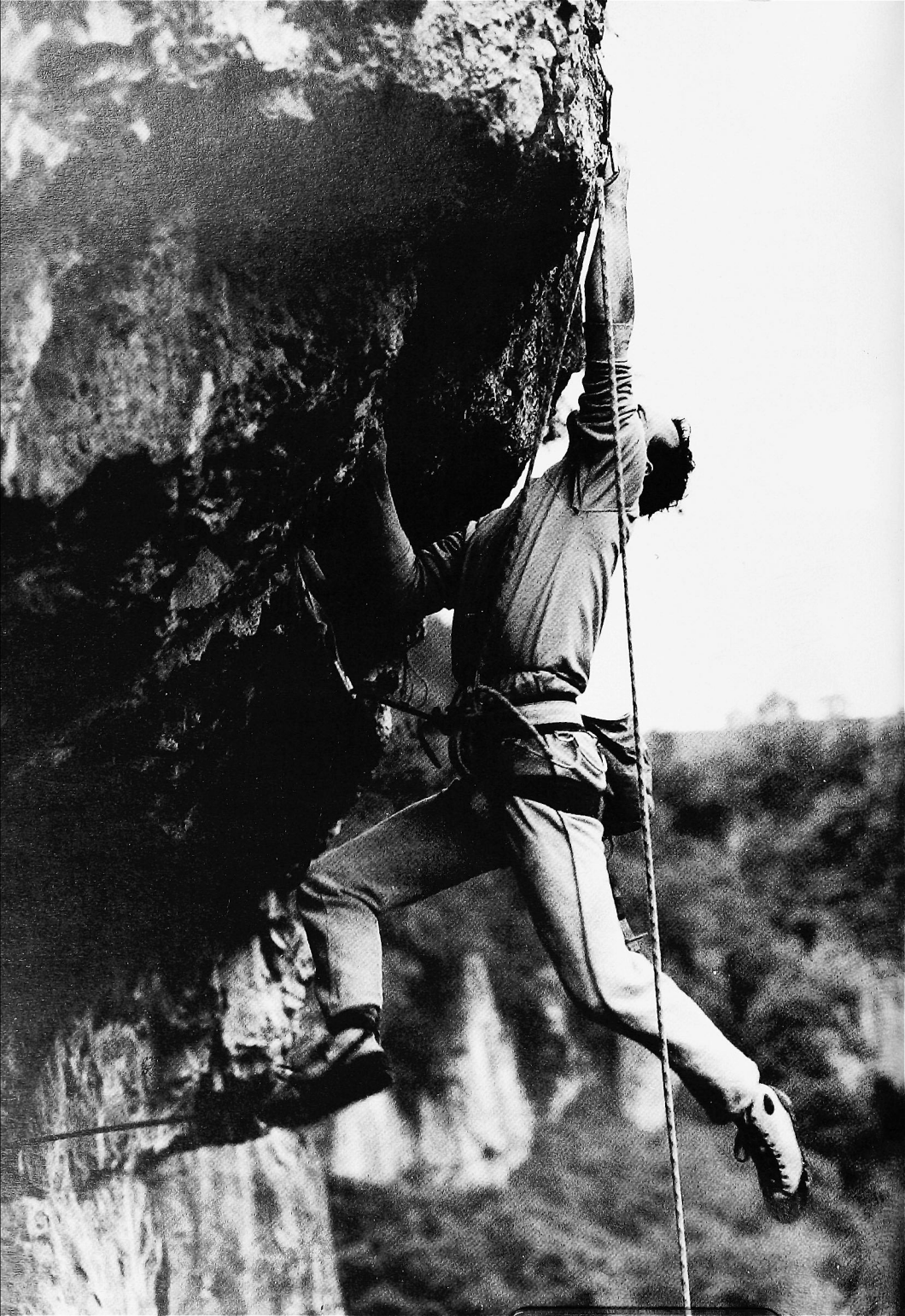
After these few days I craved for more and by early August I was at Kilnsey and battling it out with *The Overlap*. This was my second weekend running at Kilnsey but Graham's (Hoey) first. He was busy pointing out that all the crags in 1986 had been overhanging (my preference) whilst previously in 1985 they had all been either slabby or vertical (his preference). Not only can I recommend the climbing on both *The Overlap* and *Crank Stroke Groove*, but the new bolt abseil station, recently replaced by Chris Sowden, is a God send. Previously the rappel station was a single insitu wire!

For everybody who lives in Sheffield, Rivelin Edge and Quarry can be considered their back-door crag. Often sheltered when the Peak District is weather bound, Rivelin's proximity makes it doubly attractive. Recently John Allen, often climbing with his long standing partner Mark Stokes, has added numerous modern super routes, dragging as Mark said, the crag into the Eighties. Earlier in the year Graham had repeated Allen's *New Mediterranean* and I was keen to have another attempt myself. Meeting Nigel after work, the vicious midge population meant that success would have to be quick or else it would be denied yet again. Whilst I accept that pebble pulling is not my scene, powerful undercutting is. After two falls this approach gave success and vindicated all the arm curls in the gym last winter.

I started September with new vigour, since only two months remained before it would be back to the gym again. Uncoiling the ropes beneath *Indecent Exposure* at Raven Tor I prepared for a battle. After a couple of falls I was eventually at the girdle break, but the still pumpy wall above finally forced me to submit only 4

*Overleaf left: Graham Hoey making the third ascent of "Systems Malfunction" Cbee Dale*

*Photo: Ian Smith*







metres before the belay. One nil to the crag, but I knew that I'd be back.

I felt it was time to regenerate with a few successes before returning to *Indecent* and *Teddy Bear's Picnic* at Rivelin fitted my mood. With continuously sustained climbing and the crux where it should be, at the top, it couldn't have been better. With *Indecent* still on my mind, Graham and I headed for Water-Cum-Jolly. *Jezebel* was crying out for a new bolt and a general clean up. With a bit of spit and polish, and a new bolt, *Jezebel* became an overnight success. Strangely enough, *Kingfisher* became popular as well.

My obsession with Raven Tor became too much, but the return match with *Indecent* was almost an anti-climax. The now familiar moves led up the first pitch and with only one fall the belay was reached. As Nigel seconded to retrieve the gear the memories of the first attempt began to fade. Practise, as they say, makes perfect. Verging on becoming terminally obsessed with the crag I returned twice more in September, once for *Another Toadside Attraction* and later for *Koran Direct*. Both are very worthwhile.

My attention then turned to High Tor. I have always had difficulty in getting Graham and Ian (Riddington) to the Tor at weekends. Both are teachers and work south of Sheffield, and therefore High Tor has always been an evening crag for them and consequently excluded from weekend visits. However climbing alternatively with Al (Churcher) and Nigel, when either was away, Matlock became a popular venue. Popular that is until parking the car in what I thought was an unrestricted area on a crowded Sunday, I receive a parking ticket! So much for saving the £1 parking fee! Al seemed to enjoy seconding *Tales of Yankee Power* and *Supersonic* and Nigel raced up *Bastille*, but the look of disdain as he seconded the first pitch of *Castellan* was a sight for sore eyes. So despairing was the look on his face that I think I'd rather lead it again than second it!

As the 'Indian Summer' continued we entered the third week of fine weather. For three days at the beginning of October, Nigel and I headed off to North Wales. Driving down from Sheffield on the Friday morning the sun on Pen Trwyn proved too tempting to ignore. A quick warm up was obviously in order before we tackled the sterner stuff on the Mr Olympia wall. Nigel was still firing on all cylinders and was hard to restrain as I signed up for *The Chain Gang*. Stunned by the ferocity of the innocuous looking wall, I was soon back on the ground. Nigel was after Fawcett's *Mr Olympia* and made good progress until gravity proved too strong for him as well. I went back to work and finally sorted out a way of bypassing the impasse by locking off on a layaway-cum-pinch by my waist and making a l-o-n-g reach to an obvious jug. Again terra firma attracted me again, but on my next go I made no mistake. Nigel was now really fired up and stormed his route.

*Previous page: Nigel Slater on "Jezebel", Water-cum-Jolly*

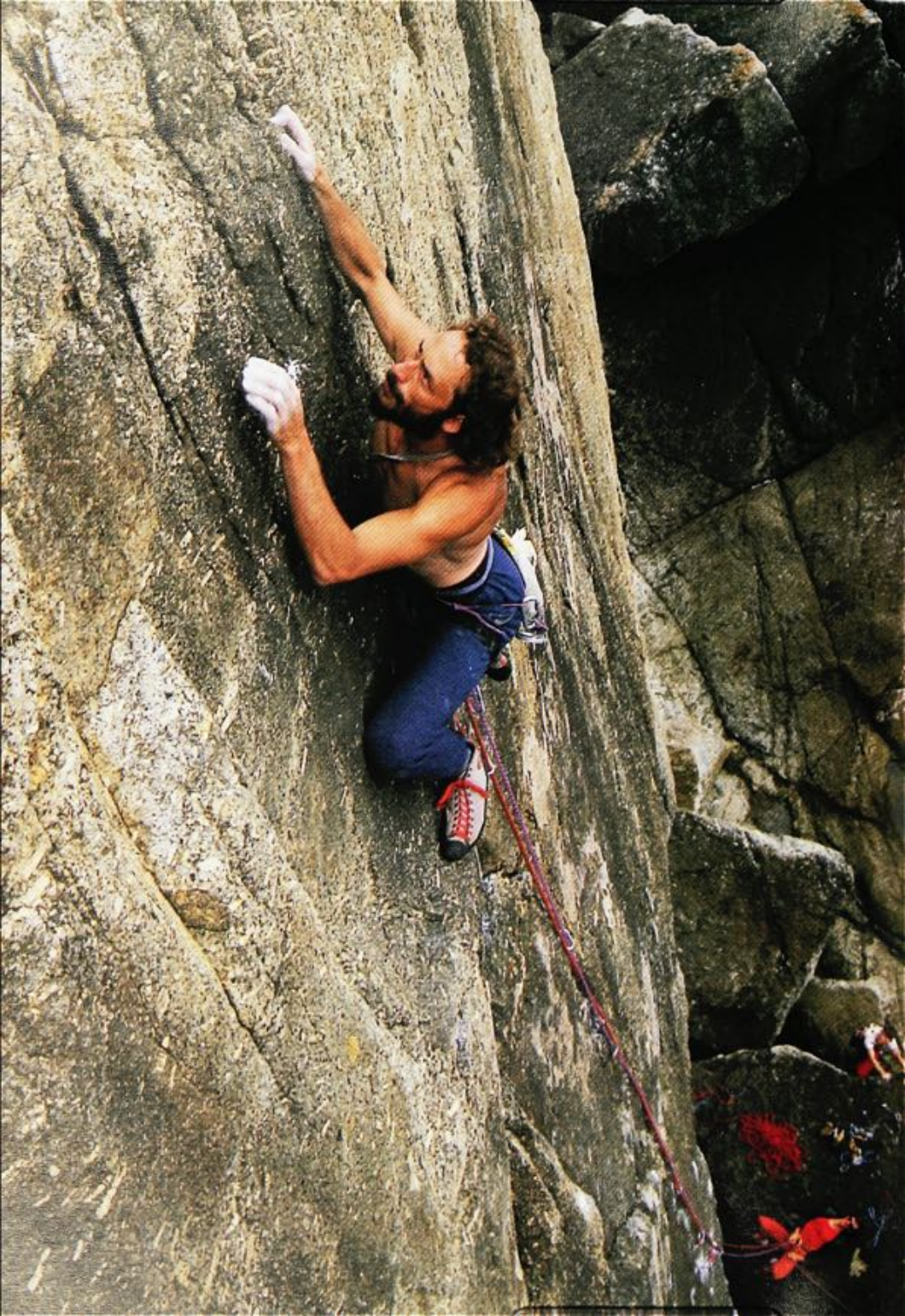
*Photo: Keith Sharples*



On Saturday morning the sun rose obligingly with us and abrogated any doubts about our venue for the day; it had to be The Cromlech. Lashed to the bottom in 1977, Liz had almost suffered sun stroke as I fell repeatedly off the final crack on *Left Wall*. That morning Nigel ran a similar risk on what turned out to be a very hot day. Lying prostrate, he watched my familiar bludgeoning approach as I battled up *Lord of the Flies*. Talking later with Neil Foster he had, so he recalls, only taken ten minutes to get to the girdle ledge, only to be forced to retire on the top wall as a badly split finger poured with blood. By contrast time stood still for me, until nearly two hours later I emerged at the top. There is no moral to this story but I am reminded of the tale about the tortoise and the hare. My come-uppance was however quickly administered that afternoon when the roles were reversed as Nigel attempted *Atomic Hot Rod*. Well not quite actually since the sun went in as I belayed Nigel. Sunday? well as you may have guessed it rained. Nuff said!

With the end of the season rapidly approaching, climbing in the evening was becoming a hurried affair. On separate visits to South Burbage, I snatched *Pebble Mill* and Nigel retorted with *The Knock*. The lack of height of both these routes belies their seriousness. In my book 5c/6a moves ten metres above bad landings means E5 for on-sight lead. Oh yes, both routes have runners to protect their final moves, but don't bother with a harness, it won't make the ground any softer! Finally a benightment on *Special K* at Stoney the following week ended evening climbing for another year. And by the way to the climber who did *Windbover* that week and found an 'abandoned' quickdraw; please give it a good home and don't forget it as I did when abseiling in the dark!

Well that was it for 1986. The decorating though is coming on fine and its nearly time to start all over again. See you on the crags.







# HOOK IN AND HANG ON

**MIKE F. BROWELL**

Imagine you're lying in Lyn Padarn on a March day. With water near freezing and white froth whipping past. You can't be sure whether its rain or spray which lashes your face. You're in the middle of the lake and a rolling swell driven by a force six wind is pushing you along. Amazingly you're warm; sweating from exertion and gasping for breath. Your forearms are pumped up solid.

You're on your own.

But you've got a board. You struggle to swim your mast round to face the wind. You ease the mast just clear of the water, pumping gently with your feet to get some lift. It clears and instantly the sail fills and lifts clear of the water sending a spray shower downwind. Hanging onto the boom you feel suddenly weightless, now floating easily with head and shoulders clear of the water. Carefully you feather the sail, working your hands along the boom and keeping the mast low so as not to overfill with wind.

Then in a flash you lift the mast and boom, catching the wind, and suddenly you're airborne, ripped bodily out of the water. You kick a heel onto the tail of the board and ram your toes into the foot straps on the board, a reflex action which stops you being catapulted over the nose. The weight of the sail strains at your pumped forearms and you twitch your waist harness towards the line which dangles from the boom. Hook into the line, connect and you're in business.

Less than two seconds ago you were lying in icy water. Now you blast across the chop, sail humming and leaning well over the board. Your bum skims the water, sometimes touching. Your toes are just hooked under the straps and the board twitches as it bounces from wave to wave. Your knees and feet are constantly reacting to trim the board. You hang off the boom, all the weight of 25 knots of wind pushing against 5 square metres of sail is carried through your harness. Your hands grip the boom and try to control the sail. Your forearms are pleasantly pumped but recovering and you gasp for breath ...

The lake shore's boulders are screaming towards you. At this speed you'll break board and bones without fail. Lifting your rear toe out of the straps you press firmly down on one side of the board.

As it bites into the water a beautiful arcing sheet of spray carves out and you turn away from the wind. Everything happens so quickly, you carve the board into the turn, unhook, lean the sail over and suddenly you let go. You're travelling with the wind for a split second and so the sail is weightless. It flips around and you grab the boom again, now on the opposite side, hooking in immediately as the board returns to its high speed planing course heading back across the lake.

Glancing around now you see other boards zipping over the water. You catch

a glimpse of a face through the sails pvc window. The hair is horizontal, eyes wild and the mouth is open in an exhilarated grin. Just like yours.

Wouldn't you rather be in the Tremadoc cafe? Or in Pete's Eats? Or bouldering at Hyll Drem? Or in the hut or walking, or even attempting to climb? No, not really.

Ever spent a wet weekend in Wales ...?

Windsurfing has to be made for climbers! It is so totally compatible and the adrenalin rush is much the same. It's only really worthwhile when it's blowing wildly and then the buzz is like driving a fast car but with less expensive consequences if you cock it up. When the weather is right for climbing it probably isn't for windsurfing. When the weather is bad for climbing it is almost certainly perfect for windsurfing.

So many climbers have discovered the sport already and yet so many others are sceptical. It takes a bit of bottle and a little bit of effort to try it for the first time. Sometimes its a nuisance to drive to a lake where they hire gear and sometimes the gear you hire is poor. But persevere. Go with someone who knows how it works; try to pick a light wind, say force 2, enough to get leaves fluttering but not trees swaying. Hire a good wetsuit and start in summer when the water doesn't bite. In winter borrow a steamer and you won't believe that just 5mm of neoprene can keep you so warm in freezing conditions.

Unless you're amazingly talented you'll struggle and fall in quite a lot on your first session. You'll be thrown by the balance of board, mast and sail and sickened by the nonchalance of other more experienced sailors. But don't give up yet. Keep falling off, sort your feet out, work out how the mast leans to steer the board and fall off some more.

Then give up for the day. Come back another day and it will start happening. You'll be able to sail, perhaps only 100 metres or so but in reasonable control. Most people take two or three days to grasp the fundamentals. The learning curve is steep and steady after that.

Come back another day, try more wind, try to turn. Then one day you'll try and the wind will be stronger. You'll find yourself leaning back, hanging on and the board will lift up onto the plane. The difference is unbelievable! This is the essence of windsurfing, not plonking around on a plank! You're almost guaranteed to be hooked from this point onwards. It might have taken two days, maybe ten days but stick with it — when you've cracked it you'll be on cloud nine.

The Force 4 barrier is the point at which you have to lean with your body weight to counteract the sail, and the point at which the board lifts out of it's wallowing mode onto a plane. Force 4 is the magic point at which things start to happen quickly, where turning ceases to be a chore and becomes an immaculately smooth and neat sequence. Technical perfection begins to matter.

Force 4 is the signal that will make your eyes gleam when the trees start to bend, you'll scan the weather news for gales and storm warnings. You'll wonder how you ever managed to go climbing on those horrendous days; remember how many times you sheltered in Lawrencefield or Stoney while the wind blasted the high crags?

Climbers come to windsurfing usually by being talked into it by other climbers. Jim Reading talked me into it. Mark Vallance came soon. Bob Bradley and Jerry Frost. John Jones and Dick Turnbull were into it years ago. Graham Desroy, Tim Leach and other Guiseley all-stars do it. Andy Newton too.

Over the past two years I've probably spent more time windsurfing than climbing — a dreadful disclosure. But the memories and incidents have been fantastic! Paul Williams would never forgive me for not mentioning the evening he helped me carry a broken board down the Padarn lakeside railway, having dragged him out of his bath on a wild May night to help on a rescue.

Two years hasn't been enough to reach total competence. It's long enough to work through long and intermediate boards down to the athletic end of the sport where short boards take over. Waterstarts, carve jibes, high winds and cold hands all passed in the night. There are plenty of tricks and techniques still to come, like jumping and wave surfing.

A board has been to most places with me this year. It went abroad on holiday and kept me sane, it went to the inevitable wet Easter and May Bank joint FRCC/CC Meet and kept me happy and it went right through the winter and kept me cold but fit. It puts a completely different perspective on your climbing trips when you know you never need waste a wet weekend in Wales. Strap on and set off.



## NO MATCH

The summer holidays were increasingly becoming the topic of conversation, not so much on where we were going, that was to be the Valley, but what we were going to do when we got there. The Nose was top of the hit list. We listened to Pod recall his ascent and wondered if we could do the route in two days. I must say these conversations usually took place in the "Porter" so these grand plans were usually beer talk (or the stuff they call beer in there). It was during a session I suggested a trial run of the routes on our local grit edges. Say 50 extremes in a day, swinging leads as we went. That should see us to Camp 4. We did think of dragging a rucksack full of water around with us but this seemed too bizarre to contemplate.

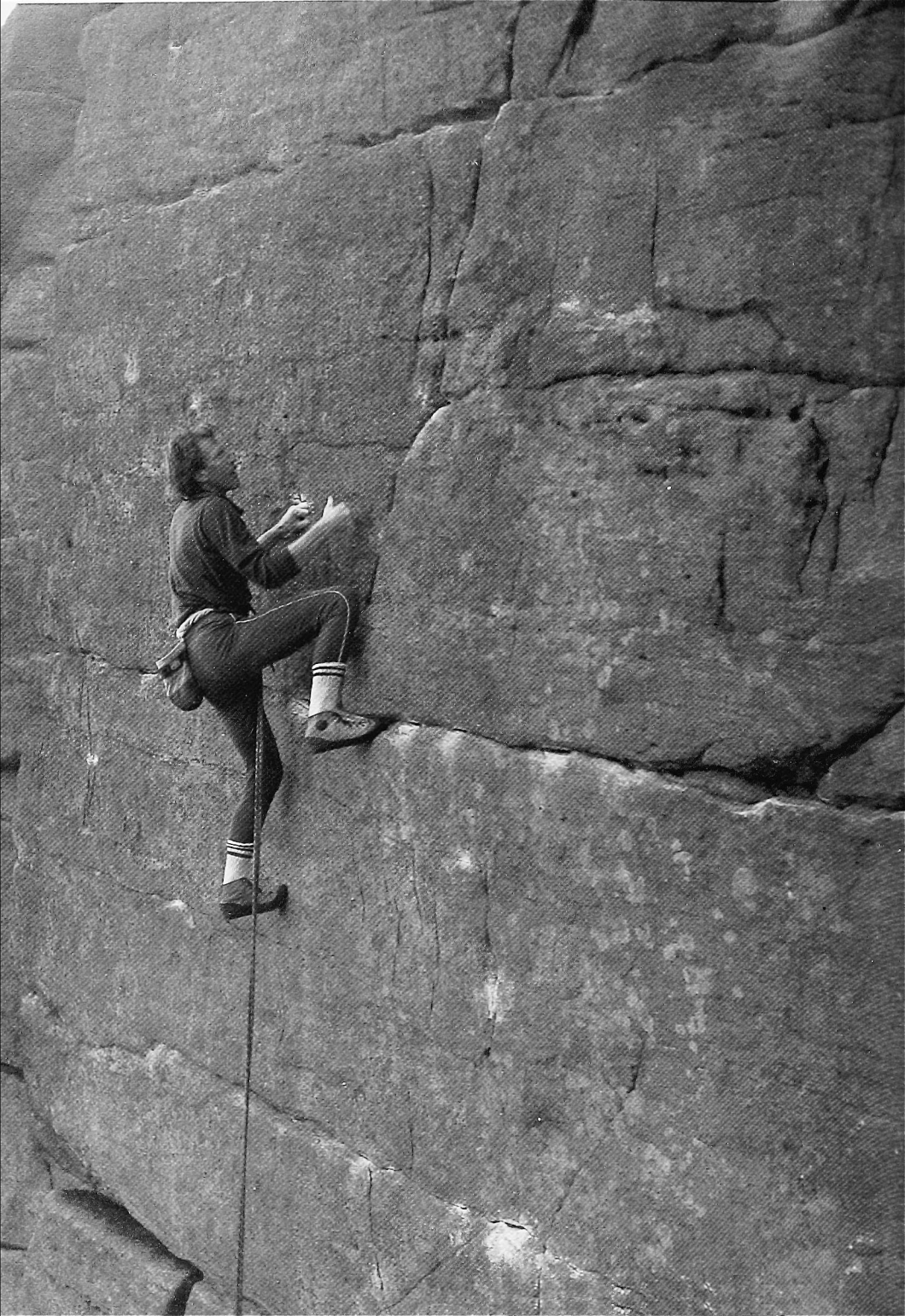
So it was on Cup Final day I swung the team coach into Wayland Road to pick up Chris. There was no sign of life, so it was to be a late kick off. It was to be a rather harassed pair that arrived at Chatsworth around half nine. Now this was to be no hit or miss thing, we had got a plan. So it was straight to *Despot* and work back towards the car. Six cold and rather wooden routes later, including a terrifying follow of *Sentinel Buttress*, it was up to Froggatt and Curbar.

Not having a driver we decided it was probably best to park at "The Chequers" (fortunately they were shut at 10.45) and walk up to the crag. We decided at this point that if we did run out of time it wouldn't be the climbing that stopped us but the walking. Tying on, sorting gear, wiping feet and all the normal ball-ache of climbing was also taking its toll. However, we soon got into a routine. Knots permanently tied at each end of the rope and when you got to the top just keep walking until you find a boulder to hide behind. This was a fine plan for Chris but I had my doubts. I had visions of being dragged over the edge like some unsuspecting fisherman. Fortunately, we didn't put the system to the test.

Curbar passed in a wave of strenuous routes and it was 17-0 as we moved onto Froggatt. This was a pleasant change from the steep stuff that had preceded it. However, you always have to pay so the lack of protection on *Great Slab*, *Cave Wall* etc. was sorely missed.

25-0, half time, down to Grindleford Cafe for refreshments and a team talk. Sitting in the cafe pondering what had gone on and what lay out there for us was all very pleasant but time was passing and the smell of chip butties and bacon sarnies were already encroaching on our weekend senses. It had also begun to rain outside. Chris assured me that the rain would miss Stanage and sure enough he was right.

Four poor routes at the popular end saw us at *Tippler* and the rest of the gang. "How's it going?", "You'll never do it" spurred us on more and more. We were certainly getting weary by now and fingertips were getting sore, still we were counting down and on familiar territory. *Silica* at 48 seemed hard and lonely.



Not a good time to go and do anything daft I thought. To do *Stretcher Case* as number 50 seemed a little ominous so we finished off with *Nuke the Midges*. Hardly a classic but nice enough.

The sun was just setting behind Mam Tor as we walked down to the car, trying to recount the routes. God, what a disaster if we had only done 49. Extra time was called for, so it was off to the C.C. disco at the Marquis. I was a tired little Hector when I finally crawled into bed at around half two.

Final score: Graham Parkes, Chris Craggs 50 — Grit 0

E 80, 2160 feet (sorry 665 metres)

### THE ROUTES

1	Despot	E1	5b	13m	27	Tip Off	E1	5b	14m
2	Vibrio	E1	5b	15m	28	Dry Rot	E1	5b	13m
3	Pearls	E2	5c	13m	29	Providence	E1	5b	15m
4	High Step	E1	5a	10m	30	The Tippler	E1	5b	20m
5	Sentinel Buttress	E3	5b	15m	31	Yosemite Wall	E2	5b	16m
6	Slip Arete	E1	5b	10m	32	Easter Rib	E1	5b	15m
7	Deadbay Crack	E1	5b	11m	33	Ice Boat	E1	5c	20m
8	Black Nix Wall	E1	5c	7m	34	Coconut Ice	E2	5c	18m
9	Mister Softee	E2	5c	12m	35	The Actress	E1	5b	9m
10	Unreachable Star	E2	6a	7m	36	Desperation	E1	5c	12m
11	Soyuz	E2	5c	10m	37	Last Ice Cream	E2	5c	12m
12	Appollo	E2	5b	16m	38	Wuthering	E1	5b	12m
13	Kayak	E1	5c	8m	39	Dark Continent	E1	5c	18m
14	Elder Crack	E2	5b	20m	40	Acheron	E1	5b	17m
15	L'Horla	E1	5b	9m	41	The Old Dragon	E1	5b	12m
16	Insanity	E2	5c	9m	42	Curving Buttress	E2	5b	16m
17	Toy	E1	5c	6m	43	Monday Blue	E2	5b	17m
18	Armageddon	E2	5c	14m	44	The Left			
19	Brown's Eliminate	E1	5b	14m		Unconquerable	E1	5b	17m
20	Great Slab	E3	5b	18m	45	Telli	E3	6a	10m
21	Heartless Hare	E3	5c	11m	46	Millsom's Minion	E1	5b	22m
22	Long Johns Slab	E3	5c	14m	47	Pot Black	E2	5b	22m
23	Motorcade	E1	5a	9m	48	Silica	E2	5c	14m
24	Ratbag	E2	5b	8m	49	Stetcher Case	E2	5c	11m
25	Cave Wall	E3	5c	11m	50	Nuke the Midges	E1	5c	9m
26	The 3D Wall	E2	6a	8m		E80		665m	2,161 feet



# CLIMBING KANGTEGA WITH THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

ALISON J. HARGREAVES

“So how do you spell Kangtega, anyway, and what height is it?” I asked Jeff inquisitively. Through a chance meeting in Germany with an American who was organising a trip to Makalu two weeks hence and a discussion about Himalayan climbing in general, my enthusiasm was aroused. Unfortunately, it was too late to do anything about that particular trip, and my interest travelled to Jeff Lowe, who at that time was trying to finalise plans for his slightly different and optimistic trip to the same area, but two weeks later. As he was then still short of a definite partner for his second objective, the *S.E. Spur of Nuptse* alpine style, I joined the list of prospective partners. However, plans for his first objective, the *N.W. Ridge of Kangtega* were still incomplete, and it was suggested I came along for this anyway. The mountain, originally booked by Tom Frost for 1985, had been postponed to 1986 owing to incomplete plans, so this expedition linked with Jeff Lowe’s to combine his plans on Nuptse.

Various climbers were listed and unlisted until the final group of six came up: Tom Frost, Jeff Lowe, Bruce Roghaar, Henry Kendall, Mark Twight and myself, the only Englishman on the trip.

Until now all my attentions had been turned towards the Alps. To me the Himalaya were really just a large mass of mountains about which I knew nothing, but amongst which I someday aspired to climb. Until that day, as with my first trip to the Alps, names of places, mountains and routes seemed mythical and distant, only to be comprehended once visited. Everest: “Yes, I’ve heard of that”. So where was Kangtega in relation to it? “Well, it’s on the walk in to Everest; most people just walk right by it and don’t even really notice it.”

So I was going to the Himalaya; I couldn’t believe it! The fact that I only had four weeks to organise it was probably an advantage. The chance to go to somewhere like Nepal was amazing in itself — the climbing was really a bonus. After a few weeks of organisation/disorganisation I was sitting in a plane at Heathrow on Easter Sunday, ready for the big adventure which was about to begin.

I arrived in Kathmandu to the most incredible thunderstorm I’d ever seen. As we turned the corner into the valley of Kathmandu there was an amazing lightshow, interspersed with blackness everywhere, and a river of an airstrip. Running through amazing hailstones, the bemused tourists headed for the terminal building, safety and shelter. With a maze of Nepalese administrators, officials and scoundrels, comprehension of the place wasn’t helped by the electricity flashing on and off with the storm. Hours later my confidence in Nepalese airways began to dwindle as my luggage hadn’t appeared; however a

*Opposite: Alison Jane Hargreaves on the summit of Kangtega*

*Photo: Hargreaves Collection*

handful of Westerners were in the same predicament and looking hopeful. Faced with the prospect of an unknown country, a horrendous thunderstorm and having been instructed not to change any money, but to wait until I was met by a character, Rodney (about whom I knew nothing — nationality; whether he'd still be waiting there after my luggage arrived), I became a little anxious.

Two hours later one last load of baggage finally arrived, soaked from having been in the rain on a trolley, and amongst this I was able to secure my own two large sacs. Having changed no money I was unable to tip the porters who staggered with my bags to the customs desk. I tried to explain, feeling grateful yet guilty. If I'd understood the system I'd have made sure that I dragged my own bags through the hall.

Finally I went into the heat of Kathmandu and a beaming American face gleamed at me, a welcoming hand was outstretched. Recognising the jacket he wore, I at once knew this to be "my man" and immediately life seemed rosy and pleasant again. My bags taken up, we crossed the street to a wealth of battered-looking cars and in passing from one to another I soon realised that what we were searching for was a taxi, complete with meter. With thieves and vagabonds all around, a meter is only a slight advantage, as for those who weren't in the know the long back way into town will be taken. Fortunately Rodney had it sussed and within a quarter of an hour of hustle through crowded streets and chaos (the rule here being not to look behind, just ring a bell/horn as you approach someone, the strength of your noise determining your size) we arrived at the Tibet Guest House. Once inside my equipment was whisked away upstairs and I was introduced to the team already installed. Tom, complete with family (wife Dorene and children Marna and Ryan) had already been in Kathmandu for four days and along with Henry (a professor of physics) was keen to get away from this health hazard and move to the mountains. They were due to fly to Lukla tomorrow.

There was one other person to meet: Nancy, a good friend of Jeff's from Colorado, was to come out trekking with us: we would fly in to Lukla in a few days' time when the rest of the team arrived. Meanwhile the tourist bit began. Armed with map and tourist guide we hired bikes and headed off into the distance. For me it was a real culture shock. Once away from the main tourist streets of Kathmandu and down backstreets littered with dead dogs, open sewers and rotting meat, it felt like one was just asking to inhale or absorb something unwelcome. Relieved to be through the backwaters and away from the Holy river where they were burning corpses, we dutifully toured to Buddhist temples. Later, slightly queasy in the afternoon sun, we headed back to the safety and security of our guest house. Paranoid about getting sick (even opening your mouth in the shower can be fatal, if you're lucky enough to have one) I was reluctant to



eat or drink anything in town, and stuck to bottled lemonade, toast, omelette and black tea for breakfast. Eating out was in the restaurant we hadn't got sick from on the first night, and even there we avoided any salad substances and ate mainly sizzling hot pizza or stir fries.

Within three days the rest of our crew arrived. Dutifully waiting outside the airport terminal whilst Rodney did his best to conjure all the team and equipment speedily through customs, I was instructed to organise transport into town. I had no idea how much room we would need, so having found the largest type of transport available (a small VW bus) we pushed and manoeuvred bags of food etc. until the suspension could take no more. Untrusting, Jeff jumped in alongside the driver, and Rodney, Bruce and Debbie Roghaar, Mark and myself tracked down a meter taxi and followed on.

So the expedition had begun. After two days' trekking and expedition-organising, we had our flight confirmed. However, at 7 am on Saturday, after we'd cleared internal customs and were ready to fly out, we sat in the departure lounge, only to hear that all flights to Lukla that day were cancelled due to bad weather. We looked at each other in dismay and disbelief before reversing the baggage process and heading back to town. Disappointment all round: our only hope was that we could fly out the day after. So it was back to civilisation, sunbathing and more sightseeing.

Sunday April 6th: sun burning down; organising loads for porters at Lukla: the walk in was in process. Having feasted on potatoes, chilli sauce and dahl bat (rice and split bean sauce) we left two of our members to recover from bad attacks of ghardia (a stomach disorder which was to have us all vomiting and with diarrhoea at some stage of the trip) our crew set off for the day's walk.

Three days later, in Khumjung, the whole expedition finally got together at the house of Nema Tenzing, our Sirdar. We had been on a circuitous route via Thyangpoche and Phorche and by now our two sick members had caught us up. We were a strange combination and wide variety of people, and it would be interesting to see how and if we all fitted together: the Frosts and Roghaars, staunch Mormons; Mark, a youth with a zest for life from the city of Seattle and me, a non-American, were amongst the many. The personal contact/interaction would be fascinating in itself.

We established our base camp up the beautiful Omoga valley, a place only visited by grazing animals and herds in the spring months, and largely unseen by trekkers *en route* to Everest Base Camp, as it was out of the way. Within minutes of our arrivals the zopcios (a cross between cow and yak) were unloaded and set to graze whilst the sherpas set to work building a stone hut covered with plastic tarps for cooking in. I wandered off in search of water and found that in

the afternoons there was an excellent source of melt water nearby which formed a bubbling mountain stream further down valley. Having scoured out good sites for tents, the different varieties began to take shape. After settling in I headed downstream to take a plunge and to do some laundry in the icy water — a refreshing change!

A week's excursion up the Khumbu valley towards Everest saw four of us acclimatising on a route on the so called "trekking" peak of Lobuche. Climbing as two pairs, we intended to reach the summit independently via different routes. However, with Mark not acclimatising properly, our intentions to climb to a fine rock ridge were foiled. Instead we did the same route that Jeff and Henry had done the day before. This was a new variation on the original route to the East summit. It was a couloir and involved typical Scottish snow gully climbing up to three technical ice pitches (Scottish grade 4) and more mixed pitches to reach the normal route to the summit. Later on I was able to spend a whole evening sherpa dancing on the way back to Base Camp, where I had previously been out of breath walking briskly, and I knew that I must be affecting some kind of acclimatisation.

Base camp: "no time to rest"; we were to visit the Thyangboche monastery next day for the expedition Puja with the chief Lama. After a two hour ceremony to bless the expedition, which involved prayers, blowing of ancient instruments and too much Tibetan tea (a revolting mixture of salt, barley and rancid yak butter) I sped hastily back to camp. An afternoon of Kukri rum and music helped the young blood of the team to return to normality.

Wednesday 23rd April: the weather was perfect and following a morning of packing and gathering ourselves together, it was 2 pm before the five of us were suitably unsuitable on thrice-filled mugs of best chang each (Henry deciding after Lobuche to "give this one a miss"). We headed off into what was by now a wet and cloudy afternoon, following the directions of Tom and Bruce who had spent the last four days sussing out the best route to the col. Four hours of drudgery carrying seven days' food each brought us to a suitable spot with room for three bivvy tents, complete with running water. There was a day to go to the full moon and the fantastic views as the clouds cleared left us breathless. Ama Dablam glinted at us in the moonlight; everything was magical.

Heavy sacs, hot sun and glaciers just aren't a fun combination, so early next morning we made a unanimous decision to leave half the loads at a suitable spot and return for them later. However it was 4 pm before I declared to the team that I had arrived at a suitable bivvy spot, so it was fortunate that we had all brought personal overnight equipment up instead of food. With only one stove between us I'm not sure that I quenched everyone's need for the suitable brews

necessary for acclimatisation. As he'd had a very bad night and was unable to eat anything, Bruce made the decision to descend to the gear stash with us and then return to Base.

It was a sad moment when later on we all bade our farewells and watched him disappear down into the cloud. After splitting up gear between the rest of us we plodded back up to camp, taking hours over what had taken little more than half an hour to descend that morning. All feeling a little tired with load carrying and altitude, we resolved to have a rest day next, as we now had more food than planned.

Despite this, by 10 am there was determined and successful movement from the tent next door. With signs of dismay from Mark and I (who were happy to remain in bed as long as the day continued) but, not wanting to miss out, we too got up and followed the footsteps of Jeff and Tom further up the glacier and up two delightful "squeaky ice" pitches to an incredible position on the col. Photographs, gaping mouths and irrepressible grins all round: "What a view" right across to Thamserku with its fine snow aretes and up to our route.

A quick play up and down an ice cone on the col led back down over the bergschrund and back to camp. Not to bed, however, as we decided to organise the food bags into slightly better balanced days-worth, a job which as soon as everything was spread round was halted by the snow deciding to fall and hinder us. Satisfied that we had done all we could by way of preparation, we retired to plentiful brews and the devouring of all we had thrown out.

Making an early start we crunched up crisp snow and returned to our high point on the col. Making a slight descent to the face we then began the day's ascent of snow/ice pitches to a snow spur below a steep headwall high up. Our intention of climbing as two pairs didn't quite come about: Tom decided to jumar all the pitches, so the three of us took our turns leading, making therefore a team of four. A performance on ice by the master on the final steep pitch through the seracs to our next bivvy was marred only by confusion as to who, when and why we should haul sacs up, causing some delay and unnecessary effort.

One last rope length and I arrived at a crow's nest in the sky. As the others arrived, keen to get established, I enthusiastically began to erect the tent, only to observe with horror and dismay that a pole I'd so carefully placed in the snow had suddenly taken to ice skating in a downward fashion. In disgust, a further member of our team threw away the other pole, deciding one was no better than none. So, back to the old ice cave, boys and dig, dig, dig. The pole's performance may have been a blessing in disguise as when we looked at the headwall above us it seemed we might well be spending two nights here, so a comfortable snow cave would prove far superior to a tent.

Within a couple of hours we were comfortably established inside and all thrashing independently about getting boots and wet clothes off, dry clothes on, and into sleeping bags. Sharing out tents and bivvy bags between us, we soon all had fairly acceptable and dry sleeping arrangements. Back to the stove again!

Another day and a plan had to be decided. There looked to be three hard rope lengths to the headwall. No way could we expect all four of us, plus loads, to get up above this in one day, especially as Tom was really in need of a rest day. So: Mark and Jeff would climb and fix the first two pitches, whilst I would sort out all the food, gear, etc. not needed till the following night, pack a large sac, jumar up the two pitches and then lead the third. We would then haul the sac, leave it at my high point and all return to the cave. Next day, all four of us could then jug quickly with sacs and get established in the gully above the headwall, out of the way of the scary seracs hanging over it.

Unfortunately, a day of heavy snow and cloud made the going very slow for Mark and Jeff, and only one and a half pitches were reached. I never left camp. The following day we made amends and setting off pretty much on time, Jeff and I got to his high point of the previous day, and my pitch. Jeff's had proved fairly tricky: a rising traverse on steep ice ending with a fun off-width; mine was not to give in lightly either. Front pointing on thin brittle ice stuck hopefully on the rock, with the pitch ending with an extremely (for me) balancey move reaching over a slight lip of rock, from one ice smear to another. I ended up with my feet as near my ears as possible, then standing up like a frog I reached and reached, hooking my tools into the bottom of the ice smear higher up. Confident the ice *would* hold, I transferred weight to my tools and pulled through. Feet up by my tools, front points in, tools moved higher into thicker and more solid ice, and the angle eased off. Continuing with plan A we were soon hauling the sacs to the top of the headwall. A couple of mixed pitches later the sun was showing signs of weakening, so finding a bridge crevasse between seracs, Jeff and I constructed a life line into the ice for when the other two arrived, and began compressing the floor to form some kind of shelter. Before too long we had a split-level apartment complete with a "window with a view"

Mark and Tom set off first next morning, keen to establish what we would encounter at the famous notch. Tales of 300ft. of possible hard climbing both in and out of this feature left us wondering just how much a problem it would prove. All was not quite as it seemed: within four pitches Mark yelled that he was in the notch. Traversing around the corner and towards the gap almost disappointing, straightforward in and out.

Discovering a couloir with many fixed ropes leading off from the side of this ridge and onto the glacier below (which we assumed were remnants of a Japanese

expedition) we decided this would prove a much more suitable descent, so now all we had to do was climb out of the notch, reach the summit plateau, and finally the summit. By 3 pm, a couple of ice pitches and a mixed pitch later, we were on the edge of the plateau in sunshine, taking it in turns to build an even bigger and better cave.

Nicely ensconced inside our pits we toasted the next day's "walk" to the summit. It was a bitter and strong wind that greeted the warm faces exiting our cave, but we prepared for a long but pleasant walk to the summit and back. We were all well wrapped up and had little encumbering hardware. Kangtega means "snow saddle", it was only as we rounded the NW summit that we realised how much significance this had.

Reaching out in front of us was not merely a ridge walk to the main summit but a much more demanding piece of climbing. The ridge proved to be heavily corniced and much steeper than we had previously imagined. The only feasible route lay up the ice flutings on the SW Face, which we assumed to be five pitches at least. Jeff, weak with a bronchial cough, felt he had to descend the couloir to the glacier that night. He didn't think there was time for all four of us to climb to the main summit and descend the same day. Tom, knowing that jumaring would be slow, happily accepted the decision that Mark and I should take the two and only ropes we had with us, give them as much time as possible with the ropes to return to the notch and abseil down to the glacier that night.

Five rope lengths into the climb we realised we had slightly underestimated the project. However, keen to reach the top and put cream on the cake for all of us, we kept going. Nine pitches later at 5 pm we stood on the summit of Kangtega. Lots of snaps all round, then the sun made the decision for us to descend. With only a minimum of equipment our decision was to climb down the abominable ridge a certain distance, knowing that then our abseil descent would be greatly minimised. A peek through the cornice down the North Face of the mountain soon had us scurrying back into one of the many ice runnels. Our supply of snags was used up; aided only by the appearance of a rock spike, we resorted to the time-consuming job of cutting ice bollards.

It was midnight before we crawled back into our snow caves. The other pair, having assumed our decision to go on, had bagged the NW summit, and utilising old fixed ropes had acquired the rope we'd left in the notch and descended to the glacier. Awaking to a gas cylinder which produced only one brew before running out, the decision to descend to the valley in one day was made for us.

We staggered into camp at 8.00 that evening feeling drunk on the increased oxygen. Still, we'd survived and after all, I'd been in the most capable of hands climbing with "the Boy Scouts of America".

# NIGHT ON A BARE MOUNTAIN

JOHN HART

It was my fault really, but the others did not have to come; that was Pete's fault, and the guide book did not help.

We were on our way to Australia. Kit, my wife, and I were in a terminally ill Landrover which died in Kathmandu, luckily for us on its new owners. (Luckily for them they had vast experience in spare part surgery and achieved a complete resuscitation, donors being readily available in those parts.) We had flown to Thailand and continued by public transport and were, at the time of this tale, in Java.

Pete and Hilary, Dave and Deb, guided by a greater understanding of the Landrover's illness but less understanding of Asian public transport had opted for the bus trip. Kit and I had been to Asia previously and knew that even a dying Landrover would be an infinitely superior mode of transport!

We were following the so called "hippy trail" though there were more genuine and interested travellers on the road than hippies. Transport varied from VW "Combies", Landrovers, Escort vans, VW "Beetles", bicycles, and even a motor bike and side car as well as the bizzare or orthodox but usually dangerous public transport.

Europeans stand out like sore thumbs in Asia and tend to visit the same places so it was not as remarkable as it seems that Kit and I met the others in a small town in Java called Yogiakarta near the site of the famous Buddhist stupa of Borobodur.

I had been fascinated by the many volcanoes seen from the train in Central Java and my inherent love of mountains of any sort had me searching for one to ascend. A mountain called Bromo sounded great but its ascent a bit too organised for my liking so it had to be Mt. Merapi.

The guide book: "Mt Merapi (Fire Mountain) 2911 metres, one of the most destructive volcanoes in the world, it erupts about once every three years. Ruling princes of Central Java today throw precious silk textiles into Merapi's crater because it is believed that volcanoes have a life and soul of their own." The description of the ascent however was far from clear.

Re-reading the guide book in the cool of a British winter I still cannot follow the directions properly. What really puzzles me is how I managed to persuade myself, not to mention the others, that the book was describing an ascent of this 900ft peak in a few hours. Our only excuse is that we did not know what altitude we were starting from or the miles to the summit. It appears from our post mortem that we had read an ascent of a subsidiary ridge to observe the volcano



from a safe distance and interpreted this as an ascent of the peak and somehow made it fit!

We all met at 7.00 a.m. and caught the local transport from Yogya to Kaliurang where we breakfasted as my diary says on "something with rice and coffee for 20 pence." Thinking we had plenty of time before us, we set off at a gentle pace exchanging stories of our different trips as we went. I particularly liked the one about the camel that spat at Dave in Afghanistan and he seemed to like the one about the sewer I fell into in Nepal.

The heavy tropical cloud build up obscured the summit but for one brief glimpse and it crossed my mind then that it seemed a long way off. We could not be starting from sea level could we?

At first we wandered through villages and over smooth stream beds, hardly gaining height at all. Gradually the gradient increased so did the heat. By mid-day we were struggling in the thickness of the Javanese jungle up a tiny mud path leading ever ever upwards. Occasionally the gradient increased so much that the lantana had to be used for hand holds. Steps had been kicked out of the 60-70° mud for stretches of up to 20ft.

Kit and I had always intended to spend the night on the crater rim, of the others, there was a pair of "maybes" and a pair of "definitely nots". Accordingly we had little food and water. It would be far too embarrassing to say how little!

Exhausting and debilitating though the walk was, all six of us were lured onwards by the spirits of the volcano. The afternoon wore on and on and there was not the faintest suggestion of a summit. Every shade of green imaginable steamed around us.

Pete and I continued upwards to see if there was any hope of reaching the end of the jungle. The others rested and contemplated descent. It was not to be, Pete and I found the summit cone after another 30 minutes of gasping and struggling. "Top, top, top, toppp!" echoed around the jungle, answering cries came from the others and they quickly joined us, spurred on by new hopes.

A conflagration was called, due to the lateness of the hour, and the plans for a bivouac were changed; the "maybes" became "definites" and the "definitely nots" became "probably will have tos". The summit cone was, sadly, not the top. In fact it was not remotely near the top either in terms of horizontal or vertical distances nor in the physical effort required, it only seems as though it should have been the top. Of these parameters of distance it was furthest away in the physical effort required!

Of all the scree slopes I have climbed, this has so far been the worst, it was not so much scree as very steep mud slurry with a few cinders thrown in. Why it did not slip away and obey the laws of gravity like any self respecting mud

slope I could not understand until I discovered that it did obey the laws of gravity and was slipping away each time my foot came within a micrometer of landing on it! How we longed to be back in that steep sweaty jungle hauling ourselves upwards in the tropical heat instead of hauling ourselves back into the same place we were a second ago.

The sudden tropical night was imminent. "Something had to be done!" Spending the night on a slag heap slipping further down each time we inhaled was not an enjoyable prospect. Eventually we discovered two huge boulders, almost house size. These had come to rest in at least a semi-permanent position on the slope. We were now very close to the volcano's rim, acrid sulphurous smoke would occasionally envelop us and cracks in the cone spewed out jets of steam and smoke at irregular intervals.

As the sun went so did the heat. T-shirts and shorts were supplemented by jeans, pullovers and a thin cagoule. We thrust our legs in our rucksacks. Dave, who had been moaning that he would be cold because of his inadequate clothing, amazed us all by producing everything from a yak-wool vest and jacket to an ex-Everest expedition duvet jacket which he had bought in Kathmandu. Our earlier worries for Dave's comfort were quashed as he sat snugly in a corner smoking a cigar and watching us shiver.

A small tin of plums, a tin of evaporated milk, one cob of dry bread and a small jar of crab paste was shared between the six of us. Water — oh, we had none left — I told you it was embarrassing! We left the empty tin to collect water from a drip of liquid condensing from the sulphurous smoke.

As night deepened the awe and power of the volcano overcame all of us. Deep rumblings and grumbling were felt as well as heard welling up from the bowels of Merapi. Our imagination set to work. By 1.30 a.m. our small group of vulcanologists had predicted a definite eruption of Mt. Merapi for 2.00 a.m. To confirm the worst a big red fire-ball was spewed out of the top of the crater right over our heads towards the darkness below. Even the villagers must know about the forthcoming eruption, the ethereal rustlings and jinglings of a Gamelan orchestra had started up and whiffs of the music floated up to us occasionally, increasing in rhythm and volume in apparent sympathy with the moanings from the volcano's crater. We were petrified!

"Let's go down!"

"Who are you kidding, the tigers will get us, and if they do not we will be overtaken by red hot lava — just like Pompeii!"

Our training in vulcanology could not have been too good (you do not learn anything useful in medical school these days). We survived the night. To quote my diary "we watched a spectacular sunrise from our cold bivi". Huge atomic clouds mushroomed off the waterlogged plains far below, distant volcanoes

puffed their contributions into the thickening sky. The greenery was ablated by dazzling whites, golds and silvers as sun rays flashed from one cloud to another.

Someone produced a bar of mouldy peanut brittle from the depths of a rucksack and we enjoyed a breakfast of sorts and then walked to the lip of the crater. Smoke and fumes were everywhere, vents in the mountain's side had to be jumped as the stuff hissed out stinging eyes and skin. We took turns, in pairs, to peer into the crater, one holding the other so that if the lip gave way we could be pulled back to safety. It was like hell with the fires put out but still smouldering and waiting to be dashed into life. Constant small avalanches were in motion and the occasional body-chilling rumblings continued. The sense of power welling up under one's feet was spellbinding. The spell held us for a while before releasing us to our downward path to safety.

We left at 7.00 a.m. Kit and I were off first and soon became separated from the others. The Landrover had paid off in that we were not quite as physically wrecked as the others by our Trans-Asia journey. We passed the tin under the drip and left it for the others, we were not to know that it was dilute sulphurous acid!

We collected our own water bottle from under a piece of dripping moss and greedily drank one inch of gravelly water each. Descending at speed made us realise just how much ground we had covered on the ascent. Hours later we arrived at the first village and drank from the village well, all previous health precautions going to the wind in the interests of re-hydration. A little further on a villager offered to show us a short cut but got us lost and demanded money before continuing. We retraced our steps! Then another chap showed us the way but after a while I had doubts about him and we retraced our steps again only to find that the second chap was right! We did about one hour extra walking due to our "guides" and arrived in Kallurang at 11.30 to sit down and start the long but thoroughly enjoyable process of re-hydration whilst waiting for the others.

An embarrassingly (for them) long time later they arrived just after we had decided they had been eaten by tigers. We shared in their re-hydration. Pete grabbed the opportunity to sample an obscenely disgusting local brew. We caught the bus to Yogy for bath, food, beer and bed.

Two days later we made a leisurely, well hydrated and well nourished ascent of Mt. Bromo and the following week visited Mt. Batur in Bali. Bromo's ancient crater rim contains a vast sea of sand and a new crater with smoke rising from an imagination defying hole. Batur's previous eruptions have created its own lake at the mountain's foot and a new lava flow has wiped out the jungle on one flank. Both were majestic sites of geology in action and highlights of our sightseeing but we never saw the souls of these volcanoes as we had on Merapi.

# THE CONNECTION

BILL WINTRIP

The chamber of horrors forms the connecting passage between Oxlow Cavern and Giants Hole — a classic but serious caving trip in Derbyshire. The name conjured up some pretty gnarly impressions in my mind. I'd talked to a few people who had done it, this almost succeeded in putting me off. I'd even squirmed in at the Giants end, a chest squeezing, flat out crawl to the first duck — it wouldn't take much more to finally dash the thought of doing the trip out of my mind.

I then blew it. I mentioned it to Burke, in an unguarded moment at work one day, feeling secure that he'd already done it, therefore once bitten, wouldn't want to return. What a pillock I was. He said the stomach churning words, "Let's do it one evening." You know the feeling, like when you've said to your climbing mate that you fancy leading some desperate climb and the bastard agrees to hold your rope. I sat there frantically thinking of an excuse; then Foster pipes up that he'll give a hand rigging Oxlow. (This has to be rigged to complete the through trip.) Two of them grinning at me, waiting for the squirming excuse to come — I couldn't think of one. "Supersafe" Wintrip was fast approaching decision time. I agreed to go! Oh God, I felt ill.

Neil and I spent one cold March Tuesday evening rigging Oxlow, leaving the ropes in place for Phil and I the next evening. The next evening came — no valid excuse with it, unfortunately. I'd spent the day trying to arrange an overnight stay on a job, somewhere, anywhere in the country, but no joy.

Phil and I went down the ropes of the previous evening and grovelled along the Pilgrims Way to the start of the Connection. By the time I arrived all I could see was a pair of size 8 wellies thrashing in a tight gravel filled constriction. Eventually a channel was cleared in the gravel and a 'breathe-in, squeeze-through' was made into the Connection proper. A flat out crawl followed to the 'ducks'. I was not impressed, Phil was not impressed, the water was to the roof. We could not take the chance of holding our breath, as the section is approximately thirty feet long and very tight. We retreated, back along the crawls and back out on the Oxlow ropes. At least I'd used the ropes. I blew it again at this point. I didn't have a spanner to derig the pitches which would have meant we wouldn't have had to come down again. I actually agreed to come again the following week and try from the Giants end!

The next Wednesday arrived. This time we were equipped with wetsuit hoods, the last time the water seemed to freeze the head like a vice. Lying flat out at the first 'Giants duck' we donned the hoods and Phil set off feet first. In the close confines of that tube, I could hear his mouth breathing against the roof, the only

sound in my part of the cave. Flat out waiting for my turn, my heart was pounding, it would be easy to go out through Giants, not to have to do it if Phil fails, no problem, we'd tried. By the sound of it he was probably returning, we'd be out in thirty minutes. Obviously too much water. "I'm through". Jesus, for a moment I thought Phil said he was through. "Come on Bill, its O.K." Oh God, he is through.

Flat on my back in the water, helmet and lamp off and between my legs, with the sacks in front of me. Mouth against the ceiling, water rushing to the level of my ears, just my eyes, nose and mouth clear of the water. One hand still outstretched behind me, afraid to let go. Then disaster, my helmet and lamp sink. Darkness. Complete. My first reaction is to pull with my outstretched arm. I immediately go under water, in the dark. I can't breathe, I'm under water. I come up into the air, in the dark, but still can't breathe, water has gone up my nose and into my lungs. I frantically try to turn onto my front but my hips are pinned by the confines of the tube. I struggle out further and manage to turn over. Coughing and spluttering, I catch my breath. Still darkness. I must get my lamp. Sliding back into the water, feet first, I hit something, a glow, my lamp, a faint glow, enough to enable me to drag both the helmet and lamp out with my feet. Phil has no idea what has happened and has not heard from me. I hear him calling and answer back ...

This time I put the sacks on a tape behind me. Back to the same place, mouth against the ceiling, heart pounding. I let go with the outstretched hand and almost float through the first duck. The space beyond is enough to put the head upright, briefly. The next duck is with the head turned on its side, glasses off as there isn't the room for them. I'm through. The last duck, water to the ceiling, but with Phil on the other side now able to see my wellies, take a breath and go through. Brilliant, what a buzz, can't understand what the fuss is about.

We make our way out along familiar grovelling ground. A doubt, will the Oxlow ropes still be there? or will some thieving sod have nicked them? You know what that means, a return through the ducks. Oh shit, they have to be there.

Thankfully they were and the only problem was digging through the two-feet of snow piled up on the entrance lid. We emerged soaking wet and slid down to the cars where we cracked off our frozen wetsuits — chuffed to our little moon boots.

*Overleaf left: The President on "Belle Vue Bastion" during the Helyg Reunion Meet.*

*Overleaf right: Bill Wintrip, ever the optimist, tries to go climbing in Water-cum-Jolly*

*Photo: Chris Jackson*







# DOLOMITE DEJA-VU

TREVOR JONES

An uneasy feeling resulted from looking at Dolomite photographs of a quarter of a century ago. Joe Brown, Dennis Gray, Les Brown, Claude Davies, and me sat there with all the confidence of youth, as if nothing would ever change, which it always does. Bad weather allowed just chinks of alluring blue sky as we waited in the Lavaredo Hut as clouds billowed in and fingered the rosy spires, followed by rain and rapier like lightning. Our joint lust was for the North Face of the Cima Grande, and when we did get a rare fine break, Joe Brown leading Dennis all the way was half as fast again as Les and I leading through. Inevitably, in the afternoon, the rain and heavenly electricity closed in on Les and me in the summit gully and we just made it back to the Hut before it became pitch black.

Joe had been there hours, a seated, cloth-capped Buddha, who greeted us with a rising crescendo of hypnotic falsetto laughter. As we all relaxed round the rough-hewn wood table and the rain hammered down outside, we remember trapped fingers in karabiners, the fear in the microseconds after the lightning flashes, the swiftly counted seconds after (the hope it was more than ten) which meant that it was more than two miles away.

Twenty six years later I returned to the Eastern Alps, many changes in the intervening years. Marriage, kids, baldness, then a new generation, then another, and a slip down the rankings from possibly number ten to ten thousand and ten. Distant places too became more attractive; Himalayas, Yosemite and the incomparable Mount Kenya. Somewhere in between youth died, not at any particular time, but like a thief creeping up in the night, and the greyness of middle age took over.

Early in 1986 four of us decided to go to the Eastern Alps, Mike Mortimer, Marjorie Allen, Derek Walker and me. Derek and I, and our old Alpine friend, Bob Allen did the Dulfer on the East Face of the Fleischbank, one of the greatest routes that was climbed Pre-First World War. The route rises out of the Steinerne Rinne, a deep U-shaped gorge between the Fleischbank and the Predigstuhl; two pillars of the Kaiserbirge. Dulfer had tried the route and failed, but had solved the impasse by a desperate seventy foot diagonal abseil which gave him success on the upper part and opened it up to the Wagnerian masses. Dulfer, the great Bergführer, was senselessly killed in the trenches on the Western Front in 1914.

I felt I had to go there because of the mesmeric effect that Herman Buhl's book, Nanga Parbat Pilgrimage, had on me in the 1950's, the Teutonic theme had gone something like this:

"We got to the overhang climbing solo, naturally it was of the sixth grade and it was already winter. Suddenly there was a noise. Otto fell

past me arms outstretched, fortunately he just managed to shout Heil Hitler before he smashed to pieces two thousand feet below. I carried on and soon came to a large bivouac ledge two square centimetres in area.”

After the Dulfer route we went to the pink-crested peaks of the Dolomites to the Tofana and the scene of another climb done on that holiday of a quarter of a century ago, when Les and I had done Constantini's route up the middle of the Pilastro di Rozes.

The South East Arete of the Pilastro had also been done by Constantini forty years before, and it has the attraction of being only forty minutes away from the Dibona Hut. There are a few pegs sprinkled through its fifteen hundred foot length, and I can only remember accidentally seizing a couple of them when in extremis. The climb steadily increases in beauty and difficulty as one proceeds, the crux an E1 bulging diagonal traverse about three quarters of the way up. It was a Saturday and the local Tyrollians were swarming up the route and overtook us on the crux, lucky sods, they only lived twenty miles away, as close as Derbyshire is to us.

I remembered that I had once met a burly, modest climber from the Dolomites at a BMC lecture. He had listened politely as an elderly middle-aged Englishman bumbled on and on about his Alpine exploits. I asked him if he climbed much, he replied that it was difficult as he took children out climbing. I encouraged him and gave him a list of routes I had done. He was grateful and said that he would do some of the routes when he was able to climb with his brother, Reinhold, who was in the Himalayas. With a rising feeling of horror I asked him the young man his name, he gave a slight bow and said, “Siegfried Messner, but call me Siggy”; certainly my greatest faux pas!

Now I was back in Siggy's homeland with flocks of his fellow countrymen in front of us, fortunately they showed Derek the route, and as he was leading it was extremely useful. Tiresomely one of them was even older than me, a sixty year old whose name I didn't quite catch, but I think it was Mathusavolio.

Afterwards in the hut, the chianti-unlocking conversation went something like this:

“The only route to do now is the Cassin on the North Face of the Cime Ovest. A fifty year old route” I paused to quaff even more of the red nectar “A fifty year old route done by Cassin in a big pair of spog boots. We'll piss up it.”

The others didn't seem keen on this contorted logic but reluctantly agreed.

The North Face of the Cima Ovest is a big wedge which looks as if a gigantic trowel has scooped out its lower half to give a shape like half a cathedral. A North Face has a certain charisma, especially if its first ascent was made by the maestro

himself, Riccardo Cassin. He did the five hundred metre climb in borrowed boots in a two day epic, accompanied by hail, rain and lightning, which had enabled him to steal the first ascent from under the noses of his Teutonic rivals who had already spent some time on the route. This became a pearl in the pre-war Dolomites, and one of the most spectacular and exposed traverses in the world with a roof low down so that it needs a series of frog-like hops along it to make progress.

I was impressed following Derek up the early pitches, as it steadily got harder. At the start of the traverse, Mike bless him, suggested that we climb as a rope of four, Marjorie second and Derek fourth. I thought of Cassin at the start of the traverse fifty years earlier, a rock genius who never retreated on his big North Faces, even when Molteni and Valsecchi died on the North Face of the Piz Badile. I remembered climbing with Cassin when he came to England, and I felt humble in his presence, it was like climbing with the Almighty.

Now I faced his traverse and regretted the drunken ravings in the Dibona Hut as I confronted the most awe-inspiring traverse of my life; a Guinness Book of Records traverse. After about fifteen frog-hops the traverse stopped and re-appeared a tiresome twenty feet below. To assist the descent was an unbelievable tattered piece of tat, below which was one of the biggest overhangs in the Dolomites. Was I mad to be involved in what seemed to be akin to suicide? Would the tat snap leaving me suspended like Toni Kurz on the pre-war Eigerwand? The tat held and I started across the lower traverse towards Mike when a rope jammed, and I had to untie. The awful truth dawned that I was now leading, Mike pulled the rope and its limp end hung down twenty feet away. I did the fastest bit of climbing I have done in recent times to reach it. Then there was a high rising traverse to get into the summit gully that turned out to be about E1/E2 standard.

After more tricky traversing across the obligatory waterfall of a north face onto the steep slabby wall on the left of a couloir. This still gave VS/HVS difficulties as grey clouds built up, and there were one or two mind-chilling spots of rain, which fortunately stopped. Nobody in the party wanted to point out that if the weather turned bad there was no possibility of abseiling off, and that the only way was upwards.

I was wearing Mike's Super Ratz which were about two sizes too big, and even with two pairs of thick socks my feet waggled about like a candle in a shirtsleeve. The climbing was superb, on sound Dolomite pockets and knobs. By 10 pm, as last man, I was still climbing, in pitch dark to an unplanned bivouac ledge; I put aside my dislike of contact with male bodies and snuggled up to Derek. Unfortunately he's all bones and gave off no radiant heat at all.

On the way down I thought about the three routes in nine days and the welcome loss of half a stone. The thought that I might be fitter speeded me on the way down and thence back to England where I told Les Brown of all the excitements. And so we went to Wales with new found Dolomite fitness and did Comes the Dervish, what a route, but that's another story.





# OBITUARY

**NOEL EWART ODELL**

**1934 — 1987**

The bar was empty when I entered — or so I thought when I paused in the doorway — and there was a slightly musty air about the room, reminiscent of a climber's library. An awareness of a presence made me look across and I was instantly reminded of Richard Hillary's words; a strange claim perhaps but nevertheless true.

'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 a great age ... We thought him rather fine.'

The Professor in front of me, for it could be no other person on earth, was not however the legendary Collie but another grand old man — Noel Odell. His very posture was distinguished yet in a strange way almost humble, yet it was his eyes that revealed the man. They pierced and penetrated deeply and in some strange way seemed to be a gateway to a far-off land. The clock was silent and as we talked the pages of time rolled back, but it did not happen straight away.

Noel was bubbling over with plans. Perhaps he would go to America, but then again he might go to China. His predictions about glaciers made 60 years previously had recently been acknowledged as being correct and perhaps he would go over to lecture. But of course he couldn't go in October as there would be a new crop of freshers up at Cambridge and he wanted to be around. Was I talking to a man of 95 who could give me over fifty years start? It seemed impossible. Mentally he was as sharp as marram grass and after a few pleasantries I sought vainly for any chinks in the mental armour. Whatever I brought up he was already one step ahead of me, anticipating my next move.

Born in 1890 he later took to the hills at quite an early age and after exploring the Lake District spread farther afield to the Alps with an aunt. By the First World War he was already in his twenties and he served with the Royal Engineers for some time and was wounded. In the post-war period he returned to the hills and soon made a remarkable first ascent on the Idwal Slabs. His route, Tennis Shoe, was bold for its time (1919) and nearly twenty years later J.M.E. graded it as Severe and very exposed, commenting 'It maintained its rubber reputation for about ten years'. A month after Tennis Shoe, Odell went up to Cloggy with Herbert Carr but (as he clearly remembered 66 years later when asked) the weather was vile and they merely ascended the Eastern Terrace.

1920 was a better year and saw Odell in Scotland with a small party. Carr wrote of North Buttress on Buchaille Etive:

*Odell (centre) enjoying the after dinner conversation at the Helyg Dinner 1985* Photo: Ian Smith

'Delightful rock work took us onward, Odell doing an 80-foot pitch of face-work which was certainly Severe. I turned it by an easy chimney on the left.'

After Carr left for home Odell with his wife and R.F. Stobart made the first ascent of The Chasm via the South Chimney — another example of Odell's forceful nature when exploring. This however was merely a foretaste of what was to come. During the summer season with Frazer and Stobart, Odell failed on the North East Face of the Aiguille Verte but was successful on the Grepon and other peaks. He later wrote humourously:

'Frazer who adapts his clothing to every degree of temperature, left his shirt on the Grand Dru; this was picked up some weeks later by Mr. Carr.'

Fate was soon to change the course of mountaineering history when a year later Herbert Carr chose to go to the Alps with his father instead of going on the Oxford University Expedition to Spitsbergen. Although Odell was at Cambridge he was also invited to join Frazer for the 1922 Merton College Arctic Expedition when a party of four was deemed to be the ideal: 'we were fortunate in getting A.C. Irvine and G. Milling of the Oxford boat to join us'. During the expedition Eastern Spitsbergen was explored topographically and geologically and for the first time in polar-sledging work the party was able to use a wireless set to keep in contact with the sloop. With Irvine, Odell explored a peak which he described as 3,000 feet or more of magnificent climbing reminiscent of the Tower Ridge of Ben Nevis but on a larger scale.

While Odell was in the Arctic a battle was taking place on Everest and after a brief respite the forces were marshalled for the 1924 attempt. Odell joined the expedition from the Persian oil fields but 'murder will out' when it was discovered that Odell was a geologist — the Tibetans did not take too kindly to explorers chipping away at their holy stones. It was explained that Odell was taking a break from his work and so the locals were appeased. During the expedition Odell's character was succinctly summed up by Norton:

'Odell had a record second to none for toughness and endurance ... Odell and Irvine "The Old Firm" spent over a week at the North Col in support. No members of the climbing party pulled more weight in the team than these two by their unostentatious, unselfish gruelling work.'

It was however Odell's own words which were to capture the imagination of future generations. Odell and Irvine were the third assault party chosen to go for the summit but events dictated otherwise. The disappearance of Mallory and Irvine high on the mountain attracted a great amount of attention in later years

and Odell's words have been constantly dissected in an effort to shed further light on the mystery.

'At about 26,000 feet I climbed a little crag ... I saw the whole summit ridge and final peak of Everest unveiled . I noticed far away on a snow-slope leading up to the last step but one from the base of the final pyramid a tiny object moving ... A second object followed. As I stood intently watching this dramatic appearance the scene became enveloped in cloud, and I could not actually be certain that I saw the second figure join the first.'

The next day, after failing to find the missing pair of climbers Odell was very much alone:

'I glanced up at the mighty summit above me. It seemed to look down with cold indifference on me, mere puny man, and howl derision in wind-gusts at my petition to yield up its secret, this mystery of my friends. If it were indeed the sacred ground of Chomolungma, Goddess Mother of the Mountains, had we violated it? — was I now violating it? And yet, as I gazed again, there seemed to be something alluring in that towering presence. I was almost fascinated. I realised that no mere mountaineer alone could be but fascinated; that he who approaches close must ever be led on and, oblivious of all obstacles, seek to reach that most sacred and highest place of all. It seemed that my friends must have been enchanted also ...'

In his final analysis of the situation Odell was quite clear when he stated, "I think there is a strong probability that Mallory and Irvine succeeded. At that I must leave it." His other prediction certainly was accurate and far sighted; "But my firm belief is that Everest can be climbed without oxygen." It is worth stating that Odell's judgement was impeccable. Also worth mentioning and very endearing was his love for his subject and one can imagine the thrill that he got when:

'At an altitude of about 25,000 feet I came upon a limestone band which to my joy contained fossils.'

As a geologist Odell was to travel all over the world in the years that followed and was particularly drawn to the Arctic. In 1931 he was a member of the Grenfell-Forbes Northern Labrador Expedition then two years later with his wife and W.A. Wood he made first ascents of Mt. Gog, Nathorst Peak and Teufelschloss in Greenland. Lightweight expeditions were the norm. Much of his exploration however depended on where he was professionally, and after spending time in America between 1928 and 1931 he eventually joined the Climbers' Club in 1934.

Although Odell would have been a first choice for the 1933 Everest Expedition

domestic life caused him to decline the offer and he also turned down the chance to go on the 1935 Everest Reconnaissance. Two factors prevented Odell from being selected for Everest in 1936; firstly he had been rather outspoken and had clashed with Ruttledge and secondly as he was already 46 years old Smythe was not prepared to gamble on older climbers — perhaps a serious error of judgement as the events of 1936 were to show. Instead of being on Everest Odell went to Nanda Devi with H.W. Tilman who had also been left out of the Everest team. Tilman was in no doubt that Odell was going well and had the bit between his teeth:

'On the way up the glacier Odell, either through excess of zeal or insufficiency of load, had led the field at a rare pace and the field had got rather strung out.'

Odell, who was supposed to be stopping at a scree slope, was probably hunting for rocks with his head down and must have got rather carried away:

'He steamed past the scree and disappeared ... We wrote Odell off for that day at least. Next day he carried two loads.'

Higher up the mountain Odell was going even better according to Tilman: 'Odell led over this ridge at a good pace ...' 'There was a difficult piece of rock to climb; Odell led this and appeared to find it stimulating, but it provoked me to exclaim loudly upon its thinness.' The summit was duly reached and Tilman later wrote:

'In 1936 he climbed Nanda Devi (25,660 ft.) when he seemed so much fitter than the rest of us that I considered his age (47) to be immaterial.'

When one considers that Nanda Devi was the highest mountain climbed until 1950 (when Annapurna was conquered by the French) one can only marvel at the achievement of Odell and Tilman and wonder at what might have been if they had been on Everest. At every stage Odell had proved that he was tough and resilient and in many respects when one considers his overall achievements he was at least equal of any other mountaineer of his day. Even his modesty was reflected by T.G. Longstaff who received a laconic telegram on Shetland from the Nanda Devi team: 'two reached the top August 29'. As Longstaff related '... no names. They had deserved the honour: here was humility not pride, and gratitude for a permitted experience.'

Although Odell finally returned to Everest in 1938 with Tilman his luck ran out and his precious box of geological specimens was stolen. At least that year he was made an Honorary Fellow of his college, Clare. When war came Odell served in the Bengal Sappers and Miners and finished his stint as a Major. Amidst the strife he was awarded the Livingstone Gold Medal of the Royal Scottish Geological Society — a sane action during an insane head-on conflict of mindless forces.

In the post-war period Odell was professor of several universities round the world (British Columbia, Otago, New Zealand and Peshawar) but his mountaineering interests continued unabated. While in British Columbia Odell teamed up with Smythe to explore the Lloyd George Mountains and later in 1947 Smythe commented that "Odell and I would have made a fast pair" (What price Everest? ... yet by then Odell was 57 years old!). On Mount Louis a storm blew up and led Smythe to comment:

'I for one had had enough of it. Odell was still on the actual summit, and I a few yards below, when he suddenly exclaimed, "I've had an electric shock!"'

On the descent with darkness threatening the situation got even more serious:

'I shouted to Odell to come across. He did so and there was no assistance I could give him on the rope, but he climbed across with all his surefootedness and steadiness ... It was now or never, for we were soaked by the rain, and a night out in such a condition and such a situation would be a horrible experience.'

Even on the lower stretches of the mountain when Smythe was ready to bivouac Odell was ready to navigate his way through the bush:

'He did it, both by his knowledge of the topography and by some unerring instinct. From grumbling at first I became interested ... In the end I became enthusiastic and very grateful to Odell for this extremely able and accurate course through a pitch-black night.'

On another descent Smythe was in no doubt about Odell's fitness when he recorded:

'Down we went, Odell bounding far ahead like a chamois, and a few minutes later we were in the forest, our high-pitched calls announcing to the cook our immediate arrival.'

In 1949 Odell was back in Alaska with W. Hainsworth, R. McCarter and Bruce-Robertson, and he made the first ascent of Mount Vancouver (15,825 feet) in the St. Elias Mountains. This was Odell, not far off 60 years of age and still going strong, probably better than any other man of his age — with another 38 years still to go! By comparison Mallory was a flash in the pan, or a meteor that burnt brightly for an instant and was gone.

Many years later Odell was still driving a car when in his nineties and in 1983 he was made an Honorary Fellow of his College, Clare. At the Helyg Diamond Jubilee celebrations when Odell was 95 he endeared himself to many with one very human comment. During the afternoon he asked one C.C. member if he had to wear a suit for the dinner — as he was far more at home in his short-sleeved pullover. When told that it was perfectly alright to go dressed in what he felt comfortable he was greatly relieved and promptly confided in another member.



"I say old chap, you don't have to wear a suit tonight if you don't want to."

To add meaning to nearly a century of life it is perhaps apt to quote some words which greatly impressed Odell and which were originally spoken by General Smutts on the summit of Table Mountain at the end of the Great War:

'And so it has come about that finally in man all moral and spiritual values are expressed in terms of altitude. The low expresses degredation both physical and moral. If we wish to express great intellectual or moral or spiritual attainment, we use the language of altitudes. We speak of men who have risen, of aims and ideals that are lofty, we place the seat of our highest religious ideals in high Heaven, and we consign all that is morally base to nethermost hell. Thus the metaphors embedded in language reflect but the realities of the progress of terrestrial life. The mountain is not merely something externally sublime. It has a great historic and spiritual meaning for us. It stands for us as the ladder of life. Nay, more, it is the ladder of the soul, and in a curious way the source of religion. From it came the Law, from it came the Gospel in the Sermon of the Mount. We may truly say that the highest religion is the religion of the Mountain. What is that religion? When we reach the mountain summits we leave behind us all the things that weigh heavily down below on our body and our spirit. We leave behind all sense of weakness and depression; we feel a new freedom, a great exhilaration, an exaltation of the body no less than the spirit. We feel a great joy. The Religion of the Mountain is in reality the religion of joy, of the release of the soul from the things that weigh it down and fill it with a sense of weariness, sorrow and defeat. The religion of joy releases the freedom of the soul, the soul's kinship to the great creative spirit, and its dominance over all the things of sense. The mountains behold us and the stars beckon to us. The mountains of our land will make a constant appeal to us to live the higher life of joy and freedom.'

Ted Wrangham once wrote that climbers high on Everest are said to be thankful when they have to turn their back. Not so Odell, who clearly expresses his creed which surpasses even Everest itself:

'Indeed, one's spirit must aspire ever upward, metaphorically and in actuality, raising higher and higher one's lethargic body. Or, to express it, as Robert Browning does, in another way, "A man's reach must exceed his grasp, else what's heaven for?"'

There is no doubt that Noel Odell would not have given the reason for climbing Everest — 'because it is there'.

**JOHN POOLE O.B.E.  
1920-1987**

John Poole joined the Climbers' Club in 1920: nobody else can now say that. He was born in 1899, a year after the formation of the Club, and so was 87 when he died in 1987. His three brothers were all at one time fellow members of the C.C., which perhaps makes the family unique: Gerard (Jed) remains a member.

His whole life was active, until illness prevented first climbing and then mountain walking. Much of this activity he recounted for himself in his article "Senior Member", C.C. Journal '79/80 p.27, partly reproduced in Geoff Milburn's "Helyg"

In that article he stressed how much the C.C. meant to him, a sentiment which I echo: like many others I owe my introduction to the C.C. to him: I have much to thank him for.

John was a meticulous man. I knew him first as a meticulous town clerk when we were both of that persuasion. He was a meticulous climber, as I learned when I joined him for the first time on Tryfan, a mountain on which he seemed to know intimately every hold on every route. Of course, he had the occasion to know Welsh rock intimately, spending so much of his time there from 1918 onwards and later alternating long summer holidays there with equally active holidays in the Alps. No wonder he retired to Anglesey, within sight of his beloved mountains, at the earliest possible moment. The advantage of Anglesey, and of retirement, was that he could see what the weather was like on the hills, and chose when to climb.

I have paid tribute to John's meticulousness but before saying more of his climbing career I cannot resist pointing to his Achilles' heel: he had the odd accident. Some of his earliest climbing was associated with his fractured skull, from a motor-cycle accident. Typically he chose to convalesce at Ogwen Cottage: he had a hatred of hospitals and that sort of institution. Then when Jack Willis (ex-member and ex-High Court Judge), one of many being introduced by John to the cliffs of Tryfan, asked John to show him how to abseil, John said, "Yes, certainly: you just wrap your rope round a protruding rock like this, put it through your legs and round your shoulder, stand well out from the rock and down you go" and down he went, again on to his head, because the protruding rock did not do what was expected of it!

My own early accident was his fault, I was leading on a separate rope and was misled by his agility in rescuing a damsel in distress, but that is a matter more suited for my obituary than his!

For those not prepared to turn back to the '79/80 Journal I must now give

some detail: I will not emulate his own language, which reads just as he spoke, but I will add some personal points I have learned from Jed, or from John himself.

Having acquired nailed boots, a 60 foot Beale's rope, with that famous red strand in the middle, and a copy of Abraham's "Rock Climbing in North Wales", he set about first climbing all the routes in the last, staying with brother Harry for weekends at Ogwen. Apart from his brothers his early climbing companions included I.A. Richards, Will McNaught, Dorothy Pilley, M.G. Bradley, W.J. Williams and his son Gwyn, Herbert Carr, and Herbert's father. With the last two he climbed Mont Blanc, but his Alpine record is too long to catalogue.

But his real love was Wales, to which he returned constantly and in which he lived for the last 28 years, a 'retirement' which many of us would envy but for the last few years of illness, which John bore with fortitude however much he disliked his disabilities. In Wales he became an active member and, for a period, President of the Mountain Club of North Wales.

John served the C.C. well. He was secretary from 1926 to 1928, an active period in which occurred that obscure piece of climbing history, the tragedy on Craig yr Ysfa, for details of which see chapter XX of Thomas Firbank's "I Bought a Mountain" and contemporaneous C.C. Journals. John was responsible for setting up the C.C. committee of inquiry, formed of legal luminaries. John remained on the committee of the C.C. until 1937 and was back on it almost 30 years later, after which he was made an Honorary Member.

His wife, Renie, survives him. Under his inevitable influence she became an active climber and, via the Ladies Alpine Club, a fellow member with him of the Alpine Club.

John's influence in general will live on, through the many friends to whom he introduced the mountains.

Harry Sales

### **KEITH LAWDER** **1948 — 1987**

Keith Macleod Lawder, Rear Admiral RN, CB, OBE, — or 'the Admiral' as he will always be remembered in the Club — was born in 1893. After leaving school (Fettes) he joined the Royal Navy in 1910 and spent the whole of his working life in that service, serving in both World Wars. He must have been one of the last surviving participants of the Battle of Jutland. In 1949 he retired to his lovely house on the edge of Dartmoor, where he lived out the rest of his life.

Keith started climbing late in life, in his fifties, with the naval club, and was put up for the Club by Jim Cortlandt-Simpson in 1948 (he was seconded by Dicky

Hull). In 1954 he took over custodianship of Bosigran Count House from A.W. Andrews, and ran the Count House for eleven years. During this period he was Vice-President of the Club from 1960-1963.

Keith never climbed at a high standard, but nevertheless climbing was a main interest for him. Naturally he climbed a great deal in Cornwall and around Dartmoor, his part in the explorations of the north Devon-Cornwall sea-cliffs and on Lundy being particularly noteworthy, but he spent considerable time in North Wales and the Lake District. His companion in these places was his brother Pat (Commander P.B. Lawder, RN) who joined the Club in 1955. The sight of these two old men, gently squabbling over the preparation of meals in Ynys Ettws or Birkness then going out to some modest climb which they thoroughly enjoyed, will always stick in my memory.

With advancing age and after Pat's death in 1976 and heart trouble (including an extended stay in hospital) Keith's activity dwindled. I well remember however, calling at his house when he was well into his eighties, to find him precariously high up a ladder carrying out repairs to the roof of an outbuilding, while female members of his family fussed about down below trying to persuade him to come down.

Keith did a great deal both for the Club and for climbing generally, with his work at the Count House and in Committee, running meets and encouraging young and novice climbers. He was a friendly man and an amusing companion, for example with stories of encounters with pirates in the China Seas. With his wife Joyce (who predeceased him, dying in 1980) and his family, he was very hospitable, and we were encouraged to use his house as a staging post on the way to and from the Count House, whether this entailed staying overnight or just dropping in for tea. Several times when we had things to do on Dartmoor, I would camp with my family in one of his fields and he would encourage the children in the same activities which he had formerly encouraged his own children and grandchildren in, by pointing out the best pools for swimming in the rocky brook descending from the Moor, or finding ponies for them to ride on the Moor and so on. We shall miss him very much, and our sympathies go out to his family, particularly to our fellow-member Iain Harley Peters, his grandson.

John Neill



**LJ.W. VAUGHAN-THOMAS**  
**1955-1987**

I never discussed the matter of obituaries with Wynford, his or anybody else's, which now seems something of a careless oversight. If the subject had come up, I am sure he would have centred on the need to temper a mourning notice with a dose of lightheartedness, that serious points can be enhanced with a degree of humane fun, and if it all reflected some Welshness, so much the better.

Elected to the Club in 1955, largely on the strength of following George Band up Spiral Stairs, Wynford was a rather improbable member to arrive in an organisation which recruited primarily on rock-climbing prowess. Pre-war at Oxford, he had covered a lot of ground in the hills — particularly Snowdonia — but on rock his climbs were mostly the classics on Lliwedd, Idwal and Tryfan.

Outside climbing, this is not the place to detail his achievements, though many have become part of Club legend, Wynford's unfailing support of the CC was largely expressed in enlivening functions — the speech from Thomas the Talk. Few, who were present on those occasions, will forget their laughter as the raconteur wove a tapestry of schooldays with Dylan Thomas, bombing Berlin with a wax-disk recorder, invading the prime claret vineyards in France with the Allies, or where General Patton thought that Monty thought the Desert Rat tails were up.

Mountaineering in general in this country also owes a considerable debt to an enthusiastic promoter in the media helping to widen understanding of our sport. Just about the first televised climb, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the ascent of Everest, was Wynford's brainchild. (I well remember Les Brown and I being told that if we fell off Kaisergerbirge some judicious editing 'might' be possible.) That was early BBC, but later the director of HTV motivated a string of programmes about Welsh mountains — and walked over most of them well into his seventies.

The Welsh dimension was implicit, whether as literary executor of Dylan Thomas, or assembling the Dyfed notables to make sure the CC would not be frustrated with May Cottage on the grounds of being too English, or sheer bafflement that Chris Brigg's helpers at P.Y.G. understood Catalan, but no Welsh. Characteristically he and his wife Charlotte bought and gave to posterity, via the National Trust, the coast at Ceibor.

The Club is left with a gap, though Wynford would have urged us to concentrate on other things. We should remember the infectious enthusiasm — particularly for the young, the zest and occasional irreverence applied sometimes to the most

*Opposite: Wynford climbing on Glyder Fach c.1930*





unobvious topics, and the sheer fizzing good company and friendship — and the supreme raconteur.

I will always recall with a smile the huge Humber Super Snipe where his first view of the road ahead cannot have started less than a hundred yards away; the support with advice and contacts for the Pumasillo expedition without which we would not have even reached Peru; some considerable education in historic port and venerable claret, above all an uncomplicated and uncritical friendship, and of course, much more. Once we had something of an epic on Winthrop-Young's Climb and, as I tentatively broached the idea of a sling as a little unobtrusive bit of direct aid on the top pitch, Wynford produced not only a P.Y.G. packed lunch but also a supply of Burgundy. Lack of a corkscrew was simply solved by a smart tap on the rock and, as we ate, I learnt most of what I know about Welsh history.

If ever you sit on a shard of green grass on that ledge on the Teryn Bluffs, remember Wynford and that days toast — Iechyd Da.

John Longland

### **H.G. BALFOUR**

**1925 — 1984**

I first climbed with Hugh in 1925 when he joined Paul Sinker and me in camp at Wasdale Head. We were all novices, though Hugh and I had just had our first Alpine seasons. Hugh had joined the first Climbers Club Meet to be held in the Alps, which was led by Herbert Carr and included two guides. After various smaller climbs Hugh did the long traverse from the Torino Hut over Mont Maudit to Mont Blanc, and descended to Les Boissons the same day. He also climbed the Aig Javelle with Franz Biner. Our climbs in the Lakes were undistinguished, though they did include the Nose direct on the North Climb, Pillar. I also fell off Kern Knotts Crack while leading and was neatly fielded by Paul Sinker.

Hugh Balfour continued to climb in the Alps for some years; in 1926 he joined the C.U.M.C. Meet in the Vanoise, and under Lawrence Wager's leadership traversed the Gran Paradiso. When the meet ended Hugh and Paul Sinker made off for the east side of the Aiguilles d'Arres and Wager, Kiempson and I for the west side. Next day we shouted to each other from our respective summits, Hugh's party on the Central and ours on the S. Aiguille, and then went our respective ways to meet next at Helyg!

Hugh was very faithful to Helyg, climbing from there with Ivan Waller, Stewart Palmer, Charles Warren and Joseph Bell, among others, and several times walking from there to Snowdon and back in a day. In 1927 Hugh, Dyson, Sinker and me were briefly in Zermatt together, where we traversed the Dom, and descended

*Opposite: Wynford Vaughan-Thomas*

in a hilarious sitting glissade, which gave us a new set of snow underclothes. Hugh did not do much more alpine climbing, though in 1935 he was in the Karwendel with a local guide. He had many other interests: he was a fine shot and spent much time helping to look after his father's grouse moor near Lock Tummel, and he was an excellent fisherman as well. But most of his energies had to go towards his business affairs. He was for years Chairman of the Perak Hydro-electric Company and until the Malaysian government took it over in 1975 Hugh spent much time there and in other parts of the Far East, but managing to fit in some adventurous travels as well. When at home he went on walking in the mountains until 1975 when arthritis made it too difficult.

His wife Bertha (sister of Tom Livingstone-Learmonth with whom Hugh and I had climbed in Cambridge days) and he in 1975 climbed Blencathra by the central ridge. Their comments are worth recording.

Hugh: "A lovely walk in my seventy first year. May the Lord grant me power to repeat it."

Bertha: "This is one of the most enjoyable ridge walks I have ever had, and Hugh's company (so patient and considerate) enhanced my deep content."

Hugh was like that: kind, patient, humble and yet excellent company. His friends miss him very much.

Jack Longland

### A.R. EDGE

Sandy Edge will be remembered in climbing circles as one of the earliest of Menlove Edwards' climbing companions. A fellow medical student and a co-founder of the Liverpool University club, Sandy had the distinction, rare in students of those days, of owning a car, an open sports car with a dicky seat.

On one occasion when they were returning from a weekend in Wales, the car overturned, ejecting and concussing them. They were found sitting happily side by side on the dicky seat in a ditch.

They were a sharply contrasted pair, Menlove with his shambling gait and always in scruff order, Sandy neat and orderly, a nattily dressed gent climbing in plus fours and porkpie hat, as is shown in Ralph Collinson's splendid photograph of him in Geoff Milburn's "Helyg" (p.92).

Between 1930 and 1935 Sandy accompanied Menlove on some half dozen of his new climbs and variations, most of which are described in Jim Perrin's "Menlove". There were occasions when he declined to follow his leader up slimy grass and moss; Perrin describes him on one occasion as being "understandably unimpressed" and as leaving Menlove "to his own devices for the rest of the weekend" (p.142).

Sandy must have been having an off day on the Holly Tree Wall in December 1931 to have earned Menlove's derision, quoted by Perrin (p.82). I remember him as a competent leader of climbs of up to "very difficult" standard at least. Three years later he led Stephen Darbishire and myself up the Great Gully of Craig yr Ysfa without undue difficulty.

My most colourful recollection of Sandy and Menlove together is of an incident in Wasdale in July 1931. We were joined one weekend by A.B. Hargreaves, who led us up Tophet Wall on Great Gable. On the ridge at the top of the climb were a number of large boulders. Selecting the one nearest to the edge, we lay on our backs with our knees bent and our feet against it. Then, with the precision of a coxless four "driving off the stretcher", we straightened our legs and the boulder went crashing down Great Hell Gate, raising clouds of dust. One after the other, the boulders followed each other after a quick glance to ensure there was no one below. It was an exhilarating experience, but I wonder whether the "Little Man" would countenance such "dangerous vandalism" today! Retribution fell on me and me alone. At the foot of the climb was my rucksack, badly torn, in it my Kodak camera, totally smashed!

Bill Stallybrass

**EDWARD HAMILTON MARRIOTT**  
**1939 — 1985**

Charles (as he was known to his climbing friends) died unexpectedly after a short illness on 20th October 1985. He was 79. He had returned just a few weeks earlier from the Himalayas, where he had succeeded in completing the Annapurna circuit as far as Jomosom. His suitcase and tent were packed ready for an extended visit to Australia and New Zealand.

Charles joined the Royal Artillery in 1924 and spent some years in India. He retired soon after the war with the rank of Major eventually "settling" in Cornwall in 1958.

At sixteen Charles was introduced to the Swiss Alps by his father, and was hooked on mountaineering for life. Four years later at Easter 1926 he made his first ascent on British rock, sandwiched between Nea Morin (then Barnard) and her brother. The climb was Kern Knotts Chimney. Other companions in those early years included Eric Shipton, Gilbert Peaker and Douglas Milner.

He continued to visit the Alps regularly, climbing in the summer and skiing in the winter. He was a member of the New Zealand Alpine Club, Swiss Alpine Club and the Himalayan Club. His years in India gave him opportunities for trekking and exploring in Kashmir, and the Himalayas remained his first love.

During the war he was an instructor in mountaineering at the Commando Mountain Warfare School and later at the mountaineering wing in Lebanon. On leaving the army he travelled in Africa, where he climbed in the Drakensburg. He spent two seasons in the New Zealand Alps where he climbed with Graham Brooke.

Charles stoutly resisted advances in climbing equipment. On our local club meets in the early seventies he wore a hemp waist line and was scathing of the trend towards racks of chocks. Waterproof gear was for lesser mortals, and his home-made rucksack still had the hole gnawed by a rat in Tasmania years before. It didn't matter, as it usually contained little except a canvas anorak (also home-made) and a couple of bottles of beer.

Charles loved the sea. His most noteworthy voyages were those he made with Bill Tilman in "Mischief". He sailed with Tilman four times. The first was the voyage to Patagonia in 1955. Even then his unique belongings and gear were a source of wonder and interest to the crew. Charles was blessed with exceptionally good sight, and saved the day on the return crossing of the Patagonian icecap when, during a blizzard, he spotted an all important food dump which was almost buried under fresh snow.

He proved himself a capable sea-cook on his next voyage to Greenland in 1961, and he returned to Greenland three years later. Charles last sailed with Tilman in 1968 on the ill-fated voyage to Jan Mayen Island which ended with the loss of "Mischief"

As he reached his mid-seventies Charles spent even less time at home, travelling extensively to many parts of the world.

In between travels Charles worked diligently representing the south-west on the British Mountaineering Council for many years, including a period as Chairman for the area.

Charles had a certain elan which ensured that he could walk into the smoothest hotel lounge in black beret, holey sweater and muddy boots and be treated with deference. The effect was heightened when he dressed for the occasion. Tilman describes his arrival in Greenland, still nursing a bad foot —

"... In yachting cap and gumboots, his beard a sable silver, monocle in eye and supported by an ice-axe, Charles stepped ashore like a slimmer edition of King Edward VII landing at Cowes from the Royal Yacht. The crowd were speechless with delight. At last, they thought, the captain of "Mischief" had condescended to visit them."

Those who were privileged to visit Charles at home in Cornwall will know that to enter his cottage was an experience. Often the visitor had to pick a wary path between the piles of papers, books and boxes which covered every available

space. But it would be wrong to assume that this was so much clutter. It was a huge, ordered filing system — and if Tilman planned his expeditions on the back of envelopes, I suspect he learned the trick from Charles!

Charles lived in conditions which many would consider spartan. He had his own priorities and preferred travelling to home comforts. But the welcome at Bosulow was always hospitable. There was a comprehensive range of liquid refreshment; this was only offered if the sun was over the yardarm. Afternoon tea was a daily ritual whether or not there were visitors — who might stay for a few minutes or a few weeks for that matter. Charles would put you up or lend you his car if you needed it. His generosity came from his concern for others, and he was a true friend in need. He had a respect for people as individuals regardless of age or sex. Though not one to suffer fools gladly, he was a very kind and most considerate man.

Among many memories two are particularly vivid.

The hurricane which hit Cornwall in December 1979, demolishing the chimney and caravan at Bosigran, also left a gaping hole in Charles' cottage roof. Temporary repairs were urgently required, and a group of us were trying to position a tarpaulin over the hole with the aid of old climbing ropes. Charles organised us with great efficiency and enthusiasm as we struggled in gale force winds. In the end he climbed up through the hole in his bedroom ceiling and emerged on the roof to put the final touches to the operation by hand. To him, the inconvenience, discomfort and sheer mess of the situation were nothing compared to the fun of working out the logistics of the problem. He enjoyed himself immensely. When all was under control he appeared with a dusty bottle in his hand and a twinkle in his eye. "I've been saving this for a suitable occasion, and I think this is it!" It was champagne, and, of course, excellent.

The second is on what I believe was his last rock climb. The date was 26th July, 1983 at Carn les Boël near Land's End. Charles, in old grey flannels, tatty sweater and the inevitable black beret was whistling his way upwards. The whistling, as always, was quite tuneless, and a sign of deep concentration. An accident to one eye had left him with difficulty in judging the distances between holds, and this limited his rock climbing in later years — but the style was still there.

Charles was very much his own man, an individualist, true to his own beliefs and values. He rests in the place he chose himself, by the little Cornish church where he worshipped. It is a slightly overgrown place, not too tidy but very beautiful, and it looks towards Bosigran and the sea. It is just right.

*(Quote from "Mischief in Greenland" H.W. Tilman, 1964).*

John and Janet Atherton



**ANDREW BRAZIER**  
**1981-1986**

Andy Brazier was an exceptional photographer. Forgive such an unorthodox first line for a piece such as this but that is how our paths first crossed.

In 1979 Tim Freeman and I spent the school holiday at Tremadog. We were attempting Pincushion on Pant Ifan. Immediately to our right, was a team on Silly Arete. Andy (although I didn't know him then) hung somewhere in between photographing. Though the light was far from perfect Andy seemed not too bothered and continued clicking away seemingly just happy to be there.

Tim and I failed on our route and one of Andy's team kindly gave us a top rope up the edge of the slab. Later at the campsite Andy approached me and asked for an address to which he could forward a print of me on Silly Arete. I was most pleased when some weeks later it dropped through the letter box at my Mother's place in North Wales.

Since then Andy and I corresponded quite regularly — his work down South affording him only little time off, so it was only occasionally he ventured over for more than a long weekend.

The door of our house was always open to Andy and he stayed on several occasions.

We climbed at Tremadog, The Ormes and at Craig y Forwyn, and he photographed several of us specifically for the North Wales Limestone guidebook (1981).

In the early to mid 80's Andy's undeniable expertise with a camera brought forth many a cry of help from magazine, guidebook and journal editors, for commissioned shots of specific situations. Extreme Rock, The Climbers Club Journals, The South West and Tremadog guidebooks, trade catalogues and the 'home' magazines. Much of Andy's work was published.

Although his main interest lay in photography he was a keen climber and had been involved in new routes on Cloggy's West Buttress as well as on the crags of the South West.

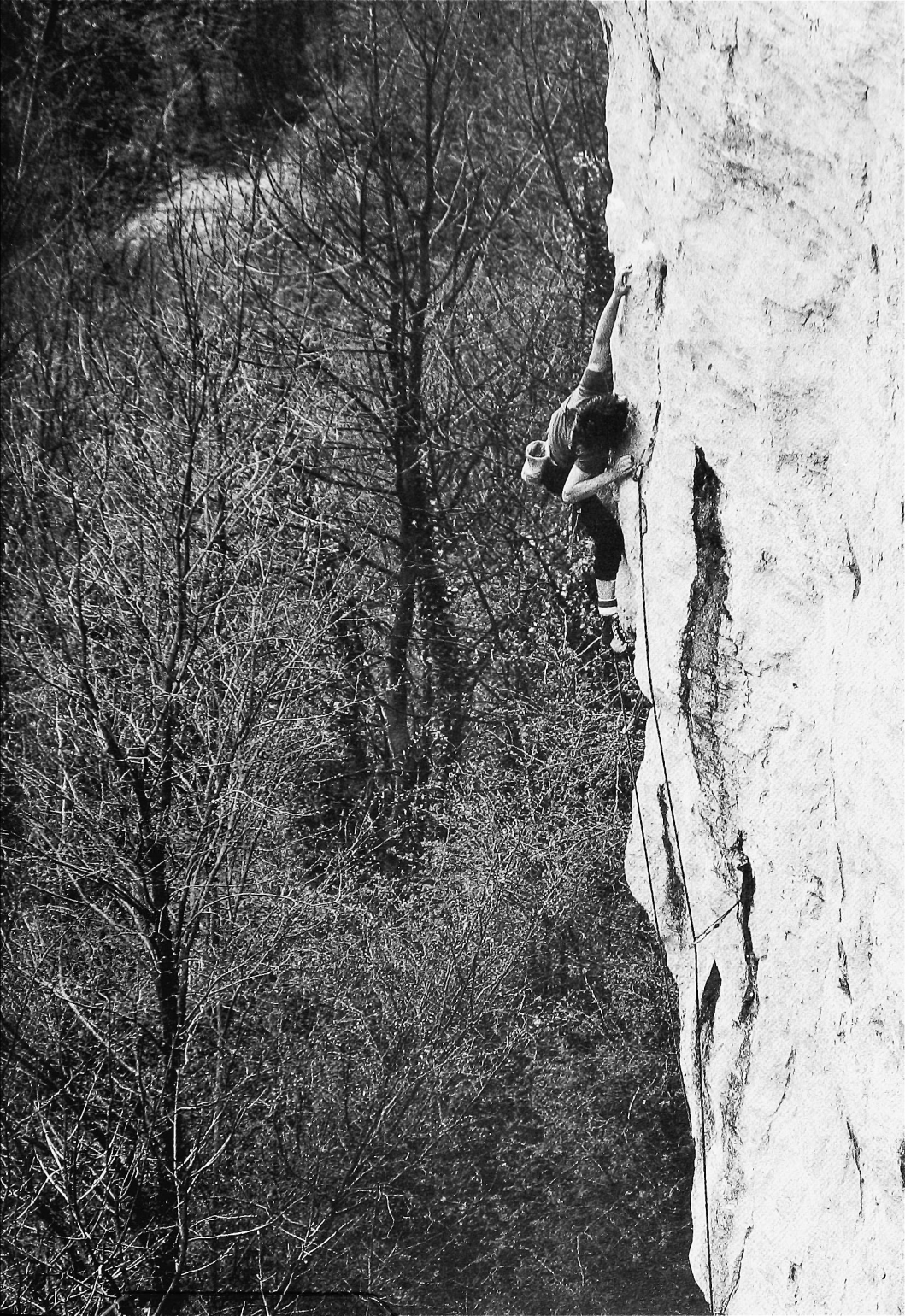
In fact it was that very keenness I remember most poignantly about Andy — his no-fuss abseils over the tops of The Main Cliff, Gogarth and High Rock, Cheddar to photograph Citadel and The Crow for Extreme Rock.

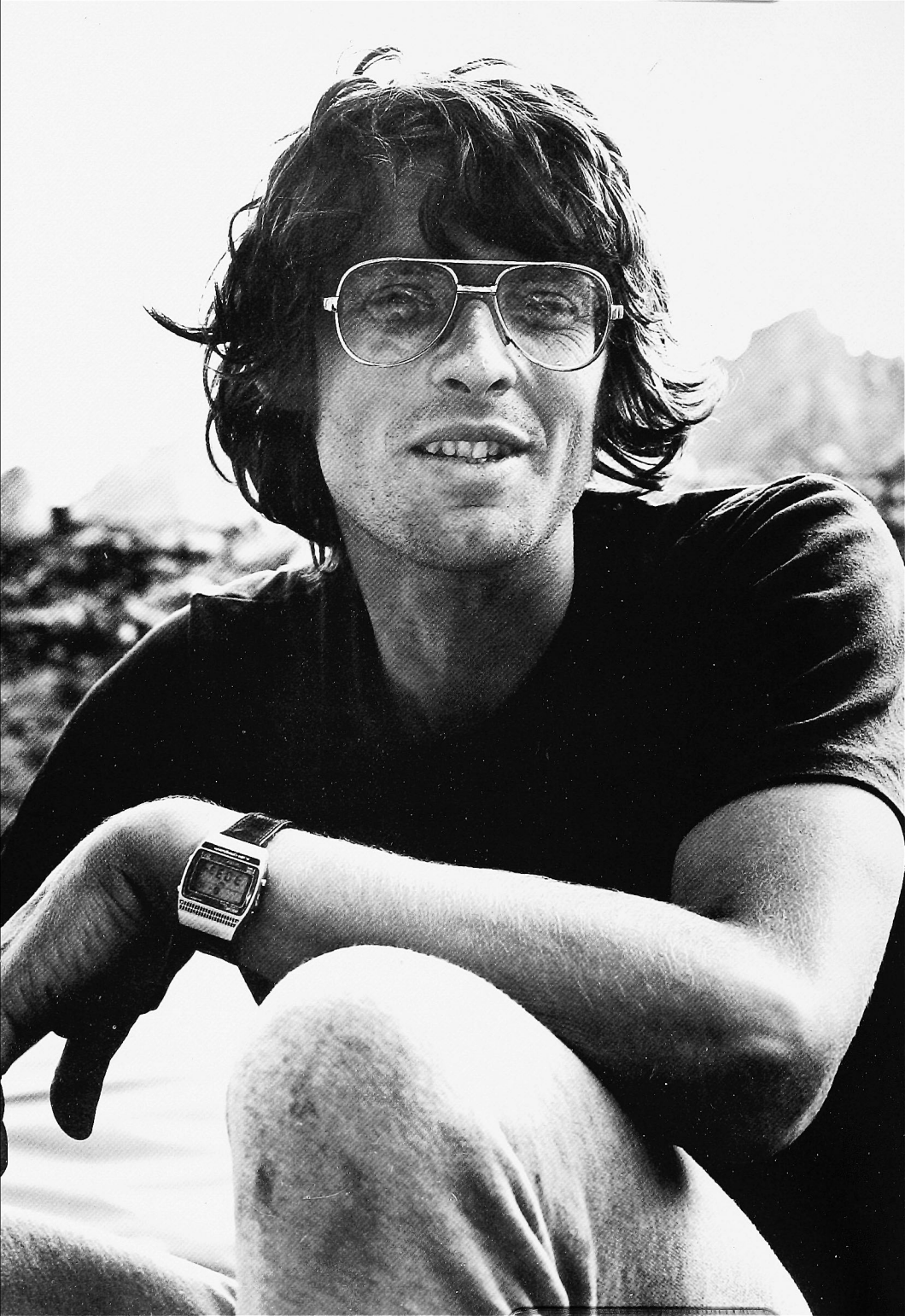
What a disappointment it is he never got to see that finished book, so much assisted by his enthusiastic contribution, for tragically he died suddenly from a heart condition.

I hadn't seen Andy for some months, the terrible news depressed me and I

*Opposite: Andy Pollitt leading "Quickstep" (E4 6a) Craig-y-Forwyn*

*Photo: Andrew Brazier*





thought of his loved ones. I never knew him that well but thought of him as a friend and a stirring character.

To his Mother and Father, a dear couple I only met the once I extend my sympathy and to all who knew and respected Andy as a friend, photographer and fellow climber may he remain in loving memory.

Andy Pollitt

*The following obituary takes the form of slightly edited versions of the Addresses at the Memorial Service held in Sheffield for Alan Rouse.*

### **ALAN ROUSE**

**1979-1986**

On the 11th day of August this year, Al Rouse died on the descent from the summit of K2. When news of it broke, hundreds of people around the world who knew Al, paused at their work and thought fondly of the good times they'd spent in his company. For eight or nine years Al's life and my life were deeply entwined as we wended our way through the growing-up process of climbing and in that time a love and understanding grew between us so that at times we seemed able to read each other's minds. Predictably enough, it was at the Padarn in Llanberis that I first met Al, propped up against the bar, long hair and orange loons. He was on a flying visit from Liverpool and had a plan for a new route. Our day on Cloggy is as clear to me today as it was then: Octo, Aries, a failed attempt on the new route, then on to do East Gully Wall Direct and finally West Buttress Eliminate. Instantaneously a deep friendship welled up, an intuitive knowledge of strengths and weaknesses revealed. For years after that first day I was afraid to climb at Cloggy, lest subsequent visits tarnish the glorious memory of that day.

Al was brought up in the Wirral; a scholarship took him to Wallasey Grammar where he excelled, and a further scholarship took him on to Emmanuel College, Cambridge to study pure maths. His climbing started whilst still at school, on the Breck, a sandstone wall just a stone's throw from his house. Here he found an outlet for his adventurous nature and also a sport at which he could excel. Pete Minks and Brian Molyneux took him under their wing where his climbing skills and ability grew in spite of their beer swilling excesses. Al's natural flair and drive gave him early ascents of Wee Doris, Our Father, The Beatnik at Helsby and the first ascent of that wonderful route Positron on Anglesey. Minks and Phillips gave him soloing, which he pursued audaciously 'til he was caught on the hop on the *Opposite: Alan Rouse*

South Face of the Fou and ended up with a broken ankle. Minks introduced Al to the Alps and here Al was in his spiritual home. Chamonix kindled a flame in Al and it was here he wanted to live. The secrets of the mountains could be found in the Alps, in Chamonix the close company of friends in the bars and cafes. Al loved it here and made friends readily, friendships which could last for over a year of neglect yet be rekindled over a glass of wine in the Bar Nat. or a brew in Snells Field.

Mick Geddes gave Al Scotland. The subtlety and desperation of Ben Nevis in winter, long weekend hitches from Cambridge to Fort William and the thought of a long, difficult day on the hill in winter brought a particular gleam to Al's eye.

Al Rouse gave me the world to climb in. In 1972 after an excellent season in the Alps, Al convinced me we should conquer Yosemite. It was now that I discovered the finer details of Al's organisational skills. Over breakfast on the day of departure he drew from his pocket a tatty piece of paper covered all over with his spidery writing and a myriad of long multiplication sums. Heading the paper in bold capitals and underlined to ensure its importance; Things to Do. Number one (this circled) get gear from Brighams, 8.55. Two: opticians. Get eyes tested and new glasses, 9.10. Three: Bank and organise travellers cheques, 9.30. Four: pack gear, 10 o'clock. Five: Train to London, 11.20.

Needless to say Brighams didn't open 'til 9.30. We had a brew, then a butty, the optician was forgotten, the banking never mentioned, but we did get to Yosemite. From then on the trip abroad was an annual event, with Al generally choosing the venue. A disastrous trip to Patagonia where we almost failed to reach the mountain was followed in '74 by a winter season in Chamonix: Brian Hall and John Whittle and a cast of thousands. Al was in his element. A posh apartment in Argentiere (not so posh when we left it); skiing on the doorstep: parties almost every night, and the new experience of Alpine winter climbing. The irony of making a two-day ascent of a certain col in the Argentiere basin only for someone to ski down it in 20 minutes several years later. But also the first ascent of the North Face of the Pelerins which has since become a winter classic. I once remember chatting to Al and saying how glad I was that we were lucky enough to go to places like Yosemite, the Alps in winter, before the masses got there. What I failed to realise then was it was Al's vision that took us to those places, not luck.

The heady summers of '75 and '76 brought with them endless sunny days. Routes on Cloggy, Sheard's transit van and parties at Harris's. The Pirhana club with its twin mottoes so close to Al's heart: "Never let the truth get in the way of a good story", and "More than enough is quite sufficient"

At the end of '76, the Burgess's, Brian Hall, John Whittle, Al and myself all set

off on our supertrip to South America. This was the best trip ever: plenty of climbing, lots of close friends and new places to visit. Memories flood back: Christmas at Piedra de Fraile. Success on Poincenot but yet another failure on the West Face of Fitzroy with Al. The Peigne in the pouring rain with Sue and Al, Hector Vietes in Buenos Aires. Then the saga of Al's boots stolen in the hotel in La Paz. And then finally on to the Cordillera Huayhuash in Peru, and Al banning all conversation of pubs lest we became too homesick and had to leave before all the routes had been done. Finally, Rondoy, fear, and complete trust in each other's capabilities.

And so to the Himalaya — it had to be the next step — Jannu alpine style with RBJ and Brian was a long, hard, exhausting climb, and perhaps verging on the necky. Finally in '79 on Kangtega, tearfully realising that Al and I had at last come to the end of the line in mountains. Al's ambition led him on, mine to compromise. Perhaps we'd been together too close, too long. Sorrowfully we parted, Al's path led him on to Nuptse and Everest, mine to Kungjung and the plains of Nepal. We remained friends after that, but never climbed together again. Al asked me to go on to K2 with him this year — I turned it down, and he added, almost as a postscript and thinking of his imminent fatherhood, that he'd probably be joining us next spring for our family weekends away. I was looking forward to that.

Don't anybody leave this service sad, Al wouldn't have wanted that, but just, when you're sat down in a pub or round a camp fire, remember the good times you had together, and smile at the memory.

Rab Carrington

I hope this doesn't sound too much like a shopping list, but Al's achievements go on and on.

After Kangtega he joined Doug Scott, Brian Hall and Georges Bettembourg and climbed the North Face of Nuptse, the third peak in the Everest chain. It was a trip that really hasn't had much publicity, maybe because it *was* so successful. They actually only spent 18 days at Everest Base Camp and achieved a major new route, but as so often happens with success, not much happened, so perhaps that trip has escaped the public eye. In 1980 he went with Michael Ward and Chris Bonington to China on the Kongur reconnaissance, which was the first time any British climbers had been allowed into China, and one which showed Al's acceptance into "The Establishment". Al's lecture always started with the comment that he was a bit dubious about going away with Chris and Michael because their combined ages added up to over a hundred.

I feel he enjoyed that trip more perhaps than the main expedition the following year, despite breaking his ankle yet again.



In the winter of the same year he went to Everest and again was at the forefront of pushing his concept of expedition climbing, although this was a fairly big trip by Al's standards. They tried something that was desperately difficult, to climb the whole of the West Ridge in its entirety in the winter winds. They failed and I think this became a turning point in Al's life in that for the first time he actually admitted that you couldn't do everything just on willpower alone and for the first time he had to admit that he couldn't actually succeed at everything he put his mind to.

But the following year brought success on Kongur with Chris, Pete Boardman and Joe Tasker. It was the first time I'd been on a trip with him, I'd climbed with him a bit in Britain, and I found his company absolutely fabulous, relaxed, always, and incredibly at one with the mountains. Kongur Base Camp wasn't the most exciting place in the world, but Al told me one day he just enjoyed being there, he was quite prepared to sit it out for as long as it took to climb the mountain, which was something that he did again this year. He was also having some misgivings about whether to be a professional climber with all the attendant problems of lecturing, writing and making his money at it. He still enjoyed climbing but I felt never really resolved whether or not he was going to be a professional climber — he slipped into it and certainly became one. But after Kongur he rediscovered an interest that had been diminished, in rock climbing, and particularly rock climbing in Derbyshire, with close friends like Richard Haszko, Simon Wells, Neil Foster, Tom Richardson and even old ancients like Geoff Birtles, Paul Nunn and myself. We went through some fun times and some fiascos. His training for big mountains — he wasn't a runner, (he didn't like running because of his ankles) meant evolving this horribly macabre scheme of carrying rucksacks full of rocks up the steepest bit of Derbyshire. So if ever you're walking over Bleaklow and find the odd pile of sand, it was Al's training for K2 or wherever he was going.

He was a pivotal figure in the Sheffield climbing scene, he bridged gaps between generations — the young lads in their tights and the old grey worthies in the pubs — Al managed to be somewhere in between.

In 1982 he had an unsuccessful attempt with Paul Nunn, Brian and Andy Parkin on the Ogre, and then in '83 a big trip to the Karakoram again with Doug, Don Whillans, RBJ, Andy, Jean Afanassief, Steve Sustad and Greg Child. He did a rock climb near to his own heart on the Lobsang Spires and then Broad Peak with Andy, Jean and RBJ. He failed on K2 after the tragic death of Pete Thexton, and no doubt this and the deaths of Pete, Joe, Alex MacIntyre and Roger Baxter-Jones, profoundly upset him. He often remarked that almost all his Himalayan contemporaries were dead.

1984 saw him going to Karun Koh with Chris Bonington, but the major event of that year was undoubtedly the great family trip to Jersey. Ian Smith said that we should go and there might be some climbing there, so a motley team assembled, and Al had this wheeze (Al was always having wheezes) and this particular one was for me to get a Family Rail Card in order to make the trip cheaper. Al said that he and Phil Burke could go as my sons. I pointed out that that would have made me a father at the age of eight. He was a slave driver — we did over 20 new routes in a week. (In particular three of Al's routes have become classics of the Island at their respective grades - Ed.)

His enthusiasm for the hills knew no bounds. Not just at rock climbing, but ski-ing, cross-country, erratic downhill, walking — everything Al excelled at and wanted to get involved with. And yet he frequently said he never thought of himself as an outdoor person, or of climbing as being an outdoor sport. He thought the most civilised and enjoyable activity was to stand in a pub with a pint in one hand and a ciggy in the other, brushing up his conversational skills. He had a theory that only regular pub-goers could ever master the art of conversation, because it was so competitive. I hope that after this service we'll go and put that theory to the test.

But he was a great one for theories — Al's theories were outrageous, funny and very compelling. One of his daftest ones was the big climbers versus the small climbers theory. If you're a big climber you always imagine that small climbers have the advantage, and vice versa. So Al being over average size said that well, obviously small climbers were better than big. And when asked why, he thought for a moment and said, "Well, ants are brilliant and elephants can't climb at all." Another theory was why sheep all pointed the same way on a hillside. He said that the legs on the inside, the side facing up the hill, were actually shorter than the ones on the outside, which is why they all stood the same way.

Last year he didn't go on an expedition, he spent it rock climbing, leading E4's and E5's and lecturing, and a trip to New Zealand, which he thoroughly enjoyed. He was a great one for lists; he said once that once you'd made them you didn't feel as guilty about not implementing them. He also said he found work so easy he could take it or leave it. One famous list was discovered that said something like, "Stamps, paper, bread, cheese, marge, buy house, get girlfriend". By the end of last year he had both the house on Rupert Road and Deborah. He was incredibly pleased with the house and typically managed to persuade us all that he'd got a mortgage that was exactly a 100 times his declared salary for the previous year. —  
Once again, he'd outwitted the system.

He also became Vice President of the BMC, commenting that this really put him well over the hill, but in fact he was pleased and proud to serve on the BMC

and by all accounts was very competent and sensible in his actions on it.

But '86 came up and K2 again. It was a big trip to the NW Ridge. We had magnificent sponsorship from Fullers Brewery, it could hardly have been more appropriate. The weekend after the Buxton Conference Al and me went down on the train to meet them for the first time. Al said, well, we don't really look much like climbers, but there's no doubt that we not only can endorse and approve their product, but we quite clearly use it frequently!

The expedition was long and hard and dogged by bad weather, and eventually most of the team had job commitments and had to go home. But Al stayed on. He had a total commitment to K2, and had already spent 4 months of his life at Base Camp and said he didn't want to have to come back again.

He knew the risks, and he certainly didn't over estimate his own abilities. I don't want to dwell too much on it, but August 4th must have been the best and most fulfilling climbing day of Al's life. He soloed most of the upper section of K2, and made the first British ascent, shortly followed by Julie Tullis. That's how I would like to remember him, at his moment of total fulfilment. I find it strangely appropriate that Al did solo it — the wheel had turned full circle, from soloing on the Breck as a sixteen-year-old schoolboy, to finally at his moment of triumph soloing the second highest mountain in the world.

Only two things I think need to be said apart from this. I don't want to dwell on those appalling days of storm and sorrow that followed, but when Kurt Diemberger came down, terribly injured and utterly distraught from the top, we spent many hours talking at Base Camp. Two things stand out — one was that Al had been incredibly consoling to Kurt when Julie had died. But the other one was a strange thing, because I'd got it into my head that Al in fact hadn't climbed K2, and it seemed almost an imposition to ask — it seemed trivial under the circumstances and whether he'd got to the top or not didn't seem to make much difference, but when Kurt actually said he had, and said that on the day he was the strongest and had broken trail for most of the day, I was incredibly pleased. It *did* make a difference. But the last thing he said, was when he was telling me about his day of utter devastation and how Al had spent the day in the tent consoling him over Julie's death. He paused and perhaps unwittingly said the one sentence that really summed Al up. He said: "Alan was always a gentleman."

Jim Curran

**BRIAN DAVID CHASE**  
**1966 — 1987**

Brian Chase died in October after a short illness. A skin complaint four years earlier had suggested possible later complications and this summer a Malignant Melanoma was diagnosed from which there was no escape.

Brian was born in Derby, the son of a Management Consultant who ran a group of provincial newspapers. He was introduced to climbing at Derby School by Bob Pettigrew who, in the late fifties, had developed a sort of unofficial climbing club there which apart from Chase included Ian Talks, Rob Gallacher and John Ashburner. The group was very active climbing many of the classic Welsh routes and various Scottish winter climbs and (without Pettigrew) had an Alpine season at Arolla and Zermatt in their final summer holiday. In 1962 Brian went up to Christ's College, Cambridge to read Natural Sciences and after graduating in 1966 moved to Imperial College where, in 1970, he gained his Phd for research into "Defects in Gallium Arsenide". In the same year he married Elaine Walton and moved to Southampton to join the Manufacturing Research Laboratory of IBM and began what was to become a distinguished scientific career in which he eventually became an acknowledged expert in Electron Microscopy and Computer Display Technology.

By the early sixties Brian, in company with school colleagues Ian Talks and Rob Gallacher, had developed into a fine climber leading such typical test pieces of the day as Spectre, Erosion Groove and The Mole. He also climbed (with Gallacher and Ashburner) the Matterhorn during that first alpine season.

Most of his friends in the CC (which he joined in 1966) first became aware of Brian in his Cambridge days where his humour, his climbing skill and his taste for drunken revelry made him ideal CUMC material. During the mid to late sixties the club reached a peak of notoriety, not only for its wild climbing but also for its fabled bachanallia and in 1965 Brian was elevated to the Presidency where he successfully advanced the Club's traditions. Many stories survive from the period to be retold and embellished in the huts and bars of Wales in the succeeding years. Guest lecturers were 'blooded' in nocturnal college building climbs and the CUMC dinner (a DJ affair) became notorious for outrageous consumption — guests were brought to a peak of inebriation before their speeches and if they "foundered" mid-speech or better, shot a momentous tiger or, better still shot a tiger and *then* slumped, the dinner would be pronounced a resounding success. Such carefully selected luminaries as Tom Patey, Ian McNaught-Davis, Nat Allen and John Clements performed with distinction at these events and the CUMC's lecture programme of the period reads like a sixties "hall of fame".

Chase, I believe, presided over the now celebrated dinner when Whillans was guest. He, of course, outdrank everyone and failed to perform the expected collapsing act, but he was treated to a series of interjections from deliriously happy admirers keeping him posted on increasingly excessive eating and drinking feats as the evening progressed. A climax was reached when Bob Keates (perhaps the wildest extreme eater) staggered up and squeaked proudly "I've just eaten

two daffodils and a tulip” Whillans, typically upfazed, responded — “well done lad, keep up the good work” and an entranced Keates withdrew, genuflecting, and set to work on a used brillo pad to the resounding cheers (led by Chase) of the assembly. To be judged a successful President of such an energetic group of revellers called for supreme prowess as well as an iron constitution. These were the days of gross consumption, quart bottles of Daddies Sauce at motorway cafes were a favourite, though some CUMC members aspired to ever greater feats too disgraceful to mention in an obituary. Chase inaugurated curry powder eating and on one overhung occasion served his guests cups of morning coffee mistakenly made from the stuff. Another incident involved an “old cabbage” liberated by a cackling Chase from the bilges of the Cambridge minibus to supplement dwindling rations on the winter meet and form the main component of a communal *grande soupe*. By all accounts the levels of flatulence on the return journey (Chase as usual distinguishing himself) reached such a peak of toxicity that the windows were kept open all the way, an incident that may account for the subsequent indifference by CUMC members for cold alpine bivouacs. Brian was also famed for his elephantine belch, once confused as an incipient rockfall by two climbers descending the West Gully of the Mot.

Brian moved to London in 1966 to join our garret-style living in a spartan house in East Finchley where at one stage the bare floorboards of the spare bedroom hosted an exotic sardine-like mix of struggling photographers, others of an artistic bent, and degenerate Oxbridge climbing graduates including Chase, Sean Williams, John Peck, Nick and Carolyn Estcourt, Malcolm Howells and many others.

It was during this time that I got to know Brian and in 1971 we planned an Alpine season together. This turned into an amusing shambles when the big end of his decrepit mini van failed near Saarbrücken. I was all for leaving the relic and pressing on but such mechanical cowardice was totally out of the question for Brian, even though it was Saturday, in a heat wave and the start of a public holiday he decided that we would mend the thing. Feeling not unlike a member of the Long Range Desert Group whose truck has broken down 500 miles inland from Tobruk I erected him an awning and plied him with tepid beer as he set out to work slowly dismantling the engine. A jury rig with an assortment of prusik loops and jumars was employed to winch the engine clear and a day later we had revealed the source of the problem. After two day's festering we spent a fourth day rushing round Saarbrücken purchasing, in pidgin German, all the spare parts, reamings, bushings etc that were necessary and eventually on the evening of the fifth day the job was done. It was an interesting test of patience for me and a demonstration of methodical application by him. The remnant of

our two-week season were less eventful, a modest Oberland pass, a Dülfer classic in the Kaisergebirge and a visit to München's red light district and its klettergarten — all pretty tame stuff after that character-building engine epic.

These selected anecdotes serve to describe Brian's role in the climbing world far better than any dry list of climbs, and, I believe, illustrate the madcap life of hilarious incident in which he felt most at home. Perhaps this was a balance to the necessary exactitude of his professional life.

He was noted as an extremely safe climber and a dogged and skilful all-rounder. The climbing record contains a string of worthy rock routes including an early prowess in artificial climbing. He was a member of the Keele University Peruvian Expedition in 1965 during which he made ascents of Chichiccapac and Huaynaccapac. His report on this trip in the CCJ noted that one of the members enjoyed "A Short Siesta on the Upper Slopes" — a phrase that prompted Anon (probably Kevin Fitzgerald) to write a zany article in the 1967 CCJ (republished in *The Games Climbers Play*). His early alpine career produced a selection of respectable routes including The Old Brenva (with Pete Rowat, 1966), and the Route Major and Triolet North Face (with Rupert Roshnik, 1967) and he was elected to the ACG in 1969. On moving to Southampton he played an active part in the IBM climbing and caving club and also took part in sub-aqua activities in various locations on the south coast. In 1979 he resurrected his alpine climbing, attending a string of AC meets and climbing many classic routes including Frontier Ridge, Nadelhorn/Lenspitze, Täschhorn/Dom, Salbit etc (with either Steve Town or Mike Pinney) and in 1986 was a member of the AC's Garhwal expedition where he climbed Saife (6,166m).

He was invariably to be found at AC and CC functions warming the conversation with his bluff bonhomie. An enthusiast to the last, it was totally in character that with his illness well advanced and his speech and mobility greatly impaired, he insisted on attending the IBM Irish Meet for one last visit to the mountains. Brian will be greatly missed by his many climbing friends as one of the most amiable and amusing members of the mountaineering world whose presence was a reminder of that now distant memory of undergraduate mayhem of the sixties, and who, even in his mature years added a welcome Falstaffian element to any occasion. Our sympathies go out to Elaine and her daughter Lisa and all the other members of a family so full of fun.

I am indebted to John Peck, Bob Keates, Ian Talks, Bob Pettigrew, Jancis Allison, Carolyn Estcourt, Mike Kosterlitz, Mike Pinney and Elaine and Edgar Chase for assistance in preparing this obituary.

Ken Wilson



## EDITORIAL

A journal acts as one important reflector of the health of a club, the recent history of our Journal would suggest a high degree of fitness. This year sees a change of Editor after ten years, in which eight Journals were printed. The man behind this effort, Geoff Milburn has produced more Journals than any other Editor in the New Series; he is now an Hon. Member of the Club.

Geoff stimulated through his considerable enthusiasm a series of very full and exciting volumes characterised by lavish numbers of articles, and particularly photographs. My reaction was "What a hard act to follow".

Any Journal is ultimately only as good as its contributors. I hope you will agree that this year's standard is as high as we have come to expect. There are some differences but essentially I have tried to keep to the pattern established by Geoff. However, if you think there are elements missing then please do something, and send material for next year's publication to

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# REVIEWS

**Extreme Rock compiled by Ken Wilson and Bernard Newman**

Diadem, £27.95

Sitting deep under the earth in a tomb carved out of solid rock by a Minoan culture some 4,000 years ago it reminded me that man has always had a close affinity with rock. The savage Cretan scenery attracts visitors by the thousand and each day crocodiles of people from many lands tramp down the Samarian Gorge to gaze in awe at the soaring limestone walls. Elsewhere the hot Sirocco wind scours the coastline and while the locals bulldoze the rocky landscape to dig out building sites endless tourists wind their way round the partly reconstructed palace of Knossos.

And so it has been with *Extreme Rock*, a book that started its life eight long years ago after the success of *Hard Rock* in 1975. The foundations were laid and then the craftsmen were hired by a strange process as a list of routes was circulated. Usually the response to a claim was along the lines of: "I'll do Left Wall, Surplomb and Spectrum." "Sorry, Perrin's beaten you to it." Despite the fact that writers came and went the great walls began to rise and an outline was faintly discernible. Along the way however walls were knocked down and rooms were added as the architectural style was modified. Like some great cathedral the final edifice is a mixture of styles and only two people could tell the whole story. There were casualties along the way as bog-standard classic routes were scrapped in favour of the latest super-routes and not a few writers are still chuntering about how their literary masterpieces were hacked at a late stage to create more space. Space for what? Harder routes.

There we have it in a nutshell, the book purports to include modern classics but omits many of the true classic Extremes in favour of the hardest routes of the day. Dictionaries by Collomb and Crew both rightly stress that 'Routes are designated as classic only many years after the first ascent'. Modern classics such as *The Weaver at Tremadoc* only come into being after a spate of ascents. To wave the red rose how about *Mandarin at Hoghton Quarry*, *Cracked Actor at Trowbarrow* or *The Golden Tower at Anglezarke*? At *Gogarth* we lose *Supercrack* and *Wonderwall* in favour of *The Bells!* In no way can the latter be considered as classic, unless it can be described as a classic death route — yet how many climbers have been foolhardy enough to venture on to it? I know of only two. And how many climbers will complete *Master's Wall*, *Pierrepoint*, *Master's Edge* or *Beau Geste*? Even a statement in the book's preface makes one think: 'The Moon, Steeple, Bitter Oasis and *Eroica* should already be objectives for any regular climber'. You must be joking.

Some readers will find it irritating that *Extreme Rock* does not stand in its own right and needs to be read in conjunction with *Hard Rock*. One can not have a chapter headed 'The Development of Extreme Climbing in Britain' which commences with the state of the art in the early Seventies. Forty years earlier Longland completed his *Javelin Blade* which we still accept as Extreme. (It's all semantics but even the word Extreme is a misnomer. Bomb-proof routes which are technically hard cannot really be described as Extreme.) As some of the great classic Extremes such as *Shibboleth*, *Ichabod*, *Cenotaph Corner* and *Vector* are already in *Hard Rock* it is almost impossible to evaluate *Extreme Rock* without encompassing *Hard Rock*. Even reading the articles in *Extreme Rock* was a disappointment as they merely triggered a wave of nostalgia for those of 1975. Somehow climbing has lost some of its vitality and adrenalin and has become more clinical and matter of fact.

'I found myself at the mercy of my old friend, gravity, and underwent an immediate change of direction.'

If it had been me sharp ending you'd have heard about it five miles away.

Even amongst the plethora of multi-extravaganzoid pictures I could not find many climbers in extremis. Perhaps Pete O'Sullivan looked a trifle gripped on *Gates of Delirium* but most of the angry young men who appeared to be superglued to the rock had looks of either nonchalance, indifference or an awareness of slight constipation. Chris Gore on *Footless Crow* appears to be bored out of his

mind, while Basher on Pierrepont was clearly a permanent fixture for the duration. There is only one proper picture in the book and that is the one of Crew and Harris after the first ascent of Zukator in 1964. What a team! All the best 'climbing' pictures depict non-climbing scenes — most of the others are mainly ego. Having said that it is time for the prizes.

Out go all the rather indifferent black and whites which look worse than they really are when eclipsed by the breath-taking colour work. Winner by several lengths (or a long tongue) is Bernard Newman. His two action shots of Craig Smith on The Prow and Wolfgang Gullich on Dominatrix are exceptional. The former in particular draws me back again and again as I don't believe that anyone can live with exposure like that — even if I see them do it with my own eyes. I'd need suckers and a parachute. Bernard's shots of Pollitt on The Prow, Chris Plant on The Cad and Pollitt on The Bells! The Bells! are also of the highest calibre. Having said that Bernard is disqualified as it is partly his fault that the book has taken so long to come out. Several years ago the rumour was that he wouldn't rest until he'd taken ALL the best pictures himself. He certainly set out to do it, which reminds me of one little incident in the Lakes. One glorious week Jim Moran dragged me up some of the hardest routes and in Ambleside Bernard bumped into us and asked us what we'd done. As the list unfolded ... Saxon, Nazgul ... Cumbrian ... Bitter Oasis, Footless Crow ... Gates of Delirium etc. Bernard's jaw dropped more and more. "But you can't have — they're all in the book." He was even quite put out when we refused to go back and do them all again for him.

A few other photographs that deserve a mention are Phizacklea's shot of Saxon, Andy Brazier's Citadel, Ian Parker's Cavemen and Mick Fowler's aesthetically pleasing photo of Heart of the Sun. Old favourites worth commending are John Cleare's stunning Left Wall composition and his not to be forgotten portrayal of Livesey on Liberator. The Abrahams Thornton Pickard award goes to Ken Wilson's mood shot of 21 years ago with Pete Crew very much alone on the big wall of Mammoth.

The smacked hand award goes for 'Jonny Woodwood' (sounds like a motor-boat), 'it's hard-won traditions' and a return of the dreaded 'Flakey (Flaky) Wall'. Most disturbing however is the reawakening of the old debate as to the accuracy of 'Clogwyn Du'r Arddu' or 'Clogwyn du'r Arddu'. Will someone please come to the rescue before the 1988 Cloggy guide goes to the printer.

Two value judgements are made which concern the club and the thrown down gauntlet must be picked up.

"The most recent FRCC Lake District publications to Borrowdale and Scafell probably represent the state of the art in 1986."

"The CC Welsh guidebook empire, which throughout the seventies and early eighties was trendsetting now has a rather dated look and is in need of some new 'grand design'."

Rather than debate the pros and cons of each area one word will suffice — "Pass" (of the Paul Williams 1987 Llanberis variety).

For those with an eye to facts and figures (and subject to a recount) within the 296 pages of this book to end all climbing books there are a staggering 300 photographs elegantly designed by the maestro himself. Are you up to doing these routes? Well the breakdown is as follows: E1 (9), E2 (32), E3 (47), E4 (41), E5 (35), E6 (13), E7 (6) and E9 (The Indian Face).

Technically we have: 5b (23), 5c (54), 6a (66), 6b (32), 6c (9).

The two most frequent route grades are E3, 5c and E4, 6a so you know what is in store and if you are an E1 climber you might as well stick to working through Hard Rock routes. The burning question seems to be just how popular will Extreme Rock prove to be with the masses. Will those with the other five books in the set feel compelled to lash out on this speed merchant's dream trip.

Whatever the sales figures blandly state the Birmingham boys (alias the Mountain men) have finally delivered the goods and confounded the pundits who had wagged their heads and cynically commented that this book would never arrive. Whatever the carping criticisms might be this book

is a BRILLIANT effort and will be acquired by hook or more likely by crook. My copy is staying under lock and key as I can't afford to replace it in a hurry.

As a last thought, "Eat your heart out tickers. Work your way through this list and you'll end up in a box before you finish — that is if you don't die in the attempt."

Geoff Milburn

### **Llanberis by Paul Williams**

The Climbers Club, £9.95

On the 53rd problem of a glorious afternoon at Burbage North, he thugs his way around the 6a roof at his first attempt. In between 'Charles Atlas' poses and exaggerated gasps of ecstasy he screams proudly, 'Not bad for nearly forty ... good 6a youth ... smoked it youth!' Paul Williams is in full flow. 'You know, I just love climbing on grit', he continues, unabated, as we walk back behind the lengthening shadows. 'Well I love climbing on any rock I suppose ... in fact, I just love to climb, full stop', he finally decides. The qualification is unnecessary, Paul's sheer delight in climbing is as obvious as it is rare in many climbers today.

Three years later, this time at Fachwen, the enthusiasm is unchanged. The intimate details of every problem are divulged, along with tales of local nymphomaniacs and secret lines in 'The Quarries'. Eventually the conversation turns to his latest labour of love, as he asks anxiously about the new 'Pass' guide. He needn't worry. All Paul's enthusiasm, love, experience(s), humour, hopes, cares and fears have fuelled his pen for the new Llanberis guide. It is without doubt the best contemporary guidebook, and is possibly the finest ever written.

A bold statement, but this is not to infer it is without fault, there are simply fewer faults than in other guides, even, though my heart aches to say it, than in the Peak publications!

With its blue spine and white lettering it presents itself well on the shelves although the front cover may not be bright enough to catch the eye of a passing climber. Considering the area it covers this is far from important, and the quiet beauty of the photograph slowly grows on you. It is a thick book, some 340 pages (including photographs), and here's the first moan, too thick. The inclusion of slate has pushed the size up from around 250 pages but a separate guide to this new medium may well have been too small and uneconomic. The amalgamation of areas is for reasons of convenience and economics (as much to the climber as the publisher) but the present choice of materials, and binding technique, is inadequate for books of this size. My own copy has seen only 1 week's use on the crags plus a few reads and the cover has split. In future, if the slate section increases in size and becomes viable as a separate guide, the problem will be simply resolved.

The text is effectively divided into two sections; the slate and the rhyolite (the tights and the breeches!) and, deliberate or not, the writing style reflects this. The slate section oozes with enthusiasm, for this is the new. Humour abounds, and along with characters such as 'Captain Crater' and 'Captain Crank' we are introduced to the intricacies and 'idiosyncracies' of slate helped by useful tips and a glossary of terms, *Gin Palace* is described as 'a frantic frictionless fight fraught with frustration; yet another stern test of ones vocabulary!' and on *The Machine in the Ghost* one can 'take a bone-crunching pendulum into the groove, and get the second to ring an ambulance.' There is excitement here but tempered with caution; particular importance is placed on crucial gear placements and care is taken over the exact line followed on this often featureless rock. In addition, the approaches and descents in the complex maze of quarries have been very carefully described and on only one, that to The Mau Mau Level, is there a minor error (the fence on the right is crossed just before the steepening and not after). Note that the removal of ladders by the C.E.G.B. has occurred since the guide was published.

The 'Pass' section, whilst lacking some of the freshness of the slate, is nevertheless a superb effort. Once again the descriptions show first-hand knowledge of the routes and give a confidence seldom found from other guides. In fact, the route descriptions throughout the guide are, in my experience, extremely accurate as are the grades and a lot of effort has obviously been made in these areas. I only noticed a few peccedillos, and only on slate; on *Cystitis by Proxy*, after the crux you move up and left before moving diagonally right (not immediately right which is a desperate move on the girdle!) and on *For Whom the Bell Tolls* you climb up to the overlap. The in situ gear on *Windows of Perception* is a peg not a nut, *Stack of Nudebooks* is only E3 with a side-runner and *Neat Arete* is more like HVS 5b than E1 6a. Note, however, that the incorrect placing of *Pain Killer* in the text was the printer's error but should really have been spotted before the editor pressed the button. The descriptions are supported by photodiagrams for the slate and line drawings for the Pass. The former are adequate and the latter clearly drawn, with red ink used to highlight the routes to good effect. The diagrams are the work of Greg Griffiths, an extremely talented artist, who also drew the maps which are excellent and have a refreshing appearance.

Overall the selection of photographs is good; some new routes, some old, some 'standard' shots and some 'bold' ones. The best illustrate the slate, which with its lack of colour and contrast is a pleasant surprise. Most are beautifully clear with superb lighting and good composition. The exposure of Colossus Wall is shown nicely by the shot of Steve Haston on *Ride the Wild Surf* and the grandeur of the quarries by the rear cover picture of Johnny Dawes climbing *The Quarryman*. For technicality look at Dawes on *The Fire Escape* which makes exquisite use of light and shade. Slightly less impressive are the shots of the author on *Colossus* and that of Jim Jewel on *The Mau Mau* which makes it look like a slab; even so, with Jim's muscles and the witty title it's a popular picture.

In general, the photographs covering the Pass are less impressive. With only a few exceptions they lack the brightness of the slate photographs, possibly because the sun seldom shines in the Pass! That of *Cockblock* is poorly composed and static and surely someone, somewhere, must have some new shots of *Lord of the Flies*, even though Extreme Rock apparently failed to find any decent ones! The photograph of *Grona* gives little indication of its angle despite Craig Smith's grimace and the original of *Ivy Sepulchre* is a lot sharper than that in the guide. *Black Shadow* is rather average but the others are very good. I particularly liked the ones of *Atomic Hot Rod* and *The Nectarine Run*.

Despite these minor criticisms I must reiterate my earlier statement; this guide represents the state of the art, and in terms of value for money, at £10, its a gift.

When a climber buys a guide today they expect far more than just the route details; they expect to be entertained. Paul Williams' Llanberis guide does more than that, it sets the standard for the next generation of guidebooks.

Graham Hoey

### **Classic Rock Climbs in Great Britain by Bill Birkett** Oxford Illustrated Press, £14.95

Any collection of good quality climbs is irresistible and this book contains a fine selection in an admirably broad range of grades, the majority being at VS or below. Information followed by a route description is complemented by the authors personal comments on the climb. In general the colour photographs far outweigh the quality of the black and white reproductions. The author has also been badly served by some appalling proof-reading. However, once this has been accepted you have a practical picture book of classic climbs that will be on anyone's hit-list.

Terry Gifford



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### **Ben Nevis: Britain's Highest Mountain by Ken Crocket**

Published by The Scottish Mountaineering Trust, £14.95

The SMC and Crocket should be congratulated for a fine, aesthetically pleasing book which is immaculately presented. The abundance of quotes, the amount of factual information and the quality of the black and white photographs combine to make this the definitive book on the history of Ben Nevis. In tracing this history it also reflects the growth of climbing in Scotland and the SMC in particular — especially the peculiar 'sport' of Scottish Winter Climbing.

The prominent activists backgrounds and their impact on the Ben are fully explored — Collie, Raeburn, Macphee, Hargreaves, Bell, Kellet, Whillans, Haston, Smith and Marshall to name but a few.

The other features of the Ben, the Observatory, Aluminium works and the Distillery are all well known to climbers, but their history less so; I found the chapters on these other aspects very interesting.

Recent history is always difficult to write about and I found the last chapter, Revolution, a disappointment. Although it portrays the change from step-cutting to front-pointing well, the rest is more a list of routes and who did them rather than the background and inside stories of the personalities and their climbs. The impression is that there has been little modern research outside the confines of the SMC; it is too parochial.

Despite the last chapter it is recommended to anybody interested in Ben Nevis and Scottish winter climbing in particular.

Brian Hall

### **The Alpine Journal 1986**

Published by The Alpine Club

It wasn't the fine articles on the Siachen Indo-British Expedition, Eastern Karakorum, Gangotri, Snow Leopard or Bhutan that caught my imagination; though they certainly provided valuable information; nor was it the wit of Jim Curran in the Andes, or the latest on how people die at altitude, even the stimulus of Denis Gray telling us not to compete (a bit like rebuking Adam and Eve). No doubt everybody will have their favourite article in this climbing compendium; but for me it was 'Short of the Folding Stuff' by Tom Price. It is a beautiful piece of writing, combining humour, history and insight.

Unfortunately the format of the AJ is not exciting and it feels like too much of an effort to read it. When it arrives through the post I usually put it straight on the book shelf and only pick it up when ultimately bored, only to regret not reading the many fine articles earlier. Presentation needs to be updated, particularly the photographs. For example 'Snowstorm: Hannibal and his army crossing the Alps' by Turner in black and white has about as much relevance as a picture of my tonsils, or "Unter Schusselkarturm. The Schber route follows the centre cracks going direct to the summit" Where you can hardly see the mountain!

In an age when most climbers have good cameras and everything from television to newspapers is colour, there is no excuse not to have good colour photos, especially on the cover. The AJ is used as a reference book where quality photographs are just as vital as good articles.

Brian Hall

**Pembroke by Jon de Montjoye and Mike Harber**  
The Climbers Club, £8.95

Life during the economic recession of the early eighties has been a harrowing time for many people, yet rock climbing activities have been gripped (often literally) in rapid growth. This growth has nowhere been more evident than in Pembrokeshire. The first climbing guide to Pembroke was published as recently as 1981, but since then no other area (with the possible exception of Gogarth in the sixties) has seen the influx of visiting climbers nor the explosion of new route activity that is now synonymous with the area. Such was the level of this early activity that a supplement was published in 1982 and then later in 1987, the second definitive guide.

So much for the social history lesson but what about the guide? Firstly it must be said that this guide (as do all others) stands as a testament to the hard work of the authors, of both past and present editions, and that it is fitting that this volume should be dedicated to Mike Harber.

All guidebooks are essentially an exercise in communication. If the layout of a guide is attractive and easy to follow and the text conveys accurate and factual information then the guide is off to a flying start. If it is a pleasure to read and well illustrated with good diagrams and photographs then even better. Finally, if the guide is serviceable and withstands the rigours of a rucksack and is good value for money then no climber can surely have justification to levy any criticism.

The latest guide has been produced religiously to the CC house style and all the usual features are included. However certain aspects, particularly the text and some of the photographs, leave me with a feeling that an opportunity has been missed. For me the thin line beyond being informative and business-like has at times been crossed and as a result things appear somewhat stoical. Are we never to see more than a fleeting glimpse of humour within the covers of a CC guide? Perhaps describing *The Butcher* as a "meaty little problem", or *Rock Hard* as a "stiff little problem" isn't everybody's idea of fun but what the hell! That said, and all joking apart, the text could perhaps have been improved further if yet more access and tidal information had been given for the lesser known and more obscure crags. Also the readers attention needs drawing to the new routes that are still unrepeatd and hence the descriptions and grades may be suspect.

As usual the historical review and the first ascent list make interesting reading. I can't help thinking that De Montjoye has allowed himself a little too much editorial liberalism in his recording of the facts behind the Gibson/Littlejohn "Witch Hunt affair". So much so that we are left in no doubt as to where his loyalties lie. As a complete irrelevance I wonder if hell and damnation manifested itself on the 6 May 1984 as Littlejohn resorted to Chalk for the first ascent of "The White Hotel". We'd all used it for years. Incidentally just when the "Gate of Horn" first climbed: 1981 as the text suggests or 1980 as the first ascent list suggests?

Without wishing to be too controversial (who am I kidding) I must move on to the artwork; (out of the frying pan into the fire). Phil Gibson, becoming as ubiquitous as his brother Gary, has lent a hand with the crag diagrams; and how good they are too. However I must confess too being a little disappointed with the retention of the old photo-diagrams in their original guise. Surely some of the new routes are worth marking on. Still no matter, Rome wasn't built in a day. (Now for a deep breath and here goes with the photographs.) I must say that I've nothing against Parsons, De Montjoye or *Trevallen Pillar* but for my money a shot with the classic Pembroke qualities; you know blue sky, sun-drenched rock and the sea, would have been an out-right winner for the front cover. The *Trevallen Pillar* shot is an obvious frontispiece, that is if the CC had them. Some of the photo's inside shine out as head and shoulders above the rest, most are fine but at least two fall a long way short of the mark! The rear cover goes some way to restore the guide's credibility.

That's dealt with the text and the artwork, but all my remarks so far are but a jot in comparison

with my major criticism that must lie with the CC Publications Committee. By way of introduction can I say that it was only on my third copy of the guide, and hence third visit to my local friendly climbing shop, that I finally procured a copy that wasn't in the throws of self-destruction. Really, a £9 guidebook should at least make it to the rucksack! All but 400 pages of text, et al, clearly will not go between one set of covers on decent paper. Hence the dilemma. One volume for £9 or two volumes for say £15 plus? My vote goes to the latter and let all the encumbent arguments about price, a difficult north/south split and unpopular areas be damned. If a guide to an area is worth having then it will sell.

In conclusion I will again praise the authors for a difficult job well done. Whilst Littlejohn in 1981 predicted 1000 routes, the present edition contains approximately 1550 and De Montjoye and Harber are extending the prophetic utterance to 2000 routes. It would take a brave man to contradict this prophecy, especially with Gary Gibson around. Until that time this guide will serve well for all who treat it with the tender loving care it both needs and deserves.

Keith Sharples

### **New Climbs 1986. Compiled by Gary Gibson**

Published by the B.M.C. and Distributed by Cordee, £4.00

I remember, I remember many years ago ..., the first series of New Climbs. The last one in my collection is dated 1970 and edited by Ian Roper. Largish, floppy books, eagerly awaited, particularly if you were active in north Wales; my old copies show all the signs of heavy use. Dog eared and folded so as to fit into the back pocket of the then ubiquitous blue jeans, stained with sweat or worse (but not chalk), they were our contact with the inside world of climbing. The secrets of Gogarth, Llech Ddu and Carreg Hyll-drem were all unravelled through these journals. Brown, Crew, Alcock, Davies, the Holliwells and McCallum (who?); their names and others from the halls of fame and infamy littered every page. OK, the boring old fart is reminiscing again, so how does Gary's book compare?

Physically, this book is more compact than its predecessor, the cover measures some 4 x 6.5 inches and the book is over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch thick. It's soft backed with nice colour plates front and back and a blue spine bears the B.M.C. logo. The quality of the paper within the covers feels a little cheap and absorbent though, unlikely to survive a bad day in Pembroke, but I suppose this may prove useful in dire emergency. Inside, the route descriptions are arranged in logical order, running north to south, and crags are cross referenced by page number to the relevant existing guidebook. Descriptions are a little terse in places, but considering the wealth of new routes covered here (a rough estimate suggested over 1500) this is understandable. The normal E grades, technical grades and quality stars are all included. Heights and distances are in feet (inches might be more appropriate for the odd route) with the exception of the Peak area where metres are used for compatibility with the current guide book format.

As the author of more new routes than any one person in the Universe, Gary's name crops up fairly regularly, although the book is in no way a 'Gary's little route book' and many of the names you love to hate also feature regularly. Grade wise, there's not a lot for the activist climbing below E2/E3 with E5's and E6's almost becoming the norm. I did however notice a couple of Diffs ...

The only real criticism that I can throw at the book are the omissions. Peak limestone is not included due to the imminence? of the Series of guidebooks. But where are The Lake District and Scottish contributions? Wot, no new routes? Due to some misplaced sence of secrecy, the guide book 'authorities' in these areas have declined to disclose developments in their areas. I find this philosophy difficult to understand when the *raison d'être* of all guide book producers should be to inform the climber, where, how hard, how good. The Old Guard yet rule in some dark regions.

Gary, has done an amazing job here. Particularly so when one considers the scope of the guidebook, the backlog of new routes which are included and the books short gestation period. The 'old' New Climbs tended to concentrate on Wales and the SW of England, here we have a brave attempt to cover the whole of the UK. The guide is planned as the first in a regular series.

The guide is dedicated to Al Rouse who conceived the idea of a new New Climbs series covering the whole of the British Isles. It is a great sadness that he has not survived to see its completion. I'm sure he would have approved of the results.

Chris Jackson

### **Helyg, Diamond Jubilee 1925-1985 by Geoff Milburn**

Published by Geoff Milburn and The Climbers Club, £12.50

To review a book celebrating a CC event for the CCJ smacks of incest. Yet there are things to be said, even by a supporter of the project. Possibly it is useful for someone close but yet a little apart to try to say them.

'Helyg' was not primarily intended for mass consumption. It was aimed at CC members, and especially at those with special attachments related to the earliest CC hut, founded way back in the 1920s. I have few such attachments and no such memories, but found an interest in the ruminations of those who have.

Helyg was almost synonymous with the CC for many years. It symbolised the revival of the membership and their ascendancy. Masterminded by a small group seeking to drag the Club back from seemingly irretrievable decline after the First World War, it became a focus for members to an extent hardly conceivable even for Herbert Carr and the other founders. From it members and their guests issued forth to rewrite the history of Welsh climbing, seemingly in a process beginning within months of its opening. To it cars careered from Liverpool, Cambridge or London, and for decades it was the heart of Welsh climbing. Only since the 1950s has its relative importance waned, as the Club became richer and gained other huts, and the focus of activity shifted elsewhere. This thoughtfully edited volume allows the early story to unfold, principally by allowing the main protagonists to tell their own story. The accounts vary in intent and seriousness, with as sympathetic an ear to legend and folklore, to idiosyncrasy and even tragedy, as to great deeds. There emerges an image, in print and in photography of an already lost world.

It was, on the surface at least, near totally male. Helyg was a last bastion in many ways to the advance of women in the Climber's Club, and jealously preserved. Not that all male comers were always very welcome there in the past. For some it epitomized Clubbishness at its best, which for others implied its antithesis. But that is as much a part of CC history as many other aspects, and whatever one's personal views, it should not be written out. Here it is echoed, deeply different, somewhat austere, perhaps increasingly difficult to understand by younger generations. The Pinnacle Club or the SMC come nearest to it now.

Not all the writing is inspired or humorous, though much is both. In effect the Club has sponsored a little history of itself in the guise of lauding stone and slates. The volume does well to celebrate the meeting of older members in 1985, and wisely records their activities, their memories, their images now and in the past. It brings together evocative photographs, obituaries of some who did not make it to the party, and some fine accounts of aged activism, as well as of deeds nearly forgotten. In an activist sport, it is easy for a club to become irrelevant to its longest habitues. In every respect 'Helyg' acts as a corrective to such shortsightedness, and though those who know better than I, will correct its perspectives, no future historian of British climbing will dare ignore it.

Paul Nunn

**The Great Backpacking Adventure, written by Chris Townsend**

The Oxford Illustrated Press, £8.95

The Great Backpacking Adventure joins a series of 'Great Adventure' books published by the OIP, a series which includes such notables as Hamish Brown and John Barry amongst its authors. Chris Townsend describes six long distance walks: two in the UK, one in the Pyrenees, two in the US and one in Iceland; also included are 11 excellent colour plates and several route maps.

The book starts with the familiar Pennine Way, weighing in at a mere 270 miles and culminates in the Continental Divide, 3000 miles of poorly defined trail linking Canada to Mexico via The Rocky Mountains. The walks are largely undertaken solo but are sometimes in the company of a friend along certain sections of the way. Support teams are rightly spurned and instead, well planned food and map dumps are made at strategically located post offices along route, a technique which appeared to operate successfully both here and in the US. The accomplishments are highly impressive. The Pacific Crest trail, 174 days and 2600 miles. The Continental Divide, 3000 miles in 179 days including snow bound passes, bears, atrocious weather and self destructing rucsacs on route. Almost equally impressive are the years of preparation which went into the longer walks, the discussions with other trail walkers and organisations, the acquisition of maps and permits, the critical timing to make best use of the summer season.

The overriding impression that I got from this book is of Chris's tremendous enthusiasm for backpacking. This comes through right from page one, from his first uncertain steps through Edale village on the start of the Pennine Way, to the final chapters of the book, fighting his way through cold rain and glacier torrents of the Markarfljot in Iceland. An inspiration to all aspirant backpackers.

Just a few minor gripes. Covering so much ground as the book does, detail is inevitably lost, and at times, particularly in the earlier parts of the book the text tends to become a list of hilltops and campsites. The pain, despair and joy which is surely part of any long distance walk somehow didn't quite get through to me. An appendix listing equipment and clothing used or recommended would have been of interest; which tent, what books, how many pairs of socks, how heavy? These are questions that are inevitably asked after reading a book of this type. A little more detail of Chris's companions would also have been appreciated, sometimes they seemed to walk like ghosts at his side, a name and little else.

Petty complaints. I hugely enjoyed the book and if you love wild places, and even if you're only slightly interested in Backpacking — buy it! We might yet meet on the trail.

Chris Jackson

**Native Stones by David Craig**

Secker and Warburg, £10.95

This is the richest book about climbing that I have read because it is an engagement with climbing culture by a writer who brings to that engagement a sharp awareness of all the facets of himself: father, partner, animal, poet, literary critic, potentially dead climber. In a series of reflections that are always anchored in the experience of climbing itself, this writer's reflections range from route names to the rope, from ethics to fear, and from Fay Godwin's photographs to gardening new routes. The result, you realise when you finish reading it, is a slice through contemporary experiences and issues in our common culture for which climbing has been the metaphor and the medium.

David Craig began rock climbing with whole-hearted and insatiable enthusiasm in 1974 at the age of forty two (last winter he had me leave early for work so that we could sink our fists in The File



in the grey light of dawn). At the same time he was moving his teaching and writing away from the criticism of literature towards the production of it. For this reason the writing about climbing is particularly detailed and evocative, the issues have been carefully thought through and nothing seems to escape notice and gain significance. Some climbers, perhaps forgetting that this book is aimed at a general audience, have felt that the game is taken too seriously, and its senior practitioners far too seriously. David Craig does express reservations about W.H. Murry's mystical moments and Ed Drummond's ornamental style, whilst admiring other features of their writing. But it is simply not in his nature to make personal criticisms of the veterans to whom the book is dedicated. Instead there exudes a warmth for climbing with his children, for example, before they climb away up the grades, for his relationship with other creatures of the cliffs and for the rock forms themselves.

The latter part of the book is a kind of sharing of the writer's climbing chop-book — that particularly Scottish form of collected quotations and reflections around them. But weaving through these evaluations of language is the awareness that obscene route names, for example, are given to what are, after all, "innocent and often beautiful tracts of nature".

At the bottom of this book it's lack of hubris derives from a respect and a responsibility for nature, upon which, amongst which and with which we climb. As a "native" climbing "stones" in the unglamourised manner of a 'middling club climber' David Craig confirms what the magazines tend to obscure and Extreme Rock confirms: that quality of experience is not directly related to grades and that physical experience only has meaning within its richness of context. In *Native Stones* climbing becomes a metaphor for our relationship with the natural world and a reflection of our own nature. In this book, David Craig, like Wordsworth (without the tranquility) is

Speaking of nothing more than what we are

How exquisitely the individual Mind ...

to the external world

Is fitted.

Terry Gifford

### **Grande Traverse and the Mont Blanc Tour by Malcolm and Nicole Parker**

Diadem Books, £6.95

This beautifully produced guide describes three major excursions in the Alps. A summer and a winter traverse of the Alps from the Mediterranean to Lake Geneva (and vice versa), and a summer traverse of Mont Blanc. The book describes, on a day by day basis all the fine detail required to make the trips a success. Route maps accompany each section, showing all the broad detail required for planning, and are handily graduated into days. The guide is a mine of information, giving tips on route finding and general technique in the Alps winter and summer. Addresses are given for weather reports and mountain rescue and detail is given in huts and bivouacs, where to obtain keys etc.

The guide is almost worth the price for the superb photographs alone. 'Realists like myself know that the hills are not normally bathed in sunshine with views of endless hills, or else where does all that snow come from? However, its nice to pretend.

A very practical guide which really tempts you to have a go.

Chris Jackson

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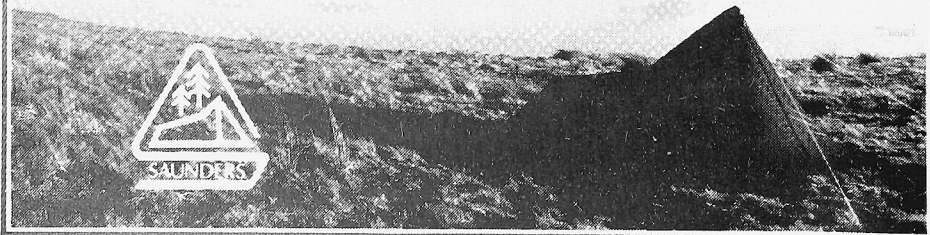
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## On High Lakeland Fells — The 100 Best Walks and Scrambles

by Bob Allen

Pic Publications, £9.95

Once there were picture/coffee table books and guide books — the former (including the Hard Rock/Big Walks school of publications) being A4 sized or larger, the latter pocket sized. Bob Allen's new volume doesn't fit easily into either category, is it a small coffee table book or a large and rather oddly shaped guide book? With illustrations comprising rather more than half the total number of pages, and a lay-out obviously planned to show these off to their best advantage, it would seem to be the former. The quality of the plates would seem, to confirm this, they are quite simply, stunning. Most were taken over the last three years, and as the majority of shots show the fells under snow the author has taken full advantage of the last two superb winters in the Lakes. Some, such as that of Dow Crag from Brown Pike are bleak, chilling reminders of the serious, almost alpine nature of the fells under a full snow cover; but more often it is the contrasts achieved by a light or partial covering that the author/photographer has exploited so memorably — the bones of a ridge picked out by the shining threads of distant gullies, the freezing air of a shadowed foreground accentuated by a patch of snow, the sun catching a distant peak ... With difficulty I'll confine myself to a few favourites: a sunless, snowy High Stile with Red Pike and Buttermere floating in a Heaton-Cooper warmth beyond, turn the page and this time the lake and almost all the hills are in shadow but for the dappling of sunlight on Grasmoor and a thin band of clear sky reflecting on distant Crummock Water. Perhaps the most dramatic of all is the view of Wasdale — the whole valley in deep shadow, but every field boundary etched to perfection by a thin border of snow, the silent, almost imperceptible figure looking on from the side of Needle Gully adding the perfect touch of human scale and involvement. I must add one more — Ard Craggs, Crag Hill, Sail and Causey Pike from Rowling End — again a light covering of snow — again an interplay of light and shadow — and once again perfection.

It's fairly obvious from the above that I would buy this book primarily for the photographs, and I feel this will be true of most people. But that is not to say *ONLY* for the photos, for these are not just beautiful landscape pictures — they are all pictures that make you want to get on to your feet and walk this landscape yourself — and for this the text is more than useful. Despite the title there are 120 walks and scrambles described clearly and reasonably succinctly, with many variation of line and tips from personal experiences to add interest. Unfortunately the personal experiences are rather too intrusive for my taste, particularly as a number seem to bear a rather self-congratulatory air about them — how I put so-and-so on the right path — how I rescued a starving sheep etc. etc. Making an account of one or two walks sound interesting is a hard enough task, making a bookful so is a near impossibility, and presumably the anecdotes and rather jolly tone of the text are designed to overcome this, it just doesn't work for me. It may well be purely a matter of taste, but for my money the photographer in Bob Allen is well ahead of the writer.

A more minor criticism concerns the captioning. For the single page plates there is no basic problem, the caption appears under the text on the opposite page. For the numerous double page spreads the solution is much less satisfactory, the captions appearing on the pages before and after the double. Not only is the necessary flicking over of pages tiresome in itself, it also tends to needlessly complicate the captioning of the single page pictures which back the doubles. A neater solution would have been to caption the doubles beneath the pictures — a slight aesthetic intrusion no doubt, but surely preferable to the present muddle. (The same problem invariably crops up with climbing guide-books, why is it only the Yorkshire Limestone guide that carries captions with pictures?)

To sum up: the sketch maps give a very good simplified impression of the various areas and walks, the author pointing out quite rightly in his useful introduction that these are not intended to take the place of the 'indispensable' O.S. maps. The general organisation is excellent — an overall map

at the front clearly showing the 13 chapter areas, a map and list of routes (with table of times, 1 to 3 star rating and difficulty of scrambles) at the beginning of each chapter. But whatever the cover blurb may say about its highly convenient size, it is certainly not a pocket book — not even for a map pocket. 'Slightly wider than an O.S. map' is hardly an accurate description for a volume four and a half centimetres wider, three centimetres longer, and of course several times the thickness and weight! It's more a book to study at home or in the hut or tent, as few people would wish to risk such a beautiful volume to the vagaries of Lakeland weather, although to my mind 'Pic' (alias Geoff 'the guidebook' Milburn and Trevor 'pink tights' Jones) have found themselves a niche in the market with their first such 'dual purpose' book. But even hut use is going to subject such a book to more than its share of wear and tear (especially when other people inevitably want to look at the pictures!) and I'm going to find a suitably sized box before I start carrying mine about. Perhaps the real solution is to buy one to keep at home and one to carry in your rucksack. After all it's a snip at £10.

Al Churcher

### **Welsh Rock by Trevor Jones and Geoff Milburn**

Pic Publications, £16.95

'All climbers will one day feel Welsh tradition gnawing at them ...' begins the penultimate sentence of the penultimate chapter of this fascinating book. Indeed, they do already — and it gnaws not only at we Brits. Wasn't it Royal Robbins who claimed that frequent trips to Wales and Scotland '... where the history is' were essential to 'recharge my batteries'? Arguably North Wales is the most important single stage, certainly in this country, on which is acted out the drama of rock-climbing, and drama it is — as readers unfamiliar with the game will discover here. This book is a celebration of those traditions, in the form of a history which despite its subtitle *100 Years of Climbing in North Wales* starts right at the beginning in 1798 and takes us to 1985.

But this is no dry tome from the worn typewriter of a professional word-smith who has done both his superficial research and his one-off course at Plas y Brenin. Nor is it a self-gratification of lurex-sheathed teenagers fighting for survival on chalky line-less rock. This is the gospel according to Jonesey and Geoff, a hyper-active pair who as a young-old-timer and a old-young-timer respectively, have been hanging around backstage so long that they are probably in a better position than anyone else to put the tale into perspective. And a compelling tale it is, handled in an anecdotal fashion guaranteed to keep the interest going well into the wee small hours, and told often in the words of the actors themselves.

There are few pages without some succinct quote, many reflecting their times: 'Cenotaph Corner is still an unclimbed gap ... there is no doubt that with sufficient ironmongery and few scruples this corner could be ascended', and 'Are we to have typewriter mechanics in the Climber's Club?' or '... with so much of the scene centering round the pub, one of the bastions of male chauvinism, it is harder for women to develop an independent status,' and 'You wanna know something ... I'm pumped'. A social history indeed. But the style is very readable and one might dare to say even racy.

As must any historian worth his salt, the authors have sympathetically analysed the events of a busy century, identified the landmarks, the important trends and events and the principle actors, and in two acts and eleven scenes have brought order to their drama. Few will fault their findings.

The First Act, 'The Early Days', starts with 'Let there be Light' which covers from 1798 to Longland's 1930 ascent of Javelin Blade on Holly Tree Wall, a modern E1 5b and the first Extreme in Britain — though not appreciated as such for over forty years (get that you kids!). It continues with 'A great Effort' in which we learn that Menlove's original name for Flying Buttress was Sodom, a title predictably rejected by our then Hon.Ed. Considerably longer, the Second Act contains such scenes as 'The Baron

and the Villain' which confirms some of the apocryphal stories of those halcyon times, and the 'Young Turks' covering the scene where I was occasionally privileged to go backstage myself. And eventually on to 'Dressed to Kill', the last strange act of the drama which opens in 1980 — the year of Al Harris' tragic death — and leads us almost to the present.

But it is surely too soon to present this final scene as history, time alone can tell how much of the era of the new philosophy, of Tormented Ejaculation and Burning Sphincter (predictably approved by a later Hon.Ed.?), is aberrant or genuinely main-stream. Certainly the routes and the ethos are the first which most climbers of my generation can neither identify nor identify with or even understand. Does that mean that we too have now started on the long last abseil?

Climbing is a stupid sport but it's mine and though I may not agree with another's ethics or techniques I'll defend his rights to them ... provided it doesn't screw up my own present or future pleasure. It seems a pity that the authors have seen fit to tar all climbers with their own brush in their assumption that the common preoccupation of the leading protagonists has been competition with each other and as Crew used to put it 'psyching out the opposition'. Obviously in many cases such rivalry was natural and even crucial and it does make an excellent story, but I know many top flight climbers who make first ascents for the sheer delight of exploration, who develop a fixation with a particular crag or line and work at it until they win, regardless of the attentions — or not — of other climbers. This purer attitude is more often the case in expeditionary mountaineering of course.

I well remember doing a new route on Craig y Castell when that little crag was hardly a gleam in the eye of anyone save one of the present authors, not that we were even aware of that. We were certain it was a new line for it had required major gardening, yet when the 'proprietor' got wind of our climb on his own secret crag he refused to concede us the route, insisting that he'd climbed it a couple of weeks before. Not that it mattered particularly to us, we'd worked the line out and had enjoyed the exploration, but to him it was obviously important. Our motivations were very different. Indeed, climbing is all things to all men. To be fair, the authors admit that this book is written from a personal viewpoint and that there may well be bias and omissions, but history was ever thus and I'd hazard that this is as definitive a history of the subject as we'll ever get.

Profusely illustrated with no less than 62 pages of plates, both b/w and colour, in a total of 318 pages, it could well be that this book is the best collection of Welsh climbing photographs ever assembled, let alone published. Personally I'm flattered that in their introduction the authors credit my own pictures from *Rock Climbers in Action in Snowdonia* for the inspiration behind their own selection, but I'm sure they would have hit on the same idiom regardless. Climbers are people doing their thing and obviously most great pictures will show that, as well as the environment in which they are performing. Here we see them all, from O.G. Jones and Oscar Eckenstein, through Kirkus and Longland, Pigott and Harding, to Whillans and Brown, Crew, Roland Edwards, Livesey and Redhead, to name but a few, some in faded monochrome, others in glorious colour — and it is interesting how often the former makes the more telling statement.

Hankinson is his book *Camera on the Crags* had all the old plates professionally reprinted — or copied — and I think this book might have benefited from similar expensive consistency, particularly some obvious 'snaps', though bearing in mind the wide sources of the original material, the reproductions are generally quite acceptable. I enjoy the very occasional colour landscapes thrown in as 'mood' — especially a dusk shot of South Stack light just starting to twinkle across Gogarth Bay. A few more in this vein would not have gone amiss.

For one who spends much time dabbling with books and publishers in one way or another, it is refreshing to see such bold, confident and competent 'private publishing' — for that's really what this book is — though I'd suggest that a professional book designer would have worked wonders



with this material. Compare, for instance, Diadem's *High Mountains* with *The Munros* from the SMT, one a beautiful production, the other plain and pedestrian from an outfit which should know — and could afford — far better: virtually the same contents but as different as chalk and cheese and the eureka-factor is Design. But to return to *Welsh Rock*, the cover picture is very impressive but does it do justice to the breadth of the subject? I think not, to me it suggests not Welsh Rock but merely a formidable E99 on a scruffy but imposing concrete-ringed quarry, an esoteric picture if ever there was one: surely a great picture on a real mountain crag or on Gogarth, would have been more appropriate, presenting a truer indication of the book's contents? Besides making it more commercially viable as one's accountant might put it ...

Nevertheless, as a first effort from Pic Publications this book is a fine achievement, it's both an exciting read and a valuable reference work and in time to come I think it will be considered an important book. This year was the 21st anniversary of *Rock Climbers in Action in Snowdonia* — and in California I'm told copies currently change hands for ninety times their original cover price. How much will this book be worth in 21 years time? Quite a lot, I'd guess.

John Cleare

### **South Devon and Dartmoor: by P. Littlejohn and P. O'Sullivan**

Published by Cordee

Most people's experience of South Devon climbing is a flying visit to Torbay to bag Moonraker, or a quick stop over at Chudleigh or Haytor on the way south westwards to some 'real' climbing. This guide by Pat Littlejohn and Pete O'Sullivan covers a large area and a vast variety of climbing in one fairly chunky volume, and does the job well. The maps, diagrams and photographs are excellent and the descriptions strike a nice balance — not too terse and not over the top with funnies or 'in jokes'. It includes all the usual features one expects these days except (thank goodness) a graded list, and the jacket photographs illustrate some of the contrasts available in the county from the hand mangling granite of Dartmoor, to the gripping positions available at Berry Head.

The area remains out of the mainstream of British climbing and certainly some of the cliffs are esoteric in the extreme. On the other hand the immense variety of rock and situations, and the balmy climate should really make the place more popular than it is, there really is something for everybody. Dartmoor has perfect rock (but oh so rough) superb settings and plenty of scope for easy routes, soloing and the odd desperate. The Dewerstone has perhaps the most beautiful setting in England, and Climbers Club Direct is worth half an hour of anybody's time. Chudleigh has a good mixture of old polished classics, some exceedingly so, and some newer test pieces in a setting that gets all the sun that's going and is almost quiet. Then there are the sea cliffs, routes of up to nearly 400 feet in settings from the sublime to the totally terrifying. There are classics of all grades from Severe to E5, and of course there are sea level traverses that go on forever.

The whole area gets extremely busy at holiday times but if you fancy somewhere different, off season, there's plenty of good cheap accommodation available, and tons to go at. Buy this little book and go and have an adventure.

Chris Craggs



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## **A Hundred Years of Rock Climbing in the Lake District**

**The Fell and Rock Journal 1986**

Edited by Geoff Cram, Price £10.95

The choice of Haskett-Smith's solo ascent of Napes Needle in 1886 as the birth of Lake District (or even British) rock climbing has always been an arbitrary one — even an article in this present volume states that Atkinson's ascent of Pillar Rock in 1826 'was the inauguration of rock climbing as we know it today'. But that as it may, it's a convenient enough date and the image of the Needle has certainly endured, inevitably becoming somewhat hackneyed in the process (a pity that a fresh treatment could not have been found for the front cover, the chosen one bearing more than a passing resemblance to that of Birkett's volume on the Lakeland pioneers).

As befits a centenary edition, the editor has taken the opportunity of reprinting a small selection of classic articles from past journals, the account of the Needle's first ascent appropriately providing the opening article, and Graham Sutton's amusing period piece 'The Man Who Broke The Needle' continuing the theme. Almost thirty years on, Herford and party's ascent of C.B. was almost as great a landmark, and it is instructive to contrast Sansom's description of this with Tony Burnell's account of the hectic pace of modern new routing when the latest 'Crag X' is discovered ('The Well Oiled Machine — Twelve Months On'). The blending of old and new provides much of the charm of this volume; Geoff Oliver and Tony Greenbank are certainly historical names to many but their pieces emphasise both the continuity of the club and that there's plenty of life in the 'old uns' yet. The former (The North-East Spur of the Droites) is a beautiful example of the understated Alpine near epic, the latter — with its tongue in cheek use of archaic modernisms ('Hey — heavy number!') a celebration of the delights of climbing 'in those pivotal years when dentures can fall from a mouth dry with apprehension' (a new definition of 'Gobsmacked?') combined with an affectionate look over the shoulder at the fifties. Angela Soper's no spring chicken, but she continues to demonstrate that 'Climbing is More a Dancing Thing' — humming across the traverse of a greasy Carnivore, tap-dancing over 'The Moon'; and I can't miss out Harry Griffin, still out on his skis whenever the snow-covered tops beckon, mind you he's only 75. But it makes you wonder who'll be left from the teen and twenties rock jocks of today when the next special edition is due ...

Almost half the text is taken up by the four parts of 'A Short History of Lakeland Climbing'. Kelly and Doughty's Part 1 (again a reprint from an earlier Journal and originally written to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary) is rather dry, but worth reading for its insights into the prevailing attitudes of the times: "in the early days the neophyte was expected to ... work his way upwards through Moderates and Difficults. If he was sufficiently gifted, he might hope after several years of this patient apprenticeship to lead a Severe — and that (if a member of the FRCC) only under conditions carefully prescribed by the committee" (!). By the time of the article (1936) "they start on Difficults and expect to be leading Severs within a year or two" — not so very different from the norm of the 60's when I started climbing. (Nowadays of course, they start on a climbing wall, are leading E3 in the first year and retire in the third with tendonitis.) The thoughts on women climbers and the need for the formation of the Pinnacle Club are outstandingly perceptive and could almost have been written this decade rather than half a century ago. Looking forward that fifty years to this present edition, Kelly and Doughty's thoughts on the growing threat of pegs ('wall-hooks!') uncannily parallel the present fears felt by many on the spread of the bolt.

But for me this historical section really comes to life in Part 2, John Wilkinson's account of the years from '35 to '59. These were the years firstly of Birkett, Peascod and Dolphin, and then of Ross, Austin and the Rock and Ice — years that saw the beginning of the modern era, culminating in the establishment of a number of climbs in the lower Extreme grades that are the trade routes of today.

Of course until 1967 everything was graded VS, but before '49 only 26 routes existed that nowadays fall into the modern HVS grade. The fifties produced another 50 such climbs, and today 15 of these are graded Extreme. Part 3 (by Pete Whillance) continues the theme of the consolidation of the Extreme grade, and by concentrating as much on personalities as climbs, maintains the level of interest (although as Paul Nunn has pointed out elsewhere, Whillance's emphasis on Ross and the bad boys of the North versus whiter-than-white Austin in the South, obscures the crucial fact that most of the significant first ascents were falling to 'outside conquistadores', Austin being only one of these).

The most recent period of any history is always the most difficult to analyse, the lack of historical perspective making it that much harder to isolate key figures and events. Even so I would have expected the authors of Part 4 (1970 — '85 by Ron Kenyon and Al Murray) to have at least made an attempt. To be fair they do — but only in the introductory page, soon abandoning this for annual lists of climbers and routes that are about as readable as the monthly supermarket print out. Perhaps this is almost inevitable for the '80's, but surely we're far enough removed from the '70's to be able to link the major events into some sort of narrative — perhaps it's being left to the Milburn-Jones team and their forthcoming 'Lake District Rock'?

Finally to the photos — like the text a blend of ancient and modern, with a fine (and welcome) selection from the FRCC's Abraham Brother's collection forming almost exactly a third of the sixty-odd black and whites included (my personal favourites being the study of Stanley Watson in white pumps on a runnerless Innominate Crack, and that marvellous posed shot entitled 'Pioneers of the Fell and Rock Club' — surely that icefall's a backdrop in the Keswick brother's shop!) A potted history of the Abraham's climbing and photography, and a short account of the restoration necessary to preserve many of the original negatives is an interesting accompaniment to the photos. On the whole the standard of reproduction is high, and where it's not, the choice of picture is often fully justified by its historical interest.

A very readable volume which will become a useful reference source in future years, with only a thousand copies published for sale it is bound to become a collector's item.

Al Churcher

### **The Eight Sailing/Mountain Exploration Books, H.W. Tilman**

Diadem, £16.95

The Outdoor Pursuits movement ought to have produced a number of climbers who are simple sailors and sailors who are also climbers. But judging from the intensity and singlemindedness of the current climbing scene I see little evidence of young climbers who would admit to being bird-watchers, botanists or sailors. In any case there is an ocean of difference between anticipating the wind-shifts in an inshore dinghy and solving the problems besetting the boat itself during months amongst the wildest wet elements. 'Adventure' is the key word for Tilman's voyaging on sea as much as on mountains, exploration his excuse, sailing the vehicle, and mountains his usual destination.

These books are very much about the adventure of solving the problems, navigational, practical, interpersonal, of sailing, more than mountaineering. Perhaps because of the intimacy of a mixed bag of people leaving, each ship, with its different mixture, to survive the sea in the simplest way, these books are very readable and have a more social flavour than the mountaineering books. And there is the familiar lacing with Dr Johnson and his own laconic humour "... there are the unspiritual attractions of a life of comfort and security in a pleasant open air prison, with the minimum of shaving and washing, and without the trouble of undressing at night."

Terry Gifford

**Borrowdale by D. Armstrong and R. Kenyon.****Illustrated by A. Phizacklea**

Published by The F.R.C.C., £7.50

Competent climbing guides must satisfy relatively few essential criteria. They allow crags and climbs to be found and give some indications as to where routes go and how hard they might prove. In Britain, even in much of Scotland these days, such basic requirements are not only met, they are generally greatly exceeded. The valleys, crags and climbs are described in guides so carefully assembled and in such detail that rather little seems sometimes to be left to climbers' imaginations. Some old fools have even been heard proclaiming that this is all to the good, when manifest it is that the young no longer possess any, as they argue about supposed free ascents while letting in the Frankenstein of bolts. But that view can be taken quite another way, as chalky hands slap their way up the last bald aretes of grit bringing into reality the futuristic fictions of past climbers.

The recent Borrowdale does more than satisfy simple criteria of a modest competence. The valley always had good climbs, medium climbs and a fair bit of stuff hardly worth recording. Before the 1960s guide a key problem was quite a lot of the latter which had somehow sneaked into print. Possibly Oliver Woolcock and myself didn't get rid of quite as much of this as was needed. Our successors, Sid Clark and these authors have completed the job. More important, they have contributed to and chronicled the massive development of climbing which has taken place in the last two decades.

In numbers of climbs this is a formidable feat. There are almost 100 climbs said to exceed E2 in the long graded list and 250 more than in the 1970s guide. Though some are old aid routes freed this is a considerable addition. Moreover a good number of crags are newly gardenised in the tradition of Goat Crag, including Grange, Bleak How, Lower Eagle and the majority of the Watendlath cliffs. These provide a range of possibilities delightful even to those incapable of the highest standards, and a good reason for those who once thought they had done Borrowdale to think again and go and enjoy it. This connects with an attribute of the new guide which to me is even more important than its basic technical competence. It is frankly seductive, lovingly produced, with some bold attempts to use colour photographs, a variety of types of diagram and a neat layout to draw the reader on. Some might feel that Borrowdale hardly needs selling, its attractions are so manifest. They will feel this guide a disservice.

Paul Nunn

**Swanage by Gordon Jenkin**

Published by The Climbers Club, £7.50

The former Swanage Guide has long been out of print, but never fear, a worthy successor — in the form of Gordon Jenkin's new Swanage Guide — is now available. I haven't yet tested whether the pages of this Guide will separate as readily, when wet, as those of its predecessor. Perhaps the next Guide will automatically inflate into a coastguard rescue beacon when thoroughly soaked — this should go some way to placating the over anxious Dorset Local Authorities.

Seriously though, this Guide continues with the proven conventional layout for Swanage's sea cliffs, ie crag plans viewed from the clifftop. It may have been better to include more crag diagrams viewed from sea level with routes outlined in colour. However, parties who venture into these areas should be competent enough to identify their chosen line, without recourse to such "climb by numbers" aids. I was impressed to find that the introduction stressed this viewpoint. The constant reference to permanent clifftop landmarks greatly facilitates the identification of different areas of crag — always a problem at Swanage.

I was pleased to find that the publication was not just a re-print of the former Guide. A great deal

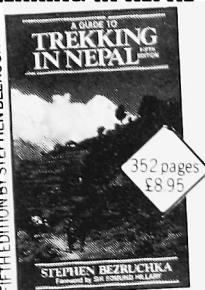
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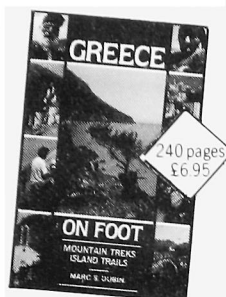
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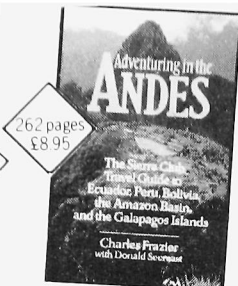
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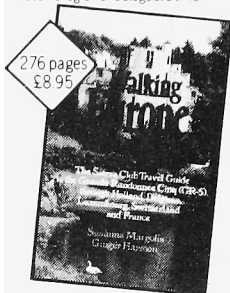
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of work and research has been undertaken in pitch grading of nearly all routes. Route descriptions have obviously been updated — former assuring references to protection pegs on older classic lines, included in previous guides, have now been amended to account for the dubious protection value afforded by these wafer thin or rusted stumps.

The Guide is also of benefit in continuing to eradicate that famous Swanage “anomaly of grade”. However, I find it difficult to believe that ‘Botany Bay’ is really only Hard Severe — but maybe I’m not climbing as well as I like to believe!

The historical section of the Guide is comprehensive and very interesting. The inclusion of first ascent dates with all routes helps to build up a picture of the continuing development of the area. The inclusion of a separate first ascent list also makes for informative reading, and, hopefully, provides incentive for further development, and developers.

One of Swanage’s best selling points is undoubtedly the consistent fine weather — its location is less than 10 miles from Britain’s top ‘sunshine hours’ resort of Bournemouth. I’ve personally spent many sunny winter days climbing at Swanage in shirtsleeves — while colleagues shivered in duvets in Derbyshire. Unfortunately the photographs in this Guide do not convey the sunshine — or indeed any of the atmosphere imparted by the proximity of the sea! Unfortunately the black and white internal photographs are dark, and generally uninspiring. It is a shame that all the photographs are printed on sixteen pages in the middle of the Guide. My personal opinion is that the photographs would have been better had they been distributed more randomly throughout the publication — therefore maintaining the reader’s interest in the different areas covered by the Guide. It is unfortunate that such a chance to show off Swanage’s best assets has not been utilised to its full potential — but never mind, maybe it means that I’ll be able to spend many more winter days climbing in the sun — still untroubled by hordes from the all too close metropolis.

Despite my moans, however, this book remains a good, practical and comprehensive guide to the Dorset/Hampshire coast. Inclusion of the Isle of Wight and Old Harry rocks are a welcome, albeit controversial, addition. Routes on the not-so-new climbing medium of chalk are rightly included, demonstrating the diversity of activity on the South Coast. I trust that this Guide will re-kindle interest in an area which, unfortunately, has become somewhat of a backwater in southern climbing.

Senan Hennessy

### **Scotland’s Mountains by W.H. Murray**

SMC Guide, Scottish Mountaineering Trust, £15.95

As I write this review on the ferry back from a brief spell of wilderness climbing in the Western Isles I am struck by the wealth of potentially wonderful experiences that must be lying behind the old how-to-get-there hint in a sentence or two of this book. This is a guide in the most general sense, acting as a checklist of personal recommendations to, it seems, almost every Scottish hill. But more than this, the hills are placed within a context of their physical evolution, flora and fauna, human history and the developments of mountaineering and skiing up to the present day.

Most climbers will find the two-thirds of the book which discuss the contextual issues of greater interest than the guide itself. The history of Scottish mountaineering is of note for its discussion of developments in ‘practice’ within each historical period. The presence of the writer himself is striking here, in his description of Terrodactyls as “our national tools”, for example, and in his suggestion that being a full-time climber “might not seem a sensible resolve for the young”. Even his confusion of ‘bolt-protection’ with ‘bolt-aid’ one might suspect to be wickedly deliberate.

This is as thorough and comprehensive a reference book as has so far been written on Scotland’s mountains for the mountaineer.

Terry Gifford

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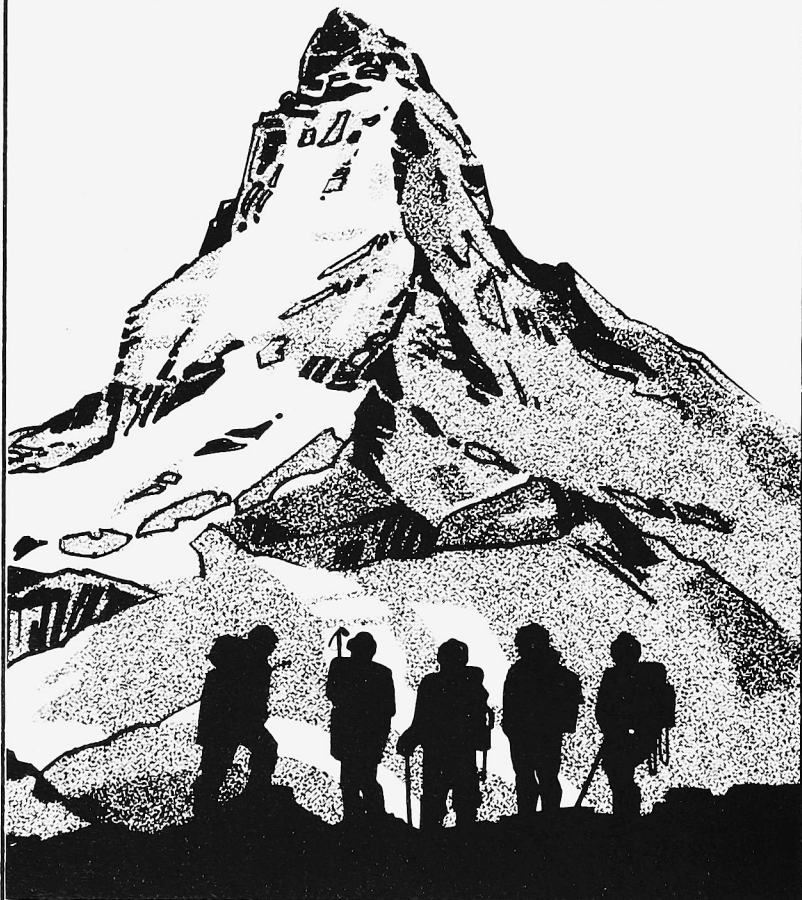
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## **CLIMBER**

**Norman Collie: A Life in Two Worlds by Christine Mill**

Published by The Aberdeen University Press, £14.90

When climbers get together and talk of the routes, the rock, the moves and the wind you might think for a while that they exist only as climbers, filling in time between visits to the crags with presumably nothing but drinking 'Stones' and talking wind. Indeed there are some inhabitants of Sheffield who do precisely this, and before you might venture to suggest that the present writer might be one of them let me point out that some climbers have also done what A.A. Milne would call Very Useful Things — like inventing the first Neon light and taking the first medical X-ray photograph. These are actually the achievements of Dr. Norman Collie, the first ascensionist of Tower Ridge and the inventor of the Collie Step.

He might, this fascinating biography suggests, have done more if he hadn't developed a propensity, which annoyed his colleagues intensely, for 'bolting when the session was done'. This does not refer, as young climbers might assume, to the development of outdoor climbing walls, but refers instead to the young Collie leaving the labs at University College, London, where the noble gases were being discovered, to get to Skye in the days before cars to discover lumps of rock like the Cioch, or later useless icefields in Canada, or isolated pinnacles on the Lofoten Island of Norway in the company of W.C. Slingsby and his son Will. (Collie's account of the young lad getting the two famous climbers out of a tight spot is a gripping move-by-move little passage with which this book warms the climbing reader.)

It was really rather surprising that, despite his suspect tendency towards 'bolting', Collie was appointed Assistant Professor of Chemistry at the age of 31. His trick was to take his colleagues with him. Nevertheless even Collie's taking his scientific interests on holiday with him couldn't disguise the increasing pressure of choices between the two careers. At the moment when Collie, refusing assistance from the rope, was observing that the effects of altitude on the human frame were causing him to attain the summit of Mont Blanc on his hands and knees, back at the lab they had finally isolated Argon. It was 1894 and the first guideless ascent via the Old Brenva Route.

Collie was also an authority on Chinese jade, a collector of rare books on alchemy, the original witness of the Big Grey Man of Ben Macdui, a mystic and a scientist, an explorer into all aspects of his experience. Ultimately this clearly written, factually-based biography presents an image of unity within the interests and approach of the man, integrating his curiosity for chemistry and for crags, his imagination for theory and for writing (see his 'alchemistic attempt' in writing up the Tower Ridge ascent for the SMCJ). He 'endeavoured to construct a harmonious picture of many of nature's chemical features' and ended up creating a three-dimensional formula for Benzene known as the 'Collywobble'.

If all climbing biographies were written as 'a life in several worlds' as this one is, how greater would be our understanding of not only the climbing or the climber but also the costs in personal terms, the choices involved in how to fit it in at all, if anyone still experiences such dilemmas these days, between the 'Stones' and the wind.

Terry Gifford

**The Black Cuillin, Island of Skye, Rock Relief Map**

S.M.C. Scale 1:12500, Price £2.95

The history of this new map would not be complete without a nod in the direction of the foregoing biography of Dr. J.N. Collie, an early map-maker of the Cuillin ridge. (But where are the plastic containers left to collect drips of precious water? You really want to know? This map could have told

you, but it won't. Carry your own.) So to continue, in 1886 Dr. Collie began a survey of the Cuillin that ended in 1942 with his view from 'Collie's Corner' of the Sligachan Hotel. He had travelled from London in the century before fast travel to correct a grossly inaccurate O.S. map of the Cuillin aided by his own portable mercurial barometer. He discovered that the highest point on the ridge was not the Inaccessible Pinnacle but Sgurr Alasdair. But what of the water?

It is usual for there to be a plentiful supply direct from above, but this map does not mark springs, never mind drips. It does however mark marshes, by their Scottish definition. Paths in brown like the contours, are confusing and crags are not clearly indicated. The use of hachuring to close the contours does not help climbers trying to get to the crags.

However this is a great advance on the 1923 map enclosed in the first SMC Isle of Skye guide, giving a greater scale, detail, colour, the use of the reverse side of the sheet for a simplification of main summits, but lacking an identification of the path avoiding the Thearlaich Dubh gap. It's as indispensable as a water bottle.

Terry Gifford

### **Wye Valley by John Willson, David Hope, Tony Pennington and Matt Ward**

Cordee, £7.95

To have seen much of this guide penned from a very early stage, it would seem perhaps too lenient on the authors for me to be in the position to review the books contents and authors work. However, Wye Valley has a place in my heart where many of my first ascent dreams were nurtured and prodded.

The production of the guide may appear to have been too long in coming. It may have been needed for years yet it landed on the book shelves at a time when the major crag of the valley, Wintour's Leap, had reached probably its latter stages of development maturing significantly enough for it to be open to the 'public' after a highly intense 'private' period. The book has sold fast.

The book's four main components are each separately written by a different author with Wintour's Leap, written by the very articulate John Willson, holding centre stage with at least half of the book taken up by its routes. John's rather floral method of writing can barely go unnoticed with numerous melodramatic moments in the text referred to by my brother as 'chat'; and that seems to fit. The 'chat' does feel over-the-top in a couple of places, see the preambles to King Kong and Firefly, yet, as John would say, one could easily forego these extensions. His enthusiasm and affection for his (not my!) crag can hardly go unnoticed. Stealthy work on every aspect of the guide has been overcome by one of the most dedicated (and at fifty his dedication is over-ripe!) climbers I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. He deserves full credit. Every route, from pieces of in-situ protection down to flora and fauna, has been thoroughly gone over time and time again to give an extraordinarily complete work, an effort some other guide writers should take note of — I know of people writing crags who have never even been to them!

John's adoption of this crag, once the bad boy of the Wye Valley, has dragged it firmly into the eighties and what's more it is readable, amusing and very, very fresh. The other sections of the guide are hard-pressed to follow suit. Matt Ward makes a very gallant effort to drag Shorn Cliff — a new HVS man's crag of the Eighties — to the attention of a veritable array of suitors and it has worked. On the first weekend of the guide's publication nearly 100 people were present for the unveiling ceremony. Symond's Yat, already known and overrated by most of the climbing fraternity, is well written and concise but David Hope has certainly bottled out on a couple of subjects; first ascents and a graded list. Lastly Wyndcliffe, probably the most minor of the quartet, falls short of interest and information — sorry Tony but it's boring!

Other good aspects of the guide are obvious for all to see. The choice of house-style and particularly

the Optima type-face is very pleasing and the layout is excellent throughout, testament to the professionalism of Cordee. The diagrams of Wintour's were at the outset substantial undertakings yet it is without doubt that Phil Gibson has surpassed even my expectations of him. These diagrams are a major artistic feat, especially when I saw Phil at work under my fishing umbrella in the torrential rain attempting to negotiate G.O. Wall (it seems a pity that the diagrams stopped here; surely the guide should have included a complete work with all the crags getting the going over from Phil — it also seems strange that at least Fly Wall was not incorporated as a diagram). An extension of the diagrams are the cartoons, always a very personal thing; you either love them or you hate them. Simon Oyes has, in my opinion, done a fine job by capturing different aspects of the Wintour's scene in an amusing and depictive manner. "Gary's Own Wall" wasn't my idea but I am flattered all the same. Best of the bunch is certainly King Kong; I've seen that situation on a number of occasions but not with a Gorilla!

Now to my dislikes. I can't help thinking that the large amounts of anomalies and printing errors in the guide could and should have been avoided. Grading inaccuracies are plentiful, not merely incorrect but actually different from the original script; Feline's second pitch or Themeninblack are two blatant examples. Anomalies between the graded list and text are glaring mistakes. For instance is Gendarmerie 2 or 3 stars and is it E3 or E4? Spelling mistakes are plentiful and I can't help thinking that all this could easily have been avoided by the use of an external proof-reader, which certainly was not used; an extra couple of weeks wouldn't have mattered all that much, especially after 3 or 4 years of coming.

Photographs are always a touchy subject, certainly vast choice was not offered to the publisher but I am sure some could have been put inside, especially considering my collection at home. The covers are O.K., but that's it. They are not special shots and it is a pity that there are no more inside to tempt climbers from other areas. A weekend could easily have been organised where just photo's were on the agenda and not new routes. I also don't understand the crag photo's at the back of the guide. They are just about bearable but considering Phil's diagrams, they are pointless. Similarly the Fly Wall shots are absolutely useless as you can't get that far back to look at the wall anyway.

In conclusion when I consider that I have only three gripes (probably only minor ones as well), then this isn't that bad a guide. Extra work could have been done to improve it visually but I cannot fault the text in anyway, especially the accuracy of Wintour's which is very, very sound. The stealthy work done by the authors, especially John Willson, should reap dividends for all the crags concerned and all have done justice to an extremely underrated area.

Gary Gibson

### **Moments of Doubt by Dave Roberts**

The Mountaineers, £9.95

Dave Roberts has always been an intelligently probing writer about climbing. He can combine a gripping narrative style with a perceptive analysis that accepts the paradoxes of his experiences without special pleading for his own 'moments of doubt'. He asks all the questions of himself and others in order to understand more of the complexity of climbing. What does the rope symbolise in the climbing relationship? (Roping Up) Why have Messner and Habeler split and what can be learned from it? (Messner and Habeler: Alone at the Top) How can Roberts himself continue to climb after



the deaths of partners and friends? (Moments of Doubt). His answers are anecdotal and thoughtful, a combination that produces a readable originality of style: "The rope epitomised our lonely imprisonment together. We had become Siamese twins joined at the will"

This is a collection of essays all previously published in *America*, and represents about a third of all Roberts' outdoor writing over the last twenty years, gathered into three sections: Adventures, Profiles and Reflections. Many of these pieces were journalistic assignments, and if anything jarred at times it was the slickness of the narration. Royal Robbins, in his Foreword, calls this 'grace'. I'd say Roberts achieves clarity in the telling and the thinking about his feelings and his actions. If you read this book you'll find yourself quoting his test-cases with friends and gaining an understanding of your own.

Terry Gifford

### **Yorkshire Limestone, Edited by Graham Desroy**

Published by Y.M.C., £7.50

Clearly the metamorphosis that has been on-going for the last fifteen years on Yorkshire Limestone has finally been recorded for all the world to see. The climbing guidebooks that were published for the area in the late seventies and early eighties were little more than a "comedy of errors", and did nothing to allay the dearth of much needed information on the recent developments. The pirate "Lime Crimes" published on a shoe string in 1982 by Graham Desroy and Pete Livesey showed the Yorkshire Mountaineering Club what could really be achieved in a very limited period, but perhaps more importantly, that unless they acted with all speed to put their house in order someone may do it for them!

It is against this background that the current edition of Yorkshire Limestone must be reviewed. It is clear therefore, that this guide marks the start of a new era of Yorkshire guides. A new administration, The Yorkshire Limestone Guidebook Steering Committee (YLGSC), was set up and given the mandate to oversee both the preparation and publication of this latest edition. This radical reorganisation has given us a completely revamped housestyle, with all the mod cons: strange really, I'm sure that I've seen that style before. In fact, now that I think about it, it does bear more than a striking resemblance to Peak District guidebooks! But you know what they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Gone are the old feet and inches together with the Mild and Hard subdivisions for the Extreme grade, thankfully replaced with the now universally accepted metres and E grades. Gone also is the old terse and "economical" writing, again being replaced with a more modern style. New to the text is the now wide-spread "star" system to indicate route quality; in-house humour in the guise of the "Twenty Commandments" and the now ubiquitous graded list. Lastly, but by no means least, the artwork has undergone a remarkable transformation. Phil Gibson's diagrams are as usual fantastic but the photographs are the real "coup d'etat". The quite natural progression to include photographs within the text was however completely upstaged by the sole use of colour material. Almost without exception the photo's are excellent, yet at least one in my copy appears printed "out of register". My only regret is that more weren't included. There are some obvious gaps in the photo coverage. Surely someone must have a least one photo of Blue Scar for example. My only real criticism of the artwork lies in the "hidden" title on the front cover. Clearly there was a "cock-up in the mock-up" and the

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title has remained obscured. Still, we all know what and where KSHI MESTO is don't we?

Notwithstanding the typographical changes in the text, the YLGSC have also rearranged the crags such that they are in alphabetical order in the text; a positive luxury. Whilst the route descriptions are well laid out for most crags, the newcomer to Malham may be confused at first acquaintance. The Left Wing reads quite naturally from left to right and conversely the Right Wing from right to left. OK so far, but the confusion comes in the central area when the descriptions for The Terrace (reading left to right) suddenly meet the descriptions for the Right Wing (reading right to left). To compound matters, the routes beneath The Terrace appear somewhat in limbo. They seem to me to be more attached to the Right Wing yet they have been described as though they carry on from the Left Wing. Confused? Well you will be when the new routes on the Lower Tier are added! Hopefully a more favourable layout can be devised for the next guide.

As a personal aside the writer, who prior to the onset of severe Tennis/Golfers Elbow, has expressed a preference for the steeper crags about — something to do with good gear — was pleased with the promotion given to the hitherto “minor crags” of Loup Scar, Troller Gill and Yew Cougar Scar. Without exception, not only do they now have a strategic climbing importance far beyond their physical scale, they are idyllic crags where one can escape the already multiplying masses.

Whilst my approximate route count revealed that this guide contains nearly half as many routes again as its predecessor, the cover price has only risen from £4.50 to £7.50 between editions. In my opinion it represents money well spent since the two guides are more than the five years apart that the publication dates suggest. All things considered, a small step in re-organisation has resulted in one giant step forward in quality. I can't wait for the Yorkshire Gritstone guide to be released.

Keith Sharples

### **Yorkshire Limestone-Gritstone Supplement**

Published by the YMC, £2.95

As if Yorkshire Limestone wasn't enough to convince even the most ardent critic that guidebook production “up t'north” has been revolutionised, we now have the Supplement. Graham Desroy, master of the new crew, has edited another block-buster. However this one may well become infamous for its writing style than the routes therein. Desroy's writing is free and easy, which is more than can be said about some of the routes that he describes! Whilst those in the highest office of Yorkshire's guidebook writing fraternity have spent the last two decades imitating ostriches Desroy at least, and I'm sure there are more, has seen the light. He has read the writing on the walls, deciphered it and given us all the translation for the princely sum of £2.95. What a bargain!

There is a certain stubbornness about this Supplement. Like for instance the hard-to-read title, didn't anybody check this out after the last cock-up? However, Desroy leaves us in no doubt as to where his allegiance lies. Clearly he stands in line with the stoical British attitude and almost without exception he treats the modern style of climbing with a heart-felt contempt. Reading between the lines, which is after all THE place to read, he must hope that Yorkshire climbing will emerge kicking and healthy from what he obviously believes, and hopes to be, a short-lived period and soon-to-be excrement style. Personally I have my doubts, about the style I mean not about Yorkshire climbing.

Whilst his introduction and acknowledgements sections are some of the most refreshing and humorous passages to appear in a guidebook this year, they must have ruffled more than a few

feathers. Much more like that and he may find himself in the hospital! I can only assume that those who have an axe to grind must form a lengthy queue, presumably led by a certain Mr. Garlick. Still, those who are concerned might do well to remember the old saying "If the cap fits ..."

Well what about the routes and grades? Everybody knows that guidebooks these days are not about routes or grades anymore but they are really about personalities. As for the accuracy, well there are the usual half dozen or so typographical errors that these word-processors seem to generate all on their own. However, when so much trouble has been taken to divide the E5-E7s in subdivisions of easy, standard and hard then it seems a little odd that at least one route has a different grade in the text to that in the graded list. And how anybody can think that The Overlap and Seventh Toad are a similar standard to Doubting Thomas I'll never know. Not to mention Ground Effect, do you know I was only saying to someone the other day, if you ask me, well I'd drop my trousers in Fargate if that ... What do I care anymore!

Finally, and being outside the Yorkshire "think tank", and if it's as hard work as the B.M.C. Peak District Guidebook Executive I'm glad I am, I can only guess at the significance of the peace offering of a graded list for the griststone. All I will say is "go on Graham, let's have a new grit guide especially now that you've got the hang of it". After all winter is coming and it isn't as though you have any good climbing walls in Yorkshire to distract you! I'm sure Naomi and Liam wouldn't mind another sister or brother to play with!

P.S. I don't suppose there is any room left on the Ark is there?

Keith Sharples

### **Climbing: R. Fawcett, J. Lowe, P. Nunn, A. Rouse**

Published by Unwin & Hyman, £15.00

A tricky one this. A lavish coffee table book, for beginners, I think. After reading this book I'm still not sure who it is aimed at. If the book is meant to teach the complete novice how to progress from Harrisons to Everest in one concise volume, we would be reading about a lot of epics in the climbing press. Thankfully the Grading Tables, featured after the introduction, will probably baffle the majority of novices, who after trying to decipher them and failing, will delve no further into the book, concluding that you need to be an Egyptologist to climb.

Ron Fawcett's rock climbing chapter follows in the 'Blackshaw Bible' mould and covers all the relevant bits well. It should however mention that a figure of eight device should only be used for belaying single rope. I gave out a shout of joy when reading the abseiling section. All teachers and instructors who insist on showing their pupils how to abseil, usually before they do any climbing, should take note.

The sections on technique and training are very good with useful photographs accompanying the text. The part on mental preparation puts the rock section very much into the modern climbing era. It also sets the stage for the ice climbing chapter.

Jeff Lowe is out to train the mind as well as the body and his approach is outlined in his introduction. The pages on equipment are informative and obviously feature many references to Lowe products (whoops another plug). As with the rock climbing section the run through of the techniques and mental preparation is very good but just in case the budding mountaineer struggled past the Grading Tables at the beginning, they've thrown another one in at the end of this chapter.

The Alpine climbing chapter is a hiccup in the book. Paul Nunn changes the book's format by including particular routes and the authors' experiences on them. The routes work through the transition from hill walker to winter Alpinism, with each stage covered by an introductory note before the route descriptions. The climbs featured are not only taken from the European Alps, which is a pleasant change, but also from other ranges, including the Caucasus and the Rocky Mountains. The Alpine chapter could be a book in itself, it would certainly sell, as it is a similar format to the very popular Hard Rock series.

The final chapter, Expeditions, is by Al Rouse, and as with the previous three chapters has the standard condensed history section, which is probably adequate for an instructional book. Personally speaking I think this chapter warrants a separate book. With the increase in small expeditions a reference book for planning and preparations has been long overdue to help the first timers through the bureaucracy and culture shocks that will hit them. Unfortunately someone planning a trip is unlikely to fork out fifteen pounds to gain the information from this book. This is a pity as Al has written everything down with some useful tips on equipment and clothing.

In general the book's photographs are of the high quality which we have come to expect from this style of book these days, but I'm glad I learnt from Blackshaw's 'Bible' as that book's compact size meant you could sneak into the loo for a quick read while at school. Novices will have a hard job nonchalantly walking past their teacher with this book shoved down the front of their trousers or up their knicker leg.

Bill Wintrip

### **On and Off the Rocks by Jim Perrin**

Victor Gollancz Ltd., £10.95

I suspect that the general body of critical opinion concerning itself with English literature despises the short story. Not I. The short completeness fits the snatched moments which are all today's turmoil affords. No need to pick up the threads of a half-forgotten story at the next meeting. A new acquaintance or an old friend can fill the available time and fit the mood. In this latter property, perhaps, is the key to what I hope will be the success of this book.

The foreword is a little gem, a story in itself, an indication that Jack Longland wasted his time running education. Lesser men than he are making a mess of it since his retirement. He should have retired early and taken to the mountain pen and we might have had a mentor and rival to Perrin for our prose.

The book is a collection of essays which have all met the public eye before. Most in the British climbing magazines, High, Mountain, Crag, Climber and Rambler. The others in the Bangor University Journal, the C.C. Journal, Extreme Rock and, high water mark, surely for a man from Hulme, The (Manchester) Guardian. The criticism can be levelled that we have read them all before, even that we have them already to hand. But have we? Some of these magazines we never saw, many we have scrapped, some have been borrowed, and in any case how long would it take to find the one you wanted? Much better to have them all collected together, available, easily accessible, and here they are. Compilations such as this are a service to the reader — remember Tom Patey's "One Man's Mountains"? — and here is a welcome addition to the genre.

Perrin's shorter writings, these, his essays, seem to me to fall into two categories. The one, which strikes the greater chord in me, comes unbidden from himself, his love of his land, our land, his

crag. His delight and joy in the rock graze, the sunlit-walls, the ooze-wet crack, the rain-lashed hill battle rush off the page at you and you know that this is a Perrin to go on the hill with.

The other form has me at a disadvantage. I suspect it's polished literacy. It may come naturally to him but it sits uneasily on me. Its essays bristle with quotation marks from writers I have but heard of. Quotations which for the most part I do not understand, and which irritate like a wrinkle in a sock which you cannot get at for the boot and gaiter and the labour of reaching it. Frequently the two styles meet and readers must learn to savour the sections they favour. Take your Jack Sprat's lean and leave the gristle to the academics. There is enough good red meat to satisfy most appetites.

Perrin evidently sees more perceptively above this ground floor partition and marshalls his essays into four sections. The first, "The Gilded Calamity", a quotation from Camus, deals with the spell which Wales has cast on him from his early teens and the magic wrought on many visits by its beauty and the pain brought by its development and the erosion consequent upon its popularity. His delight in his adopted country's splendour and his agony in its starting and potential rape carry him through this, the largest section of the book to "On The Rocks". He is a brave man, not afraid to bare his soul and his feelings to public scrutiny. One may feel a little embarrassed at times by the openness of his emotion but give me a brave open heart to defend our high lands against the ink-pump that feeds the planner's pen. Have you placed boulders in the path of rally cars below Millstone Edge and gloried in the thumping sumps? — then you will delight in his fury at finding three cans of petrol on Moel Sych and the hurling of them into the scree.

The "On The Rocks" section is to my sorrow, the shortest, for no matter how my heart sings at the sight of an unspoiled mountain view, it sings the louder if there be a crag therein, to set the fingers itching. It begins, as it should, with tributes to gritstone and that most satisfying of mysteries, the jam. Herein and hereafter he records his meetings with rock. Inland rock, wet rock, sodden rock, sun-washed rock, sea-cliff rock. Modern jewels, established kindergartens, the rock spectrum from red to violet. Classics every story in this section for the rock climber and I suspect that this is the heart run of his prose. The quotations are few, and, if in Latin, graciously translated freely for today's legions to understand. From real rock he passes through a fictional account of a tragedy happening to a sea-cliff rope to discuss in "The Human Factor" some of the personalities from the nearer history of our sport which have caught his attention.

His choice for this collection of character sketches, biographies almost, is not everyone's: Tilman, Littlejohn, Jill Lawrence, Redhead, Hodgkin, Al Harris, the Scottish icemen, John Hoyland and Bonington. A spectrum from our sport of people who have had a formative and influential effect upon it, or would have had had they been better known or lived longer. The choice is the author's and we have no right to cavill at it, but for me Hoyland is of no importance. If a relative unknown was to be brought to light why not Birtwhistle of Diagonal and the Drainpipe Crack, or Streetly of Bloody, or Preston of the two disparate Ogwen Walls, why Hoyland? Al Harris was to me merely a wasted talent but the insights into the others I found intriguing. Of them all Bonington probably needed no further publicity and the interview with him is very bland, as befits the doyen of our Greater Mountaineers. Would an interview ten, fifteen, twenty years ago have revealed this gentle entrepreneur or a hard-edged, out of my way, going to make it to the top, sharp-elbowed thruster? We suspect but shall not know.

The final section, *The Nature of the Beast*, is introduced by the only uncaptioned photograph in the book. Two figures, shielding their eyes but still half-blinded by the sun, peer into it, attempting to discover? — the rationale behind *The Nature of the Beast*? Whatever this pair (recognise them?) are trying to descry the essays in Perrin's final section are a curious assembly. Many are answers to many whys. Others just included under this heading because they do not fit the others, some, even if they do. The railway essay which one could paraphrase as "Why have we allowed the railways to



die?’ and thus lost the sense of togetherness of that platform community seemed at first a piece of very localised interest reaching right into my roots, but into those of how many others? At Hathersage, Grindelford, Bamford, Edale, were you on the opposite platform as the abuse and wit hurled across the rails in the accents from the two sides of the Great Hill? Certainly he was, and of Ma Thomas’ hearth circle. As he says she had, though she deserved it, no national obituary, but does he know that, on Stanage, “Ma’s Retreat” remains, Al Parker’s testament to her, done on the day of the closing of her cafe’s doors. From this narrow base he widens its scope and holds the interest beyond the grey-remembered hills of our youth. Why do we allow the hunting of deer? Why do some rope pairs gel and others fracture? Why do accidents happen? Why do climbers die? Anguished questions and Perrin’s thoughts on them pour out and grip you. Despite all this emotion the best piece in this section is for me the historical section on Ogwen climbing, a much more measured, gentler theme, illustrating by its contrast the range of his writing.

The book is well printed and well bound. Apart from the cover every photograph is in black and white but this seems to fit in with the sense of retrospective which is bound to accompany a collection of such pieces. The wide margins, sometimes a niche for photographs are more often empty and give a suspicion of design for design’s sake, a waste of space, and trees, a padding out of the book? Put such ignoble suspicions on one side. Delight in the range of his prose and ideas if they suit you. Struggle with them if they infuriate you. Don’t ignore them. They come from the best mountain writer we have left. If he shows signs of joining a Himalayan expedition we must have his passport withdrawn.

Dave Gregory

**The Alpine Journal 1987**  
**edited by Ernst Sondheimer**  
 Published by The Alpine Club

Portholes in aeroplanes are most frustrating at times (as were steam trains without corridors) and it is about time that pressurised balconies were made standard. It is highly inconsiderate to give a keen mountaineer a tantalising glimpse of a snaking glacier amongst a cluster of great peaks without allowing a closer inspection. Luckily on occasions, pilots helpfully bank their machines for the benefit of passengers on the right side of the craft — and so it was recently when I was presented with a fine view of Mount Olympus protruding from an encircling frill of cloud. Later back at home it was thus quite pleasing to flick through the latest AJ. and spot an article on Greece’s elusive mountain.

The thing that I like about the AJ. is that it is full of surprises and we can jet about the world from an armchair to remote ranges or recapture glimpses of friendly corners. For myself I first spotted a fine colour photo of the Triglav which led me to an article on the Julian Alps one of the favourite areas of a few years back. The clock then turned back some thirteen years with Hamish Brown’s article on the High Atlas.

After the familiar, a trip from Mount Hunter led down the Andes to Patagonia and then a dash across the Himalaya to the Book Reviews. With two contenders in the line-up for posterity I was apprehensive; what a relief! The reviewers were generous for once, but I am still haunted by another man’s spectre — the vivid memory of Jim Perrin’s description of a long gone guidebook as the worst of all time. The pen can make or break.

And then the sadness and the memories ... I paused to reflect on the obituaries for Tenzing Norgay and Nea Morin then realised that Herbert Carr and Dorothea Richards, two kindred spirits from the

1920's, had signed out together. I was at the Wasdale Napes Needle celebrations last year when Dorothea 'held court' and late in the evening had a few words with her prior to her departure. Despite her 92 years she had a magnetic charm that cut through time. We arranged to meet during one of my holidays but the chance slipped through my fingers. Time waits for no-one and opportunities must be snatched as they arise.

With a new Editor the Alpine Journal lives up to its usual high standard and awaits the next episode in world mountaineering.

Geoff Milburn

### **A Little Walk on Skis by Peter & Beryl Wilberforce Smith**

Published by Dickerson, Distributed by Cordee, £12.95

The story of a mammoth journey on skis along the entire length of the Alpine Chain.

This is an example of very high standard book production with excellent photographs and the best typeface I have seen for a long time.

The narrative is destined to keep the book in the realm of the coffee table, which is a pity because the nature of the achievement and the tenacity required to complete it deserves a more readable record. Continual breaks in the flow of the prose to explain common technical terms is my main criticism. To be told repeatedly that I am less likely to survive in a wet snow avalanche than in dry snow is irritating when at no time are the skis and binding named.

I did particularly enjoy some of the travelogue references to placenames and local history obviously gleaned from evenings in the hostelrys on the way. A genuine interest in people shines throughout this work and the section dealing with the tragic death of Peter Wilberforce Smith is beautifully handled. One can only admire Beryl Wilberforce Smith for her courage in not only completing the traverse but also this book with all the memories it must hold for her.

The maps and photographs alone will be invaluable to anyone contemplating a long distance ski tour in the Alps.

Well written but hard to read is my verdict.

Roy Small

### **A Dream of White Horses by Edwin Drummond**

Diadem, £10.95

Royal Robbins, it seems, does not want to be part of this book or part of the authors life. He rarely replies to the letters that attempt to suck him in. Yet his name keeps appearing throughout this book like a shadow the author knows he cannot escape: in writing one refusal to play the desired role Robbins touched a nerve that went deep. 'I had written inviting you', Drummond writes in 'An Open Letter to Royal Robbins', 'to be a reporter of my solo attempt on the North America Wall'. (Reporter? Of whose attempts on anything has Drummond been a humble reporter? Not even Hugh Drummond's

on Troll Wall. The 'Mirror Mirror' can only reflect himself.) Robbin's reply provides a touchstone by which the author senses that this book will be judged: 'It sounds more like hubris than love of the warm rock beneath your hand ... I want nothing to do with it. R.R.'

Now Drummond is a master at evoking a 'love of the warm rock beneath your hand' or the 'seal cold in my shorts' experiences of climbing both inside the head and at the ends of the fingertips. I think he does this best in short, intensely focussed pieces of writing: the poems and the *Hard Rock*, *Extreme Rock* essays collected together in this book. It is in the longer pieces, or in reading the book through from beginning to end, that the regular puns or reversals begin to pall, to seem arbitrary attempts at originality that are really stylistic manipulations of the readers expectations. But by then deeper doubts have begun to creep in about the 'Look what I dare do! Look what I dare say!' tone. One begins to suspect a moral manipulation of the reader. Even when describing the Frankenstein in himself he's controlling, he thinks, the way you see it. That was *Ed Ward Drummond* his previous self who was the drinker of the water when his partner's back was turned, the manipulator of a partner who would take the blame for failure (none of them seem to climb with him again), the user of various women for various forms of support from below or above.

But of course, *Edwin Drummond* gives away more than he thinks, and here's the hubris. A human being is not an all-controlling god. The crags are more than mirrors for egos. The reader can read between the lines for herself that the writer who argues that Menlove Edwards should have engaged in a sensitive, feeling, 'interpersonal' life, chooses to publish detail of an ex girl-friend's previous sex-life. Its only there to show he dare. This is Drummond now. And that as recently as 1984 he was *caught* shoplifting adds a revealing touch of indignation: 'three rurs, after having spent ninety dollars on gear for this climb?'

Actually I'd got the impression that most of the gear in this book was borrowed: the title for example. On the very last note on the very last page we find that it was Dave Pearce's name for Ed Ward Drummond's climb — sorry, their climb. Well this book is, the author tells us, 'the truth, the whole truth ... and some more.' Of course I realise that I shall be accused of being afraid of writing that 'lets it all hang out'. On the contrary, I've always argued for more emotional openness and a broader focus on the whole person. But I reserve the right not to like what I see or the way it's being hung out at me. I trust the poems most, and wouldn't want, in giving an honest response to the book as a whole, to detract from their lightness and rather different tone from the self-styled 'Bottom, or Fool/of British climbing'.

Terry Gifford

**Recent Developments in the Lake District 1985-1986**  
**Summer Rock — Winter Ice by Ron Kenyon Ed. David Miller**  
**New West (New Climbs on Gable and Pillar) and**  
**An Interim Guide to Buckbarrow by Bill Young Ed. David Miller**  
 Published by the F.R.C.C.

The bane of the Fell and Rock guide writer always used to be the enthusiast who pioneered vegetated cliffs on Far Far Raven Crag in Nethermost Netherdale, inevitably at least one hours fast walking from the nearest road-head. Nowadays these remote crags are likely to have as many E numbers as a Black Forest Gateaux — witness two useful supplements.

The very wet summer frustrated all attempts to road-test either of them (the ice routes were especially out of condition) so I can't vouch for the quality of the recent routes, but I'm sure there must be more than a few that are worthwhile. Not only are climbs on such esoteric gems (sic) as Peat Field Quarry included, but old favourites Falcon Crag, Pavey Ark and Pillar Rock still appear to offer opportunities for the ardent pioneer. Talking of pioneers, C.J.S. Bonnington, R. McHaffie and G. Cramm feature amongst the first ascensionists — plus ça change ...

Of particular note are the winter routes, ranging in difficulty from grade 1 (Waller's Gully climbed by Ivan on his eightieth birthday) to grade VI (Central Buttress 6, 6, (5b), 3, 6, 5, 4!). There are lots of goodies here, all we need is a winter.

The New West supplement updates the exiting Pillar and Gable guides with new routes, E grades and stars, and therefore serving as a stop-gap until the new combined guide is produced sometime in 1988. It also includes an interim guide to Buckbarrow which, though not exactly Tremadog, is a fast drying crag with nice situations suitable for those rare days when Scafell and Gable are lost in the clouds.

Mike Mortimer

### **Alan Rouse, A Mountaineer's Life**

Compiled by Geoff Birtles. Unwin Hyman £12.95

Al Rouse, after making the first British ascent of K2, died tragically in a deteriorating condition after being pegged down by the storm that took the life of Julie Tullis in the next tent. This biography has been cleverly collected by Geoff Birtles, and judging from the galaxy of writers that take us through Al's life, Birtles has left no stone, or pint pot unturned, in harnessing the characters to produce the 224 pages of engrossing stories.

The book is well produced and provides the reader with a full cover of Rouse's life. The colour photography is curiously grouped in a block of four pages. These are mainly portraits of Al. Each of high quality and well produced, I would have preferred to see them spaced more evenly through the book. The early pages have excellent, small black and white cameos. However these stop at the two-thirds mark, and I found this irritating in these days of photographic plenty, to have the last third of the book shouting for illustrations.

But you should not panic, the 30 essays by the 24 writers I found very readable. It is difficult to pick a winner on this card, if I could allow myself a favourite I would pick Al's sister Susan's treatment of Al's first 18 years, and Brian Hall's 'Tale of two cities' with the essays of Coffey, Molyneux, Parry, Geddes and Carrington on the non-working class climbing scene of the late sixties and seventies superb, a rare insight into this neglected social period. Perhaps a little sprinkle of 'Minks' would have put the cherry on the cake, but we can't have everything.

When the climbs get big the heavies come in, and again engrossing stuff from Nunn, Bonnington, Scott, Porter, Carrington and Greg 'Java Man' Childs.

Other lovely little pieces are scattered throughout, in a most refreshing way with Jim Curran ending it all with a fine postscript.

This is a must for all readers and collectors of mountain literature and will be read and re-read in the way one reads Tom Patey's book. Let the pages fall open and read the adjacent essay. I read this volume in one, as an instant review was required. I now have the time to dwell on the memories that for many this biography contains.

Geoff Birtles is to be congratulated for making the idea come to life, a book written by friends about a friend whom they obviously thought much of. The royalties from the sales of the book are to be donated to the 'Al Rouse' fund, set up in Sheffield to establish and maintain an 'Alan Rouse' memorial library.

I am not too religious, but at times like this I always see our late friends looking down at us, as if to say, 'Look at the old fool'. And then wondering what they are all thinking at our efforts in memorium. What are they planning for us in the next, when we arrive? A walk with a rucksack full of sand, a party, or a curry powder eating contest. Buy it please.

Nat Allen

### **K2 Triumph and Tragedy by Jim Curran**

Hodder and Stoughton, £12.95

The 1986 climbing season on K2 was quite unprecedented in the history of mountaineering. Not since 1959 when the North Face of the Eiger dropped into our laps in the form of Harrers 'White Spider', has the mountain scene seen the elements dictate the terms as they did on K2 in 1986.

We seem to have come a long way since Herman Buhl stood for the night near the top of Nanga Parbat dressed as we would now, for an October day on Kinder Scout. Developments in equipment, lightweight down suits, plastic boots, thermal gear, energy packed foods and drinks, would seem to make it possible in this day and age to take a standing bivouac above 8000 metres. There are other factors however and it was not to be so, thirteen people died in 1986 on K2 and many others carry the scars.

Jim Curran climber, photographer and member of the 1986 British N.W. Ridge Expedition spent an amazing summer season, first busying himself with his task of producing a film record of the climb, which after a good try they wisely withdrew from. Then moving on with a still strong but depleted team the 'Brits' nipped unpermitted onto the occupied Abruzzi Ridge. Bad weather ruined this attempt but we were still making the wise decisions. Al Rouse, now almost alone, teamed up with a Polish lady climber and gave it one final go, with Jim Curran backing them up around the base camps.

Most parties were near the summit when the bad weather closed in catching a whole crowd of them in the top camp, with Rouse, Julie Tullis, Kurt Diemberger, and Al's partner on the climb 'Mrufka' Wolf, caught in the trap.

Jim Curran's treatment of this epic is quite a work, and he is to be congratulated for producing what I am sure is soon to be a classic. Unlike the previously mentioned 'White Spider' this volume is a one season story, first the British expedition with inter-round summaries of happenings in the adjacent monster international base camp (the Strip). The reader is taken on into the first sequence of fatalities, firstly the two Americans, then a French couple, a Pole makes it five, then Cassaratto the great made it six and on it went.

The author grows in stature as the epic progresses and although it is his story it is easy to see that his contribution was considerable. Al Rouse, leader of the British team, is to some extent the centre piece of the book, but this does not unbalance Curran's treatment of all the other climbers on the mountain. Superb portraits pen in the characters with the events around camp and on the climbs, and the reader is made to know the climbers as they play out their own particular part of the tragedy. Jim's knack of injecting humour amongst the fascinating catalogue of events make K2 Triumph and

Tragedy very readable, engrossing, enjoyable and tragic.

The author does not shrink from analysis of mistakes that are made, and boldly wags the finger, backed up as he is with his unique experiences in and around base and advance base camps. His research and interviews with survivors of the other teams gives credibility to Jim's writings.

In the vast field of adventure writing this book is a one off, brilliantly written and riveting reading. I have looked for some years for Curran's second book and its no disappointment, but please Jim watch where and how you go for the next one, Boysen's knee on Trango was one thing but this is another. I return to Diemburger's thoughts on the reason for ignoring the danger signals:-

"Failure for most would be difficult to contemplate and harder to accept, our ambition played a significant part in the disaster."

Nat Allen



# HARRY RESCO SOLVES REVELATIONS

MIKE F. BROWELL

It was a typical Peak District Sunday on Raven Tor, the crag completely knitted up with international superstars. The place was dripping with talent and not a little water.

Things were getting chaotic by lunchtime and one of the teams was preparing to parachute down for lunch. To their consternation they found that part of their rope had become inextricably tangled with the adjacent team's rope, leaving them securely stitched to the crag. In desperation they called down instructions to their support party:

"Send up the sandwiches in that spare woolly hat". The support party wasn't looking up at the time and couldn't make out which team was shouting — he was too intent on watching the first all-female blindfold solo ascent of Revelations. Eventually he responded but by this time all the climbers were yelling at each other and he couldn't make himself heard.

So he started asking around to find out who wanted the sandwiches. He got lots of help but most of it was too obscure and after several minutes he only managed to string together a garbled collection of clues:

- a) The English have a red rope
- b) The ropes are on adjacent routes and are all different colours
- c) The green rope is to the right of the white rope
- d) The team on the E5 have a yellow rope
- e) The team with helmets are next to the E5
- f) The Americans are on an E3
- g) The French are on the left-hand route
- h) The Germans aren't wearing headgear
- i) The team wearing headscarfs are next to the E6
- j) The Australians are eating muesli
- k) The team on the E4 are wearing sweatbands
- l) The team with a green rope are eating salami
- m) The team on the middle route are eating caviar
- n) The team on the E7 are eating peanuts
- o) The French are next to the blue rope

He was just about to throw in the towel and nip down to the pub for an orange juice when up popped a famous climbing bunny. "Hello," he said, "my name's Harry Resco (CSSKBW/FBDHFB & bar) and I'm lost."

"Let's have a look at those clues ... oh yes ... I know who wants the sandwiches and also which team are wearing woolly hats ... argh!"

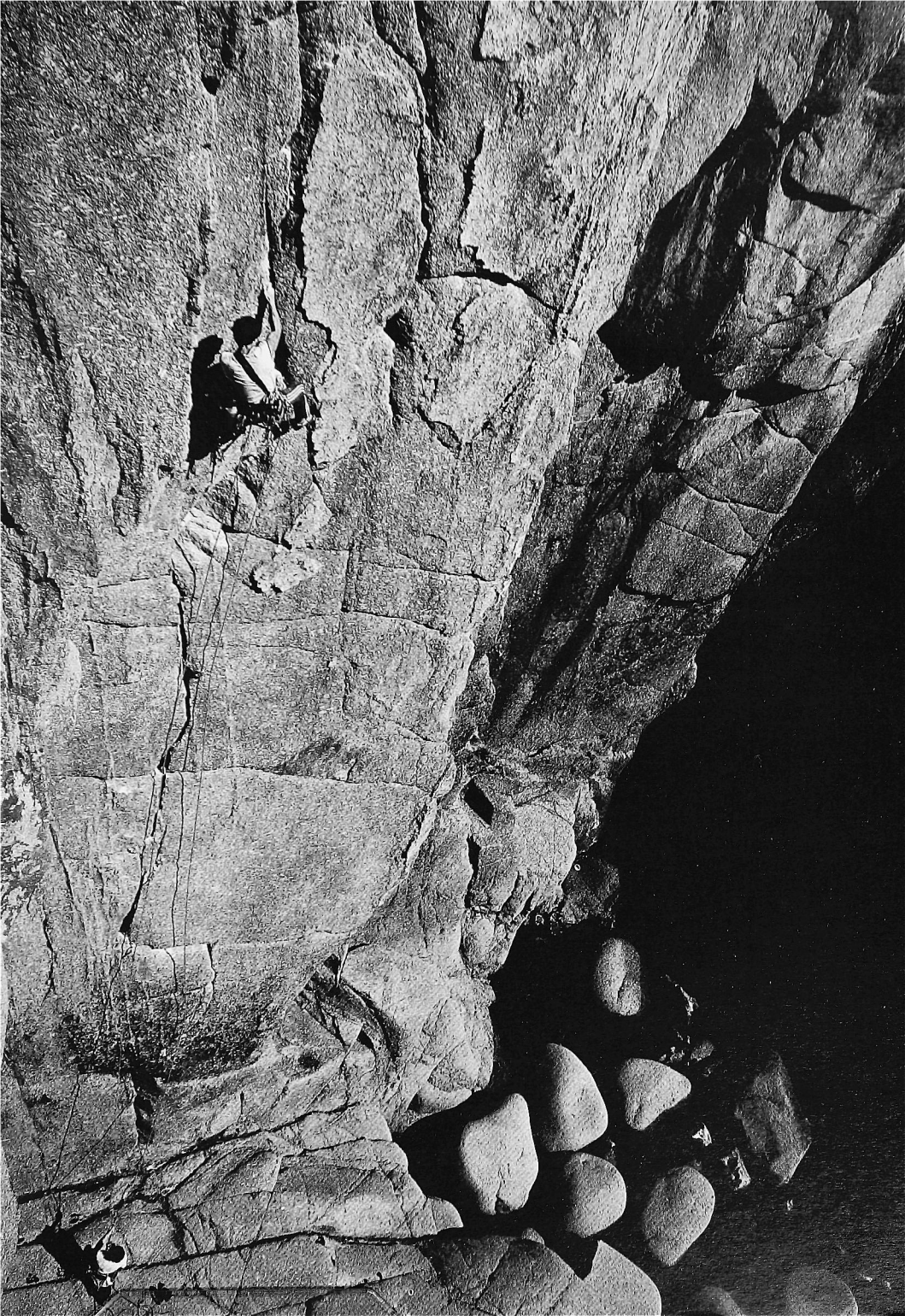
At that juncture he went strangely silent which makes a lot of sense because at that very moment the first all-female blindfold solo ascent of Revelations came to grief.

What was Harry about to reveal ...?

The Editor may wish to offer a small prize of the Helyg Jubilee book for the first rabbit or correct answer pulled out of Hamish's rucksack at the Annual Dinner?

*Opposite: Con Carey on "Yankee Doodle", Lands End*

*Photo: Ian Smith*



## AREA NOTES

*1983 was the last time that South West Notes appeared in the CC Journal. What follows is a brief summary of the events that have occurred since in North Devon and Cornwall. The West Penwith notes only cover recent activity.*

### North Devon and Cornwall

Iain Peter's new guide to the area will give an excellent coverage and should be out in the spring of '88. Littlejohn describes the manuscript as "steeped in the classical tradition of the area, better than Williams' guide (Llanberis)". It provides a first look at many places for many people including the Exmoor Coast and its five mile traverse.

During 1984/6 several protagonists vied for the vast acreage of rock available, Pete O'Sullivan, Peters, Dave Hillebrandt, Mick Fowler and others all contributing in their own idiosyncratic ways. *Frog Abuse* at Compass Point is a typical Fowler creation, whereas Peters and O'Sullivan quietly got on with the exploration of the Lizard. *The Fix* at Vellan Head (Peters, K. Hosie, P. Buttrick) showed the sort of quality at amenable grade that existed if you were prepared to hunt for it. *The Cull* and *Dawn* were instant three star classics, taking immaculate lines in stunning surroundings (S. Bell, O'Sullivan, S. Bishop). *Aboriginal Sin*, *Amnesty*, *Southern Cross*, *Limelight*, *True North*, *Girl's Best Friend* and *Dead Reckoning* showed that quality spanned the whole grade range from HS to E5.

Dave Hillebrandt sought out even quieter waters and calmly made Penhale his own though O'Sullivan slipped in to add the only bolt on the North Coast on Mick Doyle's *Capital Offence*. Lower Sharpnose began to provoke renewed interest too with blank walls becoming even more noticeable as the realisation of what was possible began to grow. Bell and O'Sullivan picked off *Spoils of War* but it was the return of Littlejohn that gave the area a kick into the eighties with *Break on Through*, *Fay* and *Pacemaker*, three routes of excellent quality and style yet very much in the hard idiom.

The south coast also received some attention with both Nare Head and Dodman Point gaining new climbs. *Dark Entries*, E4 6a at Nare Head is a serious zawn undertaking, while *Inner Secrets* E1 and *Moonshadow* both provide fine climbing. *Jood the Zood*, E2 5b at Dodman climbs an impressive arete line and *Splitting Images*, E2 5b is a good slab climb.

By the late summer of 1986 a thirteen year itch was being scratched by Dave Hope as he pointed Tony Penning at his first route in Cornwall. *Through the Looking Glass* solved the problem of Pentire's left hanging groove by entering from the left side rather than trying to take it direct from Eroica. Hope also cleaned off the line of small flakes crossing the wall to the right of Darkinbad, removing a large flake in the process (I'm sorry yer 'onour but it came off in me 'and), before deciding to leave it for later as the weather closed in for the winter. However Steve Monks got there first in May '87 to conjure up the superb *Black Magic*, E5 6a. In September '87, Penning returned to climb the second of the hanging grooves in the headwall giving *Reflections*, E5 6a, with Pete Cresswell and also took up the challenge of the great red corner some few hundred yards to the south, *Touch the Devil* proving serious and atmospheric. As well as some smaller lines he also looked north and found *Robert of Pentire* on the cliff a hundred yards away from the Main Wall thus completing a fine quartet of major routes in the area. Not to be outdone Nipper Harrison also paid a visit and climbed the groove and overlaps right of Black Magic to give *Urco's Revenge*. The Main Wall now sports some thirteen routes and still has something left to offer in the direct entry to the hanging grooves from Eroica. The only other news here is that the peg on Eroica is in a very poor state and the local debate concerns whether or not it should be replaced by a bolt. Personally I feel that this would be a retrograde step on one of the finest pieces of rock in the country, particularly on a route of the integrity of Eroica.

In January 1987, Hillebrandt and J. O'Neill at last gained perhaps the most elusive prize in Cornwall — the first Cornish ice climb. *Salute the Admiral*, Grade III, was a farewell to Keith Lawder who had

died a couple of months earlier and gave 400 feet of climbing in what ordinarily would have been referred to as 'Fowler Country'.

Littlejohn reappeared and stamped his mark firmly on the Lizard at Vellan Head with *Beauty and the Beast*, E5 6b, while Monks and Harrison separately continued to boost the modern appeal of Lower Sharpnose. *Coronary Country* by Monks and S. Wilkinson was Cornwall's first E7 and significant also in that it was achieved away from West Penwith. *The Devonian*, E5 6a and *Unnamed* E6 6b also gave sport while Harrison added the excellent *Mustard*.

Carn Gowla was not to be left out although the development here was certainly more fragmentary. Ed Hart, Hope and Peters had investigated the Supernatural area and discovered a worthy companion to it in September '86, up a crack line to the left, *Just Natural*, E2 5b, and Hope returned in September '87 to add the fine *Sackful of Clowns*, HVS 5a, up a magnificent solid blank corner. Penning closed the account here on the same day with an instant classic, *Four for Texas*, taking the obvious challenge of the gently overhanging pink wall on C Buttress.

As for next year, Peters' guide will no doubt lure many south to seek out the Helston floral dances and lonely leads, but it will also hopefully provide an impetus for most to sample the delights that this varied and intriguing area has to offer.

Dave Hope

### West Penwith: 1987

Fear, Loathing and Foaming-At-The-Mouth characterised climbing in West Penwith in 1987 as bolts began to stud the Granite with all the charm of a Biker's belt. At one point you could hardly open any of the glossy climbing mags without gouts of blood and bile pouring off the Letters Pages, as the Empires struck back. The controversy over bolts on Cornish granite even reached the sports pages of a "quality" Sunday newspaper, in one of the most dismal and misleading pieces of reportage that even this short-order hack has ever seen.

The anti-bolters argue that, technical ethics apart, West Penwith is not exactly the place for "Designer Climbing" and that those who wish to slip-slap, dynamite and red-punk should get on their Bosch's and go to where the real heat is — on slate and limestone. The pro-bolters argue that the anti's are just a bunch of bumblebees who shouldn't criticise what they can't climb, and who would rather keep West Penwith as a climbing backwater.

It's called a difference of opinion, in polite circles, leading to a degree of backwater-biting all round. The reality is, that bolts have now cropped up (and I use the word carefully) on Sennen and Chair Ladder and on a number of new developments on Penwith's South Coast. By the time this reaches print there might even be one on the statue of Humphry Davy in Penzance's Market Jew Street.

Meanwhile, on Bosigran, Pat Littlejohn and F. Ramsay have struck a blow for the bumblebees by climbing a major line, straight up to and crossing the traverse of Suicide Wall and onto the slab left of Phantom, to finish up the black overhanging groove above Phantom's top stance. The route is called *The Absolution* 180ft. E5/6 5c.6c and Littlejohn sees it as a conclusion to unsuccessful but bold efforts made by the late Pete Biven on a similar line in the Sixties. Within two weeks of Littlejohn's ascent, Mark and Rowland Edwards repeated *The Absolution*, substantially down-graded it and gave it a "new, direct and obvious" finish at 5c. Edwards Junior fulfilled suspicions that he's a little flasher by ostentatiously describing his ascent in the Count House Log as an "on sight flash". But Littlejohn had snatched the first ascent of a plum line while sucking *sweet* grapes, if you pardon the mixed fruit metaphor. His grades await a wider consensus.

The BMC New Routes Book for '86 has done a first class job of recording the many new lines in Penwith since the current guide was published. But it is only a record and closer eyeballing of the whole of West Penwith is under way in preparation for a revised CC guide. Latest developments include a number of routes by Devon County Raiders, and others.

Retrospectively but worthy of note are two routes done by Chris Nicholson at Zennor Head in 1981 but never recorded. These are in an engaging hell-hole called Rainbow Zawn that lies (or topples rather), a hundred yards north of Zennor Head, directly below an obvious granite pillar.

*Strongbow* 120ft. E2 5b is a steep rising traverse of the east wall starting with a different entry from non-tidal seaward ledges. Directly opposite, *Blackthorn* 70ft. HVS 5a takes the cracked corner in the west wall. (Nicholson, Hannigan, Sam Salmon.)

At Pedn Kei Walls between Pedn Kei Island and Zawn Duel, Pete Saunders and Nick Hancock climbed, *Sanctuary* 120ft. E2 6a. Starting 30 yards of Bill Sykes it takes a slim groove to an overhanging corner before moving right and up then left to a finishing arete.

As well as The Absolution, Bosigran Main Face has *Permanent Wares* E3/4 5c. This takes a line up Shaft then moves right to the foot of the thin black crack in the headwall before taking the crack and arete to the horizontal break, (Paul Rogers, Richard Fowler).

On the east side of Bosigran Ridge, Paul Rogers led various lambs to the slaughter on a number of enterprising lines up the steep grey wall, visible from Bosigran main face. Cool, sunless and with wickedly exciting access the starting belays are taken from abseil ropes. No coherent details yet, since Rogers disappeared to New Zealand in mid-sentence. But in a world of new-route nobbling and cries of, "We did those routes years ago and they're only 4c," his lines have been noted.

At Diamond Wall on the West side of Bosigran Ridge some neat lines have developed round Pete O'Sullivan's Gallipoli. *Kobima* 80ft. E2 6a takes the diagonal crack running left below the traverse steps of Gallipoli then climbs the wall to join the latter's finishing crack. (O'Sullivan, Max Grassi.) *Imphal* 60ft. E3 6a takes the overhanging, peg-scarred crack left of Diamond Wall, (O'Sullivan, C. Pretty.) while *Slippery People* 50ft. E3 6a takes the corner 20 feet left of Imphal, moving left across a roof, (Pete Saunders, Andy Grieve.)

On the buttress above the abseil corner in the back of Great Zawn, Dave Hope and Tony Penning climbed a pleasant Severe. *Practical Joker* 90ft. starts at the abseil pinnacle and takes an intricate line up walls and cracks.

On Great Zawn terrace *Smiley Culture* E3 5b climbs Variety Show into the lay-back crack then moves left and up the black streaked wall on good holds but zero protection. Bold and serious, which also applies to the first ascensionists (Paul Rogers, Hilary Simons).

At Window Ridge Zawn, Chris King, Jim Lawrenson and Hilary Lawrenson have climbed four routes all starting from the "Moon Pool". *Sue* 80ft. HVS 5a starts left of the pool up an awkward corner then moves right to a second corner. *Moon Pool Wall* 100ft. E1 5b climbs the slab behind the pool then the obvious crack on the left wall. (J. Lawrenson, King, H. Lawrenson.) *Pseud's Corner* 100ft. E1 5b climbs the corner directly from the pool, (King, H. Lawrenson, J. Lawrenson) while *Shadow Line* 80ft. E1 5a starts from ledges at the top of the slab of Moon Pool Wall trending left then right up a ramp before traversing right across the wall to finish up a left leaning groove, (J. Lawrenson, King, H. Lawrenson.)

On the east face of the pinnacled ridge west of Rosemergy Ridge three new routes have been done. *Opening Thrust* 60ft. E1 5b takes the left line of deep cracks, (Pete Saunders, Nick Hancock.) while *Swing Out Sister* 60ft. E3 5c takes the right hand crack, (Saunders, Alison Bonner.) *Clutching at Straws* 70ft. E2 5b. 5a takes a steep crack left of Opening Thrust to a ledge then climbs cracks and flakes on the left to a final groove and steep grass to finish. (Saunders, Bonner.)

At Aire Cliff, Ken Palmer and Andy Grieve did two routes in 1985 unrecorded till now, *Dick*

*Dastardly* E1 5b takes the left hand break through the roof left of Spitfire while *Wiki Wiki Wheels*, E3 6a takes the break right of Spitfire through the roof then up to take a left leaning diagonal. (Palmer, Grieve.)

Taking a deep breath before bolting past Land End we find little recorded action until Levens Wall where Chris Nicholson has done two good Pitches, *Fingerfinger* 40ft. E3 5c, which takes the overhanging bottomless crack twenty feet right of the pool below Afternoon Boys: *Seamstress*, 45ft. E2 6a, takes the wall twenty feet right of Zip.

At St Loy Toni Carver and Justin Ford have done a right to left traverse of the cliff crossing The Boldest, to give reported E3 5c. Steve Young and Roger Mitchell have climbed *Follow The Mouse* 50ft V. Diff up vegetated cracks right of Broccoli Bucket. Young and Mitchell are two well known Rockers from the Sixties who seem to have got a new lease of life. They have put up a number of new lines at Tregiffian Cliff near Tater Du in the Severe-VS range that have all the daunting charm of 'Real Severe's'.

On the Solomon Browne slab itself is *Loose Limpet Crack* 90ft. HS 4b taking the second of four left leaning cracks then moving right and up then left and up. (Young, Mitchell). *Jean's Genius II* 90ft. Severe 4b, takes the rightwards slanting line starting left of Loose Limpet Crack (Young, Hannigan, Mitchell). *Zebra* 90ft VS 4c is a rising traverse of the slab starting left of *Esmaduna* (Young, Hannigan, Mitchell).

*Deception Groove* 40ft. Diff takes the jamming crack on the left wall of the gully to the left of Solomon Browne Slab. *Gravity Slab* 50ft. HS 4c climbs the slab and groove 15 feet left of Deception Groove then traverses delicately left below the short wall. The wall goes direct at 4b. (Young, Mitchell). *Flotation Crack* 60ft. VS 4c takes the steep slab and good jamming crack left of the previous route before escaping right below the overhanging wall.

Finally, at Tater Du, *The Water Margin* E4 6a takes a strenuous line up the overhanging thin crack left of the rock pool below Lamorna Wall to the variation of that route (Palmer, Grieve, Saunders).

A number of other lines remain unreported or "in preparation" at the moment, while the world waits with bolted breath.

Des Hannigan

### Peak District Notes

Horseshoe Quarry, which ironically has nothing lucky about it, was the scene for the first developments of the year. Taking advantage of the mild winter, and the fact that nobody else was interested in the place, a merry band of men toiled away fearlessly to produce some thirty routes in the E1 to E4 range. They that dared included Ian French, Chris Wright, Steve France, Mark Pretty and John Godding. Bolt-protected (but not over so) and seemingly loose, the routes were ridiculed by many but several are extremely worthwhile. While other crags were cold and wet well into the 'spring', Horseshoe Quarry dried quickly and caught the sun, providing a much needed place to get 'climbing fit'. The best offerings were *Megalithic Man*, *Private Prosecution*, *Ancient Rhythm* (French), *Shot Your Bolt* (France), and *Party Animal* (Pretty). Even Johnny Dawes joined in on a first ascent, but unimpressed quickly returned to the grit.

Down the road on Stoney itself, Pretty was also active squeezing in even more routes. *La Belle et La Bette* virtually fills up Garage Buttress (E5 6b) but more independent is his *My Personal Pleasure* up the wall left of Belinda at the same grade.

Way down south at Willersley there was (by Willersley's standards) a new route boom. The wall left of Lime Street Direct fell to Derek Bolger at E4 6a (*Police and Thieves*) whilst that left of Jericho Wall gained a bolt runner and *Sparkle in the Rain*, an E4 6b by Martin Roome, Gary Gibson (I bet



you were wondering when he'd turn up) also called in and left *Hallowed Be My Name* up the horribly bulging wall above Boomerang, E5 6b. Possibly even more esoteric is Wild Cat where Malc Taylor climbed the colourful *Shades of Pineapple Pink* up the wall between Great Crack and Sunset Creek.

High Tor saw some development, although nothing to get too excited about, the main talking point being Malc Taylor and Darren Hawkins' almost free ascent of Twilight (1 point) which they renamed *Squeezin' Out Sparks*, E5 6c, 6b. Another difficult route was added here by Gibson up the wall left of Delta G at an optimistic E5 6b, V2.

Over at Dovedale new routes were still hard to come by which is amazing considering the scope there. The wall just left of Things ain't like ... gave a *Slap Up* to one G. Jones at E5 6b and Nick Dixon produced the savagely technical *So this is Summer*, E4 6c/7a!

As usual however the major activity on the white stuff took place along The Wye Valley with Chee Dale collecting most of the prizes. On Two Tier Simon Nadin and Richard Davies almost cleaned up the right-hand side of the Upper Tier with Nadin's offerings being the finest. *The Tier-drop Explodes*, *The Sea is a Big Paper Bag* and *Curse of the Mummy* (which frees the second pitch of Osiris) all gained the E6 6b/c tag. Nadin's most impressive route however appeared on the Lower Tier up the wall left of Spizz Energy, *Seven Pounds Overweight* weighed in at a mighty E7 6c! Also active here was Gibson adding two difficult pitches. *Why Me?* climbs the wall left of Orange Sunshine and *Some Coincidence* the wall left of Osiris via some hard and serious moves (both around E6 6b).

Further down the dale, Gibson continued his onslaught on The Cornice, without doubt one of the last bastions to hold out against the free-climber. *Big Zipper* is a sustained outing right of Big Store (E6 6a), *After the Goldrush* is a direct on Rue Morgue (E5 6a) and *Snails of the Riverbank* climbs the wall right of Up the River ... by a strenuous dynamic sequence (E5 6b). The wall left again gave another pumpy route in *Old Man River*, again E5 6b, but the most difficult climb hereabouts proved to be Mark Pretty's *The Naive and Sentimental Lover* which is essentially a direct-cum-leftwards finish to Up the River ... at E6 6b. Rapid repeats of all these routes confirmed their quality.

Further right, Pretty proved the walls either side of Gibson's Cosmopolitan to be possible to leave *Mandy* at a reputedly generous E6 6b and, after much effort, *Unleashing the Wild Physique* at a gobsmacking E6 6c. Even further right several routes were also added of which the best is Richard Davies' *Turbo-charged Monster Mouse*, an enjoyable E5 6a climb.

In comparison Chee Tor was for once, a bystander although one 'last great problem' was solved with Chris Gore's ascent of the steep wall left of Kriklet's Cancer. *The Ogre* is reputedly E7 6C for those of average height! For two less E points but again at 6c Gibson added *Shake Hands with the Octopus* up the wall left of White Gold.

Over in Water-cum-Jolly Richard Davies virtually had the place to himself and although many would gladly let him keep it, he managed to find some reasonably good new routes. *La Belle Age* climbs the wall left of In Bulk (E5 6b) whilst *Fire on Water* has "nearly clips on nothing grips", an E6 6b direct on The Alien. At the same grade Davies added another direct between Sox and La Chute (*Fatal Hesitation*). Davies was not always on his own. Andy Pollitt made a fleeting visit and climbed a superb route right of Brachiation Dance. Its E5 6c grade, bolt protection and overhanging nature should render it a popular test-piece.

On the other side of the valley while Davies was concentrating on the 'Lammergeyer Twins Wall' much was afoot on Rubicon Wall. Paul Mitchell squeezed his way up the rock right of Jaws (*Plectrum Maxilla*, E5 6b) and Quentin Fisher, helped by a tube of Araldite, managed to force his way up *Let the Tribe Increase* left of Coot (E6 6b). The most important finds though were Tony Ryan's *Caviar* and Ben Moon's *Hot Fun Closing*. *Caviar* climbs the severely overhanging rock right of Plectrum Maxilla at E7 6c while *Hot Fun Closing* takes a line right of Miller's Tale at the same grade. Controversy surround the latter route as Gore, believing Moon had lost interest with the line, put in a bolt and climbing it only to swing right into an existing route at the first opportunity. The route was named

Kudos only to be renamed when Moon returned and led the route without the bolt and added a new finish.

Raven Tor also let a few slip through its fingers. Steve Lewis expressing his penchant for massive bolts smacked a beauty in on his *Super High Intensity Body Building* left of Saline Drip producing an instant classic at E4 6a. Not so instant, but destined to become popular is Andy Pollitt's *Chimes of Freedom*. Climbed over a period of two weeks, as a result of Pollitt's desire not to practice the route, the climb is effectively a free version of Free and Easy at E6 6c.

Not surprisingly it was limestone which received the most attention, with bolts providing the stimulus in the majority of cases but for quality rather than quantity the gritstone had the lion's share.

Taking advantage of a dry spell in February, Dawes, presumably wearing thermals with a big S on the front, climbed a number of stunning 'last great problems'. *Dharma* blasts the gap right of Great Crack in Duke's Quarry, *Chautauqua* (suckers required) takes 'The Arete' at Robin Hood's Stride and on *Gaia* (the groove left of Curving Arete at Black Rocks) he narrowly avoided taking a ground fall from the finishing 6c mantelshelf! All the routes are in the E6-8 6b/c category. Black Rocks also saw visits by Andy Barker just beating Dawes to *Discombobulator* E5, 'mild 6c' (can 6c be mild), which sneaks right from Stonnis Crack, and climbing a potential bone-snapping E5 6b up the wall right of The Sprain, *Liquid Ab's*. Another good find here was the arete right of Sand Gully by Johnny Shepherd, *Camel Hot*, E4 6b.

Moving north, Curbar was also to benefit from the talent of Dawes who once again set about 'the last great problems' (I promise not to use that phrase again). *Janus* (E7 7a) sorted out the groove right of Profit and *Slab and Crack* (E7 6c) was 'a return to traditional values' by linking the direct to One Step Beyond to a direct finish (without pre-placed protection). Most impressive however was Johnny's lead of the right arete of Moon Buttress (he needs a check-up from the neck-up pal!). At E8 6c this stunning route will wait some time for a true on-sight ascent.

Nearby Froggatt saw a little action including the long awaited repeats of *Beau Geste* By, you'll never guess who, well yes Dawes, and his own route, *Benign Lives* by Tony Coutts. The Crack on The Boulder off The Path was also eventually beaten into submission by Mark Leach after some 25 days effort! *The Screaming Dream* which "If you've got what it takes, it will take all you've got" received the interesting grade of E8 6b, interesting that is for a 15 foot route! B3 may be more appropriate. Also on Froggatt, Martin Veale practised his craft on the wall left of Beau Geste to leave the necky E5 6b *Ramp Art*.

Over on Stanage, John Allen has continued to work his way through the best remaining lines. *Direct Loss* (E4 6a) is a good direct on Wall Buttress and *Boys Will be Boys* climbs the unprotected wall left of the chimney left of Moribund. John originally climbed this E6 6b nasty in winter above a snow drift finding it fairly easy but come the thaw had a real jibber. Even more difficult, and just as unprotected, is his *Grace and Danger* (E6 6c) below Esso Extra, an elegant but deceiving line. Another 'last great problem' (sorry) bit the dust as well when Allen added the much-needed direct finish to B.P. Super, *Indian Summer*, E5 6b and a fine effort. Also of note on Stanage was the incredibly long-awaited girdle of The Cowper Stone. *Traverse of the Gritstone Gods* was climbed by such notables as Dawes, Allen, Mark Stokes and Steve Bancroft (hon-member), or as one wag put it "with this team it should have been called Traverse of the Gritstone Gobs!"

On t'other side o' peak in Staffordshire it was Simon Nadin who once again dominated the events helped only by Nick Dixon. Needless to say all the routes are excellent additions. At The Roaches, after much effort, Nadin managed the wall above the start of The Swan to leave two desperates in the shape of *Against the Grain* and *Thing on a Spring* at E5 7a and E6 7a respectively. On the Upper Tier he also completed his affair with the Sloth roof by finding a way out at the right-hand end to produce the superbly named *99% of Gargoyles look like Bob Todd* (E5 6b). Dixon meanwhile forced the 'unjustifiable' scoop left of Fred's Cafe, trusting glued-on pebbles to leave *Doug*, E8 6c! His *Ou*

*est Le Spit?* proved slightly easier (E6 6b) on a large boulder right of Pepper.

Down on The Five Clouds, *Who Needs Ready Brek*, goes right and up from Persistence at a man-eating E4 7a whilst *Cloud Busting* lies just right at E4 6b, both routes courtesy of Nadin. Not to be outdone Dixon sneaked over to the Nth Cloud and padded up the steep slab left of Pillar of Judgement utilising a pre-placed RP. A repeat by Dawes confirmed the quality of Judge Dread (E6 6b). *B4 XS* is another Nadin monster climbing the horrendously serious arete left of Central Climb at E7 6b.

Finally in this area Nadin filled in a few large spaces at Ramshaw Rocks. *Dangerous Crocodile Snogging* attacks the fin and wall left of Elastic Limit (E7 6c) and *Never, Never Land* the overhanging side-wall right of Ramshaw Crack, another E6 6b horror show.

Last but not least, The Chew Valley received a face lift mainly at the hands of Nick Plishko and Dougie Hall. Wimberry saw the most action with free ascents of *Wimberry Overhang* (E5 6c) and Desecration which was renamed *Ambler Gambler* (E6 6c). Both of these were the work of Plishko who also added *Neptune's Tool* up the wall left of The Trident. Hall's contribution was an outstanding line based on the old aid route The Prow. *Appointment With Fear* must take the prize for one of the most exposed routes on gritstone and at E6 6b one of the most daunting.

Hall also produced a couple of desperates across at Upperwood Quarry. *Waiting for an Alibi* climbs the wall right of Pipeline and *Edge Your Bets* the wall right of Turtle. Both are around E5 6b/c and the latter reputedly is "a sustained exercise in crimping". Crimping by the way is "to hook one's fingers around a non-existent hold" ... well now you know.

## 1987

A measure of the year's weather in The Peak is given by the thickness of the Stoney new route book. At the end of '87 it was only about one third as big as at the end of '86! The limestone had its wettest season for years and although the grit dried quickly few were able to find the commitment to add new routes on this medium. Even limestone stalwarts Martin Atkinson and Mark Leach were seen on the 'nasty brown stuff'.

Starting off with 'God's own rock', Stanage saw a few mini-desperates crossed off. After much practice the stupendous arete left of Not to be Taken Away fell to Ron Fawcett at E7 7a (*Careless Torque*) and in a similar vein Martin Veale added *Big Air* on the boulder behind. This latter route has a 2m leap across a gap, filled with nasty boulders, to grasp a small pocket followed by a 6b move to finish. With a total length of 4m and a grade of 6b it works out at 1.5 E points per metre and few routes could beat that! Steve Bancroft was also active here squeezing in *Suited* over the roof left of Crew Pegs Diffs (E4 6b) and John Allen beat everyone to the long-fancied hanging arete right of High Flyer. The holds on *Chip Shop Brawl* are so sloping you would do well to use them on a slab, hence the E5 6c grade.

Over at Rivelin Quarries another 'obvious' line has been climbed at last. *The Bear Necessities* follows the groove left of Paddington at E5 6b, a fine addition by Mike Lea.

Millstone Edge still provides the odd crumb. Allen Williams saved everybody an unpleasant task by soloing the arete right of Street Legal to leave *Blood and Guts in Botty Street*, E5 6a. *Scruples*, E5 6b is a Paul Evans effort, taking the faint line left of Bond Street, up which it starts. A poor peg runner protects the upper section and given a direct start the route could become a modern classic. Also this year, Master's Edge finally received an on-sight ascent by Martin Atkinson whilst the previous ascensionist, Mark Leach, soloed the wall left of the upper arete at E6 6b to give *The Bad and the Beautiful*. Commenting on his route Leach advised helpfully, "You can fall but you'd better not bounce"!

Across the moors at Burbage South, *Rollerball*, E4 6c, was climbed by Fawcett up the wall left of Saul; the scene of some chipping earlier in the year (not by Ron however!). The gap left of Captain Sensible was also filled by Allen at E4 6b, *We Aint Gonna Pay No Toll*.

Fawcett also 'did a bit' on the Froggatt Curbar Escarpment. On Froggatt he climbed the blank wall right of Artless at a tall man's E6 6c (*Toy Boy*) and added a direct start to Neon Dust, 6c. Also on Froggatt Nick Dixon sneaked in from Staffordshire to climb the slab right of Gamma. His *Polyp Piece* has received little acclaim despite the E4 6c+ grade as a result of a high side-runner. No such controversy surrounded his ascent of the large boulder below Narcissus. The horribly named *Turd Burgler* proved to be a scary E6 6c.

Curbar also provided Fawcett with a couple of small finds. *Phone the Hallamshire* takes the arete left of Usurper (E5 6c) and *Stopper* plugs the gap between Canoe and White Water at E4 6b. The faint line left of Scroach was also finally climbed, by John Hart. *Happy Hart* obviously describes the feelings of John as he forced his way up this long-standing problem (E5 6c). The similarly named *Happy Eater* was very short lived however. Led with A PEG RUNNER (on Curbar!!!), Mark Pretty went too many steps beyond on the faint line left of Predator and it was left to Chris Plant to lead the route without. *Little Chef*, as it is now called looks much harder than the E4 6a grade given. A better name would have been Pretty Larceny! Also on Curbar Tony Coutts spent seven weeks on the wall left of The Peapod eventually producing *Your Preconceptions need Changing*, E5 6c and, even with side-runners, a ground fall is possible!

The best line to fall on Curbar was indeed, *The Fall*, E6 6b up the wall left of Profit, climbed by John Allen. Although a slightly wandering line, the upper unprotected section will provide a definite 'leg shaker' with a monster fall protected from the final crux.

Allen was also busy over at Chatsworth Edge where he climbed a rightward finish to Sentinel Crack, *Welcome to the Body Park*, E5 6b. Farther right *Diamond Life*, E4 6a, climbs the arete left of Pearls and was the work of Andy Elliot.

South again, and again Allen, who climbed the arete and wall right of Five Finger Exercise. *Liquid Assets* is reputedly excellent climbing and particularly hard for the grade of E4 6b.

At Black Rocks the wall left of Birch Tree Wall received an ascent by Johnny Shepherd who gave the interesting name of *Bring Back the Birch* and the grade of E5 6a.

Over in the Chew, Nick Plishko and Dougie Hall continued their development of the area's potential. Plishko freed the remaining section of Desecration (Neptune's Tool had cleaned up the lower section) to produce *Ambler Gambler* which looks well worth the E6 6c grade. Hall, meanwhile, on the same day went back and relead his horror route of last year without clipping the bolts, upping the grade of Appointment with Fear to E7! Running Hill Pits also provided Dougie with some technical interest. His *Scoop de Grace* received the mighty 7a (E5) grade and climbs the wall left of Phastus to gain a smart scoop above.

Finally for grit, Staffordshire has gained a few more new routes. At the Roaches Simon Nadin succeeded on the monstrous roof left of Antithesis. With a 6c climbing and a possible decker from the lip Simon felt an E7 grade appropriate. On the Lower Tier the wall right of Licence to Run succumbed to Allen who gave it *A Licence to Lust*, E4 6a, and Nick Dixon solved the steep wall left of Inertia Real at E4 6c, *Ant Lives*. Andy Popp also stuck his oar in with *Metaphysical Scoop* right of Barbeque Corners at Nth Cloud and *Black Eyed Dog* on Hen Cloud. Both routes get the usual E5 6b grade and the latter looks a real trouser filler up the right arete of Recess Chimney.

As already mentioned limestone had a relatively quiet year but on a pleasing note the quality of the routes produced was particularly high. Mark Pretty set the ball rolling on Raven Tor as early as February by climbing the wall right of Rooster Booster's second pitch. *Paxo*, E6 6b, described as "like overhanging scree", is unlikely to become popular but fills a gap. Much more impressive, and undoubtedly the pitch of the crag, is Andy Pollitt's *Whore of Babylon*. With just two points of aid it effectively free climbs Brandenburg Gate finishing up most of Prow's second pitch followed by the last pitch of Indecent Exposure. The grade, E8 6c/7a. Somewhat smaller and only slightly easier were

Pollitt's other additions this year, *Boot Boys*, E7 6c, is a superb line right of Little Extra whilst *Out of My Tree* climbs the classic sandbag, Perfidious Primate, direct from the ground (E6 6c). Just right again Ben Moon crimped up an almost blanker section (I can make out about two holds) at E6 7a.

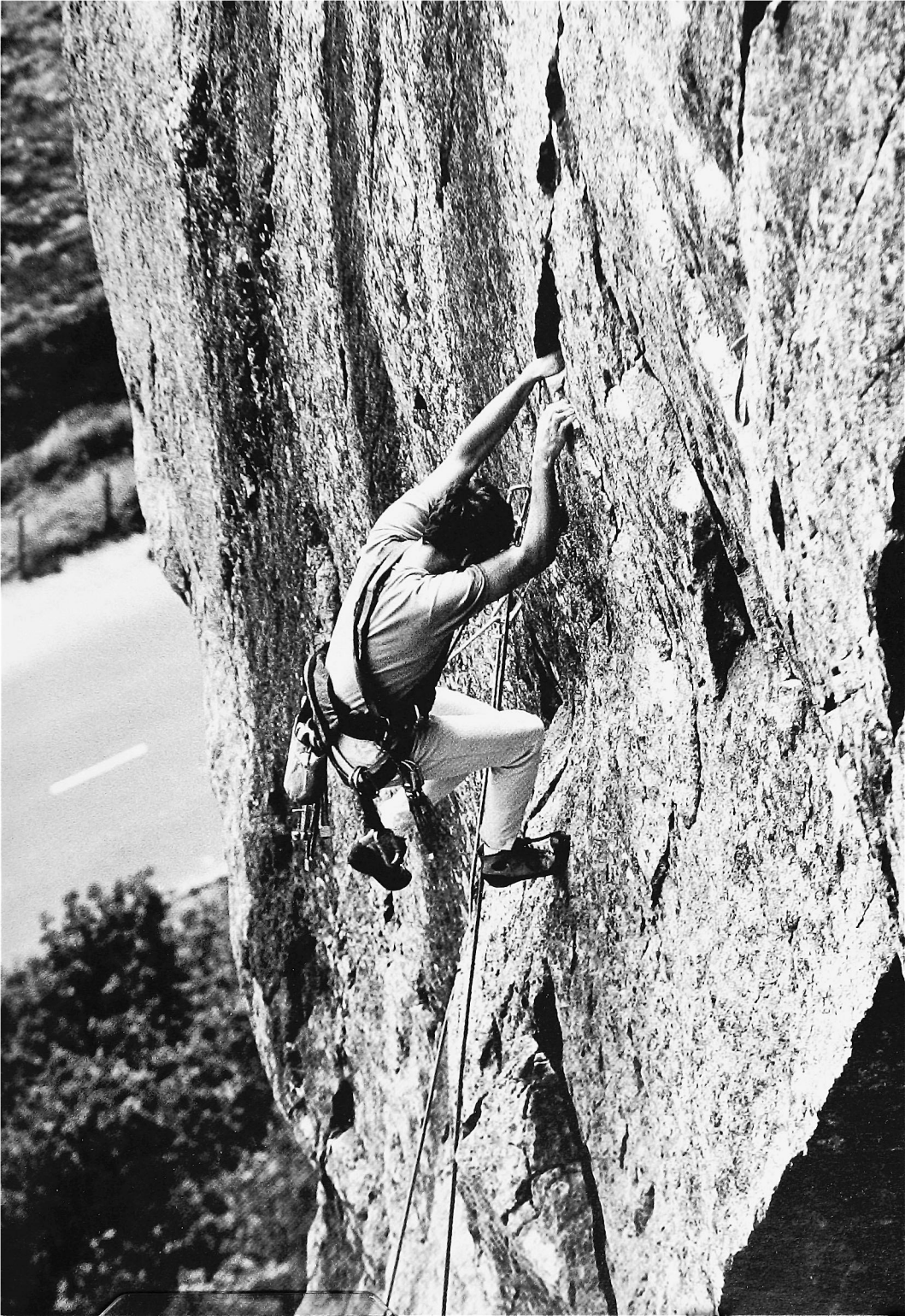
At last Chee Dale dried out and action recommenced, with The Embankment taking the most flak, largely from Gary Gibson. Starting just right of Hungry Eyes the new routes left when the smoke cleared are *Beef It* (Pretty), *Secret Gudgeon Society*, *Mind of a Turbot*, *Sturgeon in the Cupboard* (Gibson) — all E5/6 6b, *No Hiding Place*, E5 6a (Chris Wright), *Over the Rainbow Trout*, E4 6a, *The Zander Welfare Club*, E5 6b, *Barefoot in a Pool of Sharks*, E6 6c, and *The Life of a Stickleback*, E5 6c (all Gibson), deep breath. The best route is reputedly Sturgeon in the Cupboard. Having been left out for some time the majestic Plum Buttress eventually saw some attention, the best being Pollitt's near free ascent (1 point) of The Spider at E6 6a, 6b. Nearby Gibson found *The Wilderness Years* (E5 6b) just left of Scratch Race and *My Secret Life* just left again. On The Long Wall his own route, Multiplex, received a direct start from Allen Williams, *Smutt*, E4 6b and right of this Mike Annesley added *Hot Panties* (definite smutt) at E4 6b. Left of Multiplex the superb white wall yielded *Breathless*, "a brilliant, sustained and technical route" by Dave Pegg, E6 6c. Similarly the excellent wall left of Spizz Energy was breached by Simon Nadin with lots of big numbers, E8 7a and 5 bolt runners but a disappointing name, *Gonads!* Ironically the loose wall right of Ra got a better name in *The Cruise Brothers*, courtesy of Mark Farrer, at E5 6b.

Travelling downstream, past the rebelled and therefore popular Tequila, Water-cum-Jolly is soon reached. On the right Richard Davies continued his personal vendetta against Central Buttress bringing his development of the wall around In Bulk to an end. *En Masse ... Descendre* follows that route to its crux then moves left to follow a thin crackline on 'just sufficient gear' hence the E5 6a grade. Opposite this, Vision Buttress grew a couple more routes. Left of The Vision Marc Taylor climbed a series of flakes to leave the unattractive *Sunshine Superfrog* while right of The Vision Pollitt forced the very fine *Knocked Out Loaded*. Both routes attracted the E6 6c grade. Further down the valley Davies continued working on The Lammergeyer Wall adding, amongst others, *Final Apocalypse*, E5 6b, right of One Way Reflection. On Rubicon Wall Pretty found himself *Too Old to be Bold* on the wall just left of Coot and placed 3 bolts in as many metres thus providing a very popular E5 6b until the holds dropped off!

Slightly left again Martin Atkinson bolted a line only to find it recorded as an aid route before he had even finished trying it! *Yet Another Pointless Bolt Route* was short lived however as Atkinson cleaned up and renamed it after the perpetrators, *The Dangerous Brothers*, E6 6c. The most pleasing news from this wall was Ben Moon's free ascent of the line superseding the disgraceful aid climb Free That You Bastards. Having nearly succeeded last year only to have some holds hammered off, his *Zeek the Freek* must have brought extreme satisfaction along with the knowledge of climbing probably the hardest route in The Peak at E8 6c.

The 'Southern Limestone' area, as it used to be known, had a pretty barren year with only a few worthwhile additions. At Wildcat Pete Cresswell climbed the arete right of Great Cleft at E5 6b, *Stolen Jewel*, a fine effort. On High Tor Simon Lee wandered around the line of Robert Brown leaving *Ariadne's Thread* and Mark Pretty got involved with the thin crack right of Tumbil, *The Passion Waggon*. Both routes go at E5 6b. Finally, at Willersley Gibson squeezed another one in above Boomerang's Traverse, *Mine is the Kingdom* (right of Hallowed By My Name!) at the same grade.

Graham Hoey





### North Wales Notes 1987

These notes in the last journal started by bemoaning the loss of that year's summer. Well, nothing's changed much over the past couple of years, still, the lack of a journal last year saved you from having to read that twice! The few breaks in the weather, notably around Easter and October, have provided the opportunity for those on the spot to get out and climb those new lines. The nature of slate, a truly all seasons medium, and occasional forays to Gogarth have done much to ensure that the climbing scene in North Wales remains healthy and dynamic.

Talking of things dynamic, Johnny Dawes must take the laurels for the most consistent performances, *Indian Face* at E9 6c being simply the jewel in the crown. With this he completed what Rehead intended, and Moffat avoided, with a direct line including Master's Wall. Both Dawes and Redhead contend that *the* line still remains, to the left of Indian Face, but whoever gets to grips with that will have to be very good indeed and possess a neck somewhat longer than the average giraffe.

Staying with Cloggy, Dawes, bravely abetted by Mike Raine, completed a girdle of the East Buttress, *Rupert Road* E6 6b6b6b6b5b, climbed on sight and with a considerable amount of airtime by the second. Redhead, with virtually his last contribution to the area before moving up to Yorkshire, also added a girdle. *The Rite of Spring* crosses Great Wall at E7 6b, and is fairly serious as usual, Dave Towse insisting on a back rope to second this one.

The major event for the Llanberis area has been the publication of Paul William's superb Pass guide, including both slate and volcanic rock routes. By far the best recent Welsh guide, it will be a standard by which other guides are judged. It would be pointless here to cover the routes that are now included in this guide, save to say that a new generation has left its mark on Welsh climbing. Dawes, Pritchard, Redhead, Smith, Dixon, Haston, Drury and a host of others have made significant contributions, and not just on slate, but on traditional crags as well.

Among the more interesting lines not included in the guide are; *The Lost Castle (Of My Desires)* by Steve Haston, graded ABO, it consists of nightmare off-width climbing, protected in places by large tube chocks, and lies in the depths of the Gideon Quarry. *I Ran The Bath* E7 6c by Paul Pritchard takes the west side of the prow that emerges from the pool at the base of the Vivian Quarries, while the *North West Face Of The Druid* E6 6a takes a huge pillar up in the Heaven Walls area, and was climbed on sight by Trevor Hodgson with Steve Chesslett. The Quarryman Wall in Twll Mawr gained, in addition to a number of other pitches, *The Wonderful World of Walt Disney* E5 6b6b7b6a and was climbed by Dawes, Bob Drury and Andy Popp, all leading parts of the route. This stunning wall may take some time to become popular! Mention too should be made of George Smith and Perry Hawkins who have beavered away producing many fine routes, and Nick Harms, who has the distinction of shaping up like slate's answer to Gary Gibson! Moving up the Pass, Pritchard added *The Bog of the Eternal Stench* (nice name!) E5/6 6b/c to Craig Ddu, and Dawes gave Craig Fach the *Satsumo Wrestler* E5/6 6b which takes a line just to the left of Nectarine Run and sounds very good. *Truncheon Meat* E6 6c is a desperate overhanging groove on the Sombrero Fallout wall and again is the work of Pritchard.

Attention has really focused on two crags, Scimitar Ridge and the scattered walls of Cwm Glas Facet, with a considerable number of climbs being added to each of them including some very desperate lines indeed, however, I'm still trying to work out where most of the recent lines go.

Over in Ogwen, Steven Boyden and Simon Cardy have been continuing their explorations. *The Devil Dries Out* E4 6a climbs out of the depths of the Devil's Kitchen, *Poultry in Motion* E4 4c5c climbs a fine arete on the Pinnacle Crag of Cwm Cwnion, and *Game, Set and Match* E5/6 6b takes the sustained crack below the first pitches of Tennis Shoe (and if you don't know where that is ...). The other notable route in this area is *The Tree of Man* E5 6b by George Smith and Martin Crook

which takes the impressive crackline round to the left of Wrinkled Retainer, and is desperate for the short. Other less recent routes in this, and other areas are included in New Climbs 1986 and 1987, both published by the B.M.C. Tremadog has seen the usual set of variations on eliminates, although there were a few worthwhile lines added. Mind you *Llanberis* E7 6c might fall into the category just mentioned, but it certainly looks out there, and is said to be "too hard for Reginald Perrin", which is not surprising as Dawes found it pretty difficult on the first ascent. Stromboli Buttress gained a short but difficult high girdle, *The Agony and The Ecstasy* E6 6a6a, starting by Cardiac Arete and finishing over by Un-real. This was the work of Redhead and Crook, the latter being disguised as Van Goch for the event, (the mind boggles ...) Carreg Hyldrem received a couple of new lines, *Gwyddbwyll* E5 6b by Dick Griffiths and Elfyn Jones, which is a sort of direct on Hardd, and *Total Bull* E4 6a, which climbs the outrageous scoop right of Raging Bull and is the work of George Smith and Hawkins. Hawkins with Chris Parkin has also ventured into the lost world of the Drws y Coed slabs, Nantlle, to add a number of routes.

North Wales Limestone has just received a brand new guide by Andy Pollitt, and so there seems little to say here other than to mention that the recent first ascent lists have been dominated by Dave Lyon, who has made use of his local knowledge to roam both Ormes rather than squeezing in lines on Pen Trwyn. More importantly, two thirds of the areas covered in the guide are under threat as far as access goes. Pen Trwyn has problems that follow a recent accident, and are no fault of climbers, although the cartoon in the front of the guide is unfortunate in the extreme, as it could not be further from the truth. The Craig y Forwyn saga is a different kettle of fish, an obtuse and entrenched caravan site owner being the problem here. Unless new negotiations make headway, it may be a case of climbers putting themselves in the firing line to reclaim the right to climb on this excellent crag.

Gogarth has been the venue for a good deal of recent activity lately, and it continues to be the area that sorts the quick from the dead (not to mention the compulsive bolt clippers). Many of the lines were climbed on sight, with considerable adventure, so although under threat in other parts of the country, British climbing is certainly not dead here.

Starting with North Stack, Redhead found *A Flower of Evil* E7 6b which takes the arete right of The Bells, and then with Dave Towse added a girdle *The Stroke of the Fiend* E6/7 6a6b, Crook completing the team, starting up South Sea Bubble, belaying on the Cad bolt (more about this item later) and finishing on Blue Peter. Nick Dixon added *Headbutt* E6 6a just left of Blue Peter, but Andy Pollitt claimed the biggest number with a direct on The Bells, *The Hollow Man* E8 6b, which marked Andy's welcome return after injury, although he was concerned enough about this lead to provide the second, Dawes, with a paid of jumaras "just in case". Pollitt had also repeated *The Bells*, *The Bells*, on sight, an outstanding feat in itself.

Wen Zawn saw some remarkable new lines, with the area around the arch opposite Wen Slab being opened up. John Whittle and friends had investigated this area many years ago and concluded that they weren't deranged enough to complete the lines. Dawes was! *Conan The Librarian* E7 6b6b, climbed with Simon Donohue went across the arch and up, but Dawes returned to find a better finish (*The Janitor*) way across to the right. Climbed in the rain, with Craig Smith, the route is so steep only the very top was wet. Pritchard and Dixon added their own route to this area with *The Unrideable Donkey* E7 6b5c, climbing the groove left of the arch all the way. Crispin Waddy and Conroy Mallen added *Dislocation Dance* E3 5c and *Agraphobia* E4 5c to the area around The Trap.

Easter Island Gully also came under inspection with a number of new and freed lines. Haston freed *Annihilator* E4 5c to which Craig Smith then added a direct finish, *For Madmen Only* E6 6a, which is "way gnarly". Crook added a wild finish to Wonderwall, *I Wonder Why* E5 6a, freed *Belvedere* E2 5c and produced with John Sylvester the *Ancient Mariner* E5 6b nearby. Still in this area, Hodgson found *Mordor Newydd* E3 5c, and Smith added *Boil All Irishmen* E5 6b5c and *Sex Lobster* E3 5c5c (the subject of this abuse left Llanberis shortly afterwards, much to everyone's relief).

Smith also added the bold *Psycocandy* E6 6c up a thin crack to the right of Dirtigo on the Upper Tier. Crook and Noel Craine have been active up here too very recently in the area around Yellow Scar. Holyhead Mountain has been delivered into the eighties, firstly by Redhead, and more recently, by Kel Neal and Mike Gresham, with a number of hard routes, and is certainly worth a look if the sound of waves gives you nightmares.

Moving over to South Stack, where much of the new climbing has been desperate, dynamic and downright deadly. Steve Haston, after checking routes for the forthcoming guide, added some of his own. *Me* E6 5c5c6b lies on Yellow Wall and finishes right of Dog's of War after starting left of The Moon. *The Drunk* E6 6b starts at the same place, but carries on straight up, the name being a carry over from the previous nights party, as was Hastons bloodstream. John Tombs and Ray Kay were unfortunate enough to follow Haston on these and other routes here. *Isis Is Angry* E7 6a6a5c6c attacks the area above the huge cave direct, most of the first pitch fell into the sea as it was being climbed and the rest is merely terminal, climaxing with a desperate finish up a groove right of Me, climbed dynamically before the holds and the climber fell off (again!). *Free Stonehenge* E7 7a5c climbs through the overhangs right of Obelisk, the upper pitch being superb, but it is guarded by a twenty foot roof crack below. This little item had Dawes in extremis on the second ascent, only Haston's comment that he couldn't do it keeping him going. Round the corner, across the little zawn from Black Light, Andy Newton and Crook found *Captain Nemo* E3 5b5c, which is a sort of mini 'Dream'.

Left Hand Red Wall has almost become a private crag for Paul Pritchard, who has added a number of super bold and desperate lines. Haston though set the ball rolling with *The Electrification of The Soviet Union* E5 6a, which lies above the promontory where Pritchard and Dawes found *Come to Mother* E7 6a6a. This climbs a groove from the bottom of the zawn, and gave them both a good deal to think about on their respective pitches, it comes as no surprise that a good portion of the route has since decided to become aquatic. *Schickelgruber* E6 5c6b climb the big curving flake on the left of the wall, *The Enchanted Brocoli Garden* E7 6b6b contains very difficult climbing with terrible gear and an even worse belay, and *Super Calabrese* E6 6b6b6b completes his big trilogy. Pritchard also straightened *Heart of Gold* E6 6b, and Hodgson took *Cannibal Direct* at E5 6a. Since then, Crook has added a couple of lines on the front face of the promontory below these walls (a sizeable section of one route landing on the second, the long enduring Toombs, during the attempt) and South Stack Island has also seen interest from Crook, Dawes and Haston.

So here and on Cloggy is where the adventurous fork of modern rock climbing stands. As if these routes were not enough, Haston soloed *Positron* and Dawes soloed *Citadel's* crack pitch. As mentioned earlier, the Cad bolt story took a new twist recently. Jim Jewel, who over the last year or so had built up a tremendous reputation as a solo climber, with routes like *The Axe*, *Great Wall*, and *T Rex*, decided to make his point in the issue. Having had a friend unscrew the bolt, he led the route smoothly on sight. He returned a few days later and soloed the route, and then replaced the bolt hanger, so as not to interfere with anyone else's attempt. Make of this what you will, but he certainly made his point!

The new guide to Gogarth is very eagerly awaited, and polarised as it is to the opposite end of the spectrum from, say, the modern Malham. I wonder which will provide the most satisfying memories, or doesn't anyone care anymore!

This report unfortunately finishes on a tragic note, with the recent death of Jim Jewel in an accident at Tremadog. Jim's ability can be judged by the above notes, but much more than that, his contribution to the "local scene" will be very sorely missed.

Andy Newton



