

**THE
CLIMBERS' CLUB
JOURNAL**

1988

THE CLIMBER'S CLUB JOURNAL

Edited by
IAN SMITH

1988
THE CLIMBERS' CLUB

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Salathe

Chris Jackson

Below! high in the gully, a boulder dislodges itself from beneath the abseil ropes. I watch it fall, hit the side wall and fall again. Nothing new. Just keep your eye on it, get a feel for its intentions and sidestep out of the way. Down again and then a complex series of bounces, ricocheting through a constriction at the back of the gully. Tricky one, this; a feint and then it makes a bee line for my head, I jump for a raggy flake of granite lying across the gully bed, and miss, slicing my shin down its well honed edge. Even as I clutched my shin, trying to control the agony, I could feel the blood spilling out between my fingers.

Too late. Four days to get my leg sorted out, another couple of days sorting the gear and then we stagger up to the foot of Salathe Wall to find it hung with ropes and tackle bags. Bill and I look at each other; we've blown it. Less than a week's holiday left, no time to wait around. We gaze up at a mile of sun-drenched granite. Next time...

Next time does not arrive for seven years, but now there are three of us, myself, Bill Wintrip and Bob Conway. Yosemite valley is much the same. Camp Four as scruffy as ever, despite the new bogs, the Ranger just as prickly and the sun just as hot. Milling crowds ebb and flow through the woods and along the paths; in the background, the eternal sound of the loudspeakers on the valley floor tour. Everywhere you look, yellow sun- washed granite stretches from the pine trees up to the sky. Easy days, we sort the gear, and then re-sort it. We scrounge water bottles and lovingly tape them up. We discuss the pros and cons of sardines in mustard sauce versus peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. We practice packing the haul sack and decide that there's no way everything is going to fit in, the last man will have to tow another 'sack. We sit in the meadows and study El Capitan and Salathe Wall. We eat and drink for the future days of famine. We question our abilities. Am I too old, too weak? We sleep, restlessly, dreaming of endless granite walls, burning like fire.

Yosemite is the same, but I am not. In the intervening years I am taken ill, and the surgery that follows leaves me incapable of producing certain steroids essential to my existence. So I am dependant on a daily dose of tablets; the dose required depends upon the amount of stress, mental or physical, that I am under. "So what?", you ask. Read on...

The day arrives and we stand below the wall, its ours, there's no one on it. I lead the first two pitches, splendid finger and hand jamming cracks up to a jutting roof, and then abseil down to bivvy, leaving the ropes in place for a quick start next morning.

The first 1,000 feet of climbing on Salathe Wall is slabby, that is to say, not slabby like Idwal Slabs, but slabby in comparison with next 4,000 feet.

Bob leads out past the section that I had fixed the night before. The roof is traversed to the right, steep slabs and shallow corners follow which take us to a smooth expanse of slabs with widely spaced, ancient looking bolts. Scary stuff for the first day, we are glad it is his lead. After pitch six I get the lead and the Half Dollar, an exhausting flake chimney. The difficulties ease and by early afternoon we're on Mammoth Terraces, a series of uneven ledges below the awful, impending Shield. The face is like a furnace in the afternoon sun and it's here that we get the first inkling that we've not brought enough water. We drag the wretched haul sack across the terraces and abseil down into The Heart. From a distance, this feature is heart shaped, a monster recess 500 feet high, with huge curving roofs outlining its top.

The base of The Heart is more akin to the focal point of a giant, vindictive concave mirror. At times it feels too hot to bear, too hot to climb, no shadows save our own, each tiny breeze like the promise of a cool drink. We sip a little of our precious water.

It's only mid-afternoon and a decision is made to press on for Hollow Flake Ledge, another three pitches. Bill takes over to lead a complex pitch from the end of The Heart Ledge; a crack, a tension traverse left, up to a roof, right, then up again. By this time he's engineered a lot of rope drag and having a bad time. Bob and I lay on the ledge, practising Zen or anything else which might isolate our minds from our overheated bodies. Above is Lung Ledge, a long, haul sack grabbing ledge. We gasp and sweat hauling the wretched thing to the upper end of the ledge where Bob and I hide in a shady corner, dozing, and fantasising over cans of iced Moosehead. Bill strikes out boldly across the next pitch which involves a long tension traverse into a 5.9 off-width crack, which should bring us up to Hollow Flake Ledge. Those familiar with such manoeuvres will know that the problem with tension traverses leading to a section of climbing, is that it's not possible to protect the pitch until well above the level where the tension traverse starts, that's assuming that there is protection to be had. After 20 minutes without any rope movement, we began to worry about Bill. From where we were belayed, it wasn't possible to see the next pitch. I lengthened my belay and padded around the arete in my trainers for a look, but it still wasn't possible to see anything round the broad arete. I shouted, and after a few seconds, a tremulous voice replied, "no runners, can't do it, can't get back". Bob and I made some constructive suggestions which didn't seem to help. Eventually, the voice said, "slithering back, take in". We did this, and several minutes later, a very pale looking Bill flew around the arete below us. Suddenly, the ledge felt like an ideal bivvy site.

Most of the traversing was now over, and with the steepening rock, sack hauling was becoming easier. More than 1,000 feet above us now, we could see The Headwall, a feature which continuously drew the eye, it dominated the wall in a way that was out of all proportion to its size. Two hundred feet of gently overhanging rock, the last obstacle. Not for today though, but tomorrow with a little luck. Bob led off up chimneys and cracks towards

The Ear, an evil flake chimney of some reputation. Only graded 5.7, this lowly grade belies the seriousness of the pitch. One bunch of tapes deep in the back of the chimney, and a single hidden peg after 15 feet of chimneying towards the big drop. Once he's up and hauling, I have to jumar up alongside the haul sack as it continuously jams itself into the upper recesses of The Ear.

Its hot again and we are becoming dehydrated, in the reflected glare of the sun fire demons dance across this vertical desert, mocking us. A mouthful of precious water and within minutes our mouths are dry again, no saliva left. Don't talk of water, don't even think of it. Why didn't we carry more? How would we have carried it? Hung from our harnesses with our heads against the rock we can look down between our legs and make out the road and the meadows 2,000 feet below. There are people having picnics, drinking beer from cans running with cool condensation.

Above The Ear the wall assumes a new steepness and fist sized cracks at 5.10d lead to thin 5.12 corner climbing. Bob leads on up leaving Bill and I on an awful hanging belay; mixing free moves with Friends and wires for aid takes him into the cool recess behind El Cap Spire. We join him, the cool shade is unbelievably delicious, and here we sip our supplies of precious water. Its tempting to bivouac here or on the top of El Cap Spire, a remarkable flat topped pinnacle, but we decide to press on for another three pitches, hoping for a bivouac ledge at the top of pitch 22. This would make it a shorter day to The Long Ledge above The Headwall. I take over the lead. Up onto the pinnacles, an amazing platform, then on up two aid pitches and a nasty little squeeze chimney to our chosen bivvy site. This turns out to be a 45 degree ledge. Past caring, we each find a corner and try to eat, but our mouths are so dry its difficult to swallow. After a mug of tea each and a few biscuits it's seven o'clock and going dark: bed time. In the night I'm woken up by squeaking. Bats are pouring out of a crack and whizzing past my head, my niche is the front door to the Bat house. That figures.

Headwall day and the exposure and position is becoming tremendous. We try to make an early start but its really not light enough to climb before seven o'clock. Bob takes the shady shift. Easy aiding up steep corners, then round The Block, usually slimy but bone dry now, and up to a good ledge. The Headwall looks close now. A wide black roof guards entry to it, and above, a thin spidery crack can be made out leading up to the skyline. Next belay is Sous Le Toit, the last ledge before tonight's bivvy site. Getting to the ledge is problematical, involving some steep and technical free climbing up thin exfoliation flakes, followed by a tension traverse. It's only during the post mortem that we discover that we've made it harder for ourselves by taking a lower variation.

The sun creeps round on to the face and its my turn to lead. Above is an evil, overhanging, flare leading up to the roofs. Steep free climbing leads to A2 and then A3 + , with the odd free move, thank God for Friends, they creak and crunch in the flared cracks but without them I think the pitch

Opposite: Bill Wintrip leaves Heart Ledge belayed by Bob Conway. Photo: Chris Jackson.





El Capitan, Salathe Wall to the right.

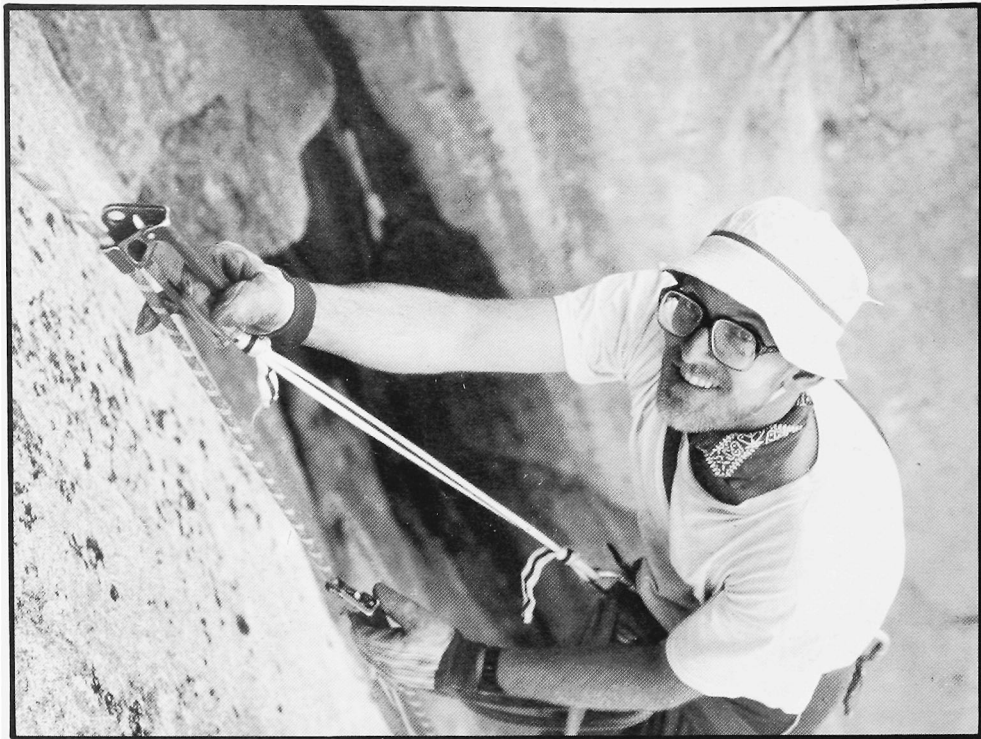
Photo: Chris Jackson.

Salathe

would defeat us. The belay hangs from the leaning wall immediately below the roofs and a row of new bolts indicate the hammock bivvy site for the recent incredible free ascent. It's at this point that the exposure starts to strike home. There is nothing between here and the tree tops 2,500 feet below. The roof is ready rigged and I aid across it to the lip. Getting established in the crack above is desperate, and in the heat, it takes a sapping amount of energy, both mental and physical. Above, the crack turns out to be thin with huge rounded edges, wire placements are difficult and I resort to small RPs for direct aid. Thirty feet and I reach the belay; below the roof they cut loose the 'sack for me to haul and Bob joins me on the stance. I press on, and take the next belay in the wrong place.

Suddenly I'm desperately tired. The wall spins and I've hardly the strength to tie the knots. What's happening? The heat, the lack of food and water? Possibly, but I can't remember taking my tablets, or if I did I didn't take enough. Bob joins me at my 'belay' and I delve desperately into the sack for supplies; tablets, jam and water. What an idiot, I can't believe it. We change leads. This must be the most exciting place in the world for a change over; at one point disaster almost strikes when the wind blows the slack rope across the wall and over a flake 50 feet away, but little by little we get organised and he leads off. Bill cuts loose from below the roof, eyes tightly shut, and he jumars up to join me. Within 20 minutes I'm OK again, that is, as OK as the rest of us, and I start to appreciate our position. What a place, a huge shield of tilted granite out and beyond all our previous climbing. No escape, just the single thin crack leading on upwards. Four thirty, no place to spend the night! Another 60 feet and Bob locates the proper belay. Five thirty, the sun is dipping towards the horizon and the big shadow is moving up the wall towards us. We don extra jerseys in anticipation of a night out. Suddenly a yell from above, "I'm there" and the tension drains away to be replaced by huge grins. In the last glimmer of daylight we're all on The Long Ledge. Down, down, far below, down in the soft green valley we can see the headlights of cars making their way to the bars in Yosemite village, but we no longer care, there's nowhere we'd rather be.

The Long Ledge must be one of the most exposed bivouacs this side of Alpha Centauri. Some three feet wide and 30 feet long, it's squeezed into the upper reaches of The Headwall looking down on the forest nearly 3,000 feet below. A fitting climax to an amazing climb. Next day, after three more pitches, lips cracked, hands battered and swollen, mouths parched, we top out. Only the best route in the world.



Bill Wintrip working hard jumaring on Salathe Wall, Yosemite.

Photo: Chris Jackson.



Above: Nat Allen, 60, down but not out.

Photo: Derek Walker.

Below: At Gimmer Crag, Daphne Pritchard, Diana McIlreavy, Roger Salisbury, Malcolm Gate, Hamish Nicol and Henry Adler.

Photo: Derek Walker.



The Boys and the White Stuff

Paul Moores

It's a strange feeling climbing with lads that you've known for years but have probably never climbed with before. Last summer a group of 16-20 of us assembled at the Rongbuk for an attempt on the North East Ridge of Everest. The group varied in size because Doctors changed over in mid stream and also cameramen and TV presenters came and went as they pleased. The expedition was labelled by the climbing press as the "Golden Oldies Expedition" mainly because of the inclusion of Joe Brown aged 57, Philip Horniblow aged 60 and Mo Anthoine aged 50 (but with the mind of a 21 year old). The team also included plenty of 40's all quite experienced and still quite fit!

The expedition was full of hassles from the word go, it started by having to take a rubber raft from Heathrow to Kathmandu, nothing to do with the expedition, we were doing a favour for a rafting company based in Nepal. After we had spent several days being delayed in Kathmandu due to the normal customs routine, we left Kathmandu on the 5th June and headed up the road to Lamosangu where we spent the night. We would have progressed further afield but we had endless trouble at police check points, even though we had the necessary permits and permission to use the military road up to the border with China. A reluctant early rise the following day, only to be told after several hours waiting, the road was still closed to us because our permit was now out of date. The road permit we had was valid for one day, the day we departed Kathmandu. After several meetings with military personnel they allowed us to continue. We arrived at the Chinese-Nepalese border at 6 pm in the evening to be told once again the border was closed, and to our dismay the official said for three weeks.

Back in Kathmandu, a little poorer but wiser for the experience we had to re-think our plans. Brummie Stokes the expedition leader busied himself visiting the Nepalese and Chinese Embassies and the British Military Attache to try and find out the exact score on the border closure. Meanwhile the remainder of the team milled around Kathmandu wondering what we were going to do with our six tons of equipment, and how we were going to get to Base Camp.

Mo Anthoine had left Great Britain three weeks before the main team to take over a Base Camp cardboard hut from the Joint Services Everest Expedition. So we thought he would be sat at Base Camp wondering when we were all going to arrive. This was giving us considerable concern as the longer we took to arrive the more chance of him thinking we weren't coming at all. Mo had also collected quite a lot of equipment which the expedition had left in Lhasa in 1986 after an attempt on the same route. All this gear had now been transported to Base Camp and was waiting for our arrival, along with Mo and one Sherpa Lakpa Dorie.

Back in Kathmandu we decided that it was best for three of us to fly from Kathmandu to Lhasa and get to Base Camp as quickly as possible. This would put Mo and the rest of the expedition at ease, also by doing this we could report back on the state of the road and border situation on the Chinese side. Myself, Pete Long and Harry Taylor were volunteered to be this advance party and got ourselves a flight to Lhasa on the 11th June. We were duly met by the Chinese Mountaineering Association Representative and taken to the Lhasa Hotel. From there it was a jeep ride over two days to Base Camp where at last we met up with Mo, who as you can imagine was pretty glad to see us. Over the next few days Mo kept us amused by his tales and stories of his journey to Base Camp and of the Joint Services efforts on Everest. Mo had done a fantastic job in setting Base Camp up, so there was very little for us to do when we arrived, but to acclimatise. Harry and Pete made a couple of forays up to where Mo had left a tent which was to be an interim



Team members on a coach.

Photo: Paul Moores.

Overleaf: The approach to Advance Base Camp with the summit and the N.E. Ridge in the background.

Photo: Paul Moores.





Above: The Pinnacles and the summit from Advance Base Camp. Photo: Paul Moores.

Below: Members of the team at Base Camp. (left to right) Bill Barker, Pete Long, Ali Kellas, Davey Jones, Mo Anthoine, Joe Brown. Photo: Paul Moores.



camp between Base and Advance Base at approximately 19,500 ft.

After one week there was still no news of the remainder of the expedition so we started tentative plans for a four-man assault and what we would do for food if the others didn't turn up. As it was we only had one pint of petrol for cooking, when, as if they had been listening, the others arrived with three trucks and a jeep, so the team was at last complete at Base Camp. They had all had to fly to Lhasa as well as the border was still closed. We had masses of gear to organise and weigh out into loads for yaks to carry up to Advance Base Camp 14 miles away. Before the expedition could be formally started in the eyes of the Sherpas we had to have a puja, which is a religious ceremony, which also ensures the safe return of all members. Shortly after the ceremony Pete Long left with the first load of yaks for the two day walk to Advance Base Camp. A day later I joined him. Our job was to organise and set up Advance Base Camp and then to cross the glacier at the foot of the buttress (Bill's Buttress) named after Bill Barker from the 1986 attempt on the Ridge.

Pete and I, over the next five or six days, made several journeys across the glacier and up the buttress fixing ropes and also finding ropes from our last attempt in 1986. We also found a lot of fixed rope from Doug Scott's expedition which was in the Autumn of 1987. Harry and Russ by this time had joined us at Advance Base Camp and soon we had Camp One established at 21,000 ft on the Ridge. The conditions on the hill were very similar to two years before with deep unconsolidated snow above 22,000 ft, but below that there was certainly a lot less snow than before and the temperatures were certainly a lot warmer. The time was now pressing on and it was the beginning of July and the weather was extremely unsettled. Members were slowly drifting up to Advance Base Camp and we had to have a rota system of working in fours. Generally speaking we were doing a week's work as high on the mountain as one could get, along with the Sherpas, and then returning down to Base Camp for a rest of about five days. So at any one stage there could be two groups up working from Advance Base Camp, a group on the way up to Advance Base Camp and one group resting at Base Camp. The mountain certainly seemed to eat up all the numbers, and quite often depending on where you were you might not have seen other members for two weeks.

In 1986 when we tried this route we had no Sherpas at all and we found the ferrying of loads was wearing members out, so much so that after four or five carries we virtually had to have a week off and in the long term no-one would be fit enough to get up high enough to have an attempt at the Pinnacles. This time we decided to have Sherpas along to help resolve this situation. We had ten Sherpas in all, two of which were cooks, leaving eight working members on the mountain. Unfortunately several of the Sherpas were quite ill, two got pneumonia, one had very bad teeth, which resulted in extremely painful toothache, and another got a blood clot in his leg, so our workforce was greatly reduced.

Our progress seemed to have ground to a standstill, first of all we were three weeks behind because of late arrival; then we made good progress in getting Camp One established, but now Camp Two seemed to be miles away because of the deep snow. Several teams had been working on the section between Camps One and Two but progress was slow, many avalanches and high winds, making life very difficult. Eventually Harry and Russ reached Camp Two, having waded all day in chest deep snow, with four of the Sherpas carrying loads behind. At last Camp Two was established. Harry and Russ managed to fix some rope towards Camp Three, finding one of Chris Bonington's ropes from the very first attempt on this ridge back in 1982, this team included Pete Boardman, Joe Tasker and Dick Renshaw. Conditions weren't good with very, very deep snow making progress extremely slow.

Harry and Russ were getting pretty tired as they had been on the hill for five days. Pete Long and myself were going to have a go up front and try and push the ropes out a little further. We arrived up at Camp Two just after mid-day just as Harry and Russ were departing for Advance Base Camp. The following morning I was feeling pretty rough and was not able to accompany Pete up the fixed ropes towards Camp Three. Pete did a good day's work fixing rope almost to Camp Three, about 700 ft short of the proposed camp. The next day the weather was awful and we had no chance of returning and establishing Camp Three, instead we waded chest deep in snow down to Camp One and then onwards to Advance Base Camp.

The weather remained bad for quite some time and the majority of the team were confined to Base Camp as it seemed pointless staying up at 21,000 ft (Advance Base Camp) as you don't seem to recover very well at that altitude. It was towards the end of July and Mo, Joe, Ian Nicolson, Davey Jones were all being hindered by the deep snow and were finding it difficult to live at 23,000/24,000 ft. Time was getting short and it looked as though we might have a repeat of our last attempt with no success. Harry and Russ went up to relieve Mo and Joe's team on the 30th July, with the belief that it would be our last attempt on the Ridge. Mo, Joe and Sam's efforts to reach and excavate Camp Two had been thwarted by the bad weather and poor conditions. Lakpa Djorgie, who had previously accompanied Chris Bonington to the summit of Everest via the South Col on the Norwegian expedition, along with Rinsing Sherpa, joined Harry and Russ later that same day. A comfortable night was spent at Camp One with clear skies which afforded a magnificent view of Makalu and Kangchenjunga in the distance.

The next day saw them at Camp Two with shovels to dig out the tents which had been avalanched. Several hours later and the tents were re-sighted and anchored down. It was a comforting thought that although covered by five feet of snow, Mo's box tent had withstood the onslaught and had the Camp been manned the occupants would have survived. On the morning of the 1st August they had an early start which enabled them to be near our previous high point at 25,400 ft. The winds that had been gusting all

night now roared along the Ridge blowing crystalline swords into their faces. Progress was difficult and painful, sense prevailed and they headed back down to Camp Two. Spindrift had all but covered the tents and after repeated attempts to clear the Snowdon Mouldings Limpet, Lakpa announced that he and Rinsing would go down to Camp One for a comfortable night. On arrival at Camp One both Sherpas decided the weather was too bad and they descended to Advance Base Camp. The wind abated in the night and at 5 o'clock in the morning Harry and Russ left Camp Two with small loads and re-ascended the ropes to the high point, and then continued to fix a small amount of rope to 26,000 ft, where they were able to establish Camp Three. They erected a lightweight tent and sat for a few hours brewing up before heading back down to Camp Two in a buoyant mood.

In effect a "double six" had been thrown, the Pinnacles now appeared imminently close, the game could begin! Lakpa Gelo and Norbu Sherpa moved up to Camp Two to assist Harry and Russ and on the following day they moved up to Camp Three carrying loads of food, gaz and oxygen. The afternoon was spent filming, interspersed with the usual non-stop brewing. They also managed to link up with Brummie in Hereford via the Racal radio and the Dymac satellite system situated 20 k away at Base Camp. Harry thought it quite perverse sitting at 8,000 metres talking to someone thousands of miles away in his home, but nonetheless a welcome interlude.

They were off by 5.30 the following morning, 45 minutes of steady plodding took them to the start of the first Pinnacle. The familiar orange and blue rope that belonged to Chris Bonington's expedition in 1982 was visible at the start, alongside several harnesses, cookers and gaz canisters belonging either to the Duff or Scott/Allen attempts.

Harry tells the story: "I led off on relatively easy ground, the conditions were not good but certainly workable. After 300 ft the angle steepened and I then began to parallel the Ridge proper. Snow conditions deteriorated and wading became the norm, something that this team had become very adept at! Progress was slow but methodical and soon the 700 ft of 8mm polyprop was in situ. Russell jumared up with consummate ease, a quick chat and off he led with the second drum of rope. From my airy stance I had a good view of the East, so called Fantasy, Ridge which joined the North East Ridge near our Camp Three at 8,000 metres.

I decided the route would be attempted by someone with a strong sense of humour! Near the top of the first Pinnacle the Ridge started to sharpen but Russell made good progress leaving his ice axe behind to secure the descent. We arrived back at Camp Three just after 17:00 hours, and over 11 hours climbing at above 8,000 metres. On the radio call scheduled that night we spoke to Paul at Camp One and informed him of our progress, and of the fact that we would go lightweight from then on in a bid to go through the Pinnacles along to the summit.

When asked how the Pinnacles looked from the first one onwards, Russell gave the immortal words "they're a piece of weasel piss!" We spent an

almost sleepless night even though on oxygen and in the morning it became a scramble to get away, something we did not achieve. It was 6 o'clock before we got away laden with 'sacks weighing 30 kg. We carried bivvy kit, no sleeping bags or tent, a small oxygen bottle and masks each to sleep on and the Sony video along with the Racal radio. Our climbing gear was minimal, one length of 8mm polyprop to climb on, one ice tool each and one Deadman between us.

By 9 o'clock we were at our high point, Russell led off and I filmed him. It was a testament to the route that the video never saw the light of day again until the following day on the North Ridge. The Ridge was truly knife-like with cornices blown to either side and difficult mushrooms to negotiate. Progress was decidedly slow but momentum was maintained by methodically knocking off the top 18 inches of loose snow and virtually climbing heel to toe. It was a sobering experience with the gullies sweeping to our right and the steep flutings of the Kangshung Face immediately to our left. After four hours of tightrope walking, a 55 degree ramp led off right to the second Pinnacle. The snow conditions were now atrocious with almost bottomless snow on the ramp which left us both gasping like old men. The weather was now also looking decidedly ominous with thick cloud billowing up from the Kharta Valley.

The top of the ramp brought us behind the second Pinnacle, the Pinnacle itself is not en-route and was indeed set forward to the North by some 30 metres. The difficulties remained constant for another two hours until a subsidiary Ridge came and met us from the North. It was our first opportunity to sit down without having to a cheval the route and we took it gladly.

A brew was made and I opened up on the radio to be greeted by the enthusiastic voice of Davey Jones and then Paul. He and Bill Barker had moved up to Camp Three as our back-up with the intention of following us through the next day. We were now just short of the second Pinnacle and clearly visible to Advance Base Camp even with the naked eye. Only two hours of daylight remained as we set off again. Just before the third Pinnacle we cut down into a gully then onto a small arete where our bivvy would have to be. It was now dark and it began snowing. We hit rock after two feet of digging so the scene was set for an uncomfortable night. We clambered into bivvy bags and had a brew and delved into our 'sacks for the oxygen gear. The regulator on my set had bust so the night was spent passing the one set between us. Both of us slept with and without the comfort of oxygen. Our plans to leave at midnight to push to the summit were dashed when the snow began. Heavy flakes fell constantly throughout the night. We set off at five in the morning in a virtual whiteout, after once again gaining the Ridge. It took two hours to reach the last Pinnacle where we descended into a large gully at it's foot and traversed around it to the North. Over 18 inches of snow had fallen in the night and so we were constantly setting off slides and small avalanches. Visibility was still very

poor so we sat down for a much needed brew and called up on the radio. Communications to Advance Base Camp were only just workable but Joe Brown came in loud and clear from Base Camp. He said the weather there was clearing a little and suggested that we sit tight in order to find our way down the North Ridge. True to form Joe was right and the clouds lifted and gave us a glimpse of the summit which appeared tantalisingly close. We were in fact below and to the left of the First Step. The time was 11.30.

Our only option was to descend the North Ridge, the weather and conditions were atrocious and our time had run out. It was a bitter experience for both of us, Russell had already been to 8,000 metres on the West Ridge when he and Paddy Freany made a bold Alpine style ascent in 1981 and this was my third attempt on Everest. The descent was tortuous, both of us extremely tired and having to rest frequently.

Mo Anthoine spotted our descent off the North Col, we took a line to the North which Mo described as a “bum slide” In fact we both front pointed the whole 1,500 ft down. John English, Davey Jones and the Sherpas were there to greet us at the bottom and all that remained was a walk back to Advance Base Camp for that welcome brew!”

After Harry and Russell’s “good day out” I decided to call the expedition off as the weather and conditions had not improved, if anything they had deteriorated. The expedition slowly made it’s ways in various forms back to Kathmandu, but not without incident!

Although we didn’t reach the summit the peak of effort was, and we’d shown ourselves we could. Although we’d missed the joy of the summit we had experienced the pleasure of the climbing and learnt many of the lessons we had come to learn.

Note: The North East Ridge was climbed to a point where it joins the North Ridge at 27,600 ft.

A Year in the Life of a Mature Undergraduate

Mike Owen

New Year 1987 found me fighting for survival and desperately trying to stay upright in a damned canoe on the River Tryweryn near Bala; a particularly big and bouncy piece of white water often used for top level slalom events. I had hung up my rock boots the previous October after eventually managing a clean lead of *Cave Route Righthand*. However, having embarked on a teacher training degree in Outdoor Education at I M Marsh in Liverpool I had realised that there was much more fun to be had in the great outdoors than just rock climbing! Mind you it was very difficult to take up another interest, having to start off at the bottom, as it were, again. Coupled with this was an inherent fear of water...needless to say I eventually discovered that I did float! This was proved on several occasions when capsizing as I was always unable to roll back up. Canoeing proved to be an instant adrenalin buzz, as once you're in the water sat in your canoe, you're at the mercy of the water and there's no backing out; doggers and yo-yoists needn't apply!

Back at college; lunchtimes would find me in the gym (trying not to think of CHIPS-GLORIOUS CHIPS!) training hungrily for rock, as I realised that whilst I enjoyed this canoeing game it was, however, so terrifying that I would soon end up as a complete nervous wreck if I pursued it too often...Anyway first time out on rock was a superb weekend at Tremadog at the end of January doing the classic routes again: *Plum*, *First Slip*, *Leg Slip*, *Extraction*, *Cream*, *Void* and *Venom*. College kept me busy until March when, during a week of indifferent weather, I went up to the Isle of Skye for the first time, having recently been re-introduced to the fundamentals of navigation, and the joys(!) of winter mountaineering at college (it being a long time since I had done any of that sort of thing!) This trip turned out to be a bit of a disaster as my student colleague and I travelled up by coach to keep the cost down to a minimum. When it came to our return journey we waited for the coach at the Sligachan Hotel in vain. Eventually we hitched a lift to Kyle of Lochalsh on the mainland only to find that we'd been given the summer timetable and there was no bus until tomorrow! After sleeping the night away in the bus shelter we hitched south to the travel agents where we were given a very quick and apologetic refund. Unfortunately we had had to abandon our attempt at traversing the Cuillins after two days and a night in appalling conditions. The rest of our time on Skye was spent marvelling at the geology of the area and collecting samples of gabbros, basalts, andesites and many others, as we had recently covered Plate Tectonics at college.

Pretty soon Easter arrived and having been a model student for two terms

I was determined to hit rock again during my vacation. Two days were spent taking shock treatment at Malham's Lower Central Wall (or Frigger's Wall as it is affectionately known to many!) Here it soon became obvious that the best way to train for climbing was by climbing: seven months without touching rock ensured that in only a short time my arms were pumped stupid! However, all was not lost as it became noticeable that this was normal (almost) until you had memorised the sequences prior to 'red pointing' the route, that is, an eventually clean lead from the ground to the top. Whereas previously if I messed up a route I would go back and settle the score the next day or maybe later; the new approach was to work out the moves on a rope and then lead the climb cleanly. I was a bit wary about accepting these tactics (believing on-sight is best) but it seemed a good short cut to getting back into leading hard routes again. So I swallowed my old pride and got on with the job of working my way through those short, strenuous test pieces.

However it was with relief that Elaine and I found ourselves driving down to our favourite area, Pembroke, for a week after the Bank Holiday weekend. The crags were comparatively quiet after the Easter hordes. We got a lot of pleasure from dawn starts to bag the classic E2s at Mewsford Point, whilst getting back down into Huntsman's Leap again was just like rekindling an old friendship, with *Witch Hunt*, *Moving Away From The Pulsebeat* and *Fitzcorraldo* proving to be most memorable climbs. Our first visit to The Castle left us satisfied and well impressed with the excellent *Under The Influence*, which is probably undergraded in the guidebook.

Teaching practice followed immediately after the Easter break so it was mid-May before I was on the rock again. Slate was the art with the new Llanberis guidebook to tick! I'd never really been sold on the stuff before but Paul's excellent descriptions soon had me itching to do the new slate routes, instead of repeating routes in the Pass. The pleasant climbs at Bus Stop Quarry and Seamstress Slab were much enjoyed. However things nearly turned sour on *Never Never Land*, which is stupendously serious and almost devoid of protection apart from a metal spike which you can lasso from a good foothold 10 feet below.

College took us to Stanage for 'advanced rope work', that is the use of assisted hoists and rescue techniques to assist a fallen or injured companion. It was quite nerve-racking belaying halfway up Black Hawk, with your partner hanging on the rope which you have just tied off to the belay with a prussik knot, and then having to untie from the system and abseil down to offer help. This was more frightening than the climbing we did later in the day, even so I was a worried man when I topped out after soloing *Flying Buttress Overhang* - I promptly took off my boots and chalk bag and hid them in my rucksack for the rest of the day.

Other weekends during May and early June were spent on slate trying out the new Mega's from La Sportiva. These superb boots seemed to have been made specially for the intricacies of *Cystitis*, *Splitstream*, *Central*

Sadness and Heading the Shot, all of which were infinitely safer than *Never Never Land*.

Exams then kept me busy until the end of June, after that I was free until 5th October! Pete Whillance, Murray Hamilton and I dashed up to the Cairngorms which had been basking in sunshine, that is until we got there! Three nights is a long time to spend under the Shelter Stone with several rats and a chain smoker. Although the crag was bone dry, high winds and lack of sunshine prevented us from doing what we had intended. Despite this *The Needle* and *The Pin* were well worth doing. I can tell you that carrying 350 feet of abseil rope for Pete up and over Cairngorm to Loch Avon was not an experience I ever hope to repeat (he had assured me that there was a chair lift to the top-but on that day it was not working because of strong winds!) We had travelled up to Scotland in Gavin Peat's new Astra which he had left with me to look after whilst he was away in Norway for three weeks (he'd only had the car one week). Gavin had in fact said that I could use the car; admittedly for short journeys...he didn't seem to appreciate us running it in for him on the 800 mile round trip! Sorry mate...

A week of teaching rock climbing in Wales then followed, with a couple of days attempting to windsurf at Four Mile Bridge at Anglesey, not too successfully. So, with softened finger tips the *Rainbow of Recalcitrance* proved to be quite a painful experience. I remember just as I was trying to clip the bolt it started to rain, this was definitely the crux for shorties, somehow I was saved from the monstrous pendulum that would have followed had this delicate operation failed.

After the Rainbow I had no more desires to climb on slate for quite some time so a visit to Pen Trwyn was called for to get used to steep rock again and clock up some mileage, repeating routes until my forearms had had enough. All this was in preparation for a return to the sterner stuff in Yorkshire the following week with John Hartley. We visited Malham for the first day and ticked off more nasties on Frigger's Wall; I remember *Bongo Fury* being particularly tough and succumbing to red point tactics after a fall. In between my leads I belayed John on his attempts on *New Dawn*. This really impressed me as he nearly had it cracked, he certainly made the crux start look easy every time; he simply kept running out of steam traversing between the overhangs higher up. I reluctantly declined his offer to tie on and have-a-go as I felt it would be more beneficial to get in some mileage (quite simply I had never contemplated ever climbing *New Dawn*). Next day we went to Kilnsey in the company of Pete and Bonny. Whilst I led *The Overlap* Pete cleaned a direct start to his own route *Exponential Exhaustion*. The following day, after much talking about the route, at their house in Cononley, we all returned to Kilnsey to do the route with it's new start. Firstly Pete led the pitch in fine style, then quickly abseiled down to strip the gear; he then jumared up the rope and took photos whilst I led a rapid second ascent. John had the unenviable task of seconding to remove





the gear. This is a magnificent climb; very steep and strenuous - I was most surprised to get up it without a couple of falls. It certainly put me in a positive frame of mind for other tough routes that summer. That same day the *Superdirectissima* seemed very tame in comparison.

After Yorkshire it was back to Wales to do some more instructing, during which time Andy Newton and I took a group of youngsters abseiling down North Stack Wall to spend a night bivvying in Parliament House Cave. This was a good adventure for me let alone the kids! After a superb fried breakfast, waiting for the tide to drop, we followed the passageway out of the back to emerge the other side of North Stack. Afterwards we spent a couple of sunny hours sea level traversing, with a couple of tyroleans thrown in for good measure and added spice.

As soon as Elaine had broken up for the summer we sped down to Pembroke once more. Our first port of call was The Castle to go *Over the Hill* and *Downward Bound*, the former being of superb quality and the latter, tougher than the guidebook grade. I hadn't done much on the right-hand side of St. Govan's Head so Spuz and I quickly did *Wicked Gravity* and *Equipoise*, and next day Elaine and I did the recent addition of *Equilibrium* (which is probably not 6b). All three of these routes were well worthwhile with *Wicked Gravity* giving the best climbing in a superb position, on surprising holds, and *Equipoise* providing the hardest and certainly the boldest moves, which are strenuous and precarious a long, long way above a solitary peg runner.

A visit to Lydstep, on the recommendation of Andy Sharp, to do his route *Beat Surrender* provided me with a desperate struggle, which I thought I was going to lose right up until the last move pulling out of the overhanging corner at the top of a really exhausting pitch. It was back to Lydstep again next day as we hadn't climbed in No-man's Zawn before. The obvious plums to pick here were *Pan* and *Nineteen Eighty Four*. Both of these routes offer superb wall climbing in a unique setting, however they are both straightforward for their respective grades, particularly *Nineteen Eighteen Four* which is good 6a as opposed to 6c!

Back at Castlemartin we got into a rhythm of sunbathing during the daytime and nipping into the range to bag another route in the Leap, late in the afternoon. However, Elaine didn't follow *The Pulsebeat*, but she did curse her way up *Souls* and *Boat to Naxos* I was impressed with the boldness of *Souls* with its long run outs between dodgy in situ gear, whilst *Boat to Naxos* offers technically immaculate climbing, of a forceful nature, protected by two bolts. We finished our visit with *Heat of the Moment* on The Castle which is a very good short, sharp exercise in thin crack climbing and definitely not to be missed.

After venturing north for a wedding in Leeds the well-set-in bad weather sent us scurrying back for more offerings in Pembroke. Disappointingly it had rained whilst we had been away and many of the crags were now wet. This was a blow as I had fancied a go on the new routes in the vicinity of

Witch Hunt, which look gobsmacking! With my enthusiasm dampened Elaine took advantage of my lethargy and led some good E1s and E2s. Eventually I got fired-up to do the frightening *Heugamont*, the strenuous and painful *Bitch*, and the brilliant *Snake Charmer*. This last route has a really baffling sequence of moves to pass a bulge on the right. A fall from these moves saw me back on the ground to pull my ropes through before succeeding on my second try. When combined with the second pitch of *Witching Hour* in one run out this route provides a three star E5 6c in keeping with the best routes on the 'mans' side of the Leap.

Back at May Cottage one evening Dave Gregory announced that the weather in Cornwall was good, so without wasting any time Elaine and I packed all our gear and made tracks for the Count House, with our thoughts firmly set on one route...yes, you've guessed: Dream:Liberator. Every time we'd driven down there it had always rained, so we'd never got the route done. We arrived at the Count House at around four o'clock in the morning and then slept right through until two pm before setting off for the main cliff. The weather was indeed superb and after doing *Kafoozalem* and *Little Brown Jug* it was already six pm and very tempting to retire for the day. I suggested that we leave Dream:Liberator for tomorrow, to which Elaine retorted, "No! We'll do it now!" Who was I to argue with her? (After all she does breathe fire!) What a fantastic climb it was too, though needless to say we finished in the dark. Elaine made easy meat of the top pitch of Liberator with only the light from the lighthouse to pick out the holds! Our thanks are due to the two guys who gave us a rope on the final scramble pitch.

Next day we were indeed glad to have done IT yesterday as inevitably it started to rain, however later in the week, in between showers, we managed to do *Deja Vu*, *West Face* (6b?), *Immaculate Arete* and *Cain*. Our enthusiasm was dampened with each shower so we forgot about *Isis*, *Titanic*, *Atlantic Ocean Wall*, and let *Cool Diamonds* slip through our fingers and returned north once more. I don't believe Roland when he says the sun always shines in West Penwith!

So back in Wales again with showery weather, it was to the slate that we looked to once more for encouragement. Elaine realised a major ambition by leading *Comes the Dervish* in fine style, whilst my best achievement turned out to be *Naked Before the Beast* (the skin on my finger tips held out only just long enough to do the pitch).

All too soon Elaine had to go back to school and I in turn started to direct my thoughts towards college once more, but I couldn't resist the temptation of going up to Yorkshire a few times before term started again. One Sunday at Malham I desperately tried to piece together *Obsession* (which I had foolishly thought I might flash!). I came home well worn out and stunned by the difficulty of the climb, having spent the whole day piecing together the four 6b sections. Tim Lowe and I were back the following Wednesday and after he'd done *New Dawn* as a warm up (he had of course done it



several times before) we sauntered up to *Obsession*. I was desperately psyched-up and couldn't wait any longer, even though I was a bit cold. Intense mental rehearsal during the previous two days enabled me to execute the moves first time and suddenly I found myself clipping into the belay anchors having not even had to red point it! Climbs like this stand out as being very special in any climbers career, and I believe the experience of doing a climb for the first time is such that to repeat it again at a later date destroys the originally intense mixture of feelings such as anxiety, uncertainty and elation after successfully getting to the top of the climb. Because of these feelings I will be most reluctant to climb *Obsession* ever again, as I won't enjoy it anywhere near as much next time.

After *Obsession* Tim did *Mescalito* (which he had also done several times before) and I decided maybe I should check out this *New Dawn*. By that afternoon I'd pieced together all the moves and sort of worked out the crux undercut sequence at the start. Next day I tried to lead the climb, but a considerable lack of reach kept letting me down on the crux. Eventually I sat on the bolt and led the route from there, feeling very sorry for myself. Tim had to go to work next day so we both went home. That night Ian MacCaskill gave the weather forecast; it was obvious that if I was going to do *New Dawn* at all before going back to college then it would have to be the next day because, after then, heavy rain was forecast and the wall would begin to seep and probably not dry out until next year. So next morning I drove up to Malham expecting to find plenty of willing cragsters to hold my rope. Alas, there was nobody there! Eventually I managed to persuade a passing rambler to do the honours! He agreed willingly and stopped me from hitting the deck when I fell off the start. "Never mind", I thought "just relax and concentrate, you'll get it next time". So up again and somehow I managed to stay on. From there it was a case of repeating yesterday's performance from the bolt which at least I knew I could do, if I could keep cool and concentrated hard. I very nearly fluffed the moves up to the first roof due to a momentary lapse of concentration, but I hung on in there and regained my composure. The traverse between the roofs was wet but went okay. Chalking up on the undercuts at the end of the traverse, before committing myself to the big run out to get established on the headwall, I took a last deep breath and summoned up all my courage...Ignoring the bolt up on the right (which I knew I couldn't reach to clip anyway) I pulled around the bulge on undercuts and layaways with feet on smears. Reaching for the sloping ledge with wilting arms I was able to inch my feet up onto small but positive footholds and get a small, flat undercut for the fingers of my left hand, then a reach up right got an awkward pinch:undercut for my right hand which enabled me to rock up onto the ledge and not to fall off backwards into fresh air. Once on the headwall the rest was quite pleasant. From there it is possible to reflect on what you have just accomplished...

And so I hung up my rock boots again and returned to college, well satisfied with a great summer's climbing but also looking forward to a change. I immediately started canoeing again (having been keen enough to buy my own canoe). But, as if realising that I had a long way to go before catching up with Frank Hill and Phil (watch me, I'm the best canoeist in the world) Davidson, I became absolutely hooked on caving when we spent four days up in the Dales with college. Since then I've been down several of the classic through trips in Yorkshire. This activity makes a splendid change from climbing and is great fun on winter days - it certainly beats going on climbing walls. However some of you may have heard about my trip through Pippikin:Link in the Easegill system just before Christmas...yes well, on that note I'll finish because that's another story!

Three Ice Routes in The Oberland

John Sumner

We arrived at the Rutti campsite in the Lauterbrunner valley during the last week in July. Mainly a bunch from the Stafford M C, which included John Keska with family, Steve Coneys, Dave Gale and myself, Jill and the kids. We nicely took over a corner of the campsite owned by one Von Allmen. I wondered if there was any connection between him and the Von Allmen who had put most of the hard routes up around the area.

We were in a deep slot of a valley with 1,000 foot walls on each side with great waterfalls. Two fine looking North Faces dominated the end of the valley, The Grosshorn and The Ebnefluh.

Towards the evening the first Eiger team arrived consisting of Dave Wilkinson and Bob Brevit. Dave's knowledge of the area and his aversion to expensive railways and huts led us up to the Schmadri Hut; and a struggle up through a serac barrier with one very near miss from a huge ice block. We arrived back at the Schmadri Hut with our tails between our legs to find two German lads just finishing off the descent from the Schmadrijoch. They had just done the North Face of the Grosshorn in six hours descending via the Schmadrijoch before mid-day impressive!

After our first failure we reverted to our original plan of spending a lot of money on trains and huts. This certainly was the case on our next route the N E Face of the Monch. The train journey from Kleine Scheidegg to the Jungfrauoch left us gasping at the cost, not the rarified air, even though we travelled at the cheap rate on the last train up. An easy walk in fantastic surroundings led from the Jungfrauoch to the Monchsjoeh hut, unfortunately a private hut so the full rate had to be paid. Our BMC reciprocal rights cards made little impression on the hut warden who just pushed them to one side.

The evening in the hut brightened a little when I saw a familiar face, Pat Littlejohn with a team going for the South Face of the Eiger. The last time we'd had a chat was on the West Face of The Dru about 17 years before! The usual cock-up with the weather forecast ensued, with the hut warden saying, "Bad weather tomorrow", and my weather man in Zurich suggesting a good morning with unsettled weather following. Fortunately the Zurich forecast was correct and we nipped up the N E Face, and were back at the hut before the bad weather arrived.

The next objective was the N W Face of the Ebnefluch by the Direct, a line that could be seen from the campsite and one that looked very appealing to me. The line weaved in and out of a rock rib, finishing through an innocuous looking serac barrier. On this route our man in Zurich let us down. We spent three nights in the Rottal Hut in rain and cloud with the food situation getting serious. The hut and warden made up for this though, a



superb hut, little used. The warden and wife went out of their way to be friendly, finding us food at a very reasonable price, an unusual feature for the Swiss. On our second day of mank a Swiss guide and client came in to do the same route, the client a very fit 60 year old.

At last a good morning arrived and the flog up to the 'schrund began. The guide and client taking a line on the far left, to avoid the obvious difficulties, whilst we went for the schrund under the rib, finding it a good Scottish Grade V pitch, fortunately the placements were bombproof. Pitch after pitch followed on good ice to the base of the rib. This was taken on the left, until an obvious rising traverse right took us to the right of the rib, where an easy ramp led us back left again. The rib finally petered out beneath steep hard ice and a rising traverse left led through the serac band to the summit.

A very satisfying route. The weather perfect. A two hour wait on the top for the others and then an appalling flog through soft snow down to the Hollandia Hut. Descent next day was via the beautiful Lotschental Valley and bus and train back round to Interlaken and the camp site. Here we found the second Eiger team had arrived, a dour lot lead by Downer.

The Grosshorn was next on the list but in the two weeks since we were last at the Schmadri hut, a drastic change had taken place. The 'schrunds on the lower part of the face had become enormous, with just a nasty black escape runnel up to the rock barrier. We decided against it, obviously a route to be done earlier in the season.

Dave Wilkinson had just come back from doing the fine North Face of the remote Studerhorn, so we decided to go for that. The walk in to the Aar bivvy hut must be one of the longest I've done in the Alps, following glaciers winding their way through superb scenery, to the inner sanctum of the Finsteraar Glacier.

We had a clear sky to start with, but by the time we had reached the 'schrund cloud had rolled in and it started to rain heavily. Decisions, decisions! We waited for an hour then lo and behold the rain and mist cleared as suddenly as it had come, to leave a blue sky. The only problem was that we were at least one hour late, and the fact it had been rain not snow, meant that the freezing level was probably above the tops.

We took the 'schrund on the right under rocks and then followed a series of enjoyable rising traverses, always moving left beneath rocks on perfect ice. And then it happened! That hideous whining screech of falling rock. It was coming from a small rock outcrop, high up near the top of the face. The rocks were not taking a fixed line, making it very difficult to take a safe route. A very fast ascent followed, more through fear of being hit than anything else.

We pulled over the top totally knackered to be greeted by a female's cries of "I want a helicopter. I'm not moving". This came from a group of happy

British bumblebees trying to commit suicide. We tried to ignore them by making a brew and eating the remains of our food. The bumblebees having sorted themselves out (or that's what we had convinced ourselves they had done), Keska and I started an easy descent down the ridge and glacier on the opposite side of the Studerhorn, to the Oberaarjoch hut and the Grimsel Pass.

The Lady and The Raven A Lakeland Solstice Story

Terry Gifford

It was a raw day at the back end of the year. Only the highest red fells were lit by the sun of the winter solstice. It was the time of omens, hanging like ice in Coombe Gill between darkness and light, a year's death and a year's birth, between the salt-lick and the lambing, between scavenging and nesting. The lady was heading for Raven Crag, Borrowdale. I thought it was time they met. Big Tim, the shaman, agreed and when you're setting out to climb with a man like that you know you'll get up the route, or have a strange tale to tell. He makes things happen, drawing on powers he gains from journeys to the high mountains of the East, often undertaken, some say, in the shaman's state of trance. The Lady smiled silently to herself as Big Tim joked, "Of course, I'm a greater ranges man myself", beating himself like a bear-hunter to keep warm.

The path was a river of ice and the slope up to the crag a steep stair of frost. We knew we'd arrived at the foot of our route, 'Corvus', and were sitting on the sharp claws of the Raven because the primitive icon of the bird was etched on the rock at the start of this journey upwards and into the very spirit of *Corvus Corax*. Old Bentley Beetham knew his birds. In the summer of 1950 he had named our route 'Corvus' before, solo as usual three weeks later, he added 'Corvax' on the right to make the start of our route specifically the left leg of the Raven, *Corvus Corax*

And a scrawny notched crackline it is, leaning back at an angle to support the dark bulk of the bird above. The leg was more grey than black and it was blebbed with ice like blood which had dripped onto the slab from somewhere above. I wasn't tempted by our sacred brown Beetham book to cross into the gully on the right. Big Tim was already there, impatient to be climbing behind us. I continued left to stretch a rope up the full length of the natural line. The steeper crack above is absorbing as you feel for a jam under a chockstone to enable a high-stepped entry. From here long reaches find jug after jug inside the crack. "The Lady's going to love this old bird", I thought, and shouted down to her as she stood waiting to start this encounter with the largest of our native crows and her first high mountain climb. "Yeh, yeh!". She seemed a little sceptical.

But how her eyes sparkled as she pulled onto the big ledge at the top of that first pitch. I made her turn and take a look out over far fields white with frost, to the end of Derwent water and the sunlit snows capping Skiddaw. It was an open enough aspect for a Raven's nest-ledge, but not as overhung as the cunning crows prefer it. Being the earliest birds to nest they line their nests with sheep's wool and bury the eggs in it. The Lady seemed to need a warming cuddle at that point, just a stirring of the ancient

energies of rebirth you understand, to see us through this chilly encounter with the bird of death. And lest you think this melodramatic, let me point out that the belays on this stance were none too good.

From here you traverse across the body of the crag, across its bulky blocks and broad feathered ledges where you can choose to step out onto the very edge of experience, finding small hidden footholds whilst fingers close over flake after flake. So without realising it, you are drawn into the depths of the crag. A corner lined with disguised holds leads into a narrowing chimney where suddenly it gets steeper and you realise that you've journeyed a long way. You can see in the narrow vent a welcomed spike embedded like a heart you know you must grab to ease the pounding of your own. You are reaching deep into the spirit of the bird that savours the placenta at lambing time, 'sucking death's mouldy tits', as our tribe's royal poet once put it. You are half in the mountain and half flying in the raw air searching for holds both inside and outside the dark vent.

The Lady came through it like a rainbow, grinning, faintly coloured, and good to see again. It was the step off this stance that proved a wicked test. It took some time to realise that a start too high to reach round for a rib had invented this mysterious crux. On a journey of this kind you make your own.

But whilst I was belaying the Lady as she climbed this rope-long rib, the shaman summoned up Ray McHaffie, Borrowdale's famous scavenger of new routes and neglected crags. Suddenly, across the other side of Raven Crag Gully, in the centre of vertical rock just below the summit of the mountain, appeared a grey-haired solo climber in old bendy boots. The shaman shouted across to him.

'What's your route called, Ray?' The figure turned, gazed round calmly until, seeing Big Tim with his one good eye, croaked back, 'Summit Route.' We watched as he showed what he meant.

The Lady, I thought, could probably lead the spectacular hand-traverse out along the wingbone of 'Corvus'. It's a continuous upright handrail and there are always little feathers of rock on which to stand in balance. But when I went out to have a look at it I found my fingers stubbing ice in the trough behind the bone. So I just kept going until I finally flopped onto the flat ledge round the end of the wingtip. The Lady cruised across and agreed that she could have led it, had I given her the chance.

Chastened, I turned to find that an icefall filled the groove exit from this embarrassing situation. A bridge up and a long pull brought easy scrambling towards a final scoop which is shaped like a beak pointing skywards. On its broad massive base the Lady slipped, but Big Tim held up a hand and she stayed on. (I forgot to tell you about his huge hands.) As the Lady came up to the narrowed point of the beak it seemed to have opened to emit a single 'Prurk!' of applause. I looked up and there was the Raven flying above us. I turned to tell the Lady but she was already at the top beside me. She had seen it already.

And suddenly there beside us too was Ray McHaffie, passing by on his way down. He stopped for a croak and a crack as we coiled the ropes, telling us how Columba's Gully across the valley was a good ice-climb, how he'd done the first winter ascent in 1950, how he'd come up Borrowdale today on his bike and it'd got no brakes and only one gear (top), and how the climber who named this crag was told by a Raven that his girlfriend was seeing another climber, so, in a fit of anger he killed her and hid her body in Doves' Nest Caves over there, but later he regretted it and got back at the Raven by blacking his white feathers so that he was as black as the crag he nested on. He can tell tales like that for hours, until at last the chill begins to bite and he flies away down.

After he'd gone I found the Lady looking at me long and hard. What she was seeing and what she was thinking perhaps I'll never know now. She said nothing but I could tell she knew she'd met the Raven that day at the turning of the year.

The Presidential Range

Tony Moulam

The first mountain I climbed in America was Mount Washington, at 6,288 feet the highest of 11 peaks in the Presidential Range. I was disappointed, on my return home, to find that it seemed not to deserve a mention in the Lonsdale Library 'Mountaineering', but I was pleased to learn from a copy of the Geographical Magazine, which I happened to see at the dentists, that my peak had the distinction of being the place where the highest wind speed over land had been recorded : 231 mph, before the anemometer broke! Another fact in the local guidebook, which I was able to verify personally, was the statement that 'the higher temperature and lower winds make hiking more pleasant down from the peaks'

However, enough of this boring stuff, as the presidential range I intend to describe consists of the Climbers' Club presidents with whom I have climbed, though not necessarily whilst they were in office.

I did well in 1949. Having been knocked down by a lorry whilst hitch hiking to Wales I was condemned to spend a reluctant three months in Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital. The time was relieved by visits such as one from John Disley, who smuggled in a bottle of Scotch, and Peter Harding, who kidnapped me in his MG and took me to Helyg to see Tryfan! This escapade was soured when we got back to the hospital, where they had decided that I had discharged myself, and I had to spend some time begging a dragon of a sister to find and make up a bed for me.

When I was allowed out I had only 30 degrees of movement in my right knee so I tried to prepare myself for re-entry to the climbing world by bicycle rides and long walks. The crucial event, which got my damaged joint moving again was an encounter with a bull outside Wirksworth when I was on my way to look at Black Rocks again. After this therapy I felt able to accept an invitation to an Easter meet at Ogwen Cottage, which was something of a commando re-union, organised by Alf Bridge. Jack Longland was there, who had just stopped being president so he was free to lead me up the Arete Climb on Bochlwyd Butress. Now to you tigers who deign to know the route it will not seem much of a feat, but try to imagine the effort involved when one leg will still not bend very much, and even when it does it creaks and hurts, and add to the scenario that your delays and ditherings are holding up a second rope, led by an irascible A B Hargreaves. You might then agree that it could have been a total immersion version of a baptism of fire!

We did at least survive as friends and, later the same day Jack led us up a circuitous route on Tryfan's South Butress which started and finished up the Gashed Crag but strayed onto South Arete for the middle passages. My log does not record whether this was a matter of poor route finding by our gallant guide, or a magnificent and well planned ploy to avoid the crowds. This was a long time ago, and there were at least 100 people on the

mountain. I suppose it would be regarded as deserted nowadays, if so few were there on a 1980s Bank Holiday.

I think that it was during the same holiday that a multi-generation party assaulted the Horned Crag Route on Lliwedd. Jack Longland and A B were the elders and their sons John and Richard respectively, if not respectfully, vied for the lead. I, with my recent injury, was content to be tied firmly in the middle of one or other rope. I little thought that one day, when I was president, I would have the privilege, of climbing a pitch on the other buttress and, in Harold Drasdo's words. "Fittingly the corner was led clean by Moulam, a new president restoring what an earlier president had taken away." And so started what was to turn out to be 20 or 30 years of climbing with A B and Jack, ranging from gritstone - which the 'little man' did not like, because he could not reach the holds - to the Lakes, to Wales, and the dubious delights of the lesser known parts of the Alps, such as the Eastern Graians, and the Aiguille d'Arves. We went there at the end of a holiday in the Dauphinee because Jack held out the prospect of a new route, on which he had failed many years before. There was to be no new entry in the record book because of poor weather and indisposition due to 'flu, or a midnight meal of mushrooms - or were they toadstools - which we had collected on the way to the unguarded hut.

At least none of us died, though A B was the last to be affected, and he was unable to eat his first class meal and enjoy the free champagne when they found that his return flight was overbooked and he was ushered into the first class cabin, to join the staidly clad business men and Europundits returning from their labours in Geneva.

It always surprises me, but I never quite know why, that David Cox preceded A B as president. Unfortunately, although we had talked a lot about climbing, particularly of Sheaf, about which he was particularly modest, and of Gomorrah, Spiral Route and the Grimmett when I was writing the Carneddau guidebook, we were never actually on a rope together until after he had been affected by polio. Eventually we did make a, to me, memorable ascent of Marble Slab at Stanage Edge where John Cole and I devised a rope cradle to help David, which surely rivalled anything dreamt up by Ken Tarbuck or the Ashley Book of Knots. David and Kevin Fitzgerald were later to guide my novice (at 69 years old) father round the Horseshoe, whilst I disported on the Tremadoc cliffs, which we had recently invented. This service, freeing me of filial duty was much appreciated, and I tried to model the descriptions of Craig yr Ysfa, when I returned the guidebook writing duty, on the perfect prose David used to describe the Dancing Floor.

John Hunt was only just a Sir when I first met him and swam together in a muddy pool on the moors near Whitehall, the devil's invention, or rather that of Jack Longland that opened the way for the hills to be taken over by hordes of educational parties. Luckily by this time moulded rubber soles had been introduced - I am aware of the danger of transferring a trade name to a generic term to think of calling them Vibrams - and so we were spared

the final grinding away and polishing of sloping holds that would have occurred if nails had been de rigueur for all these novices.

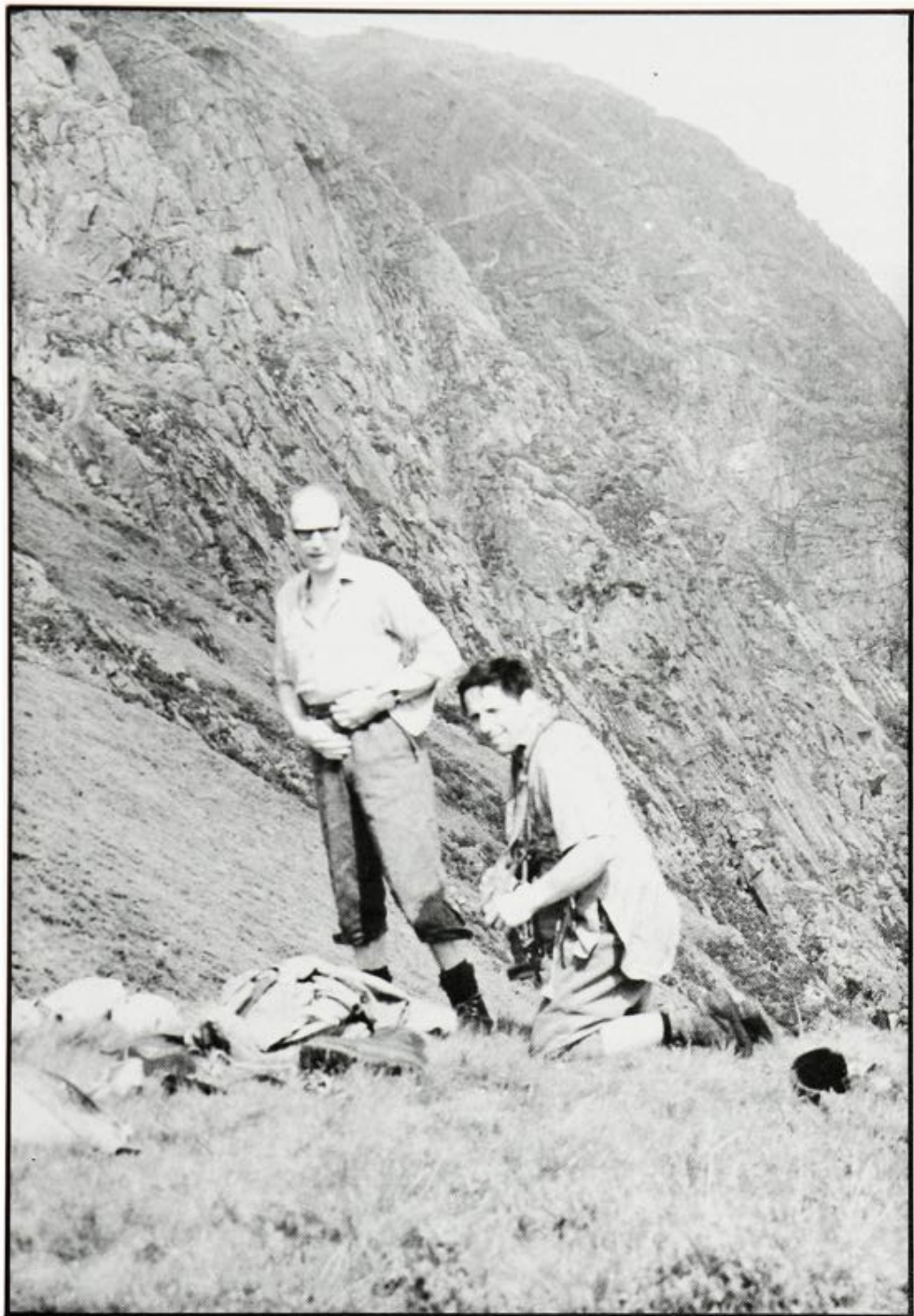
By the time we climbed together, on the Roaches, he made his way up Black and Tans in a series of moves reminiscent of his knightly namesake of the chessboard. However I appreciated far more than the strength and courage he showed then, in far from perfect conditions for an introduction to such a sandy and dirty cliff, the support and help he gave me at the time in the BMC when I had my mid-life crisis. But even the good offices and encouraging words of a Lord could not reconcile me to what had happened. But that is another story, suffice it to say that I resigned my office, and began to climb again.

The most memorable day I had on the hills with Emlyn Jones, John Hunt's successor, was not the one when he opted out of joining the first ascent of Mur y Niwl, but a walk along the southern flanks of the Moelwyns. As I recall we had gone to Wales, or rather he had taken me, for a committee meeting and the Sunday was spent, by him, surveying a new route for the Ffestiniog Railway, necessary as the CEGB had flooded part of the original track, which could in no way be described as a permanent way. I relished the opportunity of reconnoitering cliffs that I felt existed low down on these slopes, but alas none proved to be more than 20 or 30 feet high. As everyone knows that is enough for a gritstone cliff to be worth while, but the demands for proper rock are much more than that. Emlyn had however guided me earlier, when I wrote the 1949 edition of the *Carneddau* he had pointed me in the direction of some pleasant new ascents, such as Jupiter and Juno, on the edges of Ysgolion Duon, near to his Mares' Nest Climb.

Somehow I had always avoided climbing with Hamish Nicol, not out of perversity but in Chamonix it was the weather, and on Clogwyn du'r Arddu it was indisposition - usually translatable as the beer at Pen y Gwryd. In the end an unlikely conjunction occurred on Gimmer Crag. The occasion was after a dinner at the Dungeon Ghyll Old Hotel and it says much for the moral example of Sid Cross that we were sufficiently abstemious to succeed on Main Wall, and I do believe on F Route too. Unless the Lakeland beer is weaker, and I do not think that it even rained.

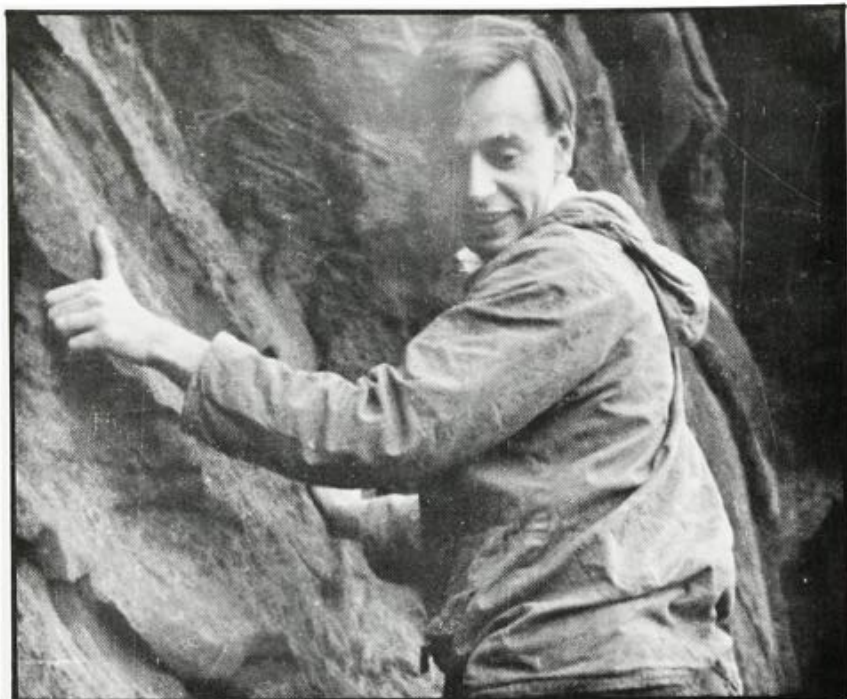
Now we come to my reactionary years, when I tried to stem the tide, and Ken Wilson's advocacy of female membership and the restriction of recruitment to what I still, old fashionedly, think of as tigers. I failed in my endeavour but Hamish and Harry Sales were the men for that moment and enlightenedly shepherded the club through those difficult years. I would not have been able to do so and I remember trying to explain my feelings to Harry, as we walked up Cwm Cywarch on our way to Styx, a sort of mini Longlands. It at least took my mind off climbing politics and onto more serious subjects such as dynamic balance and the strength of frayed nylon ropes!

My memory has to reach even further back to my one climb with Mike Westmacott. This happened in 1954 on Raven Crag, Coombe Gill and,



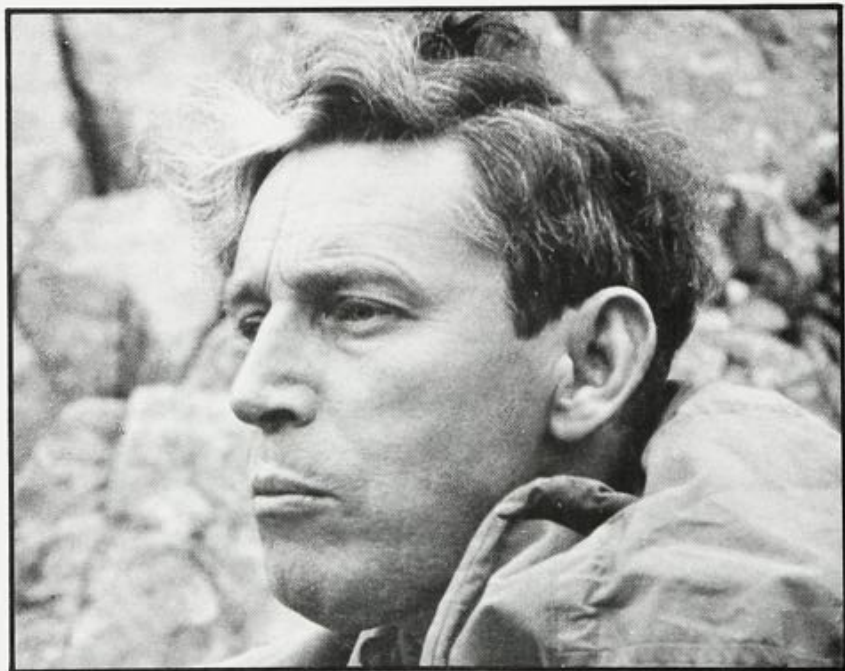
Caught on the col, Tony Moulam and Trevor Jones.

Photo: Bob Allen.



Hugh Banner.

Photo: Edgar Siddall.



David Cox.

although we thought we were on virgin rock the route seems to have coincided with Ludo, which was done two years before. I have often been on the same crag as Mike, on one occasion on the Napes Ridge when the whole of Gable sounded like the Hague, as a party of Dutch climbers invaded for a Whitsuntide break, before the more modern invention of Spring Bank Holiday, which sounds more like something you buy in a Chinese restaurant, or at least a take away. More recently I managed to persuade Sally so I had been wrong about women - to drag me up Tennis Shoe after a Helyg reunion, whilst Mike, unenviably did more difficult things on the Holly Tree Wall.

The next president, and the one I have probably climbed most with, was also there on that occasion. He was reluctantly allowing Derek Walker to lead the difficult crack to the right of the Rampart, whilst vociferously keeping up the pretence of alternate leads. Famous and prolific author Trevor Jones is the man to whom I owe a resurgence of climbing interest and ability during my 40s. In those days Trevor relied on his superhuman arm strength, and his feet were dragged up as useless appendages by his hyperactive fingers and arms. He was also capable of making rope management a sort of Byzantine science, against which the Gordian Knot would appear to be but a kindergarten effort. Unfortunately the knots were not always absolutely valid and there is at least one occasion, probably apocryphal, when Trevor found himself tied to both ends of the rope, and his unfortunate second was left standing by a tree, tied to nothing. But Trevor's career as a rock climber has endured. My earliest memory of him is chatting to him at the bottom of Clogwyn y Grochan whilst Harry Smith performed above. Then I climbed with him on gritstone, when one of our least memorable Christmas days was spent on a dismal Edge above the Woodhead road before returning to his home for our preferred Christmas dinner of bacon and sausage. The girls and children had the turkey all to themselves! On one distant day we even went to Helsby, where Trevor was most indignant when a pigeon rushed out of a crack and started to peck his knuckles, whitening with the effort of clinging to the crumbling edge of a less than adequate hand traverse. Then he introduced me to Patsy Walsh.

I suppose that Hugh Banner, currently our president, has the meticulous regard for unaided climbing that I have always envied. Two examples will suffice. One October day we were attempting a new route on Craig yr Ysfa's Lower Amphitheatre Wall. We approached free by the first pitch of what became Plumbagin and I stood happily on an uncomfortable ledge whilst Hugh addressed the wall above. I guessed that it was proving difficult because of his even slower progress than usual, and I suddenly realised that it was becoming dusk. At this opportune moment it started to drizzle and Hugh nonchalantly suggested that I should abseil off, climb round and drop him a rope. Of course I thought that if he was prepared to stand alone in the centre of that vast and holdless wall I could not refuse, so eventually I

rescued him and we stumbled down to the road in the worsening dark and rain.

As it happened this was the night of the dinner at the Prince of Wales a.k.a. Bellevue Hotel in Trefriw. So as soon as we reached the telephone box in Capel Curig we rang the hotel and asked to be collected. Peter Hatton, who had enjoyed the bar at least as much as the dinner so far, was sent to fetch us and, after a terrifying drive during which we often wished we were back on the wall, Hugh and I tried to catch up by wolfing down soup, main course and sweet whilst John Hunt gave the first of the non- speeches that soon became traditional at Welsh dinners.

The other tale which bears telling is of another October day, this time after a dinner. This time we went to Glyder Fach to attempt another new climb. Our joint hangovers proving too much for our chosen overhanging groove we let it win and so I, with a frozen shoulder, struggled up a senior climb and we took turns to peer anxiously and excitedly at the upper part of our projected route. Perhaps one day we will return.

And now we come to the mystery president. If you have been counting, or have even got this far, you will realise that ten of this rare breed have been mentioned above. So who, do I hear you ask, is the eleventh to complete the Presidential Range? Of course it is my constant companion, through all these and many more adventures. And with a bit of cheating I'll reveal, that it's me.

Alpine Silver Jubilee

John C. Wilkinson

“Where would you rather be?” I asked myself as I flew first class over the Alps, “Up here eating caviar, or down there doing the Gervasutti Pillar with Simon Donowho?” I philosophically took another sip of champagne and accepted the fate that had deprived me of doing a route which had been one of my major ambitions since I first saw it, long before anything had been published about it in an English guidebook. It was a pity all the same, I knew, for everyone else I climbed with had done it and Simon could hardly be expected to miss his opportunity because of my urgent summons to the Gulf.

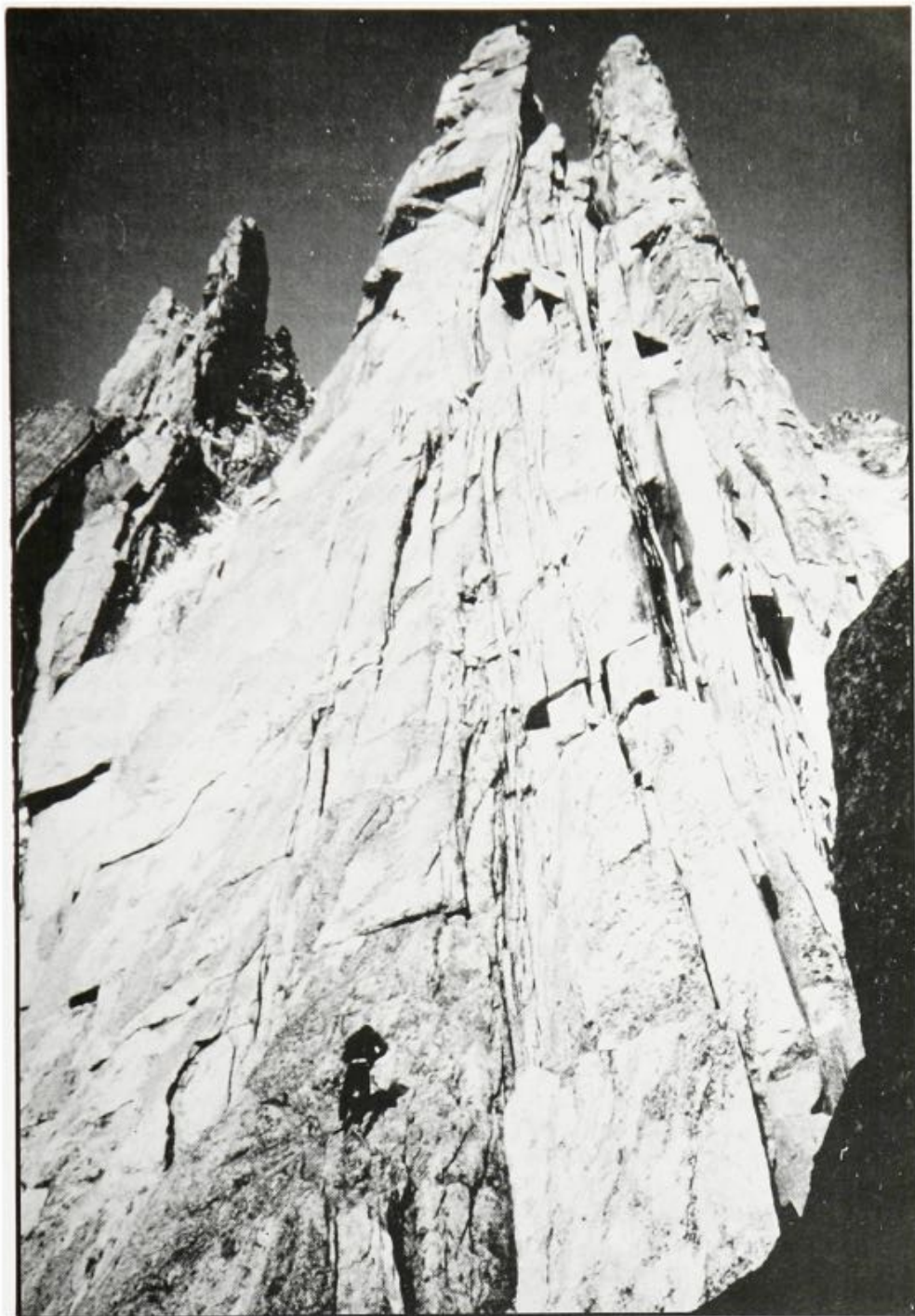
“Where’s the bread, Dore?” “Sorry, John, I’ve forgotten it”, replied my companion as we settled down to our bivvy in the little breche at the foot of the second tower, four years later. It was not only the lack of caviar and bread next day that made me wish that I could still have the choice of being up there rather than down here lugging an overweight ‘sack on a terrain of never ending rock and ice with the weather beginning to break. The trouble is, I have got out of the habit of old-fashioned mountaineering. All I had carried on a route so far was one of those pretty little Christophe Profit sacks which holds your dark glasses and a spare T shirt for emergencies. Not that we hadn’t done some real climbing.

I had suggested to Dore Green, of the Oxford University M.C., that he might like to come out earlier than he originally planned and warm up for his season by taking the senior member up a few rock routes before going on to more serious things with someone of his own standard and age. I had not been back to the Dolomites since 1967 and, inspired by the accounts of Derek Walker and Hugh Banner’s heroic return, wanted to see if they were still as intimidating as they seemed to be twenty years ago. Our first morning there we woke from our doss to find everything covered in clag, so we drove over towards Sella and did the Micheluzzi on the Ciavazes as the cloud began to lift. A hundred metre traverse as the crux wasn’t exactly my idea of how to start things off, but it turned out to be quite fun. We drove back to the Roda di Vael (Rotwand) and next morning it was even claggier, in fact we couldn’t even see the bottom of the face, let alone the Eisenstecken route. So began the game of where to start. I had already done the Buhlweg so we tried working back from there. An hour and a quarter later I conceded that Dore’s choice of chimney crack was better than mine, but I still was not convinced that we were not going to find ourselves on the Maestri as he disappeared into the gloom, where we remained for the next five hours. Not a bad route at all, with the old crux going free on huge great overhanging jugs. But you would have to have rather curious tastes to appreciate the wet pitch further up, whilst the top section requires very

careful handling. Fortunately, near the end the cloud half lifted to show us where we had been and how to get off. On the way back down to the valley it chucked it down. Next day was a meteorological repeat so we decided not to go for the Cima Ovest: besides there was much too much snow around from the unseasonable June for my liking. Continuing bad weather and £10 for a night at the Cortina campsite was enough. We returned to Chamonix.

1987 was a good old fashioned season of how things used to be, and our start in the Dolomites was typical of its "Unwetter". But the next few days did make us think otherwise and we had a joyous couple of days on the Envers des Aiguilles, beginning to think that perhaps this might prove to be THE season, once the snow had melted. This is the fourteenth time I have been up to the hut since 1965 and I feel I have really "arrived", for now I am one of the privileged elite who get invited for a tea by Babette, who was already guarding the hut when I first went up there. In the old days I used to go for the routes that ended up at the top of the mountain. Now I go for the hedonistic climbs. And that is exactly what *Subtilites Dulferiennes* is, seventeen pitches of marvellous variations on the lay-back theme up the Pic de Roc, almost parallel with the Cordier route which had been my first introduction to this new genre. And it is not Mickey Mouse because it has virtually no gear in it and one comes down a different way, albeit back to the 'sacks. No 'sacks needed for the next day's route either, a delicious piece of froth that belies its name, *Ambiance Eigerwand*, and almost comes into the *Marchand de Sable* class. A quickie on the Peigne in which we unsuccessfully attempted to locate *Verdon Memories* and ended up doing a new route on lethal lichenous rock, marked the end of the good spell and Dore went off to Buoux whilst I got on with some work.

The weather was still abysmal when he returned so we decided to revisit Presles, on the edge of the Vercors, where last year we had done a couple of excellent routes, notably *Olivier* which should be on everyone's tick list. Leaving Chamonix after breakfast we drove into the inevitable cloud as we climbed the pass to Presles itself. So we chose a route of easy access from the tourist site at the Chorance caves and by lunch time the fog began to clear and we could more or less make out where our route, *Nils*, went. As Dore closed the boot of the car I realised we had locked the key in it, and that cost us a further hour before a kindly coach driver worked out how to short circuit the wiring system and get the boot open again. The next obstacle was a team of archaeologists working at the foot of the route who said we couldn't go up; in any case, they claimed, someone had recently fallen off and stripped the vital gear. But we were welcome to do *Jonathen* which crosses it halfway. Since my guide book said all sorts of things about the need for sky-hooks we were not enthusiastic about this alternative fare. Nor were we when we managed at last to find the start. Matters did improve however, after the first three pitches and Dore did some fantastic things freeing the artificial pitch leading to the junction with *Nils*: but by the time



The Gervasutti Pillar.

Photo: John C. Wilkinson.

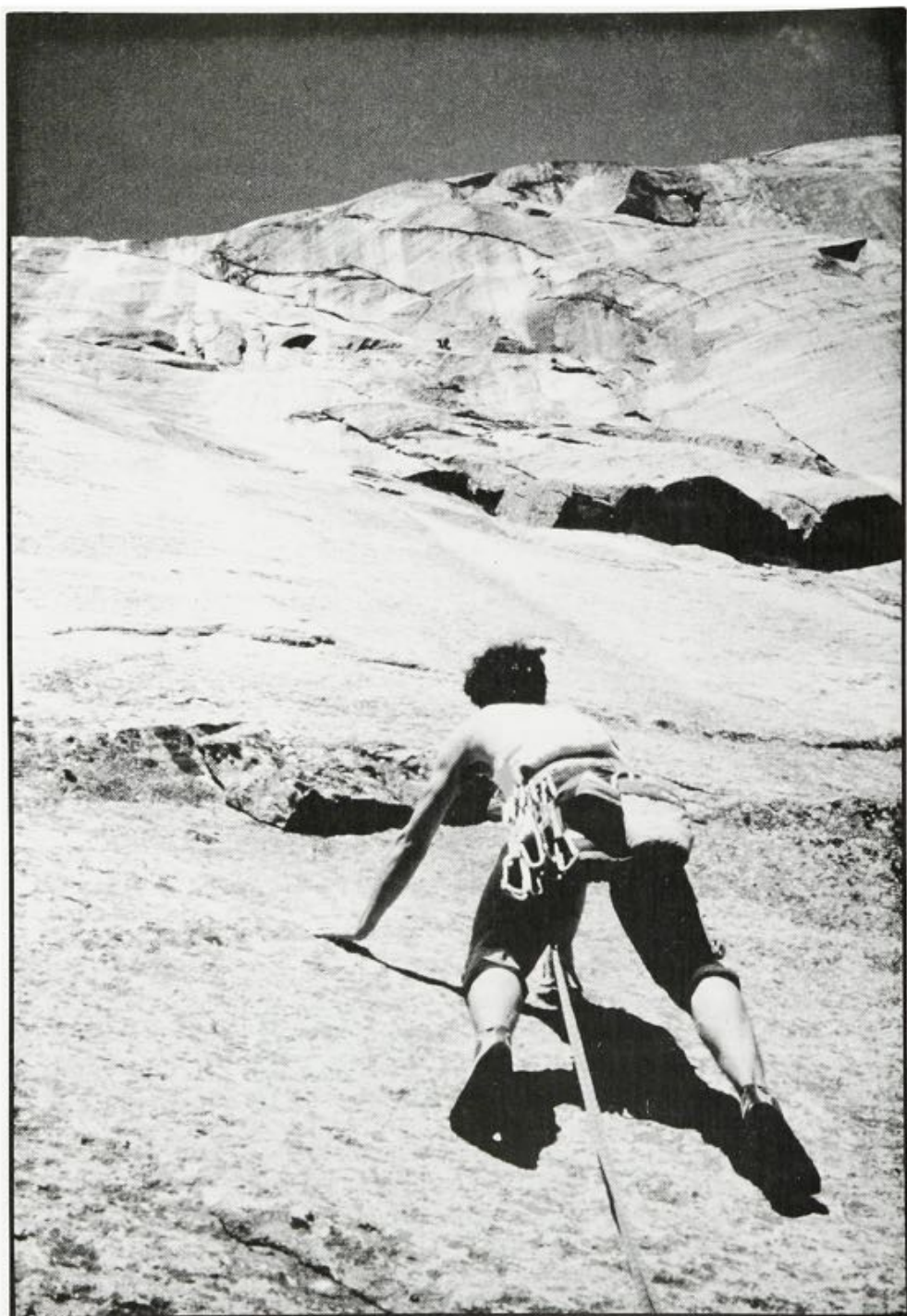
we got up all the loose rock and wet cracks and abseiled back down in the twilight over terrain calculated to jam ropes and knock blocks off we felt we had run a gamut of risks worthy of something rather more important. Next day we decided to do one of the better known Vercors' routes, but by the time we got to the foot of the *Arc de Cercle* the other side of Grenoble it was again afternoon, and once more we were climbing with a visibility of only a couple of pitches. Furthermore, the crack was wet and presented Dore with some major problems, and he had on occasion to abandon a purist approach; but the rain did just hold off and we were rewarded by the A1 and A2 pitches which gave a full run out of superb free climbing for my leader and allowed me to indulge in my favourite grade of A0. But on the long final so-called easy section one could not help but think what happened to Marc Martinetti and Lionel Terray and it was with relief that we reached the top. But it was only temporary, for we had not realized quite the significance of the simple instruction, the best way off is to traverse the ridge until grassy slopes leading back down are reached. If the reader has done it he will know what I mean: if he hasn't I won't spoil the surprise for him. But for goodness sake do leave yourself a little more time than we did.

When we got back to Chamonix the conditions seemed to be even more uncertain, but with new snow and cold temperatures it seemed that perhaps some of the ice routes were possible. However, I find I have lost most of my old enthusiasm for these, and it was fortunate that there were now others around for Dore to exhaust and he managed to snatch a couple of ice routes, including the Swiss on the Courtes which he walked up to from the valley at night, on the met man's dubious promise of at least half a good day, after having climbed with me all day at Salvan (the latter, incidentally, is a superb paradise of hard granite routes, 100-120m high, in a sylvan setting above Martigny, which we had completely to ourselves on one of the busiest Sundays of the holiday period). A couple of days later the weather forecast again foretold another day when the frontal system would move slightly northwards so we decided to go and hope there was not too much snow on the other Swiss route, that on the Grand Capucin. That night there was a bitterly cold wind, so we did not leave the Torino until 6.30 a.m. Furthermore, the weather was by no means what had been promised, but at least the wind was from the north-west and the cloud coming over the top was not too thick. A party that had come from the Col du Midi and had been sitting undecidedly shivering at the bottom of the route for hours determined to go for it when they saw others arriving and when we reached the couloir I realized that there was also a party of three Italians belting up behind us. No time for putting on crampons or the rope; we simply had to get there first. As we reached the rock and rushed to change the Italians courteously gave us best, so we only had one party ahead to contend with. It was only at the serious difficulties that we began to be held up by them, so Dore tried to psyche them out into finishing by *O Sole Mio*, saying he

had heard that the Swiss route had virtually no gear in it and the alternative was only 5b-ish. Unfortunately, this ploy did not work and the leader resorted to the original way the route was climbed, declaring that whilst he happily led E3 in no way could he see how the traverse and roof section went free. Nor did I when Dore did it and there is no doubt that he had an exciting time on the three crucial pitches whilst I nervously belayed him from hanging stances. I hardly need add that I was glad I had brought at least one etrier with me. As I arrived at the summit I experienced a feeling of that same sheer pleasure which I used to get when I first started Alpine climbing. For some reason, perhaps because of the dramatic presentation in Les Etoiles du Midi which so impressed me when I was a beginner, I have always had a mental blockage about the Cap and I thought it would be something I would never bring myself to try. In the event, we did it in six hours, despite being held up for nearly an hour and the fact that it could hardly have gone much above zero all day. With a friendly Dutch pair who had done one of the Abo routes we abseiled back down in an hour and a half, queued for an hour to catch the cable car and were back through the tunnel in time for dinner at Chamonix. Next day, it stormed. Two days later the front came in early. Never mind, I had not really wanted to do the Diables Couloir and the weather man's mistake only cost us a couple of hundred francs and a sleepless night crowded together above the loos of the Midi teleferique station!

Yet again we were forced onto lower things for the next promise of a day and half's reasonable weather. This time, we decided to try the Grimsel fare which so seems to enthuse the rock jocks. With reason. *Septumania* proved to be everything that we had been told. We had wanted to do *Motorhead*, but by the time we reached it from Chamonix after an unnecessary drive to the Oberaarsee and back, it was 1.30 and there was a slowish party on it. But I don't think it was a matter of second best. Both routes are clearly superb and ours offered seventeen pitches of sustained and varied climbing at HVS:E1, 5a:b on perfect granite. And the routes are rather more committing than might be thought, for the cliff is nearly 500m high and it is certainly better to go on than try and retreat after one has woven intricately across the overlapping slabs. Next day was, as promised looking stormy, so we confined ourselves to Handegg and did the classic original route on the right hand pillar, *Fair Hands Line*. Again somewhat longer and more engaged than might be thought, with an excellent start and finish, and a unique descent.

Back in Chamonix the weather man was enthusiastic, summer at last was with us. I found it hard to believe, looking at the frontal systems on the charts, but he seemed certain. So I suggested that we let the rest of the stormy weather really clear away, as also the crowds of the 15th August, and go up on the Sunday evening to do the Gervasutti Pillar on Monday. That evening the forecast started backtracking, storms coming in Monday afternoon. Sunday, on the other hand, turned out more brilliant than he



'Septumania' at Grimsel.

Photo: John C. Wilkinson.

had predicted. The answer was clearly to get on the route and try and climb most of the rock that day, hoping to find a reasonable bivvy site and get off before the weather broke next day. So at 11 o'clock I dashed round to the Aiguille du Midi station while Dore did the shopping (including the bread) and managed to find a tourist near the head of the queue who kindly got us tickets for the 1.10 cable car. What a rush and what a pleasure to get out of the crowds and go up to such a popular route with no one in sight. The only problem was the weight of our 'sacks, particularly once boots were exchanged for Fires.

The bergschrund proved not too bad and we attacked the rock a little before 5 p.m. We passed all the obvious bivvy sites low down, deciding to press on in hope. The Piola topo did not seem to show much sign of anything, but my French description, which was otherwise equally useless, did talk of a fine little breche somewhere in the apparently continuous pillar that rose above us. It turned out perfect, and we passed the night wedged between two shoulders of rock, with just enough room to lie out facing the Capucin, the Super Couloir below our feet and the Boccalate Pillar at our heads. One of the problems about bivouacs *in media res* however, is that one does not get the warm up of the approach of a classic start and, lizard-like, waits for the sun's warmth before attacking hard rock. Particularly, since we had been chilled by sharp gusts of icy wind that had started at dusk and gone on all night, clearly not the result of the usual differential cooling process at nightfall which we had first thought. However, although the dawn was milky the sky was reasonably clear, so far as we could see. In any case, what the hell; four or five pitches of hard climbing and then... Well, everyone had warned us the route went on somewhat, but even so those three final lines of description could not be that disproportionate to the rest. Perhaps not, if one is really altitude fit and has been carrying heavy 'sacks all season. And if things are not too iced up. But the weather had left its mark and as soon as we moved round onto the shady side of the Pillar it was real *Ambiance Eigerwand*. We had heard that several parties had been forced to abseil back down at the time we were doing the Capucin and the presence of a perfectly good krab and sling indicated that the previous party must have done so. But it was an unattractive solution and we decided to soldier on, despite the first flurry of snow. No pleasure now. There is more serious climbing in the last three lines of the route description of the Gervasutti, than all the preceding page of guff about V and VI rock. Three pitches in Fires climbing on snow and ice on a steep rock ramp with a strenuous finishing crack took us to the top of the classified difficulties, where we could change into those plastic lumps that have replaced old-fashioned leather boots, ideally suited to such terrain. And then on and on, up interminable mixed ground, for the couloir was unfortunately out of condition. One pitch from the top, where the rock briefly re-emerges in some technical interest, we were overtaken by a rapid Swiss pair, but we discovered later that there were many others below, some of whom must

have had a very exciting time if they did not abseil off before the storm broke. Thank goodness we had avoided that hassle.

We arrived at the summit of Mont Blanc de Tacul about 4 o'clock with the range to ourselves. A superb sight, the high mountains still half in sunlight but the Aiguilles Rouges and the Chamonix Valley in the blackest gloom. I hoped my wife would not be too worried for I had confidently predicted our return that evening and now there was no question of getting the cable car. And already the storm was breaking. The flog back up to the Midi was, as everyone inevitably remarks, interminable. But this time it was even more interminable. As I started up the ridge my hair began to bristle. To be struck by lightning and fall down the Frendo face as a completion to one's twenty-fifth Alpine season and two hundredth route would be bad fiction. Twenty yards from the tunnel the lightning leaped from the Aiguille onto the iron stanchions that support the tourists' guard rail and across to my ice axe. I was in the tunnel before the next flash struck and started one of the most spectacular storms of the season.

New Year's Eve

Dave Gregory

We arrived just after mid-day, dumped our gear in the hotel, and walked into the town to look around, buy tomorrow's mid-day food and get a box of milk for the illicit coffees in the bedroom. The state of the town bore out the dismal views we had had of hills merely snow-dusted. The roofs were just roofs, as dry as midsummer, the pavements were free of snow and of people. Shopkeepers stood idle in the shops. Where last year they had been fighting through the customers to fill the shelves today they stood bemused waiting for the doorbell to ring and the till to make its satisfied Swiss klunk as it closed shut upon the satisfactorily heavy coin and devaluation proof notes. We spared them no pity. The pound was falling and the Montana shop windows wore their usual sneer for the poor British. Wisps of velvet with a few shards of pretty glass were labelled in hundreds of francs, yes, there was no decimal point in it, and the necessities of life came dear. Probably in dearer, plusher Crans one would need a mortgage for a ham sandwich and Brits were starving to death. There was nothing for it but to empty the ski boots, socks and pyjamas of the Twixes and Bandits, fill the day-sack and head for the hill, knowing that entering one of the high restaurants would induce a financial shock equivalent to the physical one of falling from the telepherique onto a concrete terrace, on your head.

There was hardly sufficient snow on the first day but the falls of snow each evening gradually covered the grass and gravel and reduced the frequency of the sole-ripping scars. The fall on the Sunday night was Alpine at its best. The chalet roofs donned their metre thick duvets overnight and the spirits of the whole resort lifted. The restricted pistes of the first few days became a wonderland of thick powder above that hard base. Even the shopkeepers smiled. There had to be disadvantages. The poor snow of the early season had kept the holiday hordes away to the delight of those skiers who had booked and had to come anyway and experienced, to their surprise, queueless lifts. The heavy fall itself kept them away for the first day but thereafter the crowds came. Hard though the avalanche patrols worked all day and into the night the high level runs were kept closed for two days until all danger from the new fall was dissipated. Until they were opened the torrent of new arrivals was pinned into the lower runs and the queues massed into crowds.

The French, having invented the word queue, as usual ignored its meaning and tempers flared. On our next to last day the Plaine-Morte:La Barmaz indicator changed from red to green and the log-jam burst upward into the telepherique and the long run. A wonderland of perfect snow and magnificent views fought for in a melee of shoulders and elbows which made

the Ashbourne Football game look like a Tupperware party. If one waited a few minutes while each cabin-load struggled Gadarene-like to be first to the piste the snow cleared and one could imagine that one was alone.

We eulogised that night about that afternoon's skiing. We had only one more day, only one more day and that day was New Year's Eve. I knew where I wanted to spend the last day of the Old Year. On that magnificent high run, despite the struggles to reach it, but the others in the party did not want to go through the repetitions of the Battle of Waterloo to get in the top cabin and voted for the lower slopes. Myself, I was willing to put my front row experience to the test and opted for the Plaine-Morte again. I caught the bubble-car from Les Violettes and settled back to watch the scenery near and far. The saw upon saw of crests, a few days ago merely a dirty black horizon streaked with white, was now a multi-crested white blanket accentuated by the black buttresses and the changing light of the climbing sun.

The snow-laden pines above the town thinned out to the rolling slopes of the high pasture, broken only by the cabins of the awakening towns and the summer chalets of the cowherds. Higher again the ground became more broken. The snow sweep jumbled into a giant lorry spill of snow blocks; snow covering the huge boulders which are the debris from huge old rock falls from the cliffs higher up. Here cornices curled out and lapped over the steep walls of canyons left by landslips. A rock stack with a thick snow mortar-board stood tantalisingly within snowball throw. Over the final rise to the Les Violettes station and the first scrum for the telecabine. Quite a genteel affair really with elements of politeness remaining as the numbers were still under a cabin load.

I never noticed her in the queue but she stood out in the cabin as she would have in the Wigan pack. Even though the shops and wealth displayed in Crans had become less of a surprise after a week she displayed a flair unusual among the load of serious early morning skiers. Gold-blond hair she had, shoulder length, held in expensive casualness by a blue chiffon scarf, reversed and knotted behind her neck and then behind her hair again. A gold chain, thick and heavy, hung from beneath the scarf and dipped from view behind the top of her well filled powder blue salopettes. She leaned back against the cabin wall looking at everyone with a mildly condescending smile but catching no-one's eye. Although we were quite crowded for an early morning cabin she had a clear space round her and she could be clearly seen. Her knee-length fur coat hung open, its horn toggles unlatched and its palomino gold lit up the car. Her upraised left hand held her skis, no hire label, her own, well over head high, with a pair of sticks hung over the points by the straps. A pair of bushy tails hung from one stick and swayed as the cabin rocked over the pylon wheels. She passed unruffled out of the car and into the clear sharp air. Like me she let the press rush for the long schuss until she could get an uncluttered run at it. Away we went, she with elegance and effortlessly. I, working hard, trying to remember the lessons

of the week and forget the toilet training of those self-taught Scottish corries.

I could have made the whole descent into the valley but I chose to re-run that high section as often as I could and so I trampled the top surface of other people's ski and had the top edges taken off mine in the Barmaz queue and re-entered with zest the international maul at Les Viollettes. The early morning politesse had gone and the gloves were off. Happy to find myself among a group of French I lowered the shoulder and got the elbows to work. A very pleasant twenty minutes passed in brisk wrestling before I popped through the door of the cabin like a cork out of a bottle into its comparative calm and there she stood cucumber-cool in the car corner, completely unruffled, probably descended from a line of fly-halves, with a sidestep both ways. I saw her again in some of the other rucks and as the fingers on the "prochaine ascente" clock crept nearer to four I saw her pass through the guichet a few places in front of me and heard the dour uncommunicative oaf who manned it positively trill "Derniere ascente, madame, belle piste, bonne chance". Well who wouldn't be melted by that radiance. I looked across the car at a fixture about a metre to one side of her, goddess-worshipping out of the corner of my eye. She looked tired, and well she might, non-stop skiing and several Rugby internationals takes it out of you, and as for me, I was cream-crackered. Her coat and hair seemed lighter now but the squirrel tails swung with spirit, bushier than ever.

The last half-dozen left the station and stood for a while in the cooling evening. The sky was changing colour from the day's clear faultless azure to a steel-blue, crimsoned in the west before it died to the night's black velvet. I was very conscious of being tired but I knew that this was the last run. Tomorrow the plane and work-a-day England. "Once more into the breach, dear friends" and I stood there stiffening the sinews and summoning up the blood. I saw my beautiful doppelganger again. The squirrel tails swirled as she did and by some trick of the sunset light seemed to glow. Away she went, her hair and the coat lighter, almost white in the colour-hiding uniformity of approaching night.

"On, you noble English, on" and down the familiar run I followed her to La Barmaz. She rode the lift alone, some chairs in front of me, and at its top she slid leftwards down the slope passing just left of the buildings to stand silhouetted beside them against the darkening sky. Her hair was no longer confined in the scarf and hung, wind-blown, to her shoulders. As I came nearer she crouched forward, appearing for a moment like a cloaked and bent old man, then she rose to the start with a parody of the cavalry officer's arm-swing command to "Charge."

She followed the trade run which joins the Piste Nationale but she skied so much better than I that I could not spare the attention to notice what track we took. She left that M1 certainly and followed some minor track like a sprite. She took one hump like a bird, her arms widespread against the sky, the squirrel tails glowed, I swear it, her coat flared behind her like a cloak. I checked before the bump with a side-check and slid over it to

see her slipping out of view below me. I poled frantically on and gained on her; her tracks left our minor road and arrowed down a slope of unbroken snow into the deepening gloom. My God. "Good yeomen, whose limbs were made in England, show us here your mettle." Fear rose in my throat and I slowed to a safer speed, determined now to let her go and to follow just her tracks, but then, there she was waiting.

She looked less like an enchantress now and more like an eldritch taunter. Again the wave and I followed, straining to keep up. Up and down the switchbacks we went in plumes of powder, all under control until she leapt again, outlined against the sky but turning as she came down to land like a feather on that icing topped rock stack.

I swung hard into the turn, edging hard to come to rest on the very edge of the cliff, a plume of snow arcing towards her. Her? The gold hair was lank and age-whitened. The sun-kissed coat was bleached white and fell full length in folds. The figure lifted its left hand above its head and the glow from the lantern fastened to the stick it carried fell on the gown it wore. The right hand ski stick thrust into the snow by his feet melted into the tip of his ski. Melted and merged; not a stick and a ski but a scythe. A scythe. The bent figure straightened, peered out of the lantern's glow across the gap at me and swung its scythe. The cornice on which I stood collapsed beneath me and down I fell in a cloud of snow into the abyss, night, and oblivion.

No New Year's Eve for me.

The Book of Borrowdale

(Banzai Pipeline, June 1988)

1

Turn the leaves of the crag,
Work through the ponderous gathers
Of the rhyolite or the Skiddaw slate,
Thumb their deckled edges,
Hang in there, look for a passage, even a line
That chimes with your own movement.

2

Slabs of forgotten event
Are closed beyond eyes, beyond fingers,
Their own weight sealing them.
Only when they build in an overlap
Do we see into them, glimpse a millenium
Thinned to an insect's wing,
The scalding blood of the planet
Caked in death.
Its thickness thwarts our chests,
Threatening us like burial.
Our brains eel outwards to our sensors' tips
Intent as a snail's eye growing down its horn,
And there between the lines of the sombre volume
An ice-white break presents itself:
On the immaculate faces of the quartz,
With relief, we print our images.

3

Here is a vein of weakness, here the genius
Is hardly at his best
Dismally snuffing to himself,
Grinding his stained teeth,
His chapped lips murmuring wetly
Making a dismal virue of the fact
That he has stood in the corner, back to the sun,
For longer than he cares to remember.

4

Sliding down is easy,
Easy as English.
We have to read it upwards,
Struggling to make sense
Of its outlandish Arabic;
Scimitar blades cutting space on a curve,
Clenched knots, flaring tongues.

Inscribed in another time,
Crazed as a refugee
Whose babble of genesis and holocaust
Threatens our balance, the jagged columns barely
Allow us in. Our eyes
Stray to the minature gardens twined on the margins:
Pendulant summer leafage, carmine bells
Tasselled on leaning spires...

The gist is here, central
The line that closes out
All footling sidetracks, easy escapes,
Or loose alternatives.
We are bound in to its spine.
Each point entails the next: once we have grasped it
Going back is unthinkable.
The great end shears abruptly.
Scalloped leaves of oak
Weathe in a colophon.
Meaningless spaces open out beyond.

David Craig

Paucity

it's called
they said, grinning
under woollen hats,
wanting to go now
that I'd just arrived
panting, warm and keen
as the moorland wind
they hunched and hopped against.
November. Sunday. Stanage.
'Do you want a go?' they
stammered. 'You'll not take
long, will you!' came down
the black gritstone wall.
Day had darkened.
'We'll tell you the numbers,
call the moves'
Leaping at the ledges
I fired fingers to accept
what comes under the overhang.

'Turn the left into an undercut.'
I didn't
till I had to.
'Step left'. I had and reached
high. 'That pocket's good.'
Better than words
was the urge to flow
limbs at their unlikely
purchase points on rounded rock
that gave its grains of grit
to the eye that trusts,
the foot that feels
the least ripple
in this uplifted sea,
till Paucity struck.
'Why do you think
its called Paucity?'
they mocked from below.

Standing on some small
forgotten grains
my hands slapped surfaces
that smiled a rounded face
until a pull on a single
pale pebble
pinched between finger and thumb
on a straight arm,
leaning out,
allowed a foot to reach
around a bulge beyond
the logic of gravity
to rest on a rim
of a thin ledge,
push down and rise
on only fingerprints
with confidence
and stagger over the top.

'Look at those rays
of sun on Hathersage!'
Suddenly they strike us
and someone shouts
'Who's turned the nightlights on?'

A Severe Attack of the Deja Vu.

Peter Harding

Late last February, when good snow was hard to come by and decent ice could only be got from the freezer, and even God's Own Rock seemed to have found an answer to sticky rubber, a weighty package came thudding through my letter box. Unwrapping revealed a splendid looking volume on the flyleaf of which was written simply, "To the author of the first bumper fun book from the author of the second---". It was signed. For a few days I could not put it down, despite threats of decrees nisi and nasti from my wife.

I had already read many of its reviews in various journals; all amounting to rave notices plus, of course, the odd, contrived criticism which every conscripted critic feels bound to make. They conjured up mental pictures of some intrepid soloist, sloping smoothly up steepening slabs of slate, lightly equipped with chalk bag and magnifying glass, pausing only to dip into one or peer through the other, alternately at book or rock. Had I been given such a task of reviewing "Llanberis" I could have done it with enormous economy of work, style and space; a single mixed superlative: Fantabulous! It truly is the best bit of guidebook writing for years. No clipped, clinical catalogue of climbs; nor mammoth mimic of Menlove Edwards. If anything, a quite original touch of George Bower, sixty years on and in the modern idiom. Yet, here and there, a definite but unobtrusive sign of maestro Milburn. And those Griffiths penned pictures - sheer cliff artistry!

Now before the reader, (or the Editor), thinks; "what the hell is the old sod on about?" let me hasten to explain it was that new Llanberis guide which brought on a severe attack of deja vu, catapulting my mind backwards through seeming eons of time to the spring of '49 when the first B.F.B., commissioned as a guide to Llanberis Pass by the C.C., was almost finished. There came over me then a great temptation to swoop across my sou' western boundary of the Snowdon Railway, with rope and pencil, to annex The Black Cliff of Arddu. The problem was to persuade my editor of the wisdom of including, in a book already fatter than its predecessors, the great "Ah Boo Boo", (as The Black Cliff was affectionately referred to by Alf Bridge and its great, western, first ascensionist, Jack Longland). Argument such as having done all existing routes save Sheaf and Bow Shaped was much too puerile to present to Wilfrid Noyce. I needed some subtle, psychological vantage from which to court my case. Opportunity came on that lesser black cliff, Craig Ddu, during the ascent of Crown of Thorns. With me on top, Wilf below, our rope ravelled through the crowning holly, I won a wincing murmur of accord.

Hot foot with Gordon Dyke who, like many others, had already assisted much with the guide book explorations, I sped across and over to the Ah Boo Boo, intent on Bow Shaped Slab, The Sheaf, or both. Inadvertently we

60

ended up doing a West Buttress Girdle. It was all triggered by discovery that Sheaf had landed me on the upper reaches of Narrow Slab, where I was tempted into playing a silly trick on my second. I ascended that familiar ground for some few feet to loop a runner, bringing the rope down again, hidden then by grass, to a point below where Sheaf emerged. When Gordon swung round just above, to stand in balance, looking up, I shouted, "Boo!" His quite unruffled, scathing glance conveyed such disdain I could only say, "Go up to belay while I look at something down here". In fact I had spotted a break in the right, retaining wall of Narrow and scrambling round, there I was on Bow Shaped Slab, above its crucial traverse pitch. Our subsequent, downward, crossing of the Bow led us to traverse right across the West Buttress but that is almost ancient history.

As a final check out for the guide I ascended Bow Shaped some weeks later. When Fred Smith and I were about to leave the hut and flog over to the Ah Boo Boo, Graham MacPhee arrived. I had to invite him to join us for "it was he, the Black M'Phee", who had given it the more famous name of Cloggy. Anyone from the land where they can get "a Vatty" out of Sgurr a' Mhadaidh was sure to make a "Cloggy" out of Clogwyn du'r Arddu! At that time MacPhee himself was quite a famous name, he had seconded Kirkus up Great Slab and Pedestal Crack in '30 and '31, he was editor of an elegant S.M.C. guidebook to Ben Nevis and, in '46, followed Arnold Carsten on the first ascent of Central Rib. I had climbed with him on Nevis and on Cynr Las, but each occasion turned out to be an epic. Thoughtfully, I put a spare rope in my 'sack.

At Cloggy we used the Great entry to reach our goal and when we were assembled at the stance below Bow's crucial traverse I nipped up the blunt arete for some twenty feet to fix a running belay loop. Clipping in the spare rope I descended and tried to explain to Mac how he could use it as back rope protection across the crux. However wondrously exciting my vision had been during our walk up Cwm Glas Bach, of the great MacPhee pendulating across Bow to end up in a flying yo-yo onto Narrow, there on the wild fastnesses of Cloggy's West Buttress it became mortally terrifying! I had other problems to worry about. Was it still possible to follow Menlove Edwards' original line? Everyone who had tried did not believe it was, since a crucial hold had broken away. I needed to know for the guide. So I traversed left onto the Bow, then up, a longish reach, fingery and hard, to gain the upper line of traverse. It did still go, after all! Continuing on across the break then upwards to a stance I halted to bring my second. With Fred belayed I climbed directly up, a little further, to a more commanding stance and flake belay. I called for Mac to come. Supported by Fred in the Circle and me in the Gods, with a back rope in the wings, no epic incident could possibly occur. Or could it? I should have remembered that MacPhee was a great competitor; anything J.M.E. might have done, G.G.M. would do better, or at least try to do so. On the hard move he tried to go even further left, then with one hand gripping the cliff he got annoyed with the back

rope and tried frantically to flick its runner off with his other hand. He seemed determined either to climb the pitch single handed or win the Pendulum of the Year award. Fred and I, with bated breath, could only watch, gripping our ropes and marvelling at his singular strength of arm, even more at his command of language, terrible language. Foul Scottish oaths rent the quiet of Cloggy's western front. I prayed that neither Mac nor the back rope runner would come off. Fortunately, before either happened, he let go of the rope to concentrate entirely on climbing and swearing, thugging and cursing his way up to the easier, traversing line. There, the runner came off easily as I intended and he proceeded, to join Fred. When Mac was secured, Fred came up to my perch and its Grade A flake belay. I then continued on the thinning crack line which leads to the Bow's topmost edge; a long run-out. Unfortunately, 120 feet of rope was scarcely enough and reaching the finishing ledge I could only pull up to lie half on half off, chest down, unbelayed. And Fred had given me all the rope. Knowing Fred had a good belay, I shouted for him to bring Mac then waited, relaxed, listening as occasional words floated from below. No epics now, all was serene and Mac was on an easy bit. Suddenly there was a wild, horrendous cry. I had heard it on Nevis and on Cynr Las. A simultaneous snatch at my waist pulled me backwards off the ledge. Miraculously I stopped just short of take-off point for the Welsh yo-yo Record. Balanced on forearms, in a sort of elbowed mantelshelf, at the Amen end of the ledge, I gingerly turned my head to glance down. For King Louis! Fred was completely off his perch, bent double, hanging from the belay; a twangy rope stretched down to a swinging Scotsman; some tiny rattle of distant stones echoed the fate of MacPhee's erstwhile holds. Mac's life was hanging by a Fred!

Horrific though this scene undoubtedly was, worse still were those dreadful curses which only a pure bred Scot can deliver so loudly and continuously! With no wish to exacerbate the situation I strained against the rope, scratching, pulling, trying to gain more purchase on my ledge. Silent prayers, bursting forth as tiny beads of perspiration, were mercifully answered: Mac did find other, stronger holds, Fred got himself upright and back upon his perch. Then, my rope slackened, I was able to stretch forward; an eternity later, reaching the belay, fixing a sling.

Eventually, when both companions had joined me on my ledge, Mac explained that none of it had been his fault. First, that "infernal rope" had all but succeeded in pulling him off. Finally, those "bloody wee hand holds", perhaps weakened by the careless passage of earlier climbers, had broken away as soon as he gripped them. He looked from Fred to me. I could do no less than offer my lead of the final pitch to Fred.

Some time later, in the old "Royal" at Capel Curig, I met Nea Morin, a great friend and admirer of Menlove Edwards. She had accompanied him on an early attempt at Bow Shaped Slab and, on learning of our recent ascent, remarked; "For many years, after a hold broke away, everyone believed it to be impossible".

I replied, "It is still just as impossible as it always was, but a lot safer now since I invited MacPhee along to test all the holds. He pulled off those which were suspect and tossed them down".

Relapse!

Early last March, I was swinging from this finger hold on the desperately difficult gritstone of Woodhouse Scar, two hundred feet above the valley floor and a full three feet from the foot of the crag, when it happened. Again! The trouble with *deja vu* is that it is an oft recurring ailment in the aged. I was just thinking I had made a swift recovery from the last bout when my mind sprang back to that summer of '51, the dawn of a new age.

With Norman Horsefield, I had scrambled up to the Cromlech, not to have a look at Cenotaph Corner or to repeat Ivy Sepulchre, but to climb the steep, rugged arete in between. However, although its upper parts seemed most attractive, with some promising, visible cleavage, the bottom was heavily defended by ferocious holly and abundant vegetation. Each probing advance was thwarted, from directly below, then slyly sidling from the Cenotaph, finally off the foot of that four year old sister Ivy Sepulchre. Any modern tiger would have flashed it, probably solo, to give some name like Christmas Hula Girl or Murdo the Mortician Meets Geriatric Spider. For us the ultimate deterrent arrived, it rained. As if to give vent to our feelings, Norman was violently sick; clearly it was no day to proceed with anything new. The Cemetery Gates, (as our arete turned out to be), would have to remain closed until some later, Rock and Ice, age. (It was, in fact, but two months away!)

To console my ailing companion and get from within his puking range I offered to lead the Sepulchre again, maybe a second ascent, probably the first in nails since we were clad, of course, in proper mountain footgear. (Our boots were fair bristling with Tricouni No 6s).

Up I went with comforting knowledge that the crux might be aided and certainly protected by a sturdy peg; the sounds of Norman's regular retching gradually diminished and I was soon belayed, high above, in the tall, half-naked holly tree. By the time my second had picked, pulled and puked his way up there the rain had almost ceased. On the upper, slabby left wall he didn't give a retch, just enjoyed the high living. At the Valley we traversed to a tree above Cenotaph Corner and abseiled down; I wanted to rescue a karabiner which we had seen earlier, hanging from a sling almost half way.

There were rumours in the Pass that a very promising young lad called Joe, and some friendly Valkyries, had been laying seige to the corner for the last couple of years. Indeed there had been sights and sounds of such tactics, even while young Joe had been away doing his National Service. But I was baffled as to why a sling and karabiner should have been left at this particular point, 50 feet up. Joe, it was said had been a lot higher than

that even at his first attempt. Was someone else secretly competing for the honours? If so, why had the evidence been left there? Maybe whoever left it had been overtaken by darkness or bad weather, forced to abseil even though the climbing below was fairly easy.

Thus Norman and I pondered the possibilities as we scrambled down the scree to Pont-y-Gromlech. "It could be that the owner of that krab, on a similar day to this, suddenly decided to bugger off and go for a good ridge walk," I volunteered.

Norman grinned, sickness now gone; "Why didn't we think of that?" I smiled back, "We might even have had an off day!"

Then he said, "That sling and krabiner may actually have saved somebody from serious injury."

Three weeks later, the Cromlech forgotten, August Bank Holiday saw me in the Lakes for a whole weekend of classic climbing with Geoff Pigott. On one day we walked the High Level route to Pillar for that superb Rib and Slab and the fine Route II. Another day we went on Scafell to climb in the footsteps of Collie up Moss Ghyll, then tried to vanquish the Great Flake on Central Buttress. My failure to summount this timeless testpiece, in one single run-out from the Oval, was disappointing but before descending I removed a sling and karabiner found hanging just below the chockstone.

Back on the scree, we wandered round to the East Buttress to try our hands at something else; Mayday maybe or Overhanging Wall. However we found the rock beset by a bunch of young turks. It did seem to be winning though, so we waited, watching spell bound as their would-be leader, in extremis, fought desperately to descend, slowly from the top of a steep slabby buttress. It was clear he was having an off day; every move he made he dithered and slithered, repeatedly shouting "I'm off! I'm off!" Each time Geoff and I really believed he was.

His four mates, less certain, kept up vociferous encouragement from which we learned that his first name was Ron and his second one was Moseley. Eventually, by miraculous good fortune, Ron reached the scree safely. We breathed again. The now quiescent quintet then coiled their rope and tramped off dejectedly in the direction of Mickledore.

After allowing ourselves time to recover from such nerve shattering heroics, Geoff and I proceeded with the climb on which they had occurred and soon, with him belayed at the top of a steep slabby buttress, I was engaged with the next pitch. At this precise moment our five diminutive would-be heroes arrived back at the foot of the climb and lined up along a sloping ridge of scree. A voice came up "We've come back for the sling and karabiner wot you've nicked off C.B." The words had an ominous ring, spoken in the unmistakeable dialect of Manchester Sherpas. Although we were above their heads or reach, my throat went dry. Overhanging Wall, if indeed it was that route suddenly became more so. If it was not, but Mayday perhaps, it aptly mimicked the word that was almost on my lips. However, my second, made of sterner stuff, and fastened to the crag, secure

on his stance, simply replied "Piss off". (Actually being a nice refined sort of bloke he never used such language and gave a polite, gentlemanly alternative, but the result was the same). The five, looking displeased, spread their line, sizeable stones were selected from the scree. Their spokeman spoke again in more menacing tone, "If yer don't bloody well give us back our sling and karabiner we'll bloody stone yer mate!"

Already harassed by steepish rock, alarmed at the paucity of holds, I was now frightened by those fearsome five. It was that little bit about "stone yer mate" which had me scared, for, in Manchester Sherpa dialect, there is never any comma between yer and mate, so I had the nasty feeling that mate meant me.

Reaching up round my neck for the karabiner and sling I realised it may actually save somebody from serious injury. Taking it off, I cast it down.

Without a word the gang of five dropped their stones, picked up the sling and krab then tramped off once more. When they had gone I retreated slowly to the haven of Geoff's stance. He descended to the scree. Then I started down; I was having an off-day. I slithered and dithered on every move, continually mumbling, "I'm off! I'm off!", Geoff laughed like a drain, he seemed to think it was bloody funny.

In retrospect, I suppose it was. Ronnie Moseley survived those early years to become one of our ace rock climbers, a pioneer of classic new routes, respected author even of the New Climbs Supplement in a re-print of my Bumper Fun Book, and a leading exponent of a new technique called chockstoning!

In Praise of The Club

Keith Sharples

It had been several months since I had promised our Hon. Journal Editor some copy for the 1988 Journal. All I had to show for the period between that time and today was just thoughts, incomplete and wondering thoughts. Today however I was making one of my occasional visits to one of Sheffield's many second hand bookshops. Occasionally, treasure is sometimes to be found within these establishments. Today was just such a day, a pristine copy of the 1964 blue Stange guide, a pristine copy of 'High Peak', and finally a copy of the 1939 C C Journal. Never one to look a gift horse in the mouth I bought all three and retired gracefully to examine my spoils in greater depth.

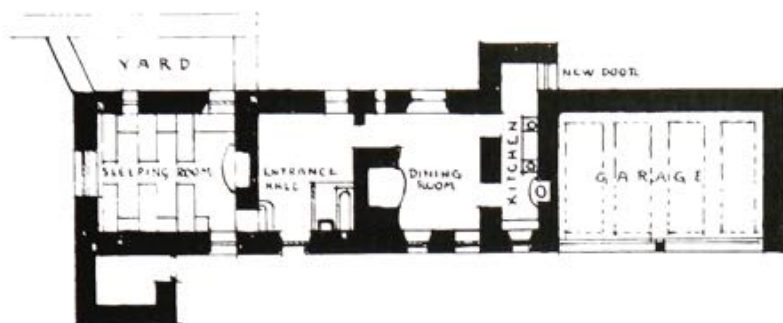
On any other day the Stange guide would have been sufficient to get me feeling that life wasn't that bad after all, but together with the Journal and 'High Peak', well what can I say? I'd tell you more about the copy of 'High Peak', but that's a different story altogether, and in any case I had recently read the book having acquired a copy on an earlier treasure hunt. A two 'High Peak' family? no, it has moved on!

No, under these peculiar circumstances it was the 1939 C C Journal which captured my attention. As soon as I started to thumb through the Journal I knew immediately that I had a solution to my aforementioned predicament, and that suddenly I had a theme for an article. Those club members who 'go back aways' will have to forgive my ramblings, but what I found within the covers of the 1939 Journal, and its style and layout, was I felt worth comparing to the more recent editions. It was perhaps because I had never seen a Journal from this era before that it caught my attention all the more.

It must be said immediately, that the format and layout of the Journal has changed not one jot. However, I can hear those amongst our membership that recall the 1973-74 and 1975 Journals crying out that there was once the A4 format. True, this larger format did emerge for a few years only to be dropped in favour of the familiar A5 format, it spoilt the look of the Journals in the bookcase 'you see' A cursory glance at the contents page revealed articles on familiar themes; mountaineering in the Himalaya, the Alps, rock climbing, technical articles, notes on the Club's huts, obituaries, new climbs, book reviews, editorials, officers of the club, advertisements and photographs. As I said, a familiar list indeed. In addition to the above the 1986:87 edition included some poetry, articles on such diverse sports as wind surfing, cross-country skiing, caving, all good clean fun - perhaps with the exception of caving, and colour, yes colour pics.

What is the point of all this self retrospection? Well it is simply this. My conclusions having studied both 1939 and 1986:7 editions fall into two main categories, the first relating to the 'health' of the Journal and secondly to the 'health' of the huts.

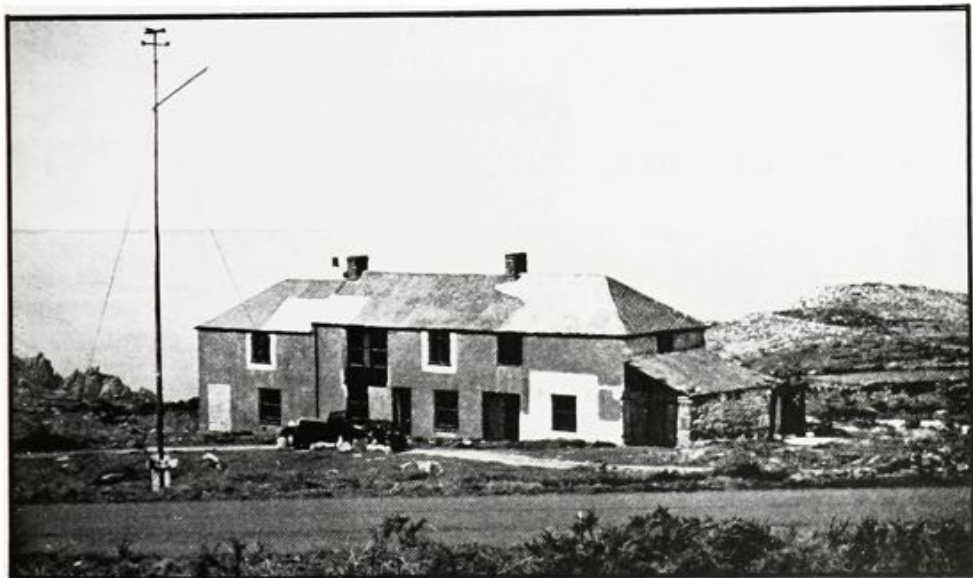
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LLANBERIS PASS
FOR THE CLIMBERS CLUB
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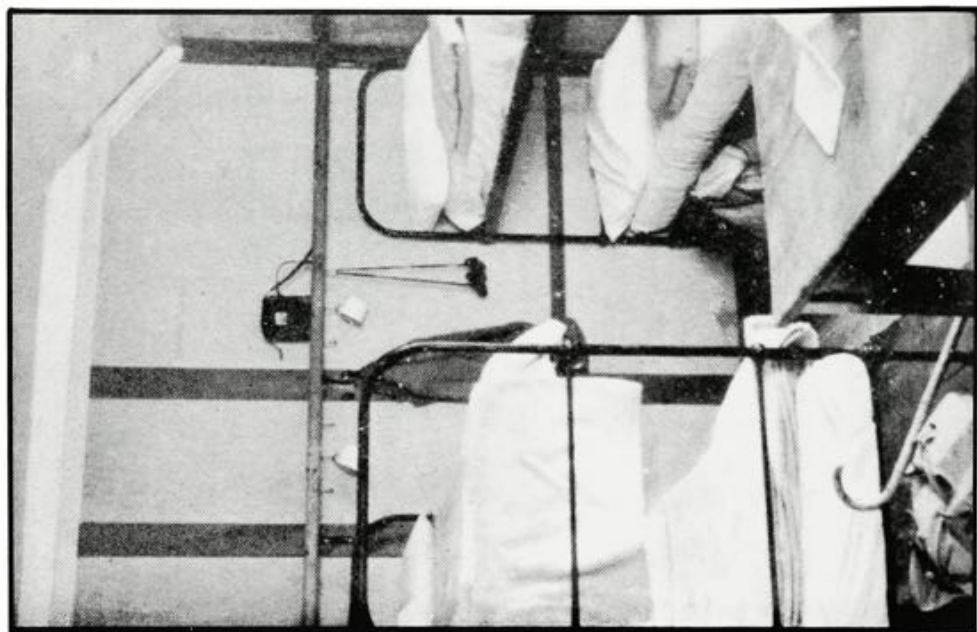


PLAN



STEWART McLAUCHLAN FRIBA
CHARTERED ARCHITECT
ROYAL LIVER BUILDING
LIVERPOOL FEBRUARY 1939





Without a doubt the Journal is very much alive, this surely being indicative of a healthy, active and involved Club membership. The new Hon. Journal Editor must surely have slept soundly in his bed after the publication of last year's Journal! The Club have undoubtedly a successful Journal long may it remain so.

Having read articles in the 1939 Journal by such eminent climbers:club members as J M Edwards and Wilfrid Noyce to name but two, I felt humbled indeed to think that I have in the past and hopefully will continue to - contributed both written and photographic work. Far more important though is a feeling of belonging and contributing to the Club and the Journal for the latter is a statement of the former, yet without the former there would not be the latter. They are unmistakably connected and cannot be extricated from each other. The health of the Journal must be ensured and therefore so too the Club.

Having patted our collective backs somewhat over the Journal, I now move on to the Club huts. Now here I am on decidedly dodgy ground, walking the proverbial tightrope. Since I have no involvement in the Huts maintenance - and can along with many others no doubt be justly chastised for it my remarks are given in praise of the work done on our accommodation rather than in anger at the work left to do, for that is surely in hand! The 1939 Journal contained two articles relating to the Club Huts; firstly Bosigran, which was opened in July 1938, and secondly Ynys Ettws which had just been purchased and for which extensive reconstructive works were planned. Perhaps my writing is poignantly timed since the latter has just been extensively uprated again, yet the former is in sad repair.

Judging by the photographs in the 1939 Journal the Count House must have been a fine place to spend a week or more. With luck it will rise once again to its former resplendent glory, since at the time of writing it is indeed a sad and sorry place. However E S Chantrell, writing about the purchase of Ynys Ettws in 1939, said "one cannot believe that anywhere in North Wales would it be possible to find a property more ideally situated", how right he was! The recently completed work at Ynys is again indicative of a healthy Club and is evidence, if it is needed, that the Huts Sub-Committee under the Chair of Henry Adler is as alive and well as the Club itself. Again long may this remain so!

So there you have my reflections on the Club, its Journal and its huts, and I never mentioned climbing, climbing ethics or bolts once! E S Chantrell concluded his Ynys Ettws article thus; "The cottage itself is well protected from the cold winds, and there is every reason to believe it will provide most comfortable accommodation". I think my parallel between the Club and its Journal and Huts can be concluded at this point also.

A Twist of Fate (54 days and 56 years)

Geoff Milburn

The name of Arthur Bullough is not well known within the rockclimbing world but his name is linked to the first independent guidebook to Laddow, written by H. Pearson in 1933. Bullough helped with the script and provided three of the 15 photographs.

In 1930 as a student Arthur Bullough became a member of the Manchester University Mountaineering Club which had amongst its members: Maurice Linnell, Philip Brockbank, Herbert Hartley, Wilson Hey, Roy Horsman, Geoffrey Winthrop Young, J.H. Doughty and Sir Martin Conway.

Arthur Bullough had already climbed in the Dolomites by 1931: "We hadn't intended to climb the Guglia - in fact we'd never even heard of it, but this unfortunate omission was rectified, repeatedly too, at various stages of our journey, by people enquiring, on seeing our climbing gear, whether we were going to climb the Guglia."

According to John Stewart during the 1931 Tal-y-Braich meet: "Bullough sang loudly in German most of the way from Bethesda along the ridge to Y Garn and finally we had to form a search party to recover Hobson's rucksack, which he elected to cast down many hundred feet of couloir to the stony cwm beneath." During the February 1932 M.U.M.C. meet at which Bullough was present, Maurice Linnell, with a party of six, completed the Great Gully of Craig yr Ysfa, but in the dark success was bought only at the cost of some hundreds of matches. The Easter meet of that year was also memorable: "These chronicles would not be complete without mention of Copeland's hat, a sacrifice to the Gods! Of the scarlet flowered pyjamas, which flown as an ensign from the chimney denoted that Holden was in residence; of the marvellous vocal achievements of the morning washers up; or of our noble Secretary's (Bullough's) nightmare, when balancing on the edge of a chair, he is alleged to have searched the air for an elusive hold muttering in his sleep, 'I can't find it, I can't find it.' "

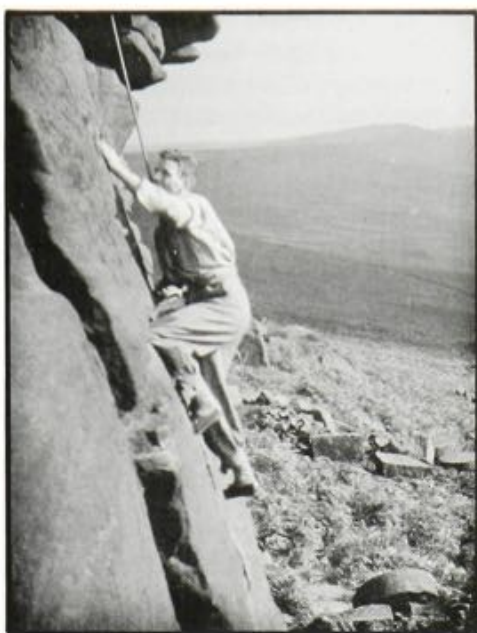
John Marchington later capped that story with an even better one from the Whitsun 1932 Langdale meet: "Bullough led some of us up the Needle for the first time, and at the top he was overtaken by a severe attack of cramp; and the spectacle of our Editor (Holden) massaging his buttocks must have been one which will linger in the minds of those who were in the Dress Circle.

Some of the party then climbed the Needle Arete and when halfway down the West Chimney, were hailed by piteous cries for help from our Secretary who was attempting a solo ascent of the Eagle's Nest Arete. In fact, his vocal efforts were so loud and persistent that we were obliged to interrupt our climb and rescue him."

Not only did Bullough excel on the crag but he also had the dogged attitude of the long-distance walker. At Easter 1933 he was one of the party which



*Arthur Bullough on 'The Scoop',
Windgather, 1931.*



*Arthur Bullough on 'Duo Crack',
Stanage, 1933.*



Arthur and Midge, late '35 or early '36.

completed the Welsh 3,000'ers by starting and finishing at Tal-y-Braich. The total time taken was 22 hours and 50 minutes. Using the same starting and finishing point philosophy he also did the Cuillin ridge during July 1933 in 19 hours from Glen Brittle.

"We had been just 12 hours on the ridge itself, rather less than Shadbolt and Maclaren, and distinctly less than the Fell and Rock party (based at Coruisk in 1926)."

Later in the 1930s Arthur Bullough met Margaret 'Midge' Stewart, one of the Scottish climbers described in Alastair Borthwick's 'Always a Little Further' (she figures prominently in the gripping Chapter 10 - Ice). They married in 1938 and had two daughters before Midge later died in 1949. During the war Bullough served with a Field Surgical Unit and was at both the Salerno and Anzio landings. He met his second wife while dodging mortar fire shells at Salerno. Later Bullough carried on as a surgeon in the Manchester area and eventually retired in 1982 at the age of 72.

Arthur's retirement was not to be of a gentle nature however as at the tender age of 76 he took up skiing and got hooked...

THE REAL STORY NOW UNFOLDS!

In January 1988 Arthur was skiing yet again in Cervinia where he bumped into Ken Vickers. On discovering that they were C.C. and Rucksackers respectively they adjourned for a lengthy chat over a bottle of wine. According to Arthur: "In conversation I happened to mention that in all my time I had only made one new climb. And it was ironic that even then, someone else had claimed the credit. It was the Grey Slab on Glyder Fawr."

Now Ken Vickers, knowing a good story when he hears one, suggested that Arthur should get in contact with the C.C. Guidebook Editor. This he did and before the end of January the factual evidence was building up. The plain fact emerging, unbelievable as it seemed, was that Arthur Bullough's ascent of Grey Slab had pre-dated that by Menlove Edwards.

A flood of thoughts came. Was it perhaps Grey Rib or one of the other routes? Surely it must be a mistake? We'll be hearing next that Kirkus didn't make the first ascent of Great Slab...What about the evidence?

The Rucksack Club log at Tal-y-Braich told the story. On July 2nd 1932 a party of five had left for Idwal. Bullough, Cooper and Marchington did Hope on the Idwal Slabs while Stewart and Holden made a second rope on the Ordinary Route. Higher up the mountain the party re-grouped for Holly Tree Wall. Stewart and Bullough were followed by Cooper, Holden and Marchington. Cooper and Holden then remained together for an ascent of Twisting Gully on Glyder Fawr, while John Marchington joined the other two.

The intention was to climb either East or Central Arete but as they noticed a large area of rock over on the left they decided to have a go at that instead. According to Bullough: "At first I wore my boots, but when it got harder I was forced to take them off and hang them round my neck. It was quite

a long lead and near the top my boot laces broke and the boots fell to the foot of the cliff."

Thus the route was dubbed 'Lost Boot Climb'. The final entry in the hut log reads: "Presumably a new climb on the slabs to the left of the East Arete on Glyder Fawr. Considerable difficulty was experienced. A small cairn was erected at the foot of the climb."

Some time later John Marchington repeated the route with someone who already knew it as Edwards' Grey Slab (of 25th August 1932), and not only did it fit Edwards' description but it was the line which Marchington had already done with Bullough. Unfortunately Marchington did not survive the war as his bomber was shot down between Gibraltar and Malta in 1943. Alan Stewart on the other hand, an architect by training, served with the Royal Engineers and later retired to Leyburn in North Yorkshire.

There now seems little doubt that Arthur Bullough did make the first ascent of the route in question. Ken Wilson, previous Idwal guidebook writer, acknowledges this in the May 1988 edition of *High* magazine in which he weighs up the evidence and speculates on the various possibilities.

It does seem strange however that a chance meeting in Italy should reveal a 54 day prior claim to an important new route which took 56 years to come to light. When I go skiing in France next week I have every intention of stopping for a chat with every old skier I come across. Perhaps some old Rucksack Club member just happened to romp up the East Buttress of Cloggy before Fred Pigott and has recently taken up skiing...

Brian Chase

Bob Keates

As a newly enrolled member of CUMC in October '64, I remember my first encounter with Brian Chase, when he was Meets Secretary. Having talked three full bus loads of novices into a Sunday trip up to Stanage, he was going from bus to bus trying to find the handful of potential leaders for this grand expedition of the uninitiated. At the time, I had seconded a few VS climbs, but had rarely led. But I had a rope of my own, and as far as Brian was concerned, that was all that counted. He persuaded me to shepherd two innocent novices up the Diffs and V Diffs at the near end of Stanage. Towards the end of the day, one of my flock pointed out a sling on the lip of an overhang, and asked if it was a climb (it turned out to be *The Tippler*). I had no guide book to intimidate me, and there seemed to be adequate holds, so I started to solo up in my big lumpy boots. It was trickier than I anticipated, and as a foretaste of things to come, I made a semi-controlled descent from about fifteen feet up, landing on my feet in the one square foot of flat ground surrounded by jagged rocks. Brian duly noted this as the act of a callow but ambitious youth with lots of luck on his side, and had me marked down for future attention. The rest was, as the saying goes, history.

Brian was the consummate organizer, and while he served on the CUMC committee, Meets were always well attended, and even made a profit for the club. Many came just to hear Brian in song and verse in the minibus trip home from Derbyshire. He also had numerous contacts for speakers and entertainment, obtaining for some ridiculously low price, three kegs of beer for the CUMC beer party. By tradition, this was not the most sedate affair, and the CUMC had already been banned from every college in Cambridge. Through one of our military members, Lt. Henry Day, a venue was arranged at the OTC Mess, in a top floor room with narrow ledges around the walls, exposed beams crossing below a vaulted ceiling, and a skylight access to the rooftops. It seemed ideal territory for the CUMC. When the Proctor arrived for his routine inspection, fortunately early in the evening, things were in full swing. Only those actually filling mugs were on the floor, and the rest of the CUMC were traversing walls or dangling from the beams at various angles. Those on the rooftops had the wit not to re-enter the skylight during the critical phase of the negotiations. Brian's role was to work his charm with the Proctor, that these activities were all routine practice for climbing, and nothing of course, was untoward. He finished by offering the Proctor and Bulldogs(1) a pint, which the Proctor declined but the Bulldogs, somewhat amazed by the scene, accepted.

Now three kegs of beer was a bit much, even for the fair men of the CUMC, and so as the evening drew on, people were less than careful where some of it landed. There was the contest to drink a pint while hanging upside

down from the beams, which proved too difficult for most, some beer was thrown, and some was poured down from a great height. And so the affair became quite literally, the Beer Party to end all Beer Parties, and the club never found another location willing to host a repetition of this formerly traditional event.

The following day, Brian, with the help of the President, Mike Kosterlitz, and the Secretary, Dick Isherwood(2), hastily organized the first CUMC Bucket, Mop and Scrubbing Brush Meet, held in the OTC Mess, thereby saving Henry Day from being reduced to the ranks and being posted to Borneo forthwith.

By March of 1965, Brian had succeeded in booking me onto every single meet of the Lent term, and I had led several of the Stanage and Stoney Middleton classics. The CUMC went to Llanberis for a weekend meet. I rapidly exhausted two seconds, leading a series of VS routes the first day, and HVS climbs on the second. By the Sunday afternoon, I was hot to try out my first XS (as the exaggerated grading went in the Llanberis North guidebook of the day). Brian stepped into the breach and took over the job of holding my rope, and seconded me on *Brant Direct* and *Karwendel Wall*. He gave me a knowing wink, when after making an impetuous lunge for a sloping hold on the crux of *Karwendel Wall*, I had to grab a runner to restore my equilibrium.

Some men have been described as an inspiration to others. The more appropriate word for Brian is that he was an egger-on, always ready to incite others to feats at the limit of, or in some cases, just slightly beyond their talent. He could talk courage into a faint-hearted leader, and so became very good at holding ropes and catching falling bodies. Other than the Karwendel incident, I was never a beneficiary of this service, but Mike Kosterlitz was, more than once. Mike would usually lose his glasses on the way down, and Mike and Brian could lay claim to First Myopic Ascent of one or two routes in Derbyshire.

Brian egged-on in other ways - he was quick to spot an opportunity and make the most of it. On the drive back to Cambridge from the Welsh Meet, we stopped at a transport cafe on the M1. Brian eyed the brand new, 24 ounce bottle of A1 Sauce that had just been placed on the table. Out came the story of Nick Estcourt in his heyday consuming an entire (12 ounce) bottle of Daddy's Sauce without it leaving his lips, on the way back from a Meet. It was clearly implied as a feat to be topped by an aspiring hard man in the CUMC. Aside from the fact that I don't particularly like A1 sauce,

(1) For those not familiar with Cambridge life, the Proctors were responsible for enforcing university regulations, such as the wearing of gowns by undergraduates in the streets of Cambridge after dark, a regulation still in force in 1964-5. Their other task was to inspect all parties, to ensure that men were not engaged in dancing with other men, or even worse, with women. So, by Proctorial standards, the CUMC's activities that night were quite innocuous. The Bulldogs were their assistants, and by reputation, one would be the fastest, the other the strongest from among the college porters.

(2) Isherwood's activities that night were too infamous to be described here.

it wasn't too bad really. The volume was no problem regular ingestion of much larger volumes of beer had already dilated my stomach but for the record, I would like it noted that A1 Sauce is thicker than Daddy's Sauce, and requires much more effort to suck from the bottle.

Brian was my sponsor on the King Street Run. King Street is a short street just off the centre of Cambridge, and had eight pubs, with the atmosphere of town rather than gown⁽³⁾. Now eight pubs means eight pints, but there's more to it in the rules, which required absolutely no loss of bodily contents until the run was complete. Any infraction resulted in a two pint penalty, which in turn would increase the likelihood of further infraction. To make things worse, the beer was not well kept at one or two of the pubs, and those pints did not stay down that easily. The average runner incurred one penalty, which would forever be recorded on his King Street Run tie - either as a silver or a golden "P", depending on the type of infraction. A clean; run required scrupulous timing, neither too fast nor too slow. Brian, spotlessly clean himself, was a regular sponsor, and knew the ideal rate of consumption, pacing me through so I came in clean in the best CUMC tradition. After my safe passage was recorded, Brian bought me a celebratory pint of Guinness, and shortly afterwards, I lost the lot on the front step of a dress shop on King Street.

Brian succeeded Mike Kosterlitz as President of CUMC in 1965. He was the natural choice for the job, through sheer force of personality. This was a colourful period in CUMC history. Visiting speakers were often taken on a guided tour of college rooftops, the traverse of Great Court in Trinity or the "Wedding Cake", a gothic tower in St. John's, being the favourites. One of our visitors was the Senior Tutor of a prominent Oxford college, and I always wondered what the reaction would have been, had he been discovered in such nefarious activities.

The CUMC Dinner was another annual fixture with a precarious existence. We had to negotiate with various college Deans, hoping to find someone new to the job, and praying that the CUMC's history had not been passed on to him by his predecessor. It always started out as a very august affair, with Guests from the Alpine Club and the C.C., and so forth, but somehow as the night progressed, things would degenerate. In Brian's year as President, good fun was had by all, and Trinity College was still in one piece when we left. Unlike the previous year, none of the guests were arrested. Later that night, Dr. Hallard Crofts, Fellow of Peterhouse, drew back his curtains, and was truly amazed to see a parade of drunks in dinner jackets wandering up the walls and across the roof of the Fitzwilliam Museum. He later remarked to me how impressed he was, that people who were in obvious difficulty on level ground, seemed to be so capable on the vertical. The same drunks then descended into Peterhouse, and proceeded to try out the finger traverse outside my room, before collapsing for the night. Those

(3) On my last visit to Cambridge, I was saddened to note that King Street had been rebuilt, and I could only count five pubs remaining.



Brian Chase in the balaclava, and Mike Kosterlitz, on the Walker Spur.

Photo: Bob Keates.

wearing P.A.s under their dinner jackets left black marks round the skirting boards, and despite a substantial bribe to the bed-maker, I spent the next year out of college.

As a climber, Brian never gave the outward impression of a “hard man”, but this was probably because he was already a seasoned veteran when he came to Cambridge. Unlike many of the rest of us, he was not under the compulsion to prove himself. He had already done a lot of the climbs many of us were struggling with, particularly those in his native Derbyshire. His talent lay with aid climbs, especially on limestone. This was the day of wooden wedges and a limited range of soft-iron pegs. Brian was expert at devious solutions to tricky problems, often using then-novel nuts in ingenious ways to circumvent awkward peg placements or bypass rotting wedges. Teamed up with Mike Kosterlitz, who would handle any difficult free climbing, the pair completed a number of major aid climbs around Britain, some second ascents. The Biven-Peck Zawn West Face at Bosigran was one of these. This route was subjected to a Yosemite-style multiday siege, so that Brian could return to the pub for lunch and a few games of darts each day, as a relief from the drizzly Cornish winter.

One of Brian’s prized possessions⁽⁴⁾ was the so-called Bomber nut. This enormous hexagon was reputed to come from the undercarriage of a B-52. How it came into British hands remains unknown. At this time, few carried nuts bigger than 1”, but you could put your fist through the hole in the Bomber nut. It was made of very light alloy, so despite its size you could carry it quite easily. Brian would wear it prominently around his neck as a badge of office, like a sommelier’s cup. Otherwise “unprotectable” gritstone cracks became quite amenable with the bomber nut lodged securely at their crux.

Brian also made his mark climbing abroad. His Derbyshire experience helped him up several Dolomite grade VI climbs, and with a number of forays around the Aiguilles, he earned his A.C.G. membership. He participated in a few expeditions to the higher ranges - among them the Cordillera Carabaya in Peru. Altogether, he was a well rounded mountaineer, and not just an outcrop king. He shepherded the CUMC Alpine meet at the end of his year as President, introducing many of our enthusiastic aspirants to their first Alpine experience. More so than any of his contemporaries at Cambridge, he was an unselfish climber, who helped many aspiring rock climbers and alpinists on their way, by encouragement, and more important, by taking the other end of the rope.

⁽⁴⁾ I believe the bomber nut actually “belonged” to Rob Stephens, but Brian had it on permanent loan.

Three on the Eiger

Alison J. Hargreaves

"Interested in a trip to the Alps this summer?"

"Great, yes - when do you fancy?"

"I've got two weeks leave booked for the beginning of July which I can't change - how does that appeal?"

I pondered, having usually enjoyed the peace and settled weather of late Spring and Autumn, and replied:

"Fine - and it's the 50th anniversary of The Eiger North Face..."

Two weeks later,

"Dear Steve, Do you want the good news or the bad news first - the good news is that JB and I are going to be parents, the bad is - and I'm not sure how to put this - but when we go on our trip to the Alps I shall be six months pregnant. Whilst I've talked to Charlie Clarke about altitude etc and have been given the go ahead for up to 12,000ft - I've no idea how I shall feel on the day. If you want to find another partner..."

Our selection of routes was going to be narrowed down. Whilst I knew I was keen to get on the hill, it had to fit the bill, easy access, as I didn't fancy a long carry of gear to and back from a route, a good excuse really. The ideal was an Alpine face next to a road or a railway a.s.a.p. The south side of the Blanc, the Jorasses etc, out, Argentiére basin, in.

As typifies Chamonix in summer we arrived to very hot and unstable summer Alpine weather. Roasting hot days with stormy nights, perfect for mixed routes! Cragging was out, my nimble figure transformed into a pear shaped 'mum to be' Alpinist. Unsited to do rock routes any justice, we waited, walked to Lac Blanc, and sunbathed. Five days of frustration and rain later we were faced with a meteorological forecast of some optimism, one guaranteed night's freeze and a following day of 'beau temps' before deterioration shortly after - but how shortly? Both in peak condition after our five days 'training' we returned to the campsite for coffee and biscuits to discuss the numerous options. Our 10 day trip was rapidly being eaten away and nothing in the bag, it seemed like we'd only get one route in anyway before having to head home, so it had to be worthwhile.

As we were packing up to move an old familiar English face came across.

"Going home?"

"No, off to Switzerland", Steve replied

"Oh, going to climb the Eiger are we?"

"Not necessarily..."

"Well it's the only thing Brits go round for..." mumble, mumble.

I didn't sleep too well that night, as my diary reflects, *I hope sprog is okay, I'm trying to look after it... Steve and I would both really like to get up this... I'm a little anxious about my physical fitness, and the weather. Hope we've not underestimated it...*

Switzerland...

The next morning dawned hot, humid and cloudy and we spent the day getting wet. Tucked up safely under the Rote Fluh we hoped the predicted freeze would hold things together. It was not one of my better bivvys. We had eventually dug out ledges from hard compacted snow:ice, the normal long and narrow excellent bivvy site being buried. My diary reflects, *I was unusually tired and felt sick. I eventually threw up in the night.*

I was slow getting ready next morning, a little hampered by the awkward task of putting my boots on, but we were blessed with a most fantastic Alpine day. A heavily verglassed Hinterstoisser Traverse, and a fantastic pitch up the Ice Hose, soon found us on the Second Icefield, and in sunshine.

Again we spent a long time preparing a bivvy site, on arrival at Death Bivouac it was dig, dig, dig again. However we soon had a shelter for the night and room to lie down.

My diary takes over the story,

Woke at 3:00 am - brew on - holding the stove all the time so to conserve gas. We were away by 5:00 am and across the Third Icefield and onto the Ramp. Was feeling heavy and unsupple...Soon off the Ramp and onto the Brittle Ledges. A long traverse, and a pitch up to the Traverse of the Gods...by now it was very cloudy and misty. Keep traversing - each time hoping for a bivvy site - eventually had to dig out a seat at the end of the traverse, a sit-up bivvy - too dangerous to go into The Spider.

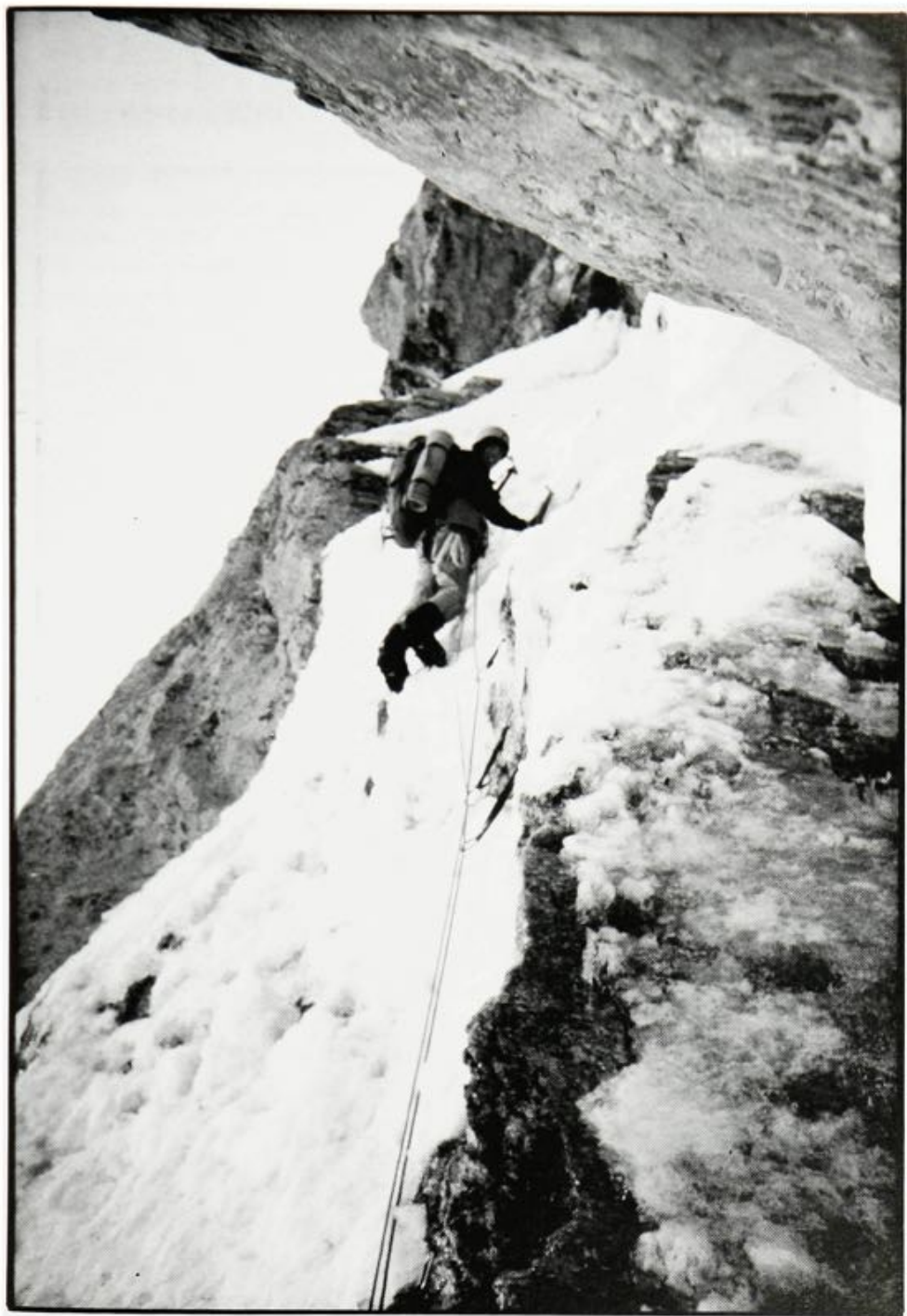
Tuesday 12th.

The morning started with a very close electric storm, a little worrying. Was this the deterioration? The Spider was in good condition, so were the Exit Cracks, lots of ice.

We were on the last pitch up to the ridge around 2:00 pm? (The only watch between us was steamed up), but it was so hot, no direct sun, just cloud, and the snow cornices were very, very unstable.

As we arrived on the summit ridge we decided to bivvy thinking it was late, but it was light for ages and ages. I kept waking up to shiver and roll over, It was a long, very cold night. We eventually got a brew on at sunrise and got going. The ropes were frozen so we lashed them to the 'sacks as best we could and set off.

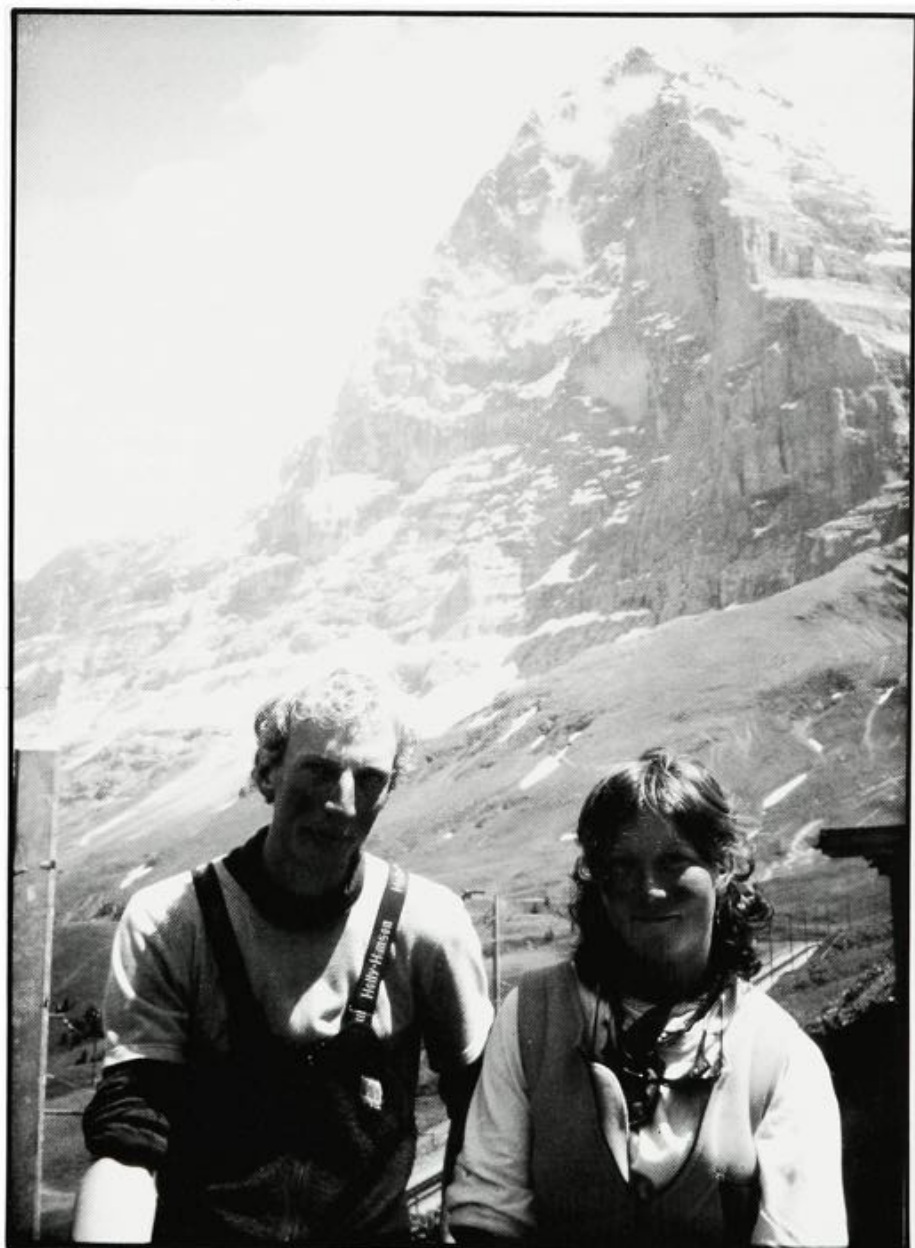
I slowed considerably, by now having to carry most of my gear, my 'sack seemed very, very heavy. It was a slow descent, I was extremely tired. As the sun came out to greet us our frozen gear became wet and heavy so we spent more time sitting, resting and chatting in the blazing sun.



Halfway up The Ramp on the North Face of the Eiger.

Photo :Hargreaves Collection.

Eventually a hot Grindelwald and a double token of showers later saw me frantically writing postcards and buying food for the journey home. Staying with friends in Interlaken that night I looked at my swollen solid legs, from knee to toe, and my rosy cheeks and we reflected I'd overdone it, but we'd enjoyed it, all 'Three of us'



"The three of us below the Eiger."

Photo: Hargreaves Collection.

Anyone for Everest?

David Yeoman

Among my 1986 Christmas presents was "The Everest Years" by Chris Bonington. Reading it set me thinking about the progress which the native hillmen of the Himalaya and particularly the Sherpas have made as mountaineers since Gurkhas accompanied early Himalayan climbers in the late nineteenth century.

Since the first ascents of Mont Blanc two hundred years ago the Alpine chamois hunters and herdsmen who helped on those climbs have evolved into a well organised and highly expert body of professional mountaineers whose leading members are the equal of any in the world. A similar evolution, starting about a hundred years later, has been going on with the native hillmen of the Himalaya. Is it not possible - indeed likely - that the sons and grandsons of the present generation of Sherpa mountaineers will be members of a profession as firmly established in the Himalaya in the twenty-first century as that of the Alpine guides in the twentieth century? Pondering these things, I put my feet up on the sofa for a siesta - asiezz zzz - zzz.

I am in the Rapide from Kathmandu. It starts to slow down as we approach its terminus at Namche Bazar. This is a bustling modern town of hotels, restaurants, bars and shops. The old village is barely discernible, buried as it is in the newer development. I collect my bags and cross the platform to the waiting narrow gauge train which goes up to the head of the Western Cwm. Before long it starts and as it draws clear of the town I see the large car park and the notice at the end of the road from Kathmandu: NO MOTOR VEHICLES BEYOND THIS POINT.

The train starts its slow journey up the valley stopping from time to time at wayside halts with names like Tengpoche, Pheriche, Lobuche, which sound echoes from Hunt's "Ascent of Everest".

I remember it is time for me to take another aklimone - the hormone pills which enable the body to acclimatize in hours to the same extent as it took days to achieve in Hunt's day, and indeed for many decades thereafter. Between Namche Bazar and Tengpoche I see across the valley the dam which blocks the upper valley of the Dudh Kosi to form a reservoir for the hydro-electric power station from which cables radiate like a giant spider's web.

About two hours later the train arrives at the station under the Base Camp Bristol, where I get off. The station is dug into the ground and there is a large concourse which is bright and clean. Around it I see the booking office, toilets, an Amex office, a snack bar and a news stand. A door marked NO ADMITTANCE gives access to a fuel store, stand-by generators and a mountain rescue station. From the centre of the concourse escalators go up to and come down from the foyer of the hotel. This has a modern

impersonal mid-Atlantic decor. As well as the reception desk there is a tourist information office, a bureau for guides, a bookshop, a kiosk for maps, postcards, films etc., and a post office with telephones and telex. At one end of the foyer is a large lounge and leading off it the ubiquitous so-called coffee shop - really a low-key restaurant. At the other end is a shopping arcade where one can buy goods of all kinds ranging from cheap souvenirs to high class jewellery, and including of course a large store for mountain clothing and gear.

Above the foyer are successive floors of identical bedrooms each with a bathroom and sitting area en suite. On the top floor is the main hotel restaurant and a ballroom. There are superb views in all directions. Rows of lifts rise from the foyer, some serving all floors and some express from foyer to top floor. All public notices which are not ideograms are written in seven languages: Nepali, German, French, Italian, English, Spanish and Japanese.

In the centre of the foyer there is a relief map showing an area about twenty kilometres square, centred on the hotel, to a scale of about 1:5000. On it are marked all the peaks, passes and other points of interest with their heights, the railway, dotted where in tunnels, viewpoints accessible to unguided walkers and the paths to them, and the main climbing routes with their names and standards for reference to the tariff for guides. I see that the route of the 1975 Bonington expedition up the South West Face of Everest is now the "South West Ordinary", one of half a dozen on the face; the "Directissima" goes in an almost straight line from Bonington's Camp 5 up the centre of the rock band, and thence straight to the summit.

Next to the bureau for guides is a shop which attracts my fascinated gaze. It is one specialising in the sale and hire of the latest oxygen:communication sets, or oxycoms as they are called. A large notice states that one is advised not to go any higher without being equipped with one. Needless to say, it is of Japanese design and is a miracle of lightweight ingenuity, the whole thing weighing no more than a few kilograms. It is powered by small rechargeable batteries kept topped up by solar cells. A reservoir is kept charged with air at about 0.5 Bar by a small pump drawing in and compressing the outside air, the heat of compression being used to prevent icing of the valves. The operation is controlled by a mini computer which monitors the wearer's pulse and respiration and automatically adjusts the flow of air to the helmet to accord with his needs. Intermittent bleeps warn if the demand exceeds the supply. A miniature radio is connected to a microphone and ear pieces in the helmet; it is operated by a voice controlled switch which has five positions: "off" (listening out); "speak" (for people who would be within talking range without the helmet); "shout" (for talking to people within a range of about fifty metres); "com" (for communicating up to a range of about three kilometres); and "may-day" (with a range of about ten kilometres for emergency use only to call the mountain rescue centre). "May-day" automatically activates a small radio beacon. A 'sack

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for personal gear can be attached to the back of the set.

It is the next morning and dressed in featherweight high-altitude suit and boots I catch a train going up into the Western Cwm. A notice by my seat explains how I can connect my oxycom to a socket to keep the batteries fully charged.

The train starts and immediately dives into the rock below the Lho La and starts to spiral upwards in a corkscrew tunnel. After about fifteen minutes it emerges into a galleria overlooking the Khumbu ice-fall, where we pass a descending train. Our train stops for five minutes to allow passengers to look at the awe-inspiring sight and take photographs. It then enters another tunnel. After a further fifteen minutes spiralling up it emerges about level with the upper lip of the ice-fall in another galleria at the foot of the south face of the West Ridge, and a few minutes later it stops at "Fall Top" station. There is another loop here for two trains to pass and we wait briefly for a descending train.

The train continues winding along at the foot of the slopes from the West Ridge a little above the edge of the glacier, mostly in gallerias or tunnels, sometimes briefly in the open. About an hour after leaving the Bristol station it arrives at the upper terminus under the Refuge Genevois which is situated on a shelf blasted in the rock on the north side of the Cwm in a position protected from avalanches. It is a mini version of the Base Camp Bristol: the lowest level contains the station, public toilets, stand-by generating plant and fuel stores; also a shop for hiring skis, poles and boots for those who want to ski down from the South Col to the refuge. Above that is the main floor with bar, self-service restaurant, office and a shop selling maps and guides, picture postcards, stamps, films, some souvenirs, sweets and suchlike. A posting box carries a notice saying that letters posted there are franked "Refuge Genevois Everest" and those posted on the South Col are franked "South Col Everest". A terrace outside has tables and chairs with sunshades and two slot machine binocular telescopes. Above are a few stories of basic two and four bunk rooms with toilets, wash rooms, and showers on each floor. On the roof is the lower terminus of the South Col cable-car. This goes in two spans to the crest of the South Col. As I make this journey, which takes about fifty minutes in all, I can see some roped parties on the ordinary route up the Lhotse face, and some walkers on the glacier path between the Refuge Genevois and Fall Top station.

Near the upper station of the cable-car stands the South Col Refuge. It is a simple rectangular stone building; thick stone walls are surmounted by a single pitched south facing roof covered with solar cells, with wide overhanging verges and eaves; a U plan porch protects the door. At one end with access from the porch are two chemical toilets. Inside the main hut there is a shelf for cookers, a small sink with a single tap, and two-tier wooden sleeping shelves running the length of the hut about two metres wide. The solar panels on the roof melt snow and drain the water into a cistern in the roof space. A low wattage electric heater provides enough

heat to stop the water freezing. The refuge is a stone tent which obviates the need for climbers to carry their own, and helps to keep the col free from litter and filth. In the porch is the posting box and a large portable rubbish bin. This bin and the chemical toilets are (weather permitting) changed daily. The not unreasonable assumption is made that if the weather is too bad to change them it will be too bad for tourists to go up and put anything in them.

A party descending from the summit goes into the hut for a hot drink before continuing their descent and while they are brewing up I chat to their guide. He tells me that the route from the col to the summit is well marked, where there might be any doubt. The only difficult point - the Hillary step is now bypassed by a steel ladder and fixed chain. Purists who despise such aids can still climb "Ed's Chimney", but very few do. The corps of guides maintain fixed ropes on all the difficult pitches on the Lhotse face and keep the route marked at frequent intervals with coloured wands. Wands and ropes are checked daily when the weather is such as to permit climbing. If snow conditions or weather make the route dangerous it is closed with notices posted top and bottom, and climbers must use the cable-car. "Do accidents ever occur" I ask "despite these precautions?" "Yes," he says, "very occasionally they do, almost always because climbers ignore the warnings and are caught in an avalanche. But there are very few fatalities. The mountain rescue team is highly trained and can nearly always get to the scene of an accident very quickly with sniffer dogs and equipment. It is very rare for the weather to be so bad that the special high altitude helicopters can't operate. The casualty rate per hundred thousand tourists is lower than that in the European ski resorts".

I descend by the cable-car and take the train down to the Base Camp Bristol. Having handed in my oxycom and collected my deposit I stroll out in the afternoon sun on to the moraine in front of the hotel, and there I see an old white haired Sherpa sitting on a boulder contemplating the infinite. He calls a greeting and I go and sit beside him. I ask if he is a guide.

He smiles and tells me he was but he retired some years ago. He was born in 1953, the year Everest was first climbed, and he first reached the summit with the Norwegians in 1985. Some years later, when the National Himalayan Union of Guides (NATHUNG) was formed, he was a founder member. Now, to augment his pension from NATHUNG, he sometimes escorts parties of tourists - roped together and each carrying an ice axe - for a short walk on the glacier, at a safe distance from the foot of the ice-fall. To earn some pocket money while serving his apprenticeship as a guide, his grandson, Am Snappa, sometimes goes too and photographs each of the party in a suitable pose peering into a crevasse with the ice-fall as a backdrop.

I remark that the scene now is very different from 1985 and I ask how this change has come about. In 1985, he tells me, the Nepalese government earned a relatively small income by charging foreigners for permits to trek in their country and to climb their mountains. It was only some years later that it dawned on them that they were failing to exploit what was potentially

the greatest tourist attraction in the world, and furthermore they were steadily spoiling its attraction by allowing it to be defiled by rubbish and filth. To make money from tourism, he explains, you need three things: a powerful magnet, good communications, and good accommodation and service. There were, and still are, many magnets in the world, like the Parthenon, Niagra, Venus de Milo, the Matterhorn, the Pyramids, to name but five. But they all have good communications and hotels to serve them; Everest, the strongest magnet of the lot, had nothing. So the government set out to change things. Sensibly they realised that they didn't have the know-how to cash in on mountains, so they turned to the acknowledged experts who had been doing it for over a hundred years: the Swiss. Franchises were sold to Swiss entrepreneurs. They, financed by money from Swiss banks (deposited no doubt by Arab oil sheikhs), had engineered and built the roads, railways, hotels, cable-cars and suchlike and now ran them efficiently and profitably while the Nepalese government collected handsome fees for the franchises, plus five per cent of the gross. The Nepalese people benefitted, both indirectly by increased social services financed by this revenue, and directly by employment in the Swiss enterprises and by burgeoning profits from their own businesses shops, cafes, hotels, manufacture and sale of souvenirs and so forth.

Nepal hasn't yet reached the general level of prosperity of Switzerland, or even Andorra, but it is rapidly catching up. One of his sons, the father of Am Snappa, is still working as a guide, Class 1, but also has a very profitable shop in Namche Bazar selling all kinds of mountain gear. Another, also a guide, is earning a good second income from writing books about Himalayan mountaineering, and climbing guides for those mountaineers who prefer guideless climbing.

A loud bell rings; it is the five minute warning bell for the departure of the train which connects with the evening rapide to Kathmandu. We shake hands; I wish long life and prosperity to him and his family and I leave to catch the train. It glides out of the station exactly on time and I compose myself for a little siesta asiezz z z z z z z.

I woke slowly from my nightmare to find myself sitting, feet up, on my sofa and looking across the valley to the crags of the Pic d'O's which overshadow Andorra la Vella. But was it a nightmare? Has the railway from Llanberis up Snowdon removed the thrill of climbing on Lliwedd or Cloggy? Does the railway from Grindelwald to the Jungfrauoch detract from the challenge of the Eigerwand? Would the things of which I had dreamt diminish the climbing problems of the West Ridge? Or the South West Face? Or the North East Ridge? Or the as yet untackled North Face? If any were to fancy playing Russian roulette among the seracs of the technically easy (by Himalayan standards) but horrifyingly dangerous (by any standard) Khumbu ice-fall, there would be nothing to stop them, and the best of luck to them. In addition to Everest, Lhotse and Nuptse there are eleven other eight thousanders, and scores (or is it hundreds?) of seven thousanders.

Against the tiny loss of the thrill of the wild on one small group of peaks must there not be set the vast pool of pleasure which would be created for the millions of people who could never experience it without the aids of which I had dreamt?

The countries encompassing the Alps have been exploiting them for nearly a century to their enormous profit, thereby giving vast pleasure to untold millions of visitors ranging from intrepid mountaineers to geriatrics in wheelchairs. If the Nepalese get the gnomes and the nips to work Everest may yet become “an easy day for a lady”.

On Yer Bike

Gwyn Evans

Wind and horizontal rain; a July day on the Rhigos high above the Rhondda Valley. "You've done this before haven't you?"

"No, never." "----!----, ah well, here we go!"

The first hundred yards, up to the forestry gate was okay. The track beyond was hard work and the Youth was pulling away from me, perhaps he was right to have questioned my capabilities. Head down to at least catch up with him I noticed I still had seven lower gears, changing down made him less of a superman.

It was quite easy riding on the forestry road, not much to see just cloud and fir trees, but what was that buzzing, chainsaws? A motorcyclist (what I used to call Scramblers) shot out of the trees, across the road in front of us and into the trees on the other side, this didn't look like a footpath, time to look at the map. We were intending to ride the Coed Morgannwg Way, a long distance footpath, and we had seen none of those necessary adjuncts to such a path in the civilised wilderness, marker posts.

Off the machines we splashed and pushed our way along a fire break until we joined the path above Craig y Llyn, scene of winter escapades before the greenhouse effect proved a reality. On the edge the wind was blowing the cloud away and we could see the Brecon Beacons in the distance. The track was grassy but easy riding until the Youth got into a rut which ended abruptly, he equally abruptly described a graceful arc over his handlebars. The ridge continued with views of a sun-spotted Gower in the distance and down into the Neath and Afan Valleys closer at hand. The route description warned walkers of the dangers on the descent alongside Nant Cregan and of the need to 'take great care'. But we were mountaineers out for a ride and set off with a gay abandon which soon became an abandon ship as the slope steepened, the way narrowed and the wet grass allowed no braking. Chastened we walked and slithered the bikes down, across the stream and onto another forestry track. This was a long, steady incline on a hard surface, hell to walk along with nothing to see only the road continuing. On the bikes it was all over in a few minutes and soon we were coasting down over carpets of pine needles only to be warned by a slight hissing that road-worn tyres deserve some respect. Change the tube, a bite to eat and off again, with markers at regular intervals until we ended up in a farmyard and no guidance. Raised from their Sunday afternoon nap the natives were very helpful, but it's most likely that the marker posts had warmed their toes on some not too distant winter evening.

Leaving them behind we fought our way up onto the hillside overlooking the valley. Looking down across the felled areas it was easy to understand why this valley is called Little Switzerland, we seemed to be looking straight down the chimney pots of houses on the opposite side of the valley. My

prime concern was that we had to go down into this valley in order to get out the other side. The only relief was likely to be the cafe just above the road on that side of the valley. The going down was great, only the odd section where we had to think, across the river bridge (we had to stop here so that the Youth, who is a structural engineer of sorts, could examine its laminated timber beam construction), the up was not so good, a loose gravel track which did for me with about 10 yards to go; the Youth is made of sterner stuff and felt he couldn't take a brew if he'd failed.

Pogged after the home-made goodies in the cafe I was quite prepared to call it a day and skive off home, instead we set off on the long pull out of the valley punctuated by a puncture or two. Emerging quite suddenly from the trees we were overlooking a valley full of houses. From this elevation you realise just how localised man's impact has been in the South Wales valleys; despite the folk-myth of coal tips and pit gear they are mostly green.

Another long descent through trees and alongside a leet brought us to a little village and another pull up to the next ridge. From here the view was of the Bristol Channel, Kenfig Pool with its ring of sand dunes and buried village and, between us and Gower, the steel works and the M4. With the evening sun in our eyes we descended the teeth-rattling path into Margam Park and threaded our way through the deer herd on the way to the gate and the car.

An account of a cycle trip (probably the first) along the Coed Morgannwg Way, a long-distance footpath 23 miles long following the ridges between the valleys of West Glamorgan.

Part Two

Boxing Day, 9 am, fighting contact lenses in the bathroom; was it just because I hadn't got the damn things in that I couldn't see? Phone rings. "What you doing today?", it's the Youth talking to my wife who's still in bed. "Nothing" she said. "Nothing?" I said. "I've got to burn off all the cream I ate yesterday, fancy a ride?"

Who'd meet someone at 10:45? Well I did because the car needed fuel at 10:30, the appointed time, and I'd had to fight my way through a convoy of horse boxes on their way to their Meet.

Out with the map we conned the route; start from the Rhigos again but this time go the other way, through the forest, past the reservoir, cross the road through more forest onto the road and down to the pub. From the pub back into the forest and over the hill to Porth, roads to Tonyrefail then the ridge with superb views of the Bristol Channel and if the time's right we'll end up on that point above the car, if not we'll finish by the road. Only about 20 miles.

Drive to the Rhigos, up into the clouds and set off. At the first junction



Gwyn Evans in the forest, 'in a rut'.

in the forest it's obvious we're not where we thought we were so we cut across country on breaks cum paths until we spy the reservoir below. Back on route we cross the dam, the gate at the far end opened for us by a friendly local out taking the air and, like us, burning off yesterday's excesses. Along the mettalled track we whistled past two lads on Christmas-new bikes before breaking off up the hillside overlooking a real Rhondda coalmine. Back in the forest we get views down into the Dare Valley, though today we can't see the smokeless fuel plant instantly recognisable by it's plume of dense black smoke. Coming out of the forest we encounter a solitary runner going uphill and three riders on beautiful hunters. The Youth pointed out there was a nice rider too, but he's got street cred, I'm only a farmer's boy.

The pub was at the bottom of the hill; the community is completed by the church and is normally very quiet. Today the place was packed with Hunt followers so it was a swift half and then across the road to the church to pay my respects to my grandparents and introduce the Youth to Guto Nyth Bran. His tombstone records that he ran a 12 mile race in seven minutes under the hour (and that was in the 1730's). He was also reputed to catch rabbits for the pot by running them down, literally.

Up in the next section of forest we came upon the Hunt proper resplendent in pink (red to the Youth) and black and our riders of two paragraphs back, I've got to give it to the Youth he's a pretty good judge of female flesh. On the way we kept a lookout for Reynard in case he wanted a lift, but he kept out of our way as well as the hounds. Out of the forest for the last time we took a wrong turn across the fields and had to double up the hillside before dropping down into Porth.

Half jokingly the Youth had said it would be nice if we could go straight across the valley, halfway up the other side it didn't seem such a bad idea. He was ahead of me but I wasn't going to let him out of my sight (oh, the vanity of age!); it turned out he wanted to get far enough ahead of me to justify getting off and having a rest. Near the top, lost in my own little world, I was spurred by a young lad's shouted "How long you been training mister?" Bloody good question I thought.

Dropping down the other side, losing all those hard won feet in as many minutes, we headed for the last ridge. In the yard the farmer pointed out the best way to Blackmill (where we'd left the car) was "Across there on that road, it's about four miles". But we were going along the ridge. "Well I don't know about that, the old road's real mucky and I wouldn't take the tractor up there, the water's standing three feet deep". Made of sterner stuff, and committed, we set off pushing the bikes. "This is just like it was when I came up with Jan last summer, she pushed her bike almost all the way". As he said this the road across the way sounded really appealing. Whenever the ground levelled we jumped into the saddle, and off again as quickly,

as the wheels spun on the wet grass. Eventually we got to the water but it wasn't there, so we carried on. Turning, we followed the drovers road imagining the views if the clouds were a little higher and the hour a little earlier. At the road the decision was made for us, my legs were shot, the light was fading, the drovers road went up and the road went down, all the way to the car. That's the story of my life, downhill all the way.

R. W. Lloyd Hut (Ynys Ettws)

Claude Davies

It was becoming increasingly obvious to the membership that the wash-room and toilet facilities at our flagship hut were no longer adequate relative to the demand on them. In addition the location, being remote from the bunk room, and via the kitchen, was far from satisfactory, notwithstanding the rather squalid atmosphere that had developed over 40 years of use.

The hut, virtually our only purpose designed building, was built in 1949 and was designed to provide facilities for a male only membership and with little, if any, thought given to facilities for campers. Over the subsequent years our membership has increased considerably and of course this has been reflected in the demand on the hut.

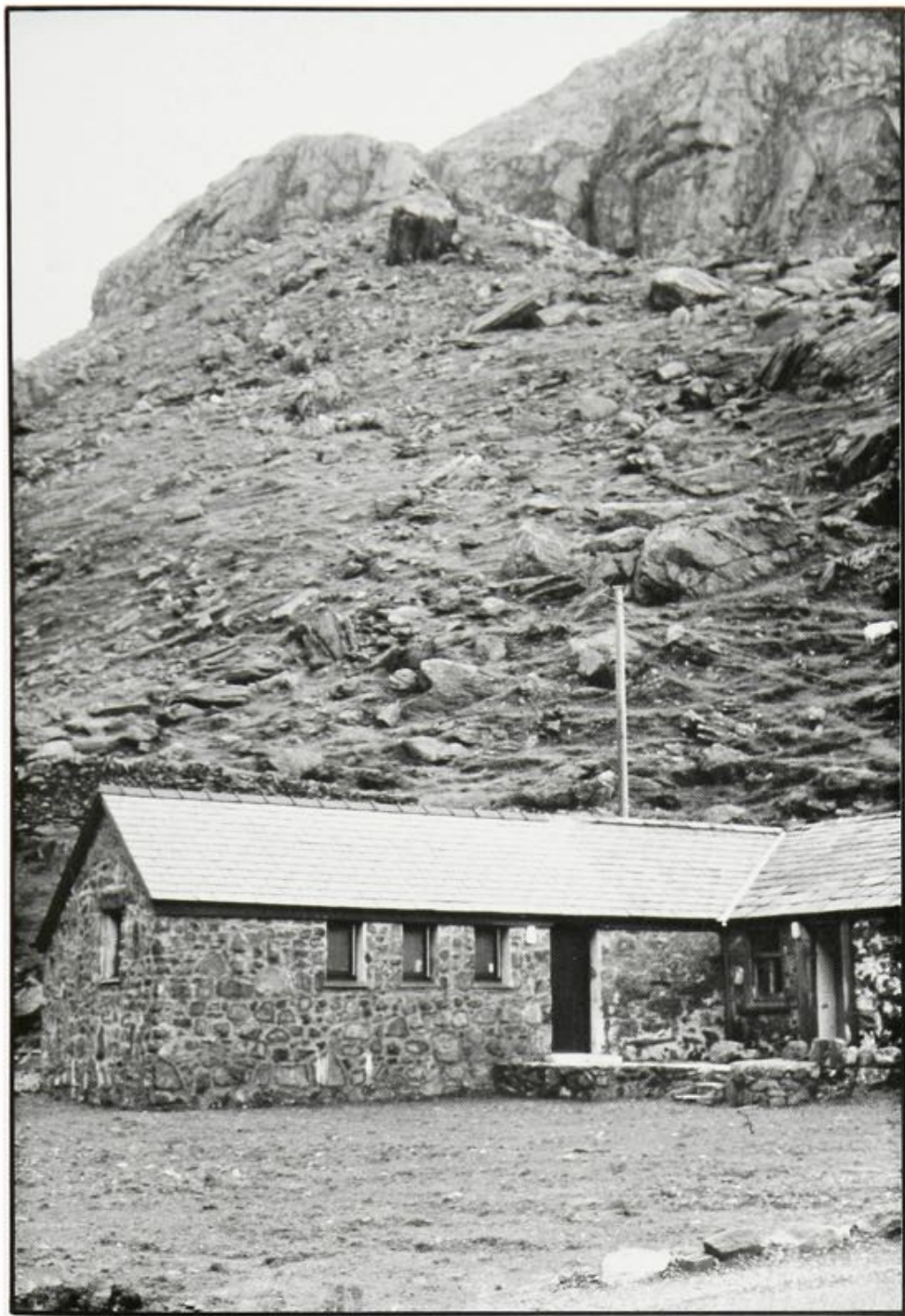
Several years ago I had suggested that a considerable benefit would ensue by constructing an additional matching wing on the side of the hut adjacent the car park in order to house an independent kitchen. Unfortunately at the time funds were not available. Subsequently Henry Adler saved the Club a substantial amount of money by converting the central area into a kitchen, which has enhanced the lounge.

Since Henry's efforts three years ago, and due almost entirely to the efforts of the Club's Publications arm, substantial capital has accrued enabling the Committee to look for proposals to improve the huts, which obviously benefits all our membership, rather than simply using the guidebook profits to only produce more guide books. The extension at the hut is the first of what it is hoped will be many such by-products.

The extension incorporates separate male and female washing and toilet facilities with duplicated showers and toilets in the male section. A small boiler/dryer room is also housed in the extension with the former having the capacity to supply hot water to the kitchen at some time in the future. A basic design principle that I adopted was that the building and its facilities should require minimum maintenance and hence the use of extensive tiling throughout.

The location of the hut, within the National Park, obviously necessitated design compatibility with the existing building and I hope that you will all agree that this has been achieved. The former wash-room has been refurbished and now accommodates a self-contained bunk room housing four beds, toilet and washing facility. The present intention is that this will be retained at all times for members use only.

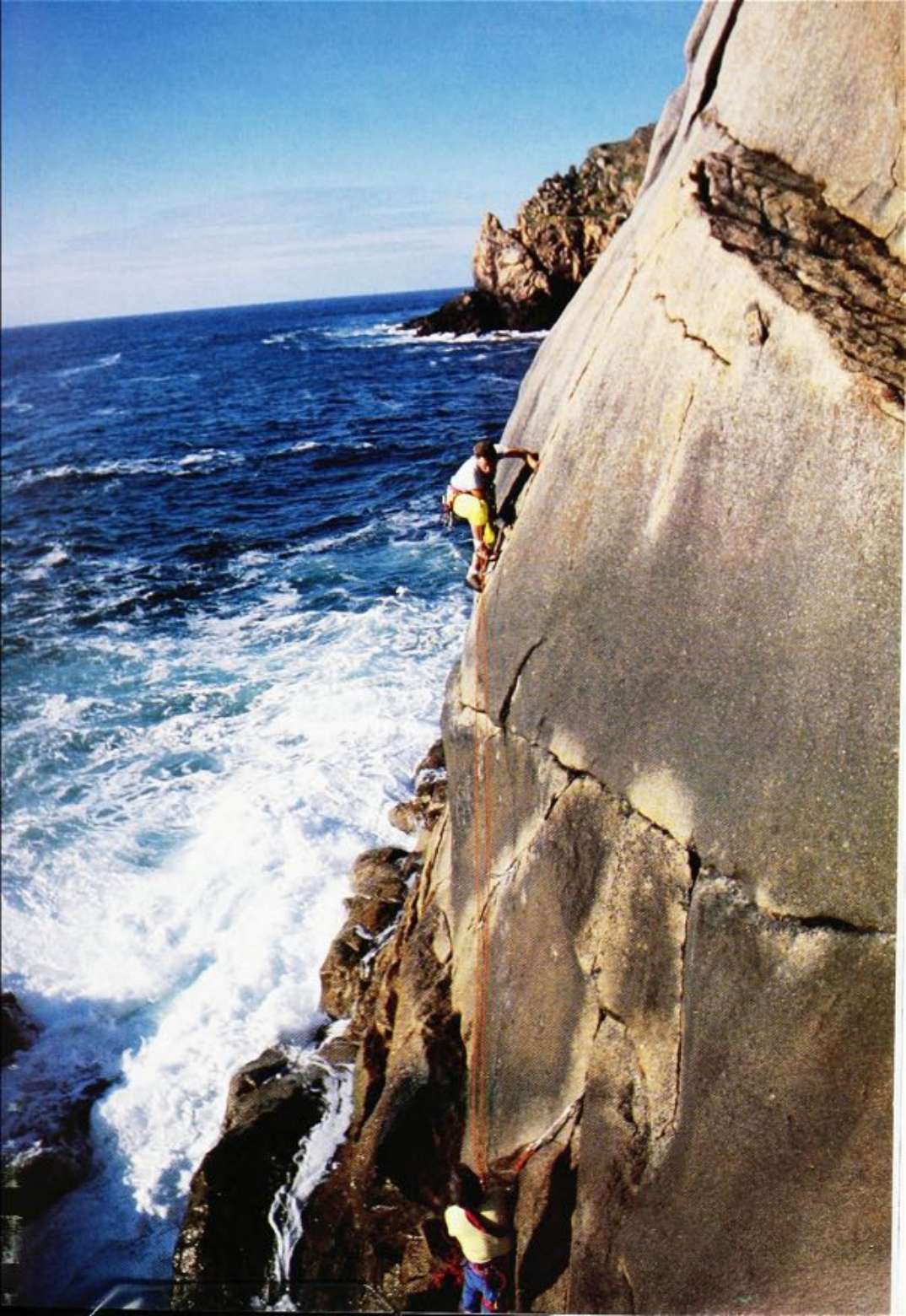
Associated with this particular work was the re-opening of the rear



Ynys Ettus, the new extension.

entrance door, a highly desirable action relative to the means of escape in the event of fire.

The project commenced on site in March 1988 and was completed in September and involved a total cost in the order of £20,000. It is hoped that in view of the Club's considerable contribution to the climbing world in general, that the sports Council will provide a grant to reduce the cost to the Club.



A Perched Block

John Hunt

The visit of Soviet mountaineers in 1960 was the first of its kind and, as such, it must be accounted as quite an event in the annals of British mountaineering. There had been quite a lot of work involved in bringing it about, dating back to my first visit to Moscow in 1954. I remember how much we, members of the Climbers' Club who had been guests of Soviet mountaineers in the Caucasus two years beforehand, looked forward to welcoming our Russian friends. We were keen to show them our mountains; I had found some difficulty in persuading the visiting Soviet Minister for Sport in 1959, that we had any mountains worthy of the attention of Soviet sportsmen. As an understandable, if less worthy by-product, we were perhaps a little over-anxious to demonstrate the high standards of British rock-climbing. It went without saying that the Russians showed no less enthusiasm about their visit and that they, too, lacked nothing in competitive spirit.

The outcome was predictable. There were two accidents in quick succession during the week we spent together in Snowdonia: one Russian suffered concussion in a fall on Cloggy and a British leg was broken (I think it was on Carreg Wasted) in the Pass. The honours in this kind of warfare were, at that stage, even.

As the person mainly responsible for encouraging these British Soviet exchanges in the mountains, I was concerned to ensure that the score should remain at *One All*. I suggested that the tempo of the programme be relaxed at the end of the week, for the strain had become perceptible. I suggested that the Russians should enjoy a Sunday stroll around the Snowdon Horseshoe, while their hosts took a day off, unburdened by the ideals of promoting international goodwill.

Some of my friends and I sought our relaxation on Cyn Las. Our general idea was to climb variously via Main Wall and the Central Route or Great Gully, so as to reach the Snowdon ridge at Crib y Ddysgl and join the Russians for lunch on the summit of Snowdon. Having sampled the Gully a few years earlier with David Cox, and after accompanying three of the Russians on Main Wall only two days beforehand, I chose the Central Route, in company with Alf Gregory and a novice friend of his from Blackpool. My wife Joy, with Michael Ward and George Lowe, addressed themselves to Main Wall. The day was fine and we were in a mood to enjoy our busmen's holiday. On reflection I may have been in that kind of carefree nonchalance which can spell danger on a mountain.

Greg wanted to take photographs of our friends on the far side of Great Gully; so I took the lead, with our friend in close support, and with such support and encouragement from me as he might need. The lower pitches

were safely negotiated, although I gained the impression that my second was finding the climb quite a daunting experience. I reached the stance at the top of Pitch 6 (Llanberis Pass Guidebook, 1955, and Cyn Las Guide, 1970) at the end of the short, sloping gangway, and looked for a belay.

There it was! An enormous block which, to all appearances, was part and parcel of the mountain. It hardly merited the description of one of the "perched blocks" described in the Guide. Below me and to my right as I faced outwards was the chimney which I had just climbed and, taking in the rope, I invited my companion, at its foot and out of sight, to follow. Greg was ensconced at the beginning of the previous pitch, doubtless concerned to watch his friend's progress, but also to pursue his photography.

There was no warning: just a violent jerk on the rope. Our companion had come off. The tug conveyed itself to my belay block, which lost no time in coming off, too. With a terrific lurch which dragged me to the edge of the stance, the monster careered into outer space. Our friend was more considerate; he fell to the bottom of the chimney and relieved me of the strain on my shoulder belay. But the die was cast and I quickly followed in the flight path of the block down the cliff, where, as the guide book has it, "the exposure is considerable".

I thought: "this is IT". There had been so many near misses over the years; now, at last, my luck had run out. I wondered vaguely whether Greg was belayed on the lower stance and whether, if so, he would be able to hold the two of us.

Suddenly, my fall was checked. There was a minor yo-yo stretch on the rope and I was suspended against the vertical wall, some ten feet from the foot of the chimney, where my second was lying huddled in a state of shock. With no special difficulty, I was to pendulum across and join him.

The key to the miracle was discovered only after Greg had climbed up to join us and had continued up the chimney to the stance on the sloping ledge. He found the rope from which I was suspended, snagged to a projection of rock, on the very edge of the ledge from which I had fallen. A trifle shaken, we finished the climb and, half an hour later, met the other half of our party on the main Horseshoe ridge. By a coincidence, the Russian party arrived at the same time. Nothing was said about the incident which had so nearly added calamity to the two earlier mishaps and I managed to explain away the minor damage to my left hand, caused by the friction of the rope.

Next day, the Russians left us for the next encounter on their fixture list, with the Scottish Mountaineering Club. I had so nearly scored an *own goal*, but happily the score stood at *One All*

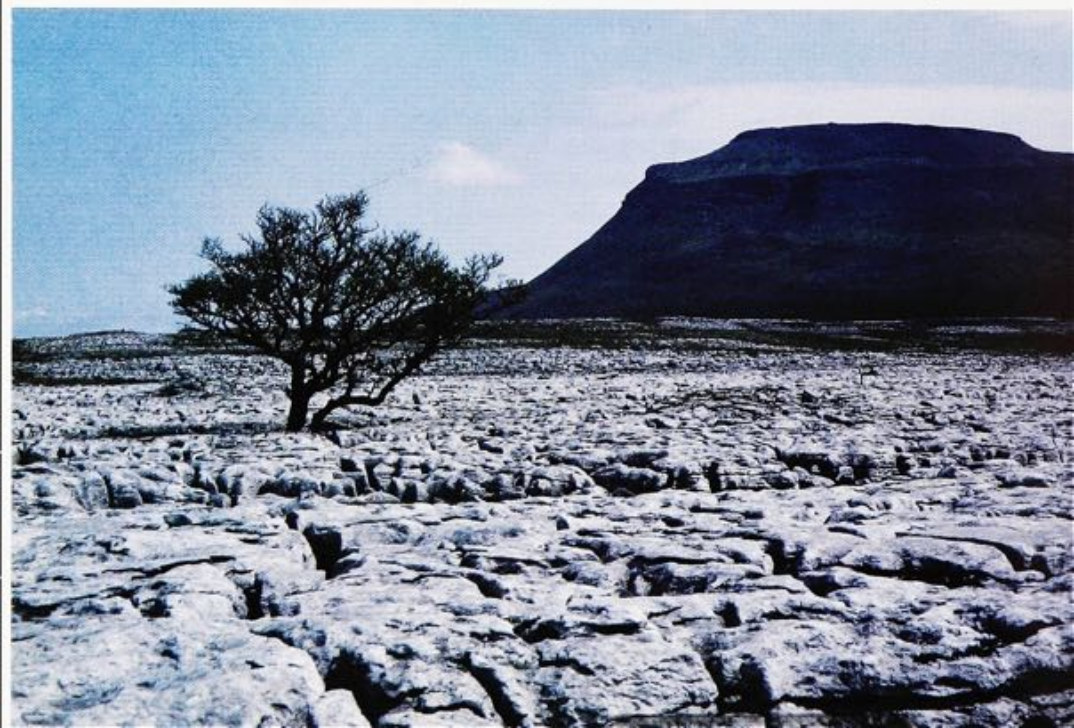


Above: Mists in the valley.

Photo: Chris Jackson.

Below: Black Shiver Moss and Ingleborough, Yorkshire.

Photo: Chris Jackson.



So It Goes

Ed Douglas

It was a difficult climb so we made a mess of it. After nine pitches we arrived at a wall, hanging, it seemed, in space, steep, clean and unclimbed. A crack split it in two, blind and finger-thick at the top, and so I climbed it because Rob, who used to be a better climber than me, had sold his birthright to a university in Carolina.

If you have a story to tell then you should tell it. We are, after all, the species of communication but the memories of the days that followed what was the best pitch of my life thump me in the chest and make me gasp for air, heart beating furiously as if the shadows of cold had greater stimulation than the danger itself. I cannot tell you. My friend, my enemy, I do not wish that you had to have been there. I have no scars, not even emotional, and my myriad insecurities (there, I've said it) suggest to me that my terror was weakness and the threats were extensions of my shock in the discovery that the wilderness doesn't just mean no people.

We arrived by air taxi, a 20 minute flight, and shivered by night, inadequately clad, on the glacier and sweated by day on the loose and crumbling granite where no abseil was safe, no matter how big the block or spike. Huw's death, a week before I left, hung above supported by a frayed piece of tape and 9mm of rope, doubled or quits. But that was okay even when the tape slipped across a flat block and hooked on a tiny spike with me 30 feet beneath and 300 feet above, it was okay. If you die, you die. Split-second equations are the simplest. Even when Rob punted that T.V. set off the ledge and down the gully towards me where it neatly amputated 75 feet of rope, and only avoided bisecting me by bisecting itself a few feet above with the pieces passing either side, even then with the utter conviction that I was dead, I felt capable, confident, a climber. That is how we made a mess of it and that is why the next day's night we drank three quarters of a bottle of Scotch and plotted our evacuation.

The Ranger had said "Three days hike, not too bad," and we believed him, imagining nice walks across nice terrain, the flowers waist high, the profound comfort that flora brings. How long is three days? Seventy-two hours. Four thousand, three hundred and twenty minutes. Two hundred and fifty nine thousand, two hundred seconds. You think I'm being facetious? To the man facing execution, time must seem a curious concept, quantifiable consciousness. "In 10 minutes I'll be in eternity". What a strange paradox. "In three days we'll be back in Talkeetna." Three days, what's that. You can raise people from the dead in three days, so what's a little stroll, a hike, a walk or a ramble. I'm a climber for Christ's sake, WALKING'S EASY.

On the first day we descended our glacier, turned right, ascended another,



*Rob Agnew on the summit of The Trolls after the first ascent of 'So It Goes'. Photo: Ed Douglas.
Ed Douglas visiting Little Switzerland off the Kabiltna Glacier, Alaska. Photo: Rob Agnew.*



crossed a bergschrund, ascended to a col, descended another glacier and camped on the moraine. Or rather, we started in a blizzard with packs we could hardly lift with virtually no food and about a stone lighter than we arrived. We staggered and fell over heavily crevassed ground, flailing up a steep bergschrund in waist deep snow (so much for the flowers) with packs pulling us back before falling down a rubble filled gully on the other side, and then having to front point out of a maze of rotting ice and yawning crevasses before landing in the middle of a moraine that would have had Dante weeping. At midnight, after 16 hours effort, soaked to the skin we draped a plastic sheet over the most stable boulder we could find and with the rain growing impossibly heavier we crawled under its pathetic shelter and I was afraid. Not the immediate adrenalin pump, the stretching of moments, the knowledge of death's proximity but a realisation that death isn't waiting to catch you at a dull moment, with your trousers down so to speak, but he (he's got to be a man, let's face it) follows you in confidence of eventual success. Not today, not tomorrow, not next year maybe, but one day and the stones and the ice and the bitter crumbs of this moraine would swallow your body like a drop of water, so much water falling down, wetting the sleeping bag, wetting your hands, creeping down your neck and you blow the end of your nose in a vain attempt to fight off that liquidity of extinction. I shiver, you shiver, he, she or it shivers.

On the second day neither of us woke up because neither of us had slept. We smoked our way out of that moraine. That boulder then a fog. That boulder then two more rests before a fog. Like inflammable, pregnant tortoises we steamed round corners, puffed up mounds of stones, panted in the lee of boulders as though they were our stations, the platforms wet and empty. It took nine hours to cover a distance of two miles. Like children stunned by the prospect of a beating we kept silent, the intolerable rain, raining, reigning...

At three in the afternoon, a few hundred yards off the moraine I heard killer bees and saw wild white horses on the glacier below us. No food, no sleep, constant rain and now hypothermia. I went into the dry bag and into a tunnel, clakety-clack, will-I-wake-up, clakety-clack, we're-off-the-ice, clakety-clack...

At six in the evening, still with six hours of daylight we started climbing up to the next pass, in the rain, up a slope of thick twisted trees, a slope of 70 degrees, fighting, clawing, scratching. Gripping wet roots and a new fire of determination, new depths. How low can you go. I want to live, I want to live, the rhythm of it all, I've got to fight, I've got to fight, clakety-clack. Catherine seemed like a dream, unattainable and unreal. 'You won't see her again, kiddo.' Grappling with the vegetation was better though. I was doing something strenuous, wrestling my fate from the rotten bracken. At midnight we stopped. Soup. Two sardines. And wait.

On the third day neither of us woke up because neither of us had slept. The bags were ringing wet and the morning was...dry! No clouds! No fucking

clouds! Get up Rob. No clouds, we'll be in the sun soon. Climbing up the hill, dragging those packs, heavy with liquid, the sun impassively rose over the horizon but morale has sunk. I can't walk another step. I'm so tired. I want Katie wrapped around me, warming the bone rotting cold in my limbs, in my chest. We stop by a stream for lunch, the last hard climb before us and we could be in the Lake District. I begin to think of making it, of a life outside this myopic desperation and then we start walking again up the scree, up the snow, up the scree again hauling our bodies, drunkenly swaying, the rain begins again, up the slope, up the slope, scrabbling viciously, HOW CAN I DIE RAMBLING!

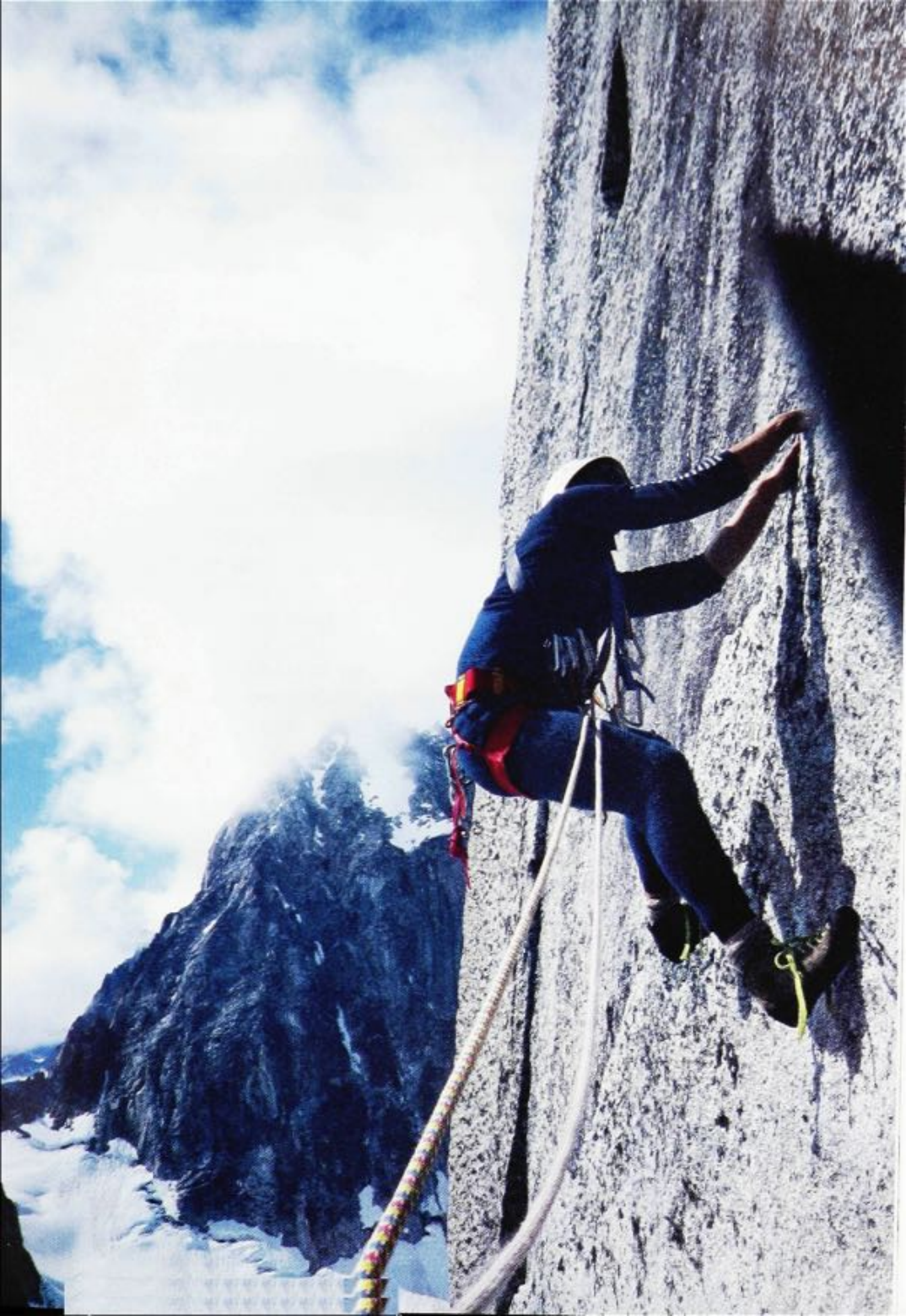
At the top, on the col we can see another col and on the other side of that col is the watershed of a stream and where that stream joins a river is a path which is used more than a couple of times a year. Safety. At the top, on the col I can hear a call, an animal's call, like a sheep only...different. Down the hill, down, down, left-right, clackety-clack and now we're motoring. We cover five miles before dark. We sit in flowers, their blooms now at head-height and the mosquitoes, hardly bothering us. And that call again. Soup. No sardines. And wait.

On the fourth day neither of us woke up because neither of us had slept. The bags were still wet and in the shivering of the night, in a dark breath-holding moment, the bear's call is heard again.

Fording the river, Bear Creek, we get wet again scrambling up the other side, through those waist deep flowers, and footprints, and droppings, no, fresh droppings in the tracks. What do you do if you meet a bear? You run round a tree. Seriously. What if there are no trees? I could show it my Greenpeace badge. 'But wait, you can't eat me, I'm environmentally right on (I hope he doesn't find that soup packet we dumped).' Rob is skinnier and so goes first, singing 'If you go down to the woods today...' and you might find the whole scene quite amusing and so do I but if I had had a gun in my hands I would have used it. The bear is probably in the Yukon before I accept that it isn't going to eat us.

At the top of the last climb in blazing sunshine we dry the gear. Tonight I will sleep. Tomorrow? It's 30 kilometres from the roadhead to the first permanent habitation. Perhaps we'll meet hunters, perhaps they'll feed us and drive us to Talkeetna, perhaps...

On the fifth day I woke up. We found mountain bikers who took photos of me because I looked 'so wasted' and we found our hunters. That night



in Talkeetna eating pizza and drinking Budweiser the stilled rhythm of survival is replaced by an empty silence that I don't know how to fill. Neither of us speak, not for days. I did not, do not know the words and that is how I know the feeling. I work with words. Language is a tool, you can pick them up, dust them off and stand them next to each other and then you might know what I mean but I read these words on this page and I know I cannot succeed. My limits are defined. And that is what frightens me most.

A Walk Down Memory Lane

Dave Cuthbertson

After three months in the Alps and 33 routes I would have been quite happy to go back to Clog and get some proper work done. I had, however, promised Pete, my brother, that I'd call in on him in Stuttgart on the way back home. So with the weather deteriorating in Chamonix a week early, I decided to go and was able to do some good limestone climbing, had a go at parapenting, had some marvellous German restaurant meals, and needless to say, had a few beers as well.

Arriving back in Wales and sorting through the mail, I discovered I hadn't finished. A good friend of mine, Dave, wanted to do the Diamond Couloir on Mt. Kenya and something on Mt. Kilimanjaro, just to get to the top. The first thing I said on the 'phone was "When do you want to go?", "Next week all right?"

Touching down at Nairobi airport after 14 hours creates the usual grumpy Smiler. It seemed just like India, with the hustle and bustle of the locals, all trying to get your baggage into their taxi. We finally chose a car, and a quarter of an hour later, we were cooling ourselves with a beer by the pool at the Jakaranda hotel, a very comfortable looking place, on the edge of town.

We had handled a lot of our arrangements through Sherpa Travel. This cost Dave a little money but he preferred to do it this way ("I'm on holiday", he'd say). Sherpa had booked us into the hotel, and indeed it turned out to be okay, not too pricey and very comfortable. The taxi from the airport was the start of a great adventure.

At the hotel we met up with our Sherpa contact, Jack Marigi, who was the local Taxi organiser, along with anything else that needs organising. He soon had everything arranged for us to travel the following day to Naru Moro Lodge, the usual starting point for Mt. Kenya excursions. So we visited the nearby supermarket and stocked up with food, gas canisters, and virtually anything we could think of. Next morning, duly packed for a big route, we were off. The three hour journey to the lodge took us out of Nairobi, along reasonable tarmac roads, passing coffee and banana plantations lining the road. At the Lodge Jack introduced us to the man at the desk and we booked in and paid for our entry to the park. Our Sherpa contact was proving very useful, saving us quite some time and effort.

It was at this point they told us that the road was so bad after the rains, vehicles would not be allowed to go any further than the Park gate. So, after collecting three porters on the way we arrived at the gate and started walking. We had an easy walk to the Met Station where we camped for the night. Things were going all right so far.

The weather pattern did however give me some cause for concern. It

appeared that the rainy spell at 10 am that morning, lasting for three hours or so, would usually occur every day. Rain in the lower regions, but snow higher up. I now know this was because of the approaching 'short rain season'. Next time I go to Kenya, it'll be in September or January.

Next morning saw a little harder walk to Mckinders camp where more acclimatising was required. Here we went soft and decided to stay in the hut. At least we didn't have to put the tent up in the rain. That evening, once the weather cleared after the usual rain, we decided to do some acclimatising and went up to 4,500 metres behind the hut. We could see American Camp a fair way below us, our objective for the next day, and thought that the walk would be a little short, just an hour or so, and then we could hang around all day there on the flat plateau just for acclimatisation. The original plans weren't changed until actually arriving there next morning. I then decided we should go on to the bivvy hut near the glacier. The porters had never been higher than American Camp, but I persuaded them to carry our revised 'sacks to the tiny hut. That only took another two hours, but by that time the weather was turning bad, so after celebration photos with the porters, they took off unladen down to Mckinders, picking up our discarded kit on the way. The little bivvy hut was quite comfy and we settled down, ready for an early start. A tremendous avalanche roared down the couloir at about five pm. It must have been the build up of snow after the daily storm and I made a mental to be off the steep part of the couloir by 11.00 am, before the snow started.

As with all important bivvys we didn't sleep much. At midnight, being nearest the door, I poked my head round just to confirm the usual fact that the stars were twinkling. It was snowing! Only lightly, but the clouds were obscuring the mountain. How depressing, but it was a no-go for that moment.

Just like most Alpine bivvys, an hour later it was glorious. Stuffing food down as fast as one could, breakfast was over by two o'clock (how I wished I had brought that MSR stove with the paraffin fuel, the gas burns so slowly in winter temperatures). With the 'sacks packed to the brim we emerged onto the snow and I was soon breaking trail through knee deep snow. I've seen it so often before, the approach to a couloir or face through rubbish snow, and afterwards the climb superb, I hoped this would be no different. Just after four o'clock I was belaying in the base of the couloir and sure enough the ice looked good.

Ice climbing in the dark is always a thrilling experience and with the first two pitches being very steep this was no different. There wasn't much time for planting ice screw runners, but the ice was very good and my tools provided the necessary confidence required. It also meant that Dave didn't have to hang around removing screws. Dave's lack of ice climbing for 12 months certainly didn't show, and with the occasional taut rope to show I was looking after him, he cruised up to each stance. The only problem I had was that my rucksack lid was so full, on top of a full 'sack that I couldn't

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look upwards easily, as my helmet would fall against the lid. After half a pitch I was getting so frustrated that I had to take the helmet off and clip it to my harness. Now I was comfortable.

The next five pitches were easier but always had a little vertical step here and there to remind us to keep concentrating. In the light of the day, we headed for the right hand side of the couloir to where we could see the final steep pitches. The headwall, a much sought-after prize if one is in the couloir, was also very steep but in retrospect I now feel it was the weight of the heavy rucksack that gave a little feeling of hurriedness. There was an easier alternative if you skirted to the left, but after all, I hadn't come all that way to not do the headwall. Around 10 am I was making some tricky rock moves to get out onto the upper slope and within half an hour Dave had joined me. So had the weather. It was now hailing quite hard. I had inadvertently taken a line in the mist which put us on a small snow ridge in the middle of the couloir. So the continuous torrent of hail and powder snow roared harmlessly past us on both sides. What it was doing down in the couloir made the imagination whirl round. Understandably, Dave was getting tired, and slower, and even I was feeling the pace and altitude. Although the angle was now easy, at that altitude in the driving snow, it took us a long time and a lot of rest stops before we pulled out onto the level ground of the col, called the 'gate of the mist' Aptly named, it was indeed an impressive place, made more so by the weather. The need to get to shelter before things got serious was very apparent. The Howell bivvy hut was 10 metres down from the top of Nelion, not very far away. After several rope lengths up easy mixed ground and one slightly heated exchange between Dave and I, we topped out.

Dave was very tired and wanted to leave the 'sacks somewhere, find the hut and return for them later. I'm afraid I wasn't having that, and when Dave, after arriving at one stance and being very disappointed to be told we weren't at the hut, tried to force through the 'leaving of sacks' decision, the dialogue going something like this, (expletives deleted in case of censorship);

"Let's leave the 'sacks here."

"But we can't be far from the hut now, and I don't want to leave the sacks and have difficulty finding them."

"Okay where IS the hut?"

"Well, I know the guidebook says it's on the summit."

“But I read the book as well and it says it’s 10 metres from the summit?”

“Well, as far as I’m concerned, 10 metres IS the summit!”

“Okay. You’re the guide! You find the ---ing HUT!”

With tempers being cooled only by the lashing snow, I raced off up the next pitch, which as luck would have it, put me on the top, and of course there was the hut just a few feet away. The incident was quickly forgotten after a few apologies for strained tempers, and within minutes all was well and we were safe inside. It was nearly two o’clock, and the next job was to get out of wet clothes and into sleeping bags and bivvy sacs.

At this point I should mention that the hut is about seven feet by five feet, and one wall (let’s call it the back wall) is five feet high and the opposite wall just two feet high, so movement in this wedge-shaped construction wasn’t easy. In comparison to the weather outside though, it was heaven, and one at a time we got sorted out. Dave was almost asleep before I’d got myself into my bag, and after getting some snow ready for a brew and a meal, I joined Dave in the land of nod. Any thoughts of descending that afternoon would have to wait for a while.

I stirred after half an hour and kept going over, in my mind, all the options and the details of the descent, obviously now plastered in snow. It didn’t stop snowing until well after four o’clock so the choice was made for us. Our option seemed quite pleasant. We had lots of food and we knew the weather would be superb at six o’clock next morning. So, once again being closer to the door, I got into the routine of melting snow, boiling water, passing the food and drink over to Dave, all the time wishing I’d brought that MSR. It had been quite a day.

Sure enough, next morning dawned magnificent, and we got away at about seven o’clock. Pitching down for a few rope lengths led us to some steep abseils, several of which were over overhangs. Heavy rucksacks, with wet gear, made these quite serious, I was impressed with my partner’s performance.

Mid-day saw us on the last few steep feet down to an easy angled glacier. The usual snow storm was, by this stage of the descent, turning to rain, but the occasional breaks in the mist meant we had no difficulty in finding the way down to the valley and Mckinders camp. The rain had worsened somewhat, but it didn’t matter now. At the hut, we were looked after with brews provided by the porters and soon were in a change of clothes and feeling decidedly more comfortable.

After a night in the hut and an early start, our porters loaded up all our equipment and mid-afternoon saw us back at the Park gate. Several trekking parties had passed us on their way up to the huts, one lone gentleman seemed to be enjoying his stroll to the full. The transport arranged, we were shuttled down to the Naru Moro lodge and a welcome ‘Masai Magic’ sandwich, and several beers with our porters, by now firmly established as good friends. The lone gentleman appeared and introduced himself as David Wright, a Climbers’ Club member working for a while in Kenya. On reading my name

in the registration book at the Park gate, he had decided there couldn't be two 'Smiler Cuthbertsons', and had returned after his walk to check me out.

He offered us a lift back to Nairobi in his Dihatsu which we accepted gratefully. It certainly proved more comfortable than waiting for Jack Marigi's elderly taxi. That evening, he collected us from the hotel and took us to a restaurant where we felt civilised once again.

Within a week, we were on top of Kilimanjaro after climbing the 'Heim Glacier' route. It's description in the guidebook, of being 'one of the world's great mountaineering adventures' was too compelling to resist.....but that's another story.



Sprechen Sie Slate?

Dave Gregory

Climbing on the North Wales slate quarries and its written description have gone through the usual, if speeded up, evolution resulting in a masterly section in the current Llanberis guidebook, purchasable at all respectable equipment emporia. This includes a brief glossary of terms used by slate activists. Now the word glossary is derived from the Greek 'glossa', meaning a tongue, giving away the game that the list was very much tongue in cheek.

Here is an extension to the glossary of slate-speak, the vocabulary of the mudstone maniacs. (To save space, and avoid the charge of plagiarism, terms from the original list have not been included).

Absent friends: A toast to someone who tried 'Dawes of Perception' last week, or any other week.

Alloy imprint: The mark made on a falling slab climber when they hit a protruding bolt hanger. Rarely, the trade mark of the manufacturer is imprinted legibly.

Blast shelter: soundproof cabin for use of those within earshot of a climber who has just suffered an alloy imprint.

Bolt booties: A form of footwear which involuntarily strays onto bolts to support the owner's weight. Often worn by chicken heads.

Bolt bruise: See Alloy imprint.

Bolt bum: A slate activist who puts the bolts just below the cruxes of his new routes instead of just above.

Chickenhead: (i) A small rocky protruberance useful as a handhold. (ii) Climber reduced to a gibbering wreck on slate by the lack of (i).

Cocoa rock: The stained rock surface below the hard sections of some routes.

Corner: A dihedral characterised by absolutely smooth walls with no crack at their junction. (Probably graded 5a).

Crack: A clearly discernible fissure into which, however, the fingers will not go.

Dinorwig dolerite: Slate.

Geordie War Cry: (i) The name of a slate route. (ii) Aaaahhh.(War Cry from any other part of the country; AAAAAAHHHHH).

Goat: A horned quadruped which roams the level above Rainbow Slab looking for potential head-first cruisers.

Gravity lobotomy: Cranial state produced by slab of slate falling edgeways onto one's head.

Groove: A vague depression running up the rock. If a straight edge is put across it, it may just be possible to see light between the rock and the straight edge.

Hairline Crack: A line marked on the rock to indicate where it would be relieving to have a crack.

Head-first cruisers: Persons incautiously viewing ascents of Rainbow Slab by peering over the top.

Hydrogen Henry (or Harriet): a climber of elegant style who just floats up.

Ladders: (i) Devices used by quarrymen for ascending slate faces. (No longer there like many of the holds and cracks referred to in the guide). (ii) Vertical holes produced in the tights of anyone who tries to creep through the razor wire around the Dinorwig power station.

Matchsticks: Short lengths of wood used to prop open one's eyes in the proper attitude of surprise when listening to the slate slicksters' latest exploits.

Metamorphic Mohican: A young hotshot. Ear rings, psychedelic tights, flamboyant hair style, sold on slate.

Mudstone maniac: Anyone who shows enthusiasm for slate.

No holds: State of considerable sections of any route graded above E3.

Peg pocket: Hole made in a falling slab climber by protruberant section of a piton. Largely superseded by alloy imprint.

Slate: (i) A writing surface once used in hostelrys and the like for writing up debts with a stick of chalk. Now rarely used. (ii) A rock surface used for scattering chalk on, to take up production now that (i) is so little used.

Slatepate: (i) An ancient climber, used to rough rock with holds on it trying to come to terms with the slippy stuff. (ii) Cranial state produced by slate slab falling flat on one's head.

Super-g second: A belayer who can run away from the crag faster than his (intending) leader is falling down it.

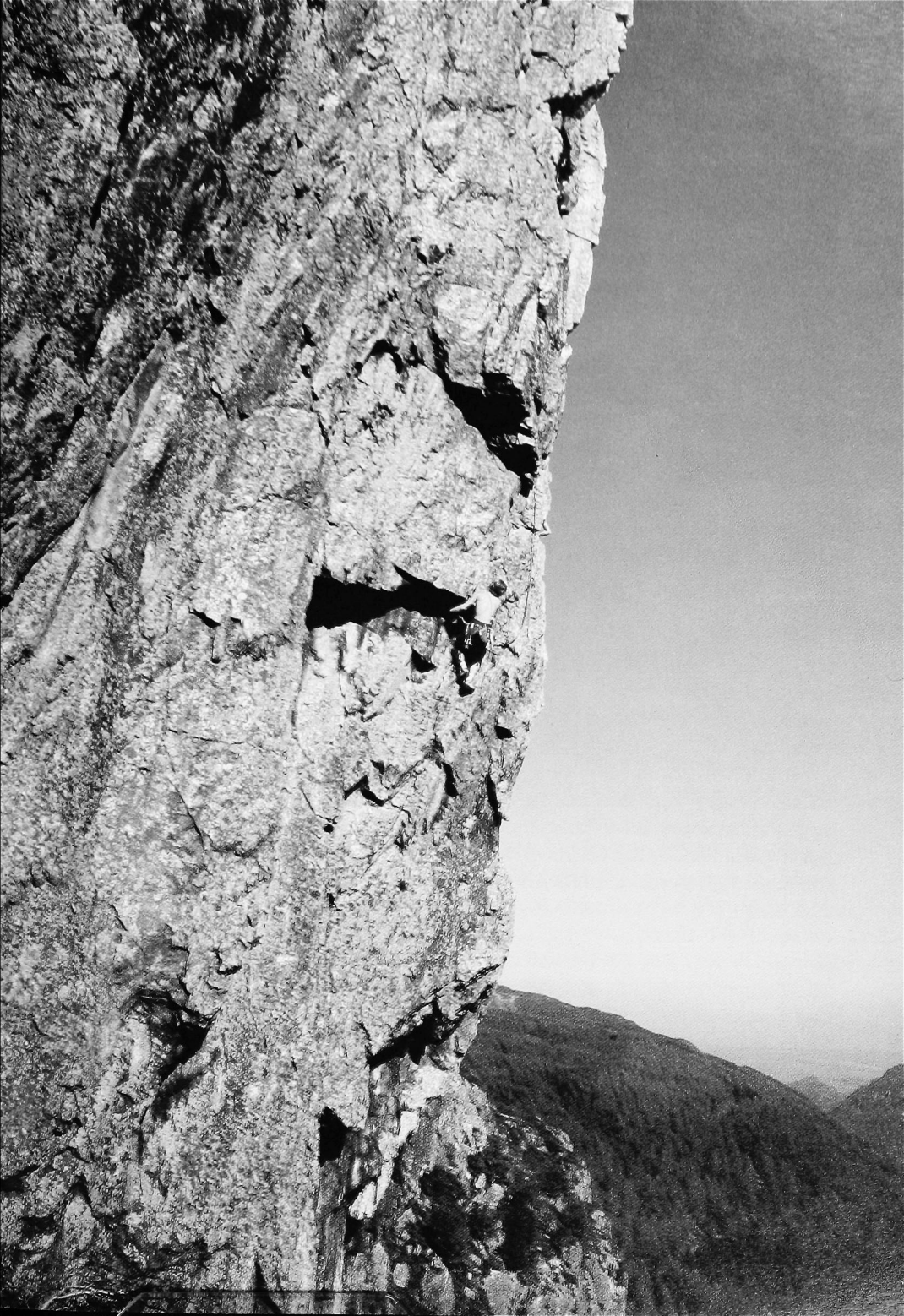
Thin crack: A barely discernible feature into which the fingers will not go.

Tome-dome: Mental state produced by a copy of the Llanberis guidebook falling on one's head.

Watch us: (i) My timepiece. (ii) I am about to fall off. (iii) Don't I look pretty in my new tights?

Wetsuit waiter: Anyone belaying a leader on 'Dawes of Perception'.





Plus ca change

Mike Ball

The snow is always a bit soft in patches. It was that day, but quite safe. Anyway it was No. 4 Gully. Last year had been good with a sunshine lunch on the top of the Great Tower and the Good Friday climb to finish with. No breaks for weather at all. This year was starting badly with snow on arrival and snow yesterday during a rough walk up to Corrie Leis. An easy route for today seemed the only hope. The steep pitch of North Gully looked secure enough and was. Easier than it often is, too. No question of the snow coming adrift either. Only a walk now, but better wait to see how the two roped pairs manage, as the seconds were not very used to the Ben.

My wife stood at the foot of the bed. "You've been avalanced off North Gully. You've broken some ribs and got a small haemo-pneumo-thorax. Your collar bone's gone too. They helicoptered you both down from the hut." I struggled to remember, no good. "When are they coming in?" "They aren't. You're in Glasgow." "Glasgow. Why?" "For a CAT scan. You were walking badly and they thought you might have an intra-cranial heamorrhage, but you haven't. It's normal."

Somewhere I'd got it wrong. Well, it wasn't the first time. All the nice rules are broken sooner or later. Bare ice glaciers are always safe....it's safer higher up, it gets colder there....we went down on good snow three hours ago, it won't have changed...this track is safely away from the cornice, look, you can see it right along and it's today's track...this would be safe in the Alps.

I found out about bare ice glaciers in the Barun Valley. They don't seem to do it every year and perhaps other ranges have this trap too. The first exploration above Base Camp for acclimatisation with a Sherpa showed what the trouble was. Some degree of altitude sickness meant that I could eat very little, though could manage fluids. The first mountain was only 19,500ft and easy. We were after a 20,300ft one the next day, also easy, but had to move the tent for better access. Plodding over the ice with a queasy stomach I was not paying attention at all. When I stopped suddenly and felt alarmed I began to wonder about the effects of altitude. What on earth had I done that for? There was a line in the ice, and if it had been snow I would have given it a poke with the axe, but this was pure hard ice, just the same on the other side of the line as on my side. Feeling quite cross I lifted my axe and struck the ice on the other side of the line hard. After teetering about for quite a bit on the edge of the enormous hole I produced I remained where I was. The Sherpa was more excited. "Oh! Sahib. Oh! Sahib." The hole was a good three to four feet across and the ice had been well under one inch thick. The distance down was more than enough, a vast wide crevasse.

We did the other mountain the next day and returned to Base Camp. As

I was with a party of New Zealanders I wasn't very keen on telling them of my episode, but two of them had already been through at the head of the valley. The one who fell through had clearly seen nothing like this in the Southern Alps and the other one only acted as a sheet anchor until he fell too, fortunately a reasonable distance, so they both survived. Mind you, rather like the Ben, it seems to spend a lot of time snowing in the Southern Alps, so perhaps New Zealanders don't know too much about bare ice glaciers.

One tends to be more aware of thawing during the day than freezing. The snow gets softer and more laborious if not more dangerous. No. 3 Gully is often snowy, though some years it is icy and some years it varies during the day. J.H.B. Bell found it unexpectedly icy once and made a rapid 1,000ft descent to near the lochan, being occasionally airborne over the steeper sections. Joe Brown and Nat Allen had already been down one day over easy secure snow. After another shortish route they went down again. Nat managed to pull off the ice to one side after about 100ft. Joe did the full 1,000ft again. A nice safe long fall anyway, not like No.5.

Cornices from below are not much better than cornices from above. I've made a track "past" a cornice coming off the Dente Blanche. An hour or so later it gave way as another rope passed along, fortunately at the line of footsteps in such a way that balance could be maintained a foot or two lower down. Tony Worssam had trouble with No. 2 Gully cornice once. His companion was attacking the cornice from below when it gave up rather dramatically and carried him down with it. Tony's ice axe belay (no Dead Men in those days) came out and he descended too. The leader had stopped but his axe was lost above and the same exercise was repeated all the way down the gully. While falling, Tony's balaclava kept pulling over his face. When he desperately pulled it up again, he saw a rock wall approaching and pulled it down again.

Ken Berrill also had an interesting time on Moonlight Gully. There's a long cornice there, and they chose what looked like the lowest part to tunnel through. About half an hour later another pair appeared below and started a bit half-heartedly on the next lowest bit. This was clearly a lost cause, so one of them unroped and came and stood below Ken and Tony Husbands to view progress. They had got well in and under by then, so the suggestion floated up from below "You look almost there. Why don't you poke up with the axe and see if it goes through." Well it did, and a large section fell off. The fall was only about 200ft without damage. Ken was most upset and apologised humbly to the other chap. "Oh! don't worry" said the stalwart supporter "he's been in the Alps." Well, there you are. We didn't know much about the Ben in the 1940's but it made a good story. I was telling it to Derek Haworth once on the top of the Buchaille, when we met there after finishing our routes. The punch line fell a bit flat. Derek's second was the one who'd been avalanched.

A party of two, including one of those rare women who manage a week

in the C.I.C. hut, recently tried Cresta. Going up the gully the weather turned sour and a white-out developed shortly before they reached the crux. They didn't like to tackle this not being able to see where the traverse went, and descended the gully again. At the bottom they had a bit of a problem deciding how to get down the pitch a little to the right (going down) and were about to set off when a body passed by quite close. They moved out of the line of fire and considered the situation. They could not even be certain that the body was the only one coming and eventually spent the night there, being taken off by helicopter the next morning. As it was a member of an army party support was very much in evidence, rather like the time another army party smartly carried one of their members into the C.I.C. hut unconscious from hypothermia. Five minutes in the drying room restored consciousness, but his slightly limited clothing needed all night there before he could safely go outside again, with a good breakfast this time. Even the Army doesn't always get everything right. The temptation with a group is to go 'always a little further'. With us it appears to have been the sheer weight of new snow that set the avalanches off. Certainly the often dramatic Himalayan avalanches we saw were due to this. Right back to Bennen new snow is recorded as being a factor. In Gosset's account of his death a clear description of a wind slab avalanche is given, the party being deceived by the apparent solidity of the snow in most parts of the slope. Also very little Alpine winter mountaineering was done then.

I have, unfortunately, no memory of our descent, being temporarily concussed and having the usual retrograde amnesia. As one would expect the injuries tended to get worse the further one fell, the one below me fracturing an ankle and his nose, and the lower members of the party being simply, though considerably bruised and able to walk down. The distance fallen was 200ft-300ft, or possibly a little more for me as I was out of sight above in the cloud. I certainly finished up at the bottom of the party. After about half an hour two climbers came up from below. One escorted one of our party down and the other went back to the hut to get more help. Finding the phone out of order he went rapidly down to Fort William and mobilized the Lochaber rescue team.

Apart from the man with the ankle we were all standing and recovering at this stage when a second avalanche from high in No. 4 Gully took the lowest two of us down another 200ft, partially burying Mike Forshaw, but completely burying me, though I did manage to leave a hand out. After freeing himself, Mike got down to my head in about four and a half minutes. Mind you, it's usually the injuries that kill people at this stage and not the suffocation. Further, you can be suffocated even with your head out. When Eric Langmuir was avalanched in Corrie Cas he was buried up to the neck. He appears to have been unaware of the fearful compression of snow as an avalanche stops and did not manage to secure adequate room for chest expansion, so he lost consciousness from the inability to inhale properly. His head could be seen so again he was soon dug out successfully.



Below: A police visit to the C.I.C Hut.

Photo. Mike Ball

Above. Ben Nevis.

Photo. Mike Ball.



Whether I started the first avalanche or not I was certainly carried down with it and the other two ropes got involved too. The snow coming down must have acted as a shock absorber in the very solid steep section. Looking at the pitch last year I was amazed that so many of us had come down with no more damage. Mind you, to survive a long fall on the Ben is not uncommon and Brian Kellett even walked down to Fort William after falling the whole length of Glover's Chimney from Tower Gap. Bill Tilman and Jim Simpson also went down the Brenva face somewhere near Bob Run due to ice and a re-entrant in the edge and walked back to the hut, and on down, Tilman with a dislocated shoulder.

You don't often see big avalanches on the Ben, though I have felt the wind of one in the Castle Gully area on the other side of the Allt a' Mhuillin. There's always plenty of debris about though; hopefully most of it comes down on the days when one feels hut-bound. Whoever they are, no-one seems always able to predict accurately when the conditions have become dangerous. This can happen quite quickly with changes in the amount of snow and temperature. But it is easy to get obsessional when everything should be quite safe. The snow is always a bit soft in patches.

Summer Days

Chris Craggs

Summer was approaching and nothing concrete had been planned. Usual partners were otherwise occupied with house, home and family, so that left me and Sherri. After Open University commitments I was left with four weeks and a desire for some rocking. The last three summers in the UK had been a wash-out, would this be another 1976? Or should we cut our losses and go abroad?

The 9.30 pm weather forecast one Thursday night and another mega low was drifting our way - a time for decisions. By 11.00 pm the car was packed, by 4.00 am we were on the ferry. Dawn mid-channel was spectacular and by dinner time we were in Freyr.

I'd visited the place a couple of times for flying visits on the way to the Alps, but as a summer venue it seemed ideal, the routes weren't too big and there wasn't the problem with the heat that can be so debilitating in southern France.

To be honest, Sherri doesn't climb a lot, she is just as happy sitting in the sun, exploring, bird-watching, or even holding my ropes, but when required she copes well. We started off with *Le Spigdo* 400 feet, E1 5a 5a 5b 5a, and as with many of the traditional classics (it was put up in 1934) the crux sections were polished to a high sheen. The route is exposed, especially the last pitch, so once on the summit we walked over the road to the Cafe Chamonix for an omelette and large brandy - climbing in Belgium really is rather civilised.

For the next few days we visited a selection of other crags around Freyr, and I did some of the single pitch routes on the main cliff, abbing back down for the gear. Most routes are now equipped with big new epoxied bolts. It stayed hot and sunny so most days included a dip in one of the local pools.

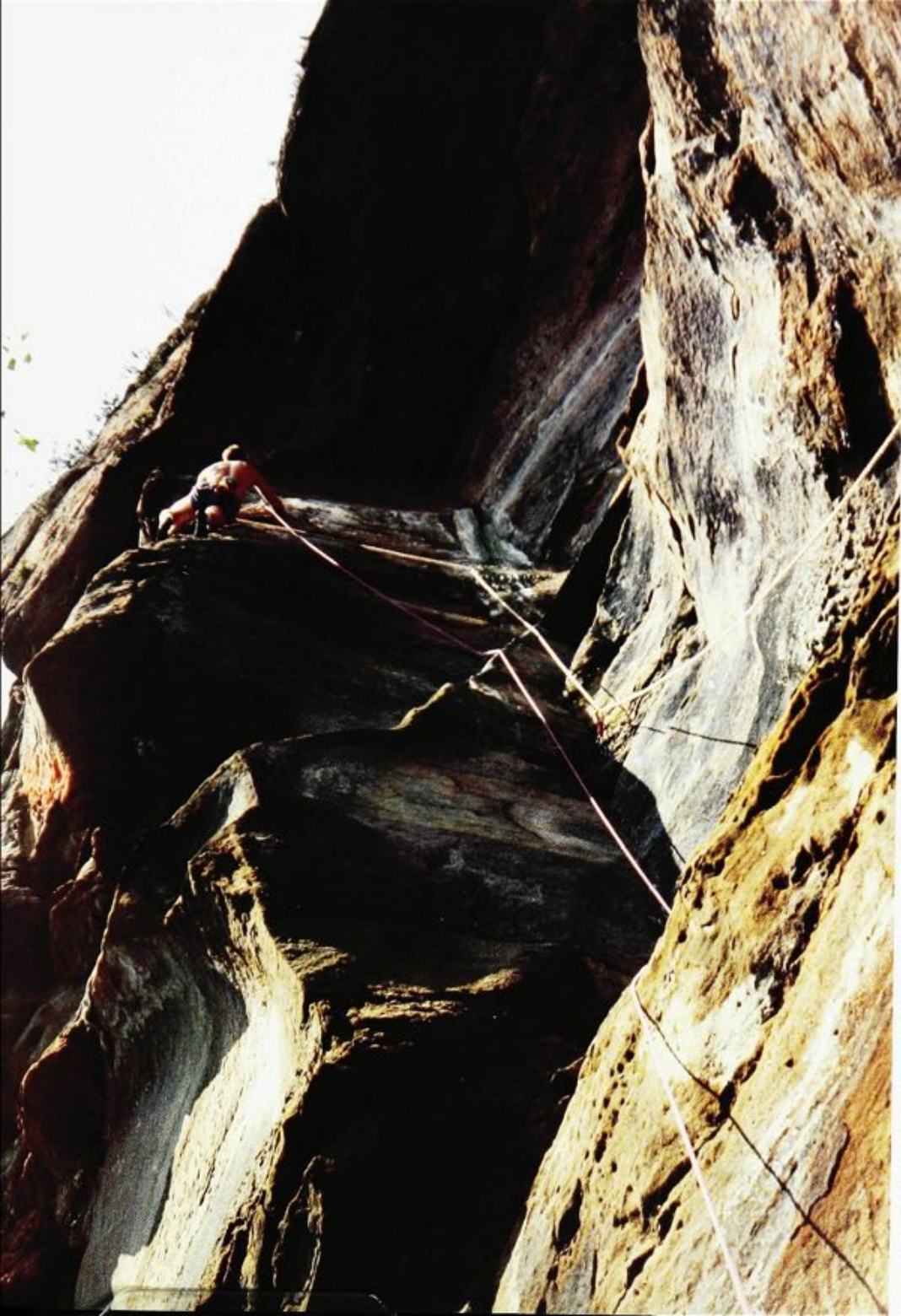
Jim and Marie Rubery arrived and told us of the recent weather back home, only 10 hours away, had been very poor - perhaps we had made the right choice after all. As the ladies beefed up their tans Jim and myself spent some pleasant days on some of the longer routes, *The Directissime* HVS 4b 4c 5b 5b, and *Toutereaux* E3 5c 5c 5c 5c were especially outstanding, on the latter it was so hot we considered abbing off and going for a cold beer, but we persisted.

From Belgium we moved on (toll-free motorways) to Luxembourg and the sandstone cliffs at Berdorf. The setting here is the most unusual 100 feet cliffs bristling with bolts and pegs set in a forest of giant trees. There are good routes of all grades from V Diff upwards, on rock that is as good (well almost) as gritstone. The bird life, local pool and very cheap beer, along with excellent fingery climbing allowed for some pleasant restful days - a couple of hours on the rock with plenty of time for other activities.

Eventually Jim and Marie headed for some holidaying in the Vosges, so we continued south. A few days in the Pfalz allowed me to grab a few of the German sandstone classics on the huge red towers that dot the area. It was very hot so eventually we packed up and drove into Switzerland for a few days at Grindlewald. We spent time on the smaller crags and had an excellent day walking the ridges opposite the Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau. An early start and we caught the longest chair-lift in the world up to First. From here, well-made and well-marked paths wander through the Alpine meadows thick with flowers, and always with magnificent views. We saw our first Golden Eagle and eventually descended to catch the bus just before a gigantic thunderstorm hit the area.

Time was beginning to run out so we moved round to Handegg. Sherri knew I wanted to do at least one of the longer routes so after a day on some of the one pitch routes we got up early and scrambled up to the start of *Herren Party*. Sherri did not ask how long the route was so I didn't tell her. The climbing was very Eitive-like with big bolts at every belay and not much in between. Initially trickles of water on the slab gave cause for concern but as the sun warmed up the rock dried out and we padded our way upwards. The pitches rolled by with hardly a complaint until eventually, after 12 pitches and 1,860 feet the route just ended as the rock steepened up. The long abseil back to reality passed quickly, and so a meal out and a few more beers than usual were in order.

That night the weather broke - we woke to torrential rain - it was time to go home.



Obituary

W.A. POUCHER 1943-1988

Walter Poucher, the man who turned mountain photography into an art and whose work inspired so many members of our club, died in a nursing home near Keswick last August, aged 96. Appropriately, he had spent the last few years of his life in the shadow of his beloved Lakeland fells.

His friends called him Walter but he was born William Arthur Poucher at Horncastle, Lincolnshire, on November 22, 1891. He was a uniquely eccentric and talented personality. An accomplished musician, he harboured early ambitions to become a concert pianist, but finally sold his Steinway piano in 1958 because he felt it was taking up too much valuable time which could have been spent in the mountains. Photography and mountains ... those were the two great loves of his distinguished life.

The young Poucher soon found that the flat countryside of Lincolnshire was not to his taste. Visits to the more mountainous regions of the British Isles soon led to an enduring love for the Lake District, Snowdonia, the Scottish Highlands and the Pennines.

Trips to the Alps, Dolomites and the Riviera soon followed, always with camera in hand, and in his youth many photographs were processed in his own darkroom at the head of the cellar steps. But it was not until after his retirement in 1956 as chief perfumer at Yardley that his second career, as a guidebook writer and mountain photographer, really took off.

The catalyst was a pre-war talk at a Fell and Rock dinner by Frank Smythe, the great cameraman and Himalayan climber, who doubted if it was possible to produce a book of photographs devoted entirely to the Lake District, due to the changing weather conditions. Poucher took this as a challenge and in 1940 *Lakeland Through the Lens* was published, followed by a further 20 books of black and white pictures on Wales, Scotland, the Lakes, Surrey, the West Country and the Dolomites. My favourite was his superb, evocative *The Magic of Skye*, which sent dozens of climbers of my generation scurrying to the Cuillins.

After the Second World War he also visited the USA and Canada, photographing the Canadian Rockies, and features in many American National Parks. Then came the guides published by Constable. *The Lakeland Peaks*, published in 1960, was followed by similar editions for Wales and Scotland, finishing with *The Peak and Pennines* in 1966. I have them before me as I write - models of clarity and accuracy, all of which ran into several editions. The possibility of books of colour pictures became a reality with the publication of *Scotland* in 1980. A further 10 books followed, the last being *The Magic of the Highlands*, published in 1987.

His career as an author came after a highly successful career as a chemist

and perfumer with Yardley. But he almost took another direction in life, for after leaving the local grammar school his father wanted him to train as a carpenter. Poucher had other ideas and was apprenticed to a chemist. He trained at the College of the Pharmaceutical Society in Bath, gaining his PhC, and started work at Charing Cross Hospital with the intention of becoming a doctor.

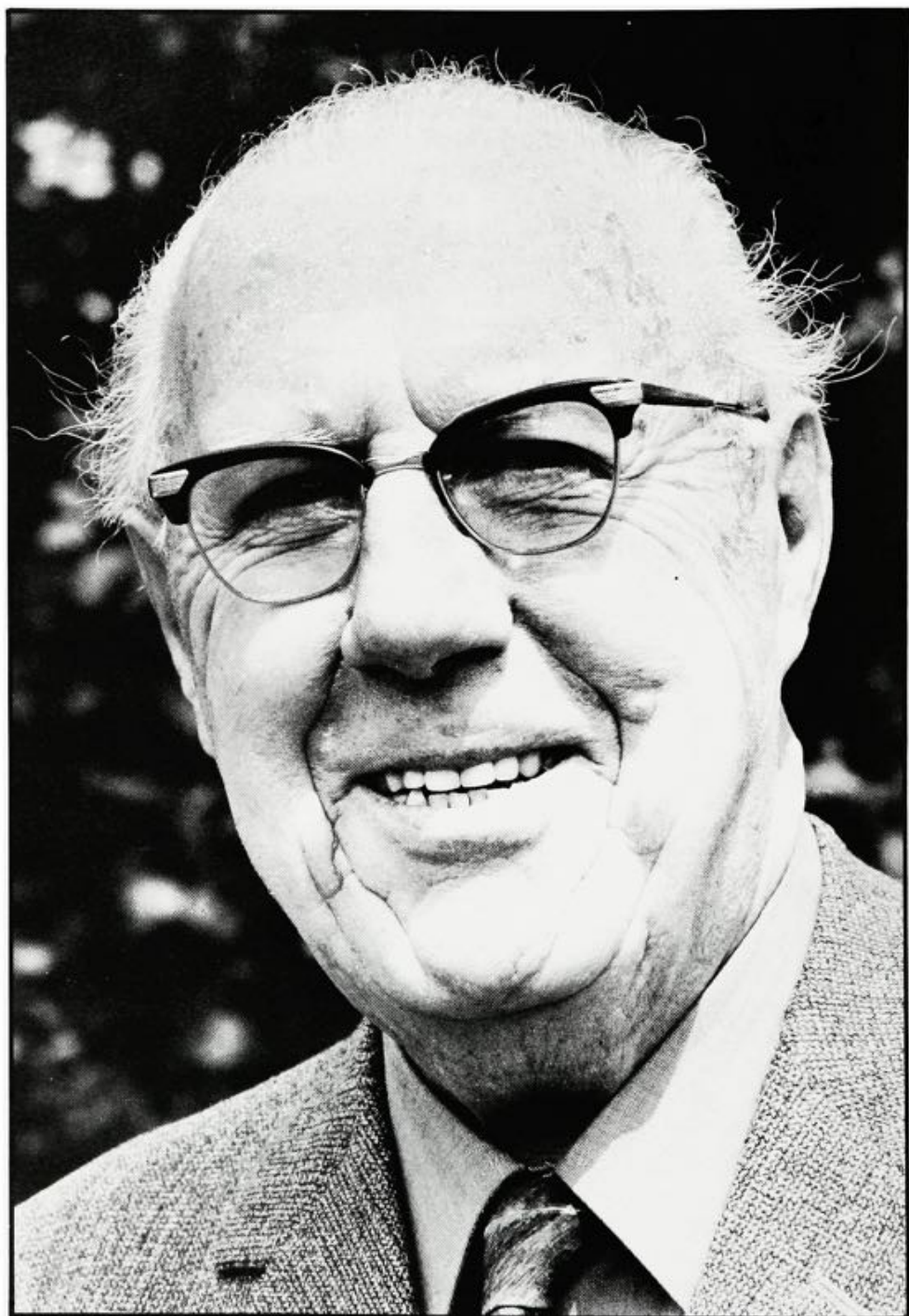
In 1914 he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and served for most of the war with the 41st Casualty Clearing Station, being demobilised as a captain and quartermaster. After working in Cheltenham with a company of manufacturing chemists he set up a consultancy in London. He married during the war and his son John was born in 1920. Around this time the family moved to Surrey, to a house at the foot of the Epsom Downs.

Poucher's wife died young, in 1925, and he re-married, his second wife passing away earlier in 1988. Poucher had become interested in perfumery and in 1923 he published *Perfumes, Cosmetics and Soaps*, which soon became required reading in the trade. The book, now expanded into three volumes, is still in print. Continuing his consultancy in London, one of his main clients, Yardley, persuaded him to join them as chief perfumer and he held this post until his retirement. Poucher was an honorary fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and the first Englishman to be awarded the US Society of Cosmetic Chemists' medal for his 'outstanding contribution to the art and science of cosmetics.'

His honour from the climbing world came in 1983 when, at a BMC dinner in Llanberis, he was presented with a crystal goblet 'in recognition of his great service to the sport.' Poucher achieved some notoriety in the climbing world, particularly after appearing on a TV chat show, for his habit of wearing make-up. It was this strange trait which I noticed many years ago when I introduced him to a lecture audience in the Library Theatre, Manchester. He emanated perfume and I had the impression that his face appeared to be made up though I can't remember whether it was with eye shadow, mascara or 'blusher.' Why? Plucking up courage after the lecture, I popped the inevitable but embarrassing question. "Tom," he replied, looking at me gravely, "it's up to every man to make the best of his appearance."

Poucher was always immaculately dressed in smart anorak, plus fours and woollen bob-hat. Sometimes he even sported gold lame gloves! He often carried three cameras - one for colour, one for black and white and a third in reserve in case of failure. He wrote extensively and succinctly about the art of mountain photography in *Lakeland Through the Lens* and *Snowdon Holiday*.

A supreme perfectionist, he would sometimes wait days for the optimum conditions for a single shot. Even in his 90s he was prepared to travel in a helicopter for the first time to take aerial pictures of the Alps. There were, of course, other master lensmen to challenge Poucher Douglas Milner, Alfred Gregory, Tom Weir and Basil Goodfellow, for instance. But Poucher



W. A. Poucher.
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Photo: Ken Wilson.

had that vital commercial streak and used to tell his publishers: "There's nobody else with the talent, the time and the money to cover the country." Nowadays (dare I say it?) Poucher's work seems rather flat and old-fashioned compared with modern American greats such as Galen Rowell.

Poucher, who joined the Climbers' Club in 1943, was a man of many parts - climber, cameraman, writer, soldier, golfer, chemist, musician, lover of powerful cars and good food. He lived his life to the full and when he died most of his ambitions had been realised. How many of us can truthfully say that?

Tom Waghorn

Natalie Bull **1984-1988**

Natalie died peacefully of cancer on 15th August, at the age of 51, after a relatively short illness. Although only recently elected to membership, she had made many friends in the Club since her marriage to Derek Bull in 1959.

Natalie's first climbs were in the Vercors, when she was a student at Grenoble University. She was a natural climber, with good balance, agility and above all enthusiasm. She climbed extensively in this country with Derek, but was not encouraged by him to lead and remained as a result very modest about her own ability. They also went to the Alps and to Corsica together, with various C C parties.

Derek's death in a train accident in 1974 was a bitter blow. She climbed little for nearly 10 years, devoting herself to bringing up her daughters and allowing herself only to attend, as a very welcome guest, some of the family meets, plus the odd weekend. But in recent years she had returned to climbing and skiing with great enthusiasm. She went to the Alps, enlisting first on an Alpine course, twice to Nepal and once to the Californian Sierras and to Joshua Tree. She joined the London Mountaineering Club, and then the C C, when she reckoned she was doing the right kind of routes.

Natalie was a delightful companion, adding to everyone's pleasure in any party of which she was a member. Her enjoyment of a climb or a mountain prospect, of an Egyptian temple or a ride through the Buckinghamshire countryside, or just the oddities of mankind was most infectious. She had a great sense of humour and our memories of her will always be of a laughing, happy, outgoing person. But she was more than that. She was intent on contributing to the community and had a strong social conscience. She trained and then worked as an agricultural secretary, becoming very knowledgeable about the practices and problems of farming in the country which she loved. She worked hard for the parish of Ivinghoe and gave

devoted service as assistant manager of the Citizens Advice Bureau in Aylesbury.

Her death leaves a large gap in many lives, particularly those of her daughters Elaine and Celia. It is tragic that someone with such vitality and charm, and with so much to give, should have to leave us so soon.

Michael Westmacott

This short note is intended to follow Mike Westmacott's more comprehensive account of her climbing years and activities. I must have known her throughout those years because the year of her marriage to Derek, 1959, was the year I was elected to the C C and Derek was already a member. I saw her regularly then with Derek, the last time being the day before Derek so tragically died.

However Pat's and my real friendship with her started and grew during the last six years. In 1983 she joined our party to trek round Annapurna. She was the best of companions, always fun to talk to, always going well, always helpful to others but an independent soul herself. She was the only woman member of the party to join the attempt on Chulu East and got as far as anyone, only being stopped by the slow going in soft snow and our self-imposed time limits. It was on this trip that I suggested to her that she should join the C C. I proposed her and she was elected with the support of a galaxy of ex-Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Secretaries, and the rest of her friends in the club.

Two years later, in 1985, the same party with a few additions and subtractions had a more off-beat trek across the grain of the country, by various ridges, ending in the Langtang Valley and the ascent of a small peak, Yalla. By then Natalie's interest in the Sherpas had developed to the extent that she was being encouraged to write a family history of them. Like all of us, she was full of admiration for their cheerfulness, helpfulness and sheer going-powers but she went further and spent hours talking to them and making notes of their lives and backgrounds. She had the ability to command their respect, trust and affection in this way: she displayed a complete empathy with them in common with her general fellow feeling for all her friends.

I cannot resist telling one personal story. In Kathmandu I dreamed that she was pushing me up a hill in a wheelbarrow and, I think, we reached the top. The next morning Pat and I were having the hotel breakfast and Natalie came down to join us. With a straight face I said "Thank you Natalie for pushing me up that hill last night in a barrow". She jumped a mile and said "How did you know", she had dreamed that she had exhausted herself completely pushing up this barrow. She was helpful even in her sleep!

This year, 1988, we were away with her twice, first skiing at Verbier, 130

a thing she could do far better than us, and later in the Ardennes, a sort of reunion trip of our first Nepalese party, based on the holiday home of the Dutch friends who were then with us. It was here that Natalie first complained of a pain which developed so dramatically afterwards.

However painful it was dreadful to see her towards the end, our visions of her will always be of a happy and fulfilled person enjoying life to the full. She retained her sense of humour and her dignity to her last days. She was a lovely person.

Harry Sales

Stephen Briggs **1981 - 1986**

Stephen Briggs, together with three other instructors from Plas-y-Brenin, flew to Delhi in mid-September 1986, with the intention of climbing the 6,300m Hagshu peak in the Kishtwar region of the Punjab Himalaya. They intended to be back in the United Kingdom by mid-November.

Anxieties were roused when there was no news of the party by the end of November. A small search party went out in mid-December and a larger party went out in June, 1987. Despite these and later searches no trace of the party has been found and it has been assumed that all four climbers perished on or near the mountain, probably in an avalanche.

Stephen was born in Auckland, New Zealand in October 1958 and would have been just 28 at the time of the accident, very much in his prime and well on his way to achieving his ambition of becoming a professional mountain guide. He discovered climbing at the age of 17 and it rapidly became one of the most important parts of his life. Not finding any conventional job to his liking, he came to spend more and more time in the mountains - this included a winter in Chamonix working in a hotel and a season at Plas-y-Brenin as a temporary instructor. He had planned to spend a winter ice-climbing in Scotland on his return from Hagshu, and to take his guide's assessment the following spring.

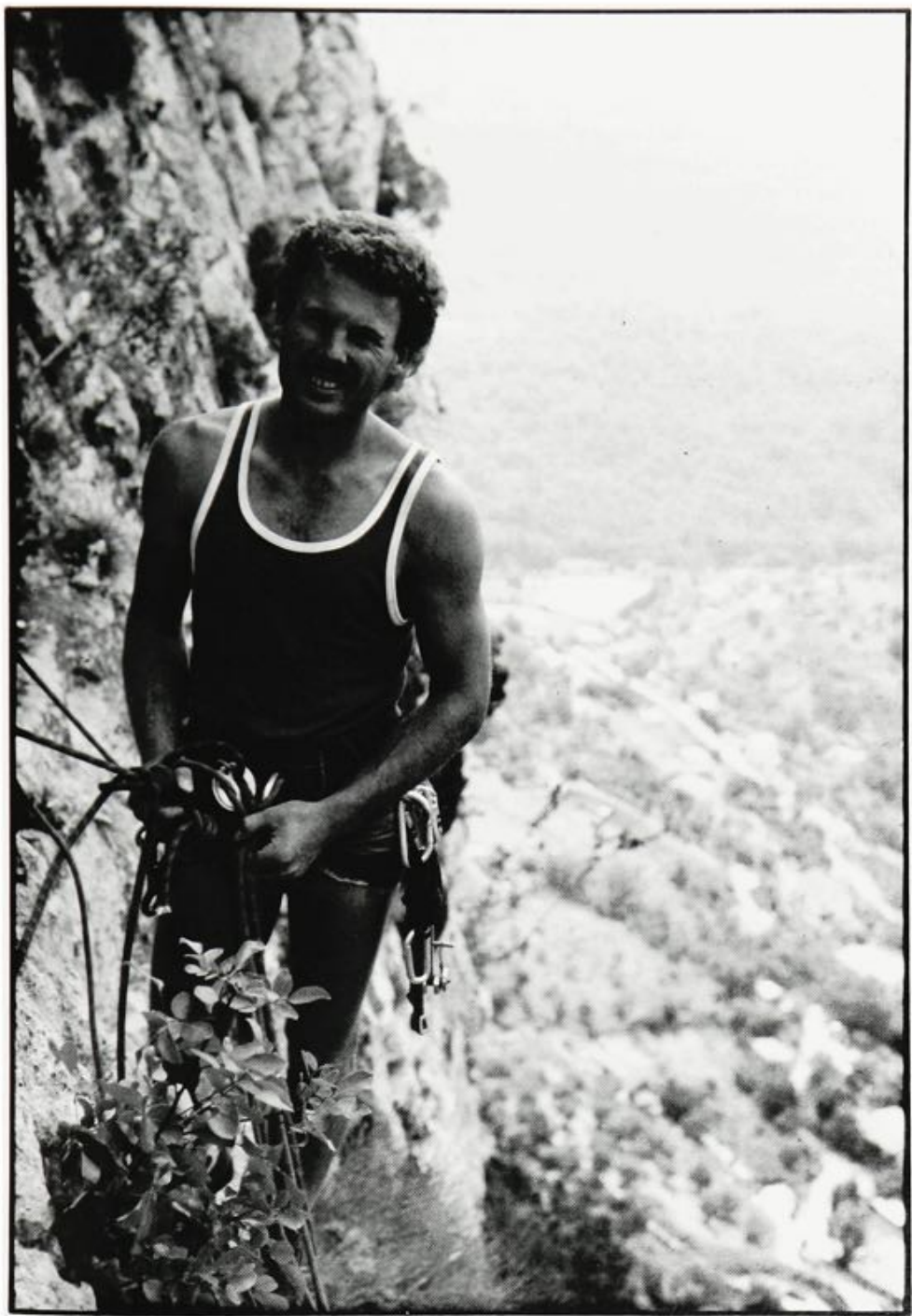
Starting with his early climbing in the Avon gorge and on West Country limestone, he had climbed in many areas of England, Wales and Scotland, in the Alps, and also in New Zealand. His technical leading standard rose to E4 and he pioneered several new routes in the Cheddar and Avon area; the most notable of these is perhaps *Clare's Complexity* E4, at Cheddar. His major climbs abroad included the very hard North Wall of the Laliderspitze (see Alpine Journal 88/89), the north faces of the Matterhorn and Eiger, as well as an ascent of Mount Cook. He became a good skier and had skied the Haute Route twice.

Stephen was a very sound and methodical climber with a superb



Stephen Briggs.
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Photo: Richard Sykes.



Stephen Briggs.

Photo: Richard Sykes.

temperament for hard rock-climbing and mountaineering. At Plas-y-Brenin he had impressed his fellow instructors as an immensely strong, very enthusiastic and extremely good climber, and also as someone with a very easy going and easy tempered nature. He was very happy to lead at what for him was a relatively low level and his enjoyment and enthusiasm came across clearly to his students. He was always very considerate for less gifted seconds, and when he climbed Mount Cook with a mountaineering novice, not only did he get his friend up the mountain, but he took great pleasure in his companion's enjoyment of the climb. He got on well with climbers of all ages and would have become an excellent guide. His appreciation of the mountains was genuine and deep and witnessed by many superb slides and photographs. You felt that the mountains were his environment - where he was most fulfilled and most in his element.

I climbed with Stephen at different stages of his climbing career and, like many others, I am richer for the experience. On his early climbs his enthusiasm and aptitude, and particularly his superb temperament were very apparent. It was not long before Stephen was the leader and was taking me, with great consideration, up some hard climb, or allowing me to share, often through his slides, in his successes and his pleasure in the mountains.

Stephen is very much missed by all his friends in Bristol and elsewhere. We miss his vitality and strength, his skill and care as a climber, his consideration for his companions and perhaps most of all for his sunny nature and his deep love for the mountains. For his parents, relatives and close friends, as for those of the other three climbers on the expedition, there have been harrowing months of uncertainty and anxiety, during which hope for his survival was finally extinguished. They have suffered greatly and we extend our sympathy and understanding in their loss. We hope they will find some comfort in the pleasure and fulfillment which Stephen found in the mountains, and which he shared so well and generously with others.

Richard Sykes

Andrew Brazier

Addition to obituary in 1986/7 Journal

Whilst Andy became well known as a climbing photographer in the '80s, at University - the mid-seventies - he was thought of primarily as a climber. He was active on rock, Scottish ice and in the Alps and became President of the Oxford University Club. What I remember about Andy is how kind and thoughtful of other people he was; a real gentle giant.

For the record, the route *Quiver* which Andy and I climbed on Cloggy was Andy's discovery.

Phil Bartlett.

The Hon Sir John Willis

(ex-member)

1908-1988

John Ramsey Willis was a member of the Club for a period in the 1950s and 1960s until around about the time he became a High Court Judge. Then, for some inexplicable reason he resigned, but he did not give up climbing and walking extensively in Britain, the Alps and in 1977, Nepal. He walked up Scafell just before his 80th birthday, a few months before he died.

I like the second paragraph of The Times obituary: 'Tall and elegant, with a figure lithe from mountaineering, cricket and squash rackets, 'Jack' Willis always belied his years.'

I knew him mainly as a lawyer because I briefed him when I was a solicitor, and when I switched to the bar I joined his Chambers where we saw him regularly on festive occasions.

But he climbed with friends of mine in particular John Poole, whose obituary I wrote a year or two ago and in which I related an incident involving Jack. More recently he was there, I am sure at one of the Helyg reunions.

Emlyn Jones, an old friend of his, gave a moving address at his memorial service at Gray's Inn in which Emlyn paid tribute to his love of mountains. This was to a packed audience with an overflow from the chapel, demonstrating the range of his friends, because not only was the top brass of the legal profession there but also that doyen of the mountaineering world, Chris Briggs, and Jo. Emlyn, too, has written a more detailed obituary for the Alpine Club.

Harry Sales

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Reviews

Wild Walks compiled by Ken Wilson and Richard Gilbert

Diadem £19.95

Opening the door of Cwm Glas Mawr in the morning we saw that it had snowed lightly on the highest ground overnight. Needing a short walk on the way home we opted for the easiest thing: walk out of Capel Curig to the west and turn north. We'd never been on those smaller craggy summits before. But looking back was a revelation. As Gill said, "Why always go for the Big Walks or the Classic Walks when the best views of the Big and Classic mountains are probably to be had from the neglected wild walks adjacent to them?"

And here's the latest book in the Wilson Tickit Series in which Richard Gilbert is making exactly the same point: 'Connoisseurs of our hills will be surprised and delighted by the new and spectacular views of well-known mountains made accessible through walking any of these routes'. But views alone are somehow not enough. What constitutes a wild walk for this book? 'Three factors: remoteness, an untamed landscape and impressive natural features. Not every walk I have selected satisfies all of the three conditions.' So what have we got? 'Mountain, Moorland and Coastal Walks'. In this book the latter two come into their own.

But first there's the evidence once again of what a rich resource, of international importance, the Scottish hills are for anyone with two legs (and some with one). A 22 mile circuit of the Ettrick Hills in winter, or a 16 mile round of the Cairnsmore group, can be had, without driving as far as Glasgow. Both these areas are threatened with afforestation.

Then there's still the Red Cuillin Traverse, the Blaven - Clach Glas Ridge, the crossing of Knoydart to Ben Aden, and no less than eight walks in Ross-shire. (I must get to Shenavall bothy. But can it take the strain of us all thinking the same?) The Paps of Jura are much better done from Islay so that you come off the hill watching the last ferry coming in to test your timing of the walk. Incidentally, the ascent of the Paps is by no means the best or wildest walk on Jura.

I wonder how many C C members have done all of the five walks described in Gwynedd described here? Or would want to? Harold Drasdo recommends crossing the eastern Migneint 'by compass in thick mist'. The Welsh walks in this book are all a bit like that really: miles of boring bog or more and more moors. The photographs, cunningly taken in the autumn, are richest in colour where they are most frugal in features. Words like 'trackless', 'rough going' and 'can be rather wet' should keep most of us on the crags where it is safer, and there's something to see.

The choice of walks in England confirms that Cumbria has been done to death. You can still get lost Back o'Skidda', but sadly there's a fair chance you'll stumble upon the house of an Honorary Member who will feel duty bound to offer you a brew. End of Wild Walk. Now is the finest hour, however, of Kielder Forest, the Swaledale Watershed, Eastern Dartmoor, Caer Caradoc and Brown Clee Hill. It is a mark of the imagination of this book that the last two are in Shropshire. Such is the breadth of vision underlying this book that it should be noted of Brown Clee Hill that 'apart from a radio station the hill is wild and unspoilt'. The Circuit of the Isle of Ely *does* appear to have been overlooked.

These books are intended to be celebrations of the character of walks and their wildness. The photographs are superb, colour celebrations and a comparison with *Big Walks* of eight years ago confirms how much the standard has improved. Has it really eclipsed the art of black and white for the coffee table book? I don't believe it, although the quality of colour pictures in this book states the challenge. There's a lot of mist and drizzle in the text, but the photographs are all fair weather. John Beatty shows what's possible in one rare shot above mist. Surely the grain of black and white could have given us the rain? And where are the women photographers and writers? Don't tell me they don't take good pictures, write well, and don't walk?

Dermot Somers writes the final essay in *Wild Walks*. He has been allocated what is graded 'an easy walk over mainly grassy hills' for eight miles and what he has done with it is nothing short of brilliant. It's an Irish walk and an Irish tale, spoken with a twinkle in the eye direct to the reader, if you see what I mean. Ah, if Richard Gilbert had a little Irish blood, or whisky,

how much wilder these plodding texts would be. Most of them don't celebrate so much as guide - clearly, helpfully, in many weathers it is true, but if only he had been able to really explore 'what the walks actually meant to me' for which he apologises in the Preface. Wild walkers will value the depth of experience and the breadth of advice in these seductively illustrated pages. But it is Steve Ashton who shows us non-Celtic writers how to make a boring walk interesting. Begin 'This is no ordinary walk', admit you've underestimated small hills, get lost, recreate the tension between walkers, blame the dog, use the dog as a theme and be a little adventurous with language; 'the mood now took us by the throat', and so will the essay.

Wild Walks is the last of its kind Ken tells me. There are just the pocket guidebook versions to come. It is an imaginative, inspirational book with colour photography of a high order that will send walkers wild, if they aren't already. It will get walkers reaching for their maps and their companions. But look at that area just missed by *Wild Walks*... Who's walking there? Can it be Richard Gilbert? No, it can't be Ken Wilson...Listen to that 'trackless moorland, lonely corrie, silent tarn'.

Terry Gifford

Footsteps of Scott by Roger Mear/Robert Swan

Jonathan Cape £14.95

My initial impressions of this book were good. It is a well written and illustrated expedition book in a now familiar glossy format. Written almost exclusively by Roger Mear, the book does well to condense and explain the huge size and expense of an Antarctic expedition. Although the majority is written by Roger Mear, Robert Swan does provide the introduction and the epilogue. They have two very different styles, one practical, the other providing the romance. The difference between the pair comes out in all aspects of the expedition.

An Antarctic expedition is a very long affair, covering years rather than the few short months of 'normal' expeditions. To winter in Antarctica is always a challenge, but it's even more so in a small hut with four people, waiting for a huge journey to begin. The moods and petty squabbling are all laid out for us to see. Unfortunately Mear does not attempt to capture the unique atmosphere that can only be experienced in an Antarctic winter. This only comes across in any measure when he describes their winter journey. Having McMurdo, the main US station, close by must have been a great safety valve for the pressures that built up in their small hut. Although little is made of how long they spent at McMurdo, particularly Swan, who spent a considerable amount of the winter there.

It must have been with considerable relief that they set out on the Polar walk in the summer. People will always look at this and say "Why didn't they finish it and walk back?" This is a valid comment and perhaps the greatest challenge still remains. But this walk will still stand as a considerable achievement in its own right. Three men, totally unsupported, without even a radio to summon help or re-supply, to walk to the South Pole is tremendous. Scott had the advantages of the laid depots and support parties, although I don't think it realistic to compare the two expeditions, equipment and services being so very different. The only blemish from an ethical point of view was their 'unofficial' rest and re-supply at the American field camp on the Beardmore Glacier. A few days 'OD'ing on rich American food obviously affected the outcome. I could understand their feelings about having the purity of their isolation shattered, but they must have known the position of the party before they started. The position of all field parties is common knowledge on the bases up to a year in advance. Roger Mear manages well to keep our interest during the monotonous crossing of the plateau by splicing in the story of the Southern Quest being crushed by the ice. And the changing group dynamics as the Polar walkers reach their goal. Never a dull moment!

For me the most fascinating point of the story begins after the walkers reached the Pole. The policy of no help to private expeditions from government groups in Antarctica is strictly adhered to, on the whole. But what happens on an individual base is often different. The South Pole Station's welcome to the walkers was heartening compared to the chilly official reaction. The South Pole personnel were just continuing a good tradition of hospitality in Antarctica that is above red tape and internationalism. Then came the outrageous decision to deny them contact with their support party at McMurdo, an unheard of step on any Antarctic station. This removed from them any control over their own fate. A bitter pill to swallow after being

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so obviously in control up until then. Hadn't they proved they were no amateurs? Mear does well to write in such a restrained manner, but short of head butting the Director of the National Science Foundation they sensibly kept cool, particularly when they were accused of disrupting the US scientific programme and causing unnecessary Hercules flights. A little unfair when Hercs fly around Antarctica carrying little more than Budweiser and 'official' government tourists. Then finally the childish decision of not allowing them to 'winterise' and secure their base before leaving the continent was beyond belief. The expedition was here saved by Gareth Wood's decision to stay for a further winter and look after the base. A brave decision after one year and a walk to the Pole. The attitude of the US officials was not representative of relations in Antarctica, and the letter to The Times printed at the end of the book, written by some people who had actually spent some time in Antarctica helps put this straight.

So this is definitely a good read, even if you've little interest in Polar travel, so many things were achieved, and went wrong that you are continually wondering what will happen next. The walk itself is almost overshadowed by other events. Anyone who has ever faced bureaucracy on an expedition will be able to identify with this. A good read!

Bill Dark

North Wales Limestone by Andy Pollitt Climbers' Club £5.95

Most climbers with even half an ear to the ground shouldn't need me to remind them that the development of North Wales Limestone has been tremendous, both in terms of quantity and in quality. Neither should it surprise them unduly to learn that this latest edition is no less than the fifth which has been published in the decade since the development began. The first was written by Rowland Edwards and published in 1976. Five years later Andy Pollitt wrote his first volume which was published by Dark Peak. Then, the real potential of the now truly popular Craig Pen Trwyn was unrealised and Craig y Forwyn and Castell y Gwynt held the limelight as the major crags. Two supplements have been published since then, and now we have another definitive guide. However times have changed, and the emphasis has shifted towards bolt-protected walls of never ending steepness. Access problems have reared their heads again to such an extent that climbing is now banned on Forwen and subject to restriction above the Marine Drive. The very nature of climbing in the area has therefore changed.

This latest guide has nearly 1,000 routes, many of which are of a high quality and degree of difficulty. The author, being active in the area since nearly the very beginning, has had, and continues to enjoy, his share of the pickings.

The afore mentioned access difficulties are spelt out for the reader at the outset; read this section well, if we get this wrong the guide will have been written for nothing. A historical precis, really a quick dash through the last decade, a kind of who done it to the Ormes, gets the main section of the guide off to a flying start. More historical, and sometimes nearly hysterical (see the Charlton Chestwig Affair) is given in the first ascent list.

I would like to discuss the artwork in some detail, since it seems to me that this is where a good guide is made great. Only eight photos have been included in the text, too few I thought. It led me to the conclusion that the Publications Committee were deliberately keeping it a low cost guide, a conclusion reinforced when we consider that we don't have the luxury of the usual plastic covers! Surely the popularity of this area would ensure that sales will be high enough to warrant a relatively high print run and a somewhat more lavish and wholesome production? The photo which caught my eye was that of Simon Berry supposedly 'down and out' in down-town Colwyn Bay. Sadly the real impact of this picture has been somewhat negated by the printer cropping out of frame an old lady who was sharing the bench, and secondly by the unfortunate mis-captioning of the 'down and out', who is actually Steve Coates; sad really. The quality of the black and white photos of Great Wall I find striking, showing once again, to colour freaks, that a good black and white shot beats a poor colour shot anyday.

Greg Griffith continues his association with the club's guides with yet more crag diagrams. No two artists have the same style and Mr Griffith's high contrast diagrams are characteristically different from other artists. The diagrams for the Mayfair Wall are fine, although I thought the obvious duplication of the two diagrams in this area was somewhat wasteful, especially

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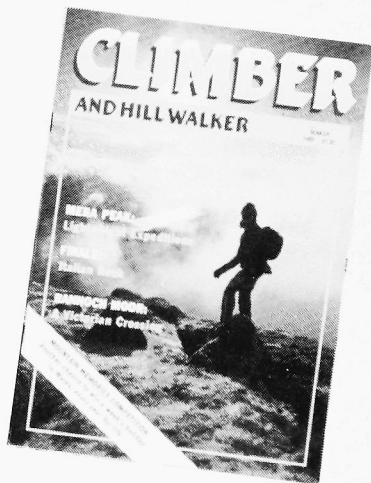
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when there are no diagrams for Craig Pen Trwyn. Perhaps an outline map could have been included to indicate salient features of this quite long crag. On a purely technical note, the diagrams have been printed with very little 'white space' at the spine. Poor location and cutting of some diagrams has led, in my copy at least, to 5mm or so of the Mayfair Wall diagram appearing at the spine between the diagram for Excursion Wall on pages 94:95. This has resulted in the line for Mayfair Wall being lost. The solution can only be either to have better control of the cutting operation or to have a bigger gap in the diagrams at the spine. Returning to a more subjective note, the predominance of shading in some of the diagrams is all too obvious in those to the Little Ormes. The diagram for Great Zawn, pages 86:87 just doesn't work for me, the shading being far too excessive and I find the diagram to be almost unusable.

The text seems to be neat and competent with few errors. The descriptions on the whole are fine, although the grades of many routes are obviously dependent on the state of the in situ gear, and I contest that this is far from being wholly trustworthy. Notwithstanding this there are a few grading anomalies, several of which are glaring. Mr Olympia and Chain Gang, both currently graded E5 6b can be subject to some discussion. The former is a sustained effort without any one particularly hard move and in my book it's worth E6 6a; the latter, by comparison does have one particular hard move which stands out but since it is less sustained then E5 6b is okay. Perhaps more worrying and potentially dangerous is another example, that of Meanstreak and Fallback. Again both are graded E5 6b, yet the former is short, well protected and a soft touch, probably only worth E4 6a, whilst the latter, apart from being inadequately described, is sustained, difficult and serious to boot, worth E6 6b by comparison.

In conclusion I wish to congratulate the author for such a fine effort, though I must apologise for a review almost as long as the guide. For the next edition of the guide I would wish the Publications Committee to grasp the nettle and incorporate Clwyd Limestone, only then will we truly have a North Wales Limestone guidebook.

Keith Sharples.

Abode of Snow by Kenneth Mason Diadem £12.95

Many an older aficionado of Himalayan exploration and mountaineering, active and armchair alike, may recall with pleasure the appearance some 30 years ago of the original edition of this splendidly scholarly and, for what is in essence a reference work, immensely readable book. It soon acquired the status of a 'classic' but, alas, it disappeared gradually from the shelves and thus became unfamiliar reading to a new generation.

In the meantime access to these remote regions has improved out of all recognition, sadly, so many may say, and ever increasing numbers of just conventional tourists as well as the more ambitious trekkers and indeed explorers and mountaineers come to see for themselves and take more than a cursory interest in the geography and history of this, the greatest mountain region in the world. For them, and many others who may never make it, it must be welcome news that we are being treated to a new 'photo-reprint edition'. This, one soon discovers loses nothing to the original and moreover gains by the addition of many photographs and by a really excellent foreword from Doug Scott which provides some interesting background, coming from one who could hardly be better qualified. The printing, too, is clearer and slightly enlarged and there is at the end a most helpful list of corrections stemming from a review by Marcel Kurz which appeared at the time in Switzerland.

The author was born in 1887 and started his career as a military surveyor, rising to the rank of 'Superintendent, Survey of India', he then, in 1932, moved on to become Professor of Geography at Oxford University from which appointment he retired two years prior to the first publication of this book in 1955. He was intimately familiar with the areas he wrote about and, for instance, was instrumental in determining the heights and more precise locations of some of the highest peaks at the western end of the chain.

The book is clearly and logically laid out, starting with a detailed and well documented (maps, diagrams) description of the ranges making up the Himalaya, and then moving on to cover the historical ground of exploration and mountaineering from the earliest times, by a number of steps, to the momentous first ascent of Everest. There is a wealth of illustrations, alas only in black and white, some going back a long way, eg Sir George Everest who, believe it or not, became head of the 'Great Trigonometrical Survey of India' as long ago as 1823!

The text itself is full of interesting details, many of them still of considerable use to present day explorers and mountaineers, such as Doug Scott who generously acknowledges their value. It is perhaps a pity only that it is evidently not practical to append a '1953 to 1987' chapter to bring the story those 30 years closer, but then to do justice to the high standards set, one should have to try very hard indeed.

In its revised form this makes a very handsome volume, with a smart cover, at a very affordable price - highly recommended reading.

Henry Adler

The Book of the Mountain Year Ed. Cameron McNeish

Patrick Stephens £14.95

The contributions of twelve writers have been collected to illustrate the changing character of the climbing in the successive twelve months of the year. The list of authors, at risk of being tedious, is; Graham Truscott, Ken Crocket, Cameron McNeish, Dennis Gray, Bill O'Connor, Terry Gifford, David Craig, Rob Collister, Jill Lawrence, Jim Perrin, Elaine Brook, and Hamish Brown.

The net is spread wide to cover a multitude of locations and interests. Gritstone of course, limestone, Wales, The Lakes, Scotland, 'Bleau, The European Alps, New England; rock climbing, hill walking, ski touring, ice climbing, winter Rockies, spring Himalaya. Take your pick, and in that lies the success or failure of the book. If there are sufficient items to interest your particular tastes the book suits you and you buy it, if not you borrow a copy.

I have not met any of these pieces before and imagine they have been especially commissioned for this volume. The twelve authors have responded to their instructions in different ways. Jill Lawrence, for instance, is fortunate enough to be able to make her September account cover a single, but extended, visit to the crags of New England. Others have drawn together experiences in a variety of areas in different years and different aspects of our sports to answer their remit for the month.

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Most of the writers are well known either as authors or climbers and there is no point in withstanding the temptation to go straight to the names which you feel will feed your fancy, and leave until later, exploration of those which to the particular reader are more arcane.

Let me declare a weakness. My interests are near home, British hills and British crags strike a major chord and Perrin on gritstone has to be a good bet, Dennis Gray laying bare his soul while wandering from his West Yorkshire grit to Wales, to Fontainebleau and back to his heartland contrives to captivate me despite myself, South Yorkshire tyke that I am, but will it interest others? No matter, follow Ken Crocket on his February apprenticeship on Scottish ice; or the Alpine evolution of Rob Collister. Fascinating stuff. For me as the book's horizons widen beyond these the interest slackens, but it may be the reverse for you and all tastes are catered for.

It is a book I imagine, designed for the Christmas market but it's interest will continue to birthdays and other seasons. It is well produced, with very few typographical errors. It is amply illustrated both in colour and black and white. The colour photos are good, the black and white less so although one or two are; or perhaps I am becoming blasé and black and white does not satisfy an appetite which nowadays sees so much colour.

We have all heard of the Punch joke in which the curate answers his bishop's enquiry as to the state of his breakfast egg with 'Good in parts, my Lord,' This Christmas book is more than a curate's egg. More my Lord Bishop's. Edible all through but some parts more to the taste than others.

Dave Gregory

Rocks Around the World by Stefan Glowacz and Uli Weismeier

Diadem £16.95

If the title leaves you in any doubt about the book's theme, then the first paragraph of the author's introduction doesn't. This publication is unashamedly a 'photographic climbing odyssey' by Stefan Glowacz as the international climber, and Uli Weismeier as the photographer. They say that the aim of their book was to capture both the 'fascination of climbing and the beauty of the climbing environment'.

Rocks Around the World visits France, England (and Wales), America, Japan, Australia, East and West Germany, a personal essay by Glowacz sets the scene for each area, and then 20 or so pages are dedicated solely to photographic coverage. There are no details given for the routes which they feature, save for the name, grade and crag. Almost as an afterthought, a small list is included at the end of the book. This lack of factual detail has been a deliberate policy by the authors, who say that they did not want to clutter the heads of their readers with mere factual information; clearly they have succeeded. I feel that a brief paragraph, say, included in an appendix, for each route would have sufficed to give the merest factual details. The text, being brief gives only the smallest insight into the author, and although interesting in so far as it goes, it left me wanting more.

I would like to discuss the photographic coverage under a series of headings which seem to me to be relevant;

Reproduction: The reproduction of the photographs throughout the book is excellent, there being very few errors by the printer. As such it is an example of what can be achieved if care and true quality control is exercised.

Presentation and Layout: Evidence of a well thought out layout is everywhere. Few pages are cluttered with multiple images, and on those pages which are, the sum of the whole is greater than the individual photographs. The desire to cram every single square centimetre with photograph has been resisted to great effect, the optimum size for an individual image is often dictated by the subject matter and throughout the book images have been printed with an empathy towards their subjects. I find this refreshing, appealing and striking.

Style: From the very beginning it is obvious that Weismeier's photographic style encompasses all the different formats with which we have become familiar, double page spreads, extreme close ups and profile shots. An example of most focal lengths can easily be spotted.

Picture choice and editorship: This is an area which I feel lets the book down somewhat. No less than 19 routes featured have two images illustrating the mighty Glowacz on one bit of a route or another, and two routes actually feature on three occasions. Often one of the photos might be a close up, whilst the other might be a profile shot. A desire to covey both

the effort of climbing, using the close up, and yet something of the environment, using the profile shot, has presumably led to this duplication. Very often I felt that one photograph stood head and shoulders above the other and the duplication not only irritated me but lessened the impact. It is in the nature of the sport and its environment that one image cannot convey both the situation and the 'mono-doigt' nature of a climb. I feel that the duplication has diluted the image that I have been given of a particular route, and I am left with a cluttered impression. There is of course one other explanation and that is that the duplication has resulted from a desire to pad out, but surely after four years of globe trotting there were many photos to choose from. If not, then the book has been published prematurely. So notwithstanding the basic desire to present both aspects of the sport I am forced to the conclusion that the editorial input has not been as strong as it might, or should have been.

With a publication such as this everyone will have their personal likes and dislikes. To conclude I would like to give you a few examples of those photos which I thought didn't work, and some which I found truly inspirational. Some of the 'poorer' shots for me were: the Verdon circus (p15), Reve de Papillon (p18), Anxiety Neurosis (p106), Jo Jo Variante (p126) and finally Erdnussflip (p136). Next, I give you some of my favourites; Papi on Sight (p12), Right Wall (p37), The Red Rocks of Nevada (p69) forest walking in Japan (p86:87), Pferdefuss (p123) and Magnetfinger (p143). However pride of place for me must be given to the shot of Titanic (p44). In this Weismeier has conveyed to me everything from situation to character, and has captured an atmosphere which displays an empathy with his subject, and which takes it beyond the other illustrations in the book. What pleases me intensely is that it is a photograph of a British route. Without any shots of natural grit how else could I commend this book to you?

Finally, I make no apologies for spending the vast majority of this review discussing the photographs, for it is essentially just that, a picture book. Because of the joint publication in the UK, the USA and Germany, the cost has been kept to a level which I believe most of us perceive to be genuinely reasonable, especially when compared with some of the more recent glossy continental publications. All things being equal I feel sure that it will prove both a popular book, and will be held in reverence as an inspiration to both climbers and photographers alike.

Keith Sharples

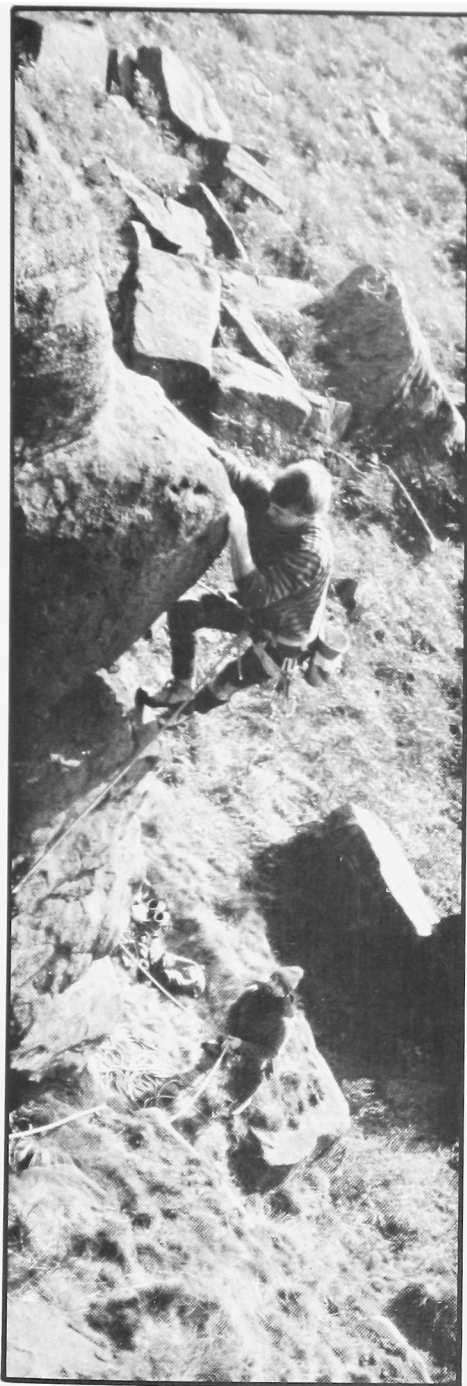
Touching the Void by Joe Simpson

Jonathan Cape £10.95

After all the reviews, and its winning of The Boardman-Tasker Award it seems almost spurious to deliver yet another accolade for Joe Simpson's magnificent first book. Every informed reader of the Journal has probably either read it or its reviews, or both, nor will I weary the reader with re-telling its events that are so well known, but confine the review to my own thoughts.

This book is one of the most compulsive 'reads' I have ever come across, not just in mountaineering, but in any kind of adventure literature, including much fiction. Because it *is* true and because, self evidently, Joe *must* have survived his ordeal in order to have written the book, one might suppose that, however well written, the reader must deep down know that the story will end, if not exactly happily, then at least without tragedy. But its author has the rare ability to keep the reader in the present tense and make one suspend even the obvious truth. Perhaps due to this illusion most people read the book in great haste, normally in one or two long sittings, possibly worried that if they leave it too long the end might be different! Maybe it also reflects the tension of the author himself, reliving his nightmare by actually writing at great speed (the bulk of the book was actually written in only 24 weeks).

For Joe Simpson the book is more than an overnight sensation. His life, since the epic, has changed forever. For instance, his injuries will prevent him from becoming the mountaineer of the first rank that was his ambition. But the book has opened up all kinds of future possibilities in writing and possibly film. It is too easy to assume that it must of necessity be a 'one-off'. True, one can argue that Joe will never have such material to work with again(!) but having done it once I believe that he has the potential to produce other work that may be as interesting in a very different way. It will not be a quick or easy act to follow but I am sure that this book will not be the last we hear from Joe Simpson. But in the meantime, this will do nicely, thank you.



*Nigel Slater on 'Out for the Count', Stanage.
Photo: Keith Sharples.*

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The Alpine Journal 1988/9 Edited by Ernst Sondheimer
 Fredrick Muller: The Alpine Club £16.95

Hello, hello, hello...what's going on here? It looks as if the Alpine Club has gone upmarket in an attempt to reach Joe Public. The Journal looks huge and is in fact 50 thicker than last year, but there are only about 20 more pages. It looks suspiciously as if the Alpine Club has handed over the venture to a big publisher who can take a risk. Aha! There's a bar code on the rear cover ready for the big shops (which I wonder?) and the trendy dust cover is certainly intended to catch someone's eye. What a gamble, especially with the price going up to £16.95 after having been pegged at £15 for several years. I'm glad that it's not my money up front as I'm certain that there isn't a market that hasn't already been exploited. It will be interesting to see what happens next year.

At least I can solve the problem of thicker journals - I'll just have to move house a bit faster than I originally intended. What does irritate me is that under the dust jacket the cover has been changed from green to blue. Mine are green, back to 1957! so what's the big idea? Has the multi-cultural revolution struck again?

The good news is that Ernst Sondheimer has now survived two years as Journal Editor and has preserved the most important standards of the A.J. In addition, the reproduction of both black and white and colour photographs has improved significantly and there is still a total of 94.

No one reads an A.J. - well not from cover to cover like a novel, and it may be years before I finally finish it - if ever. Sources of reference mature like good wines and are there in the cellar (or roof) when required.

A few items caught my attention at the first browse: the continuing saga of Everest's North East Ridge by Doug Scott threw out the challenge, but this was quickly forgotten at the thought of the howling gale on the top of Cho Oyu during the first winter ascent. Inspiration returned however while contemplating the league table of climbers with five or more 8,000 metre peaks to their credit. Where do they get the time from? Of those who ran out of time I was interested to read the obits of John Poole (C.C) and Ronald William Clark, the author. Another unexpected gem was Bradford Washburn's reference to High Flight. My father first had Magee's wartime sonnet on his bedroom wall and later I grew to love it when he handed it over to me. As Washburn said, 'although it's not about climbing, it marvellously conveys the sense of wonder and beauty that tempts us to the heights.' The words would certainly suit me for an epitaph. Look up page 315, it is well worth the effort.

...and what about all these bolts that have appeared on some of the new Jordanian routes? Is nothing sacred? It's as bad as Britain and one can't get much lower than that ethically...or can you?

Geoff Milburn

Scafell, Dow and Eskdale by A. Phizacklea
 Fell and Rock Climbing Club £7.95

Arriving hot on the heels of the 1984 guide the bumper 1988 update took many by surprise. Such was the success of the earlier edition that a reprint was called for, but we have to thank the herculean efforts of Al Phizacklea for a thoroughly updated, revised and comprehensive guide.

The 1984 guide was out of date by the time it was published and further developments, mainly on Scafell, Wallowbarrow, and on the slate meant that some 150 new route descriptions are included resulting in 47 extra pages being required. Gradings have often been revised, generally pushing them up closer towards achieving a national parity. For example, on Scafell, the mean third pitch on White Wizard now warrants 5c instead of 5b as previously, and Ringwraith gets a well warranted E5 instead of E4. Over on Esk Buttress, The Cumbrian holds out at E4 owing to good protection on the crux, although many aspirant leaders expiring and spat out of the exposed groove might argue it's E5.

There has got to be some range of difficulty and seriousness within a grade so it is interesting to compare the text descriptions and graded list. This can provide any amount of amusement on the 360 wet days in the Lakes when most climbers are pub-bound. Pink Panther on Dow is probably nearer the top of the E2s than the middle and likewise only those E2 leaders with

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a death wish will lead the top pitch of Sideshow at a middle grade E2 5a. The fun can continue for hours; Chartreuse on the East Buttress requires a steady approach, but although 'at the lower limit of the grade' warrants a position half way up the graded E1 list!

The Lakes, however, as everyone knows, is the home of the original E grade system and old habits die hard. Any technically competent team newly weaned on bolted limestone should be aware that traditional Lakeland E4s can be serious undertakings, and approach such routes with circumspection.

As the supply of new routes dries up on the established mountain cliffs, climbers have turned to the slate quarries. It is good to see that the Tilberthwaite routes are now described and that at last the slate grades are being rationalised. In Hodge Close Looking Glass drops to E2, and the classic Stiff Little Fingers now gets E2 5c which is about right. Stage Fright gets a well deserved E6 and Ten Years After and Main Event, amongst others, go up a grade. This is all to the good, for whatever the arguments, these are serious undertakings. Sky, for example, previously E3 is still a nerve racking outing at E4.

More controversial was the placing of bolt protection, initially by yours truly on Limited Edition, so named to express the hope that after careful consideration, bolts have a place to play in Lakeland slate development. By and large this has been the case. Despite howls of protest, the bolts were not chopped and the route gets two stars in the new guide. Other bolt protected routes followed, notably the three star First Night Nerves, but their use has not been excessive, yielding fine bold leads on otherwise unprotected rock. Development culminated in the climbing of two counter girdles in Hodge on the same day. A mere coincidence or a touch of competition?

The other slate scandal was the blatant chipping of holds on blank walls. This surely cannot be justified, as Al notes in three places in the guide. The holds on Dogfight At Virgin Massacre Creek were eventually filled in and strangely, although described by Al as 'vandalism, unprecedented and unwarranted in the Lakes', the route description is included in the guide.

Al produced the crag diagrams himself and these by any account are very good, being clear and drawn with a climbers eye, giving the essential detail without the clutter of extraneous matter. Only the general diagram of Dow Crag on page 96 is disappointing, being heavily executed.

The photographs are better than those in the previous edition (although the winter scene on Scafell Pinnacle is definitely a *faux pas*). Pics of Slab and Groove, The Cumbrian and Art for Art's Sake, for example, make you want to get out there and get to grips with the problems. This after all is what a good guide should do; inspire, and not merely point the way. Al and the Series Editors deserve everyone's congratulations for an impressive achievement. Through their efforts in grasping the nettle of evolving ethics and taste, integrating recent achievements into a perspective that embodies the whole history and ethos of Lakeland climbing, they encapsulate in my mind what climbing is all about. Well done.

Paul Carling

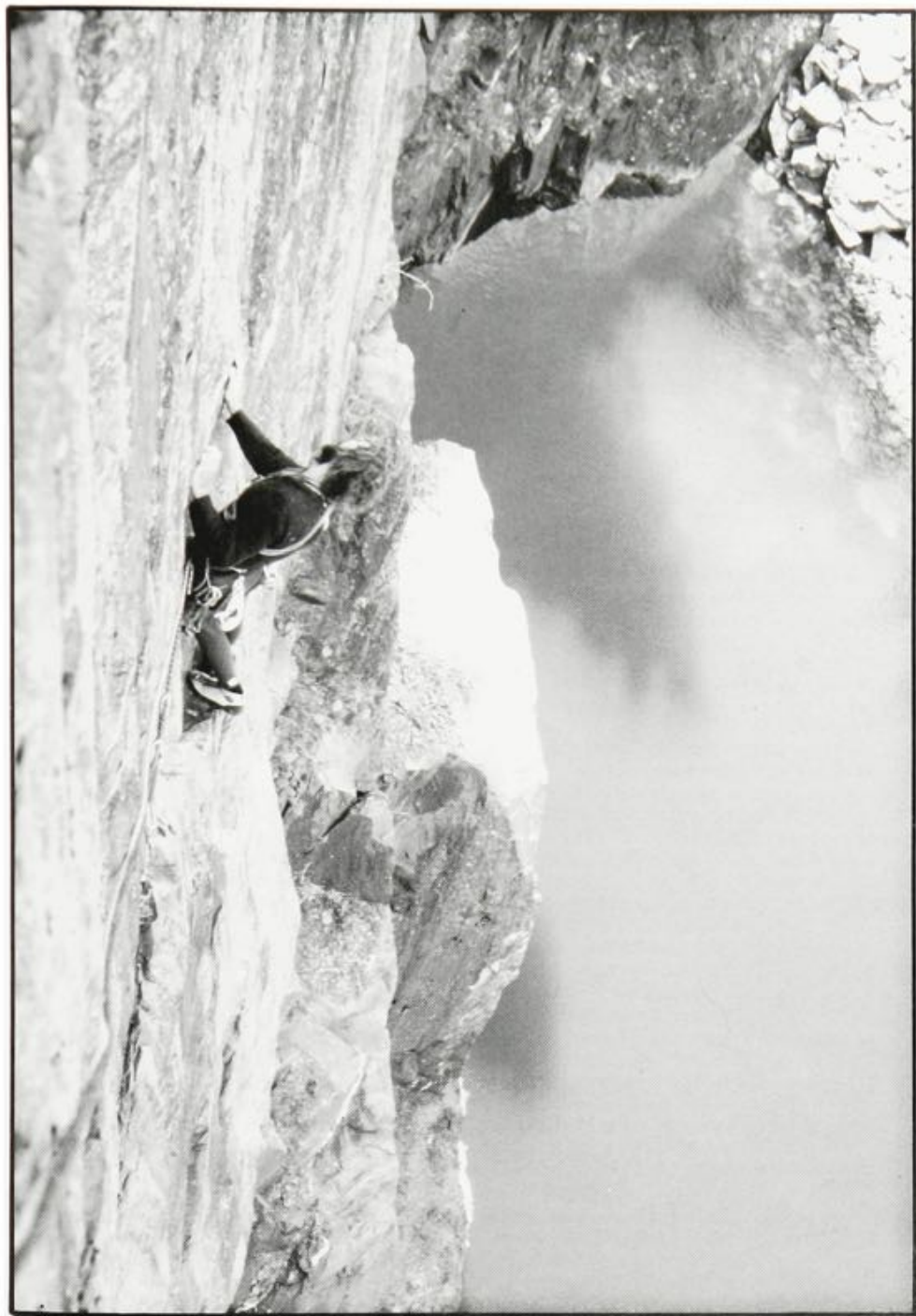
Ski Mountaineering in Scotland Ed Donald Bennet and Bill Wallace

SMC £12.95

Some years ago Donald Bennet published his attractive book combining winter and summer climbs in Scotland, and included a small number of ski tours. Now he has collaborated with Bill Wallace, and other members of the SMC, to produce a much more ambitious guide to the extensive ski mountaineering possibilities north of the border.

The Scottish Mountaineering Club have adopted a generous format for this guide. It has over 100 colour pictures and numerous other illustrations in the text. One hopes that they will be rewarded by wide sales and readership, whilst at the same time such texts raise the spectre of increased numbers using the book to invade hallowed wilderness areas. Fortunately, for the time being, the combination of technical difficulty, expense of mountaineering ski equipment and pure effort involved, are likely to keep the majority of skiers on the pistes, especially when abetted by Scottish weather.

The book is laid out very logically, beginning with some modest ski tours in the Lowlands, in the Pentland Hills, Campsie Fells, Tinto and Culter Fell. As ski tours these seem akin to those further south in the Cheviots, Pennines or Lakes, perhaps more rarely in condition than bigger



Paul Carling making the first ascent of 'Close Encounters', E4 6a, Hodge Close Quarry.

hills, but often quiet and remote when the snow is right, and even reachable in a few hours on a flexi-time working day.

The text then traverses the major ski mountaineering areas of the Highlands, inviting the skier into a tremendous range of mountain groups which only the convinced Munroist will have found time to visit. Their snow slopes, photographed on a seemingly endless sunny spell, entice and draw one on, though there can be little hint there of the wild winds, blasted and misty cornices and harrowing route finding so often encountered in reality. To be fair, the authors clearly warn of false impressions.

The accounts of different routes draw upon a group of authors, though the majority of photographs are Bennet's own. The skiing is judged both for quality and difficulty, the former by a star ratings of one to five, the latter by a I to IV grading. The rider that it is best in this sport to make one's own judgements, follows close behind, as is appropriate.

The authors conclude that Alpine equipment is the most appropriate for most of these tours, though they wish to avoid a controversy going back to Harold Raeburn on its advantages compared to Norwegian equipment. Precautionary remarks are brief, practical and to the point. Finally Martin Burrows Smith makes a stab at explaining the possibilities for extreme skiing, of which so much more has been done in Scotland than most realise. Again his remarks seem sensible, so far as extreme skiing can be, and he takes the lid off a most exciting, if hazardous area of the sport.

Unsurprisingly the Far North, including Corriemulzie, gets less attention than the supposedly more reliable and certainly more accessible mountains to the south, though among others the Fannaichs and Ben Dearg get a 'look in'. The sketch maps are particularly clear, and descriptions indicate the relevant OS map in the case of each tour. What a feast it opens up for those individualistic enough to strike out into so many fine ares, what fine runs and lasting satisfactions!

Paul Nunn

Peak Limestone: Stoney, Chee Dale, South (Three Volumes)

BMC, £8.50 per volume

Sausage egg and chips, the Triple Crown, 'Mates' and all good things come in threes, and this trilogy is no exception.

There's a lot of water passed under the bridge at Miller's Dale since these guides were published in 1987. E numbers now read like some ingredient on the side of a pot noodle, controversy reigns over excess bolting and chipped holds, W.C.J. was hit by the Dambusters and the Peak is no longer home to Britain's hardest routes.

In the professional world of rock climbing that we live in, we must be extremely grateful to this very talented group of amateur (only in terms of non-payment) writers for producing such a thoroughly professional product. Team is certainly the operative word, I've counted about 40 in this one. Geoff Milburn has done a fine job, as team manager, in pulling them all together. I can only stand back and admire the effort and dedication that must have gone into researching and checking the first ascents list.

Written for climbers, by climbers, the three guides do the job well. As so many reviewers have said before me, a good guide book should tell you where the routes are, roughly how hard they are and give some idea of the quality of the climbing. These guides do that and a little bit more. The three guides weigh in at over a total of 900 pages, it comes as no surprise, then that the area was divided into three. I think this works well, each area having its own distinctive character and style of climbing.

The Chee Dale guide at 343 pages is actually three pages longer than the Llanberis guide. I wonder if it is time for a change in the format and size of guidebook; does anyone carry them in the back pocket of their Levis any longer? Surely larger guides would help with presentation, including that of photographs. The photographs are the first thing I look at in a guidebook, these do the job admirably, making you want to go and climb the routes. I remember being in the Scotsman's Pack, at least I think I do, wondering how the photo judges could ever decide from so many entries. I especially like the frontispiece in the Stoney guide, poseur! I wonder if the days of black and white shots in this format are behind us. The diagrams are as brilliant as ever. As the editor so aptly put it 'one can only marvel at the unique talent of Phil Gibson'.

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I think the History section in the guide is an excellent idea. They make very good guides into an excellent read. They also serve to add a bit of humour to the text, but I wonder if this could have spilt over into the route descriptions. These are distinctly on the clinical side, but as far as I can see, accurate.

At about a third of the price of a cheap guide to Spain the three guides represent a bargain. You may not get the sun or quality of rock in the Peak, but you will certainly get interesting routes with lots of character, and anyway, squint a bit at Raven Tor on a sunny day and you could almost be there, Indecent 7a? (Is there any chance of some of the profits going to replace some of the crap in situ gear in the Peak?)

Love it or hate it, you can't ignore Peak limestone, especially if you live in the north. At its worst it is muddy approaches, loose rock and jungle bashing, but at its best it can be brilliant open climbing in a magnificent setting high above Matlock on a summer's evening. Forget the decorating, buy the guides and get out there!

Graham Parkes.

A Century of Scottish Mountaineering

Edited by W.D. Brooker

SMC £16.95

North of the Border there is an excessive volume of unstable water which unfortunately has a rather nasty habit of fluctuating between the liquid, gaseous and solid states. During most months of the year the clinging mist takes a perverse delight in unleashing its watery load on Sassenach interlopers, and only condescends to give a snowy mantle when the local clans perform the ancient rite of sharpening their ice tools and crampons. Hidden amongst this watery waste is a small amount of wild and sparsely populated land - ancestral home of the Scottish Mountaineering Club.

To commemorate the Club's centenary a lavish anthology has been produced, representing about two per cent of the total contents drawn from all but four of the 34 volumes of the SMC Journal. In addition to the public edition a special edition of 400 copies has been produced mainly for Club members, but ardent book collectors are scrambling for the last few copies.

Scotland means many things to many people, and for most the long haul north increases expectations whether the target be Glencoe and Nevis, the hills of the far north west beyond Ullapool, the Cairngorms, or the very gates of heaven, the Isle of Skye. It is a land of Bens and braes, and burns and howffs, and although the language of the locals is largely incomprehensible to outsiders many of the place names have an instant all-embracing picture encompassed within a single word, Rannoch, Sligachan, Coruisk, and Glencoe all evocatively call the 'stravangers and maruaders' from afar. Although many of the peak names require a tongue-twisting skill which exceeds the effort needed to scale the actual summit there are some which are aloof and gaunt, requiring no translation, An Teallach, Buachaille, Liathach, Blaven, Braeriach and the mighty Aonach Eagach. Even the village names stand out rather like the Western Isles in a vacant ocean: Ullapool, Lochinver, Aviemore, Tyndrum, Killin, Gairloch, Elgol, and Glen Brittle. Each one is a beckoning gateway to a land of promise.

Within this vast wilderness of moorland and mountain, stone shoot and sea stack, there is the world of the original occupants: soaring buzzards and lofty eagles, seals, fulmars and plunging gannets; and a carpet of vegetation which hides the rarest of Alpine blooms.

Into this land of many faces and moods came the climber, and in particular the founder member of the SMC - Will W. Naismith - a man of vision who realised that there was a country worthy of exploration far closer than the Alps. In the years that followed many familiar names appeared: Collie, Steeple, Barlow, Raeburn, Ling, Bell, Murray, Cunningham, (not SMC!) and Smith were just a few and each one was part of a unique and often hidden story. Hidden because the local way has not been to publish minute detail of the great deeds, as has happened south of the border. The first three chapters - The Early Phase, The Middle Period and The Later Years - of *A Century of Scottish Mountaineering* (let us not argue whether or not 'Scottish' is synonymous with SMC) admirably give a flavour of this colourful history. However, in the second half of the book various themes are explored and as one might expect in addition to 'On the Rocks', snow and ice figure prominently. The watery themes of Scottish climbing were considered long ago by W.R. Rickmers who reported;

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"Snow is hardly water" said my friend who saw the headline 'Aquatic Sport on Ben Nevis' and thought he knew the subject.

"Snow IS hard water" I replied.

And that very same hard water was to see a great progress in climbing technique and technology over the following years, but nearly 100 years ago Naismith commented that;

"At Dalmally, and one or two other climbing resorts, an ice axe is now (thanks chiefly to the SMC) as familiar an object at Easter as a salmon rod."

What is more fascinating is that at the same time Naismith was experimenting with skis and commented that the sport might even become popular. Technique and equipment were however at a very rudimentary stage and there was much excitement.

"... a very slight gradient was sufficient to get up tremendous speed during the descent. When the angle was too steep to risk, the skis were slipped off and turned into an improvised toboggan."

An angle of 15 degrees was thought to give the perfect angle for the best skiing - a far cry from the latest extreme skiing complete with cornice jumping.

Mention of Scottish climbing would be unthinkable without reference to the C.I.C. Hut, and even more significant is the disease of Kleptomania Munrois which commands a full chapter in the book. In the later chapters 'In Memoriam' pays tribute to heroes such as Munro, Raeburn, Bell and Smith, while 'Melancholy Occurrences' reminds us of the more sinister possibilities of our sport. 'Foreign Connections' seemed the most unlikely choice for a chapter but there is clearly an argument for such an inclusion. The last chapter 'In Reflective Mood' is a fitting finish to a memorable book which is illustrated with 80 pages of well produced black and white photographs which well represent the last hundred years. The classic is one entitled 'Two early climbers taking a fall' which has to be seen to be believed (or not!). It is a sombre yet most hilarious impression of what happens when disaster strikes - I might yet purloin it for my bookplate!

For those without the comprehensive set of SMC journals this anthology will be second best, but beware if you buy it, as it has already reminded me that I am keenly chasing a full set of what might be a full contender for the best (and certainly the most reliable) British Journal. Read on and you may get gripped with the same urge.

Bill Brooker has done a fine job and it should serve as a reminder to C C members that we now have a mere nine years to complete our centenary publication. I look forward to receiving and selecting only the very best articles.

Geoff Milburn

Feeding the Rat. A profile of Mo Anthoine by Al Alvarez Bloomsbury £11.95

First a necessary explanation. Mo Anthoine has a personal theory that there exists inside him a being, which he calls his rat, which has to be fed by regular rations of hardship, fear, excitement. The beast is omnivorous. Perfect days on perfect rock seem to do as well as high drama at altitude or sodden masochism in humid jungles. It gets hungry if its host lingers too long in tame domesticity, and to pacify it he has to give it regular rations of a mixture of all these qualities. Feeding the rat. We lesser mortals have a little of this in us, and because in our lesser ways we feed our mouse as often as we can, we shall like this book in which we see ourselves writ large, as we would have liked to be.

The author admits to the book's being a profile and not a full biography. It is a collection of sketches from a climber's life, but no ordinary climber, a man with a Rabelaisian quality, even a Whillansian quality, who meets good luck and misfortune with that same calm acceptance and cryptic humour, and even the same talent for one-liners.

The first chapter hints at a succession of experiences in his early wandering life on which Conrad or W.H.Davis would have based a literary reputation and gives a pointer to the book's two weaknesses. This is not a biography of a Bonington who has kept comprehensive diaries in the foreknowledge of a publisher's agreement and a book to come. It is probably born of a realisation in the author's mind after a long session of jar and jaw that 'I ought to get these tales down, there's a book in this.' The book is disappointing in appearance, the cover drab

and the photographs equally so. They are not those we are accustomed to in today's glossy coffee table tomes. They are the photos of a character who, in his early days, probably couldn't afford a camera, and, if he had one, couldn't be bothered to carry it. The photographs he has collected are not good quality, as reproduced here, but I found myself liking that. They indicate that here is a man who went for the climbing and the experience and the friendship, who has a few greying photos as proof and reminders, but what a store of memories, some of which we have set out for us here.

Now to its strengths. It's author, a Club member, is a personal friend of Mo's and figures in some of the episodes recounted in the book. Al is no stranger to writing and his craftsmanship and the bond of liking and admiration for his subject come out in the work. Full biography it may not be but it is much more than a profile. It is a collection of episodes in Mo's life necessarily springing from the climbing, but spreading into other experiences and giving a series of glimpses of his family life which he and his priceless wife Jackie carved out of the Welsh hillside. The respect which Al and Mo both have for Jackie stands out. What a leader and second to have on a rope, and in life, and to come home to.

The episodes cover an immense range of experiences. Creating a business making climbing gear. Minor epics in Britain and the Alps. Trips to Patagonia and Roraima. Half a score of expeditions to the Himalaya and Karakoram, and some esoteric episodes as film crew and extras in glossy film productions. The major epic on the Ogre when Mo and Clive Rowlands, another little known stalwart of similar sterling worth, got Bonington and Scott off the hill. To Bonington and Scott the media plaudits and justified admiration at their courage. To the other two, little fame but the respect of their own world. Good men to have with you in a crisis. An accolade one would have readily granted to Whillans, and there is that quality again.

We have had expedition books by the shelf. Books by the professionals, the livers-off publicity, who only feature here by the accident of being a friend of the writer. Doubtless writers must write to live but I hope Al Alvarez has another reason for writing. He realises that Mo Anthoine is a bit like us all, or our dream, but more so, and wants us to know that there are still people about who take up the mountain challenge for its own sake, for the excitement and the pleasure and the friendships, not for the fame.

Don't be put off by the less than glossy appearance. Buy it for its being what it is. Part of the story of a better one of us. What a pity we shall never get it all.

Dave Gregory

Jersey and Guernsey by Ian Smith/Alan Hill

Cordee £5.95

There is something exclusive about guidebooks to sea cliff climbing areas; they deserve the best both externally and internally. So when I saw the Jersey and Guernsey guidebook for the first time I felt drawn to delve inside, its excellent cover shots capturing something special about the area; blue sky, golden rock, and best of all the wine dark sea. How is it that so many guidebooks do themselves a disservice by poor cover shots. From first acquaintance, by cover alone, I have to say I liked this guidebook immensely.

This is the first real guidebook to these newly developed climbing grounds which not only offer excellent climbs but are an alternative holiday venue to such places as Cornwall and Pembrokeshire. I remember reading avidly in *High* magazine way back in 1984 of the new finds of Rouse and Burke, described so authoritatively as equalling the previously mentioned areas for weather and great climbing. I can still see it now, *Tax Exile* claimed as one of the best granite routes in Britain. They weren't far wrong, and now we have a booklet to make access, route-finding (and new route finding) easy. One usually expects this information to have been drawn from previous sources yet the authors, Ian Smith and Alan Hill, have had to dig out the early information themselves and combine it with the most recent and more easily accessible info. They have done a highly creditable job in combining interesting route descriptions with legibility, clarity and brevity, to make an easily-used guide packed with very useful information.

Having not climbed on Guernsey I cannot comment on its qualities yet Jersey has routes to equal anything in Cornwall, though perhaps, not quite in the same numbers. There are many shorter routes to sample along with the big hard routes on Le Pinnacle, a crag with routes

that certainly equal the routes in the Great Zawn, yet with easier access and a sunnier aspect. Jersey certainly has its future popularity assured and this guide does it full justice. Yet I do have one or two qualms. From my experience with the Lundy guidebook I know for a fact that the cover will not last very long and whilst I know I am going to be told that the budget did not allow it (as was the case with Lundy), I feel that a more durable plastic cover should have been used. Similarly the diagrams aren't too clever, probably because of the printing which doesn't do them justice at all. Lastly, and certainly most importantly, in my eyes, I feel there should have been some uniformity between the two obvious sections. All of the tidal, introductory notes etc should have been in a job lot at the front with the relevant authors going on to describe the uniqueness of their particular area. Then such things as first ascent details should have been in a uniform manner, but this is up to the publisher, not the authors.

At the end of the day these points are all really minor gripes. A guidebook's aim is to get you to the area and on to the cliffs, allowing you to find the routes without being told how to do them. With this in mind, the guide succeeds fully and both of the authors deserve full credit for bringing this new and under rated area into the limelight.

Gary Gibson

The Amundsen Photographs by Roland Huntford

Hodder/Stoughton £17.95

The chance discovery in 1986 of a box of Amundsen's lecture slides has given Roland Huntford an opportunity to follow up his excellent book *Scott and Amundsen*. My initial impression was of a pure 'coffee table' picture book, which it is, but in addition Huntford has made an excellent job of condensing the expedition stories to provide background to the photographs.

Considering the technology available the pictures are remarkable, particularly taking into account the problems of the environment. The slides are reproduced, cracks and all, and no colouring has been added. It's good to see a book that sets the text next to the appropriate picture, there's none of that annoying flicking back and forth.

There are three main chapters, the first being the North West Passage Expedition, but the main chapter is the South Pole Expedition. The pictures cover the different stages from voyage south to winter preparation and the Polar trip itself. A model expedition in the Antarctic if ever there was one.

The final section of the book deals with the Maud Expedition and Amundsen's lifelong goal of an Arctic Ocean 'drift'. The photographs record the years spent drifting north-eastwards, until eventually becoming the first man to circumnavigate the Arctic Ocean.

If you've never fancied fighting with volumes of dull, dry diary accounts of Polar travel, but would like to know the stories and look at the pictures this book will appeal to you. If you are a Polar 'buff' you will spend endless hours poring over the details in the pictures, only to find some things haven't really changed.

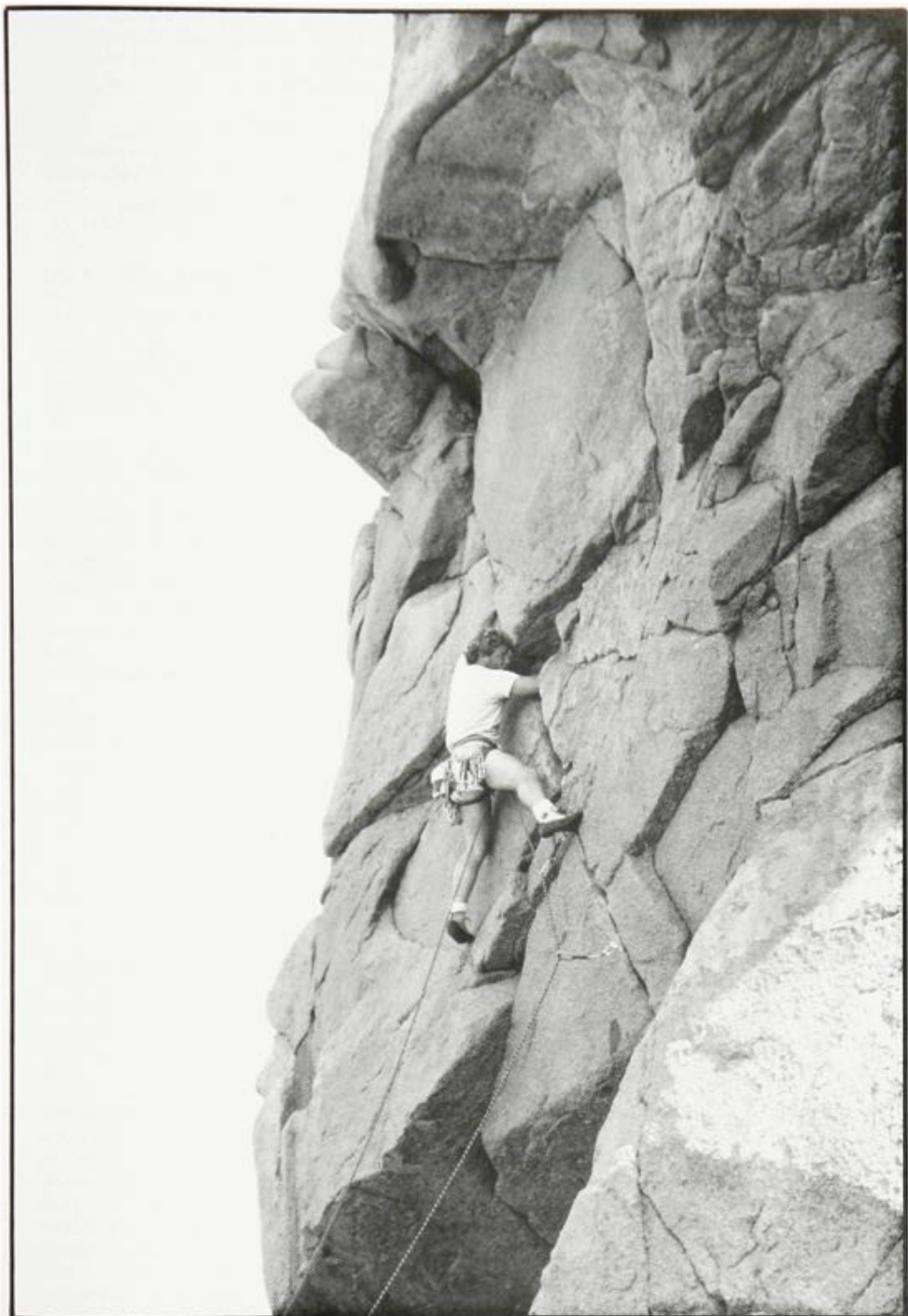
Bill Dark

Angels of Light by Jeff Long

Beech Tree Books, New York, £12.95

When John Muir first herded sheep through the Yosemite Valley in 1869, 'with notebook tied to my belt', he entered what he called 'the Range of Light'. From that first journey he went on to found Yosemite National Park. What would he have made of the residents of Camp Four, these modern angels of light, who regard themselves as guardians of the world capital of climbing? Not much, according to Jeff Long's increasingly critical portrayal of them in this novel. When the word gets round that there's a crashed plane full of drugs locked in the ice of a high lake, the repercussions of the hedonism that 'liberates' the weed are felt throughout the tribe, affecting even the strong silent hero, John Dog, and his relationship with Liz, who is caught between the chauvinism of the Park Rangers she works with and the chauvinism of Camp Four where she finds her lovers.

If you think you've already read this story in *Ascent*, where the initial idea was first tried out, you'd be missing the gripping development of the plot (usually a weakness in climbing fiction) which makes this such a good read. But, more than being a well constructed thriller, 158



Bill Dark climbing the excellent 'Gentle Retainer' HVS, Pilier Dangle, Jersey. Photo: Ian Smith.

this is an intelligent, ironic reflection of a culture which British readers may too easily dismiss before the irony has a chance to come through in Jeff Long's well observed treatment.

Although this book is not distributed in Britain, I came across it in Grant Jarvis's bookshop in Matlock and would recommend it to members as a thoroughly good read.
Terry Gifford

Fawcett on Rock by Ron Fawcett/John Beatty with Mike Harrison

Unwin Hyman £14.95

It is such a pity that a book like this will become dated, but it will because of changing gear and fashion. Ninety per cent of the book is about how to climb, and not what we wear or use when doing so, therefore the majority of the book should stand the passage of time.

Ron, no doubt the finest exponent of rock climbing Britain has produced over the last decade, has gone to great lengths, with the help of John Beatty and Mike Harrison, in a superbly illustrated attempt to put his thoughts down on paper. Aided by lots of action photographs, which show Ron's ability to get into some outrageous climbing positions, making this an excellent book, both to read and to look at.

It's an old subject and usually a rather tedious one at that; the rights and wrongs, do's and don'ts, complicated drawings of knots and technical wizardry. Not this book! It's so well illustrated and laid out that the reader flows over the text just like its author does on the rock.

The only section I found difficult to come to terms with was *Falling*, for being introduced to climbing when it was ill-advised to fall due to relatively poor gear and safe methods of belaying, having been the painful butt of jokery, and basically the scared factor, it might be understandable, but for those who don't suffer the psychological weaknesses of my rock generation as I do, go ahead. I'm sure its sound advice, but check all the details first.

Posed, amongst all the method, training and advice there are some often forgotten and welcome ethical questions. Let's hope the reader considers the answers carefully. If you want a book full of action photographs showing the Master at work, and at the same time interesting, then go out and buy it. I can guarantee that you will learn something.

As a postscript, my son, who is an avid reader of guidebooks and climbing magazines, and as yet I think, has an unpolluted attitude to climbing, when asked, "What do you think of Fawcett on Rock?" answered "Great"
Dave Alcock

German and Belgian Rock Climbs by John Hart

Cordee £4.95

In 1986 we planned a somewhat circuitous route through Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy to our eventual destination, the French climbing Riviera. By noon of the first day we were driving past Freyr in Belgium, and then following a very leisurely drive through Luxembourg and an overnight stop, we arrived at the Pfalz, in Germany, at noon the following day. It is this kind of accessibility that is slowly attracting the Brits. Even if it is not exactly luring them away from the overcrowded south, then at least it provides an attractive few days on the way. Clearly the author, John Hart, has been bitten by the climbing, and now all the local knowledge and info that he has gained over the years is available to us from Cordee.

I think that it must be said at the outset that this interim guide only dedicates eight pages out of 78 to the Belgian crags and that as such the title might well be seen as a little misleading. The remaining text is divided equally between the four main climbing areas of Germany, namely the Schwabishe Alps, the Pfalz, and the North and South Frankenjura. The author is at pains to emphasise the interim nature of this edition, but regrettably offers no clue as to the follow up. This together with the highly selective nature of the crags and routes included suggests to me that a more appropriate title might have been 'A Selective Guide...'

In his introduction John clearly sets out his stall. He says that he hopes, and I believe that he succeeds, to give the English climber information that has not hitherto been available. For each area the reader is treated to information on the character, location and approaches of

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the crags, the camping and general facilities in the area, and of course the route details. For the family climber, John also suggests interesting non-climbing activities; are there any I can hear you say?

All the major crags in the different areas have at least half a dozen routes described, although topos have been substituted for appropriate crags in the Pfalz. Generally these work well although the size (in which they appear in the guide) is far too large for the information they contain, and it rather gives the appearance of wasted space. They also bear more than a striking resemblance to those in the definitive German guide! And incidentally whilst on the subject of the local guides, I believe that the 'blue-spined' edition mentioned by the author has now been superseded by the 1985 'red-spined' volume. Returning briefly to the artwork, I would also extend my criticism of wasted space to the maps. Again the sheer size is excessive and, dare I say it, the presentation appears to be a little rushed. Perhaps, more importantly, all the information the maps and diagrams contain appears to be correct. (No letters please!)

I suppose the next point to discuss must be the routes. English grades are used throughout, and the usual star rating gives that all important hint to include a particular route on your 'hit list'. Strangely however there are no pitch heights throughout the whole guide; the author doesn't enlighten the reader as to the reason for this, unless I have missed it in the text, so you will have to use your eyes and common sense. The only area where this might be a problem is at Freyr where the routes are multi-pitch. The grades seem about right to me, John has pursued an upgrading policy where the slightest doubt existed, a healthy sign and one which our climbers at home would do well to adopt. Climbing, especially holiday climbing, is about having fun, and it's no fun to constantly fail on under graded routes.

So there you have it, a no-nonsense job from an author clearly basing his work on several years of holidaying in the area. Come on now John, let's have the follow up edition as soon as possible.

Keith Sharples

Holding the Heights by J.Bassindale, R.Sale, A.Jones, K.Bassindale
Constable £12.95

I enjoyed this book. It chronicles a year in the climbing life of a partnership. No top practitioners these, but mid-level performers who tell the stories in very personal terms rather than going on about ascents in the overtly competitive jargon we see so much of now. Many of the passages are introspective, but I found much to recognise in the feelings expressed. Plenty of times I have been left to wonder why I have failed, or feel the frustration of fear left unconquered, or even on rare occasions the unexpected success.

I was first attracted to this work because during a brief scan I saw so many routes that I had done, or had on hidden tick lists. It seemed to be a book pitched at my grade of climbing (when I go well) instead of dream fodder. There were still enough routes unknown to me to warrant a glance at again, should I visit some of the areas I don't know.

The varied styles of prose did not always sit comfortably together, and some of the photographs would have been better left out altogether. In particular 36 shots of Time for Tea on The Embankment at Millstone Edge were deeply uninteresting.

However, this book is different to anything I have on my bookshelf, and if asked to describe what climbing is all about I could do a lot worse than show someone this book.

Roy Small

Italian Rock by Al Churcher
Cicerone Press £7.95

Twenty years ago four of us wasted good weather walking to the Allievi cirque from the Val Bregaglia and climbing a poxy little route (the SE Ridge of the Punta Allievi, I think, which we had been assured was comparable with the Cassin on the Badile!), before making the tedious plod back over some God-forsaken col. Little did we know that below the cirque is one of the most beautiful valleys in the Alps with (at that time) large areas of unclimbed granite. The Mello Valley is just one of the 12 areas described in Al Churcher's *Italian Rock*; here are some

of the great rock routes of Italy with such not-to-be-missed routes as Luna Nascente and Oceano Irrazionale ('best approached in the spirit of an adventure' and he is not kidding!)

This guide reveals the potential of Northern Italy as a non-Alpine rock climbing area well worth visiting time and time again. Al has climbed there frequently, often accompanied by Italian friends, and so he writes knowledgeably, and his love for the country comes over strongly. What I particularly liked is his recommendation to enjoy not only the cliffs and the scenery but also the towns and villages with their own foods and wines and, most of all, their hospitality. This advice is particularly applicable to Arco; a meal at the old palace which formerly belonged to the Counts of Arco is just as memorable as a 300 metre climb on Cima Colodri....Sorry I got carried away, see you there next summer.

Mike Mortimer

Thin Air by Greg Child

Patrick Stephens £12.95

Greg Child is a talented young mountaineer and writer, whose previous work in magazine articles has shown rare promise of better things to come. So I read *Thin Air* with eager anticipation and in the main I was not disappointed. The book describes three expeditions: to Shivering with Doug Scott, Don Willians and company; to Broad Peak with the above plus Pete Thexton, Al Rouse and others, and to Gasherbrum IV with Tim McCartney Snape.

All three were successful but Broad Peak was marred by Pete Thexton's death, following a trauma that Greg describes in vivid and disturbing detail. Indeed his descriptive writing is of a consistently high standard, whether on the walk in to Gangotri, the frustration of catching a bug in Gilgit or the final bivouac on Shivering. He occasionally fills in background with second hand material which is less successful and in his genuine delight at spending two expeditions with Uncle Don he succumbs to the temptation of re-telling many classic Whillans jokes that were old hat in 1975! (Even the German World Cup story is retold, which was not in fact even an original Whillans story, though Don was shrewd enough to use it to good purpose in 1972).

The first two thirds of the book is sustained in its constant interest, action and richness of texture, though knowing many of the participants gives it an obvious attraction for me. Somehow the Gasherbrum IV is not as good - back in Pakistan again, up the Braldu Gorge and Baltoro Glacier, which we had only just left in the preceding chapters, the book runs the risk of becoming repetitive. A pity as the ascent is certainly the best (in mountaineering terms) in the book. But perhaps Greg himself was getting a bit jaded, for the writing did not really sustain my attention. The book ends with the re-telling of the K2 disaster which seems to me pointless as Greg knew virtually nothing of the events until he got home. This is merely a space filler at best, and a shabby morbid voyeurism at worst. A pity that more rigorous editing did not spot this and the book did not end at the high point of success on Gasherbrum. But overall the book is an interesting, well written read and once again I look forward to Greg Child's next offering.

Jim Curran

100 Classic Climbs. North Wales by Steve Ashton

Crowood Press £8.95

Are you illiterate? Do YOU get lost on routes? Do you find it difficult to distinguish between right and left?...Then read on as this guidebook is especially for y...o...u. Here for the first time in Britain we have a guidebook which spells out the routes not letter by letter but visually. The continental climbers love 'them', and the Americans can't do without them, but the British (traditional to the last upper lip) have resisted them for years. And what is the cause of so much feeling? The answer is quite simply a topo guide - Britain's first.

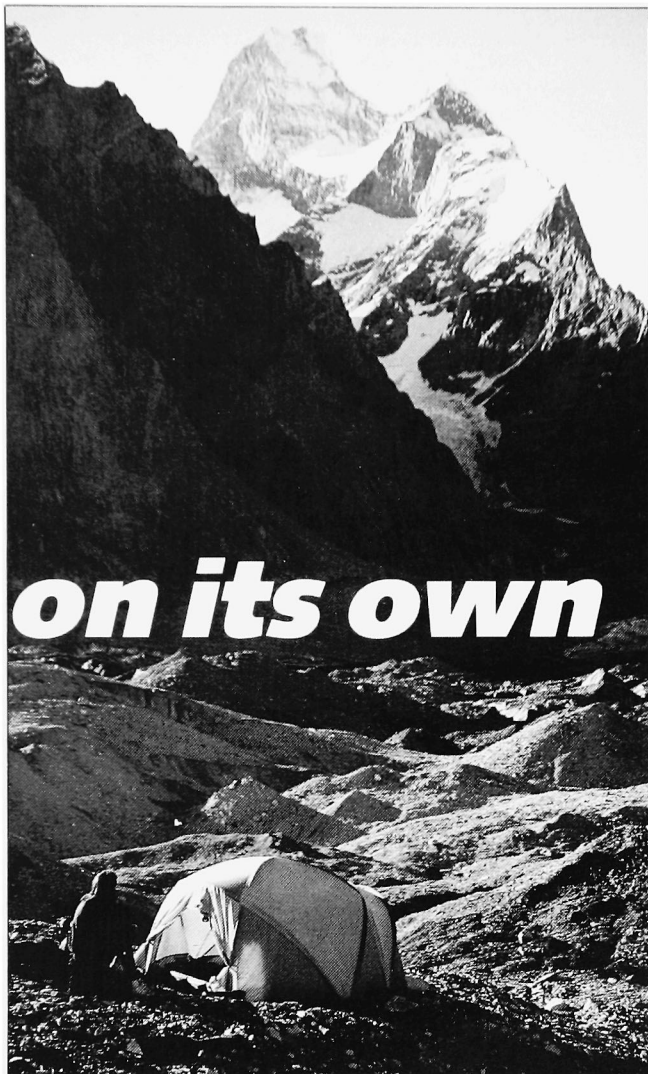
With this startling revelation the ancient climber will mutter darkly "Its not cricket, old boy" (true!) and the Oxbridge don will fire an apt quotation from Homer or Socrates to indicate

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WILD COUNTRY

in some obscure fashion (but crystal clear to Jim Perrin and 0.53% of the population) how standards have dramatically fallen in the last few years. The youthful hot shots with bated tights will welcome this new topo guidebook with open chalk bags and disappear up the crag (totally off route) leaving a cloud of white dust to gently settle downwards. They'll tick it but will probably not have done the route that they intended. Hopefully however, they may at least be on the correct crag.

There may even be those who will have to ask the question "What IS a topo guidebook?" Well quite simply, or not so simply, it is an extension of a crag diagram with route lines, giving a pictorial representation of a climb, using symbols for the topographical details such as: slabs, ledges, grooves, cracks, overhangs etc. The symbols are fairly obvious for those with imagination: dandruff (scree), arrow flights(grooves), footfalls(belays), Chinese moustache (niche or cave), French moustache (overhang or bulge), chevron(arete or ridge), reptile scale (slab). Get the picture? In situ pegs, pitch lengths and technical grades are also included on the topos. Gone are the written descriptions and the intricate detail, so to a certain extent we have a return to the 'exploratory' approach. The harassed leader of any rope may shout down the time honoured words "I'm stuck. Where do I go from here?" The response at one time might have been along the lines of "Are you at a spike? Well move three feet left, go up the wall for 10 feet past a small overhang, move back right slightly, then go up diagonally left to the roof" Now the reply will be, "Can you see a roof about 20m above and to the right? No! Well go for it"

The English when it appears is of dubious nature attempting to become trendy, yet failing: 'An escalator of super-jugs leads up to the summit. All you need is the ability to jump aboard and the stimulus to hold on.'

Paul Williams however, in his enthusiastic review for Mountain Magazine describes the humour as delightful, and delights in the variety and the authors intimate knowledge of the subject - no doubt gleaned from definitive guidebooks. Does Paul really think that Clogwyn y Wenallt is like 'a hairy wart'. Perhaps I am a cynic at heart but when there are perfectly adequate and comprehensive guidebooks to North Wales in existence this concoction of mediocre non-writing seems merely to be a tortuous way of plagiarising existing material. And what is more this upstart guidebook is a distinct threat to the C C and I quote in evidence:

'The Climbers' Club publishes a series of comprehensive guides to North Wales. These are most useful once regular visits have begun to exhaust the possibilities contained in this guide...'

Personally I resent the implication that this guidebook should be given priority and that the definitive guidebooks should only be considered as of being of secondary importance. Firstly, if the definitive series had not been written over a period of about 50 years then there wouldn't have been guidebooks to parasitise. Secondly, one must remember the largely voluntary contribution to produce definitive guidebooks. Perhaps a better title to this book would have been 'Nearly 200 of the best routes in North Wales which have been culled from the C C series and presented in a slightly different fashion in an attempt to make the plagiarist some money at the expense of the C C'

Some may counter the above argument by pointing out the existence of the selective climbing guidebook 'Snowdonia Rock Climbs' by Paul Williams. True that will take away some of the sales that would otherwise go to the C C, but at least Paul has made his effort to do his bit for the system in that he has written 'Llanberis Pass', has completed 'Clogwyn Du'r Arrdu', and has shared the work on 'Gogarth'. What has the author of this publication done?

Certainly a guidebook such as this can hardly be described as a service to the climbing public and there definitely is no new information to be gleaned from its pages. At its best it can be seen as a novel amusement or a quirk of originality, being the first of its kind in Britain. It may even act as a catalyst to make the guidebook world more aware of future trends. At its worst it will be seen as a rather ugly mutant which may yet provide another threat to the definitive guidebooks. A better idea would be to send those people for whom this guidebook is intended back to school to complete the process they failed the first time round.

Of minor criticisms the one that jarred the most was the sight of the dreaded '+' system which gives grades of VD +, S +, and VS +. Many climbers thought that this had died a natural death years ago and to resurrect it deserves a big '-'. Then there is the big booboo of transposing two photo captions which turned the exposed arete of Acheron into a snow and ice route and Maesglasau Falls into a steep rib of rock without a single flake of snow.

One final thought. Will this publication spawn a whole new breed as it implies and how will people react to future volumes to the Lake District and Scotland? If the author sets foot in the Peak however then that will mean war, and in any case gritstone crags hardly lend themselves to topo guidebooks. For the sake of several generations of guidebook writers who freely worked for the guidebook cause I can only hope that this interloper will disappear into oblivion.

Geoff Milburn

100 Classic Climbs. Scotland, Central and Southern Highlands.

by K. Crocket and S. Ashton.

Crowood Press. £8.95

Selected climbing guides are difficult, in the making of the choice of what to include, as much as in the writing. This guide picks out 100 ranging from the rock of Arran via the Southern Highlands to Glencoe, Ardgour, Ben Nevis and Creag Meaghaidh Area. Maps to illustrate their whereabouts, topos their direction on rock or snow and ice. There is advice on approaches and descents, on likely conditions, and restriction to grades Easy to E2 in summer and I to V in winter.

The guide comes in an attractive plastic cover, and is generally user-friendly and frank about its own limitations. Thus sources for more complete information are readily indicated. The writing of the introductory material has style and evocative images of the charms of the places described. Some topos, though not great art, are pleasantly attractive, and the less attractive are at least informative.

As to selection, always such books will seem to give too little of one's favourite areas. The Ben takes up about a third of the book and still looks starved, Glencoe area gets slightly more, the rest thin porridge. Nonetheless the reminders about Bridge of Orchy area or Arrochar are timely, with material not always readily available to occasional visitors. If a few people are prompted to avoid the honey-pot areas in winter it would be a boon.

On choice there is always room for difference. Carnivore is maybe a touch hard anyway, Trapeze is not described but lurks ghost-like on the relevant topo by way of an apology, whilst the Ben Nevis selection carries authority. Overall it is probably pretty near to optimal for this vast area. The inside photos seem *de rigueur*, yet somehow do not do a lot for the whole production, being muddily reproduced and somewhat separated from their context. That cannot be said for those on the cover, which enhance the book's modest attraction. Of course there is much less inside than in the Hamish McInnes Selections but the book can go out on the crag with you. Still most people will want the real detailed guide I suspect, in the end.

Paul Nunn

Medical Handbook for Mountaineers by Peter Steele

Constable £8.95

Did you know that beavers living in fresh water are a serious threat to humans catching Giardiasis which causes gastro enteritis, and that venomous snake heads can strike up to an hour after having been cut off? So states Peter Steele in the latest update of his 1976 classic book which carries a BMC recommendation tag. It is a well written and comprehensive volume, and in the usual Constable format can easily be slipped amongst the expedition luggage.

Almost every conceivable medical problem, illness and accident is included, and reading the book is a wonderful combination of the technical, macabre, bizarre and humorous. And of course it is the humorous side which leaves a lasting memory, especially some of the unintentional humour. A few of the evocative thoughts are as follows: 'prolapsed piles is the ultimate misery'; 'wild itching can drive a person crazy'; 'many toilets are dirty'; 'falling astride a fence...'; 'the Kathmandu Quickstep'; eschew heroic surgery in the field'; 'a bootful of blood at the end of the day'; and a thought for crowded stances - how to diagnose 'madness as distinct from panic'.

It may interest connoisseurs that the Glasgow Coma Scale to estimate conscious level did not in fact evolve after fights by the Creag Dhu members, and even more unusual is the case of the unconscious person who is found thrashing around in bed. Normal medical practice is to stroke the inside of the thighs of the person involved. It's true - read the book.

For those who take to snow and ice, frostbite is always a serious possibility and of the various affected extremities the genitals are somewhat prone: 'Men have the bigger problem. Fortifying underpants, a rabbit skin or newspaper stuffed down the front will keep everything warm. Dipping in brandy does not help'. By this stage, what with the thought of falling astride a fence, I was distinctly reluctant to read further. Then came the ultimate in cringing: For 'Torsion of the testicles, support the scrotum in a tight pair of underpants well-padded with cotton wool. Make a cautious attempt at unwinding the torsion - and don't make him laugh.'

All in all the book was great fun and I learnt a lot that I didn't know already. So if any nubile females are planning an expedition into a mountainous area where there are fences, leeches, snakes and beavers then I've already packed my rucksack, complete with my medical handbook - I just can't wait to see if the thigh stroking really does work.

Geoff Milburn

Nanda Devi - The Tragic Expedition by John Roskelley
Oxford Illustrated Press £9.95

The Thunder Dragon Kingdom by Steven K. Berry
Crowood Press £12.95

Nanda Devi was read first as I was intrigued to know why it had taken 11 years from the time of the expedition to the book being published. Once I started reading it, I thought from the general tone of the writing that there must be some libel law that says 'If you slag your fellow expedition members, in print, thou shalt get sued'. However the reason for the delay was due to not having a publisher interested in a book by a little known climber - Roskelley's position in 1976, he has certainly made his mark on the Himalayan scene since then!

I was prepared to be totally biased in my review of Roskelley's book. He had pipped my friends and I to the first ascent of a route on a mountain in the Khumbu (Cholatse), several years back. So I thought in a small way I could have a go at him! From the start the book is written in that typical American style, of deep meaningful thoughts and actions. I know from experience that whenever you meet an American on a stance or a crag, particularly in their own country, they immediately give you their life history and by the time you part company, you're virtually blood brothers. Initially I thought that this constant questioning of their thoughts and actions (and everyone else's) would make the reading of this book tedious. However just like watching Eastenders a couple of times, you become interested in the gossip and the scandal. I found myself feeling guilty for wanting to know who he was going to slag off next, and enjoying reading it when he did start laying into someone. This was probably a reaction of sheer relief for not being remotely connected to the expedition.

Roskelley's ability as a mountaineer is well known and the couple of sections in the book, where he describes in detail his leads of some of the difficult sections, certainly back up that reputation. There is no doubt that the choice of team was unbalanced for the difficulty of the route. He kept telling them that before they left the USA. He also requested more rope for the route. This was ignored and they had to send for more during the expedition. In the end he got to the summit with two of the stronger climbers, after the three of them decided to 'go it alone' from the rest of the expedition.

Obviously the death of one of the members, Devi Unsoeld, marred the success of the trip, but I felt that it was marred from the beginning, for many reasons and Roskelley does not mince words explaining them. If you enjoy a good scandal and some gnarly climbing sequences then you will enjoy this book.

Now, I had intended reading *The Thunder Dragon Kingdom* after the above book. Unfortunately - for Steve Berry - I started reading Joe Simpson's book *Touching the Void* instead. Needless to say - especially if you've read *Touching the Void* - I couldn't put it down. So when I did start on *The Thunder Dragon Kingdom* I was still reeling from the experiences of Simpson's book. I am afraid I was not ready for the initial history chapters of *The Thunder Dragon Kingdom*, which were excellent for a travelogue - but I was looking for something epic or

scandalous. Reading about a lama called Padma Sambhava and the soul of a king called Sindu Raja flying up people's noses was not what I had in mind. I am sure it was pretty epic for the poor devil whose nose was picked, or should I say chosen!

Either way, I found the initial chapters heavy going. What did not help was knowing that the outcome of the expedition was a failure, in terms of reaching the summit of Gangkar Punsum. I think I was looking for the consolation prize of the aforementioned epic or scandal, in place of a summit. The story does get interesting when Berry keeps questioning his leadership qualities. Shades of early Bonington here, and the chapter detailing the storm was a gripping piece of writing, but I kept thinking that it was just like so many other expedition books about Himalayan trips. I do realise that it was to the Kingdom of Bhutan, which for future expeditions to this mysterious country the book needed to be written, as a reference work, and that's the style of writing it should have stayed in, that of a travelogue. On this point I do hope that Bhutan learns from Nepal's mistakes in administering expeditions and they do not allow the destruction of landscape: culture. It was a mistake of Berry's to break into scandal in the last few chapters, as by then even I was not interested and anyway, it was not as juicy as Roskelley's. I personally think that if Steve Berry's next book concentrates on the human element side of the expedition, it will make good reading as he comes across as an honest writer, his dedication to his leadership certainly comes across. I am sure he has more trips and books lined up.

Bill Wintrip

Cumbrian Rock by Trevor Jones and Geoff Milburn

Pic Publications £14.95

I must immediately confess my bias. The arrival of any new book on Lakeland climbing, particularly one as lavishly illustrated as *Cumbrian Rock*, is bound to excite my interest rather more than most publications. The Lakes does, after all, contain much of my favourite country, and many of my favourite climbs.

First impressions on hurriedly turning the pages, are of a fascinating collection of photographs, most unfamiliar, and many successfully conveying the character of the area and the spirit of their particular era. I was particularly interested in the early colour plates such as the Devil's Wedge shots. The photo of the top pitch must be a very early example of a photographic style done to death in recent years.

Many of the modern photos are the work of that talented local Al Phizacklea, a man who has been increasingly active in the local guidebook production in recent years, at a time when the Lakeland guides markedly improved. One feature which has helped to restyle and enhance the guidebooks are Al's relief drawings, which abandon maps in favour of locating crags by way of an aerial view of a valley or area. This pleasing method of illustration has been used to great effect here with a drawing of the whole of the Lakes, which is all the more striking for its angle of view. I suppose when you live in Barrow it would be quite logical to draw Lakeland from somewhere above the Isle of Man, but for those of us from Lancashire a balloon above Farlon may have been more expected, though with hindsight probably less revealing.

Phizacklea's photos of Lost Horizons and Shere Khan both inspire return visits, and Bill Birkett's shot of the appalling Asolo does a good job of selling that particular experience to the unwary. Mind you, quite how Bill can manage to both take and play the lead role in that particular frame is quite beyond me unless, of course, it is yet another example of that unforgivable sin where the star and owner of the slide in question is so eager to bolster their image they quite forget the major part the photographer had to play. The book contains a number of examples of uncredited photos, many of which could have been correctly attributed with a little more careful research.

This impression of a slightly rushed job is also evident in a lot of the text. The routes and characters all leap from the page at a furious pace, sometimes a little too fast I thought, particularly as far as the more recent history went. Being no historian myself I have always been puzzled by the notion that recent history isn't (yet), and therefore any attempts to assess its significance are near impossible and relatively worthless. I admit there have been occasional red herrings amongst past winners of Lakelands coveted 'crag of the month' award - Rainsbarrow and St. Bees immediately spring to mind - but I still feel a better attempt could have been made to sort the wheat from the (plethora of?) recent chaff and give the modern pioneers a fairer share of the overall picture.

The later chapters seem too heavily reliant on the content of magazine articles of the day. Magazines, as we all know, can (and do!) get it wrong, and the readiness with which we accept the printed word as gospel is a worrying thing. The authors package could easily be taken to accurately portray what went on, and indeed I imagine it largely does. But I hope the existence of such a book does not stop people questioning this (or any other) interpretation in the future and writing their own view of events. Indeed I hope this book sells in sufficient numbers for a future update to be conceived and delivered, though preferably it should be even more meticulously researched and have a rather longer period of gestation.

Neil Foster

Dolomites Selected Climbs by Ron James The Alpine Club £12.50

Twenty five years ago the Dolomites were an essential part of most British climbers continental itinerary. Those were the days when the majority (though not all) tackled the long routes much as they would a major route in the Western Alps, with big boots and a bulging rucksack. Thus equipped only the very fit and able avoided a bivouac and it was always very hard work, especially on the artificial pitches.

How things have changed! It is not unusual for climbers to be dressed just as they would be at Buoux or Verdon, in lycra tights with head band, slippers, chalk bag and so on, even on the serious routes at Civetta or Marmolada. Moreover, the rise in standards has transformed so many peg-pulling classics into superb free climbs with difficulties great enough to satisfy the best. There is an extra ingredient here which is so lamentably lacking on those bolt protected extravaganzas, and that ingredient is adventure.

Strangely this magnificent area has fallen out of favour with British climbers who seem to prefer the more fashionable limestone of France. Exactly why this should be is not easily understood but certainly a Renaissance of British interest in the Dolomites is long overdue.

The lack of an authoritative and up to date English guide may have been a contributing factor, and so this well researched selection by Ron James on behalf of the Alpine Club (which comes hot on the heels of the interesting *Classic Climbs in the Dolomites* (Cicerone) translated by Al Churcher) is particularly welcome. Ron has extensive knowledge, not only of the popular, well known groups but also the more esoteric and quieter areas where it is possible to climb all day without meeting another rope.

The guide has a good representation of routes throughout the grades, including all the major classics both ancient and modern, with many descriptions appearing in English for the first time. The layout is reasonably good with all the information on huts, access etc easy to find, yet there is very little wasted space, enabling over 400 routes and descents to be included in one volume. The route descriptions are concise and (as far as I can judge) accurate, avoiding the infamous confusions of left and right. What detracts from the authority of the book are the frequent small errors such as names mis-spelt and the omission of 'hr' from some of the times to the starts of, routes thus "Base Hut - Contrin or Biv Marco de Bianco one and a half or 10 min to the start". A casual reading revealed dozens of such small errors which really should have been picked up by an alert proof reader.

The route times should be treated with caution; some appear to refer to extremely fast solo ascents while others seem to allow for sandwiches and a flask on every stance. For example any competent party would climb Messner's Gran Muro on Sasso della Croce in half the guide time of eight hours, but very few would be more than half way up the Philipp-Flamm in the minimum time of seven hours (incidentally Philipp is spelt differently on successive lines thus emulating *Classic Climbs in the Dolomites*). The main criticism must be levelled at both the cover photographs, which do not do justice to the subject matter, and the photo-diagrams, several of which are almost useless due to poor reproduction (at least in my copy).

Despite these criticisms this is a very worthy effort which I can wholeheartedly recommend. Those who wish to visit the area for the first time will find it essential reading and it might inspire others to rediscover the delights of climbing in some of the most spectacular rock-scenery in Europe.

Mike Mortimer.

"Neat man!" as the Americans might say and it all began in 1978. Several times a year the letterbox clatters and instinct prompts a grab for the mail. Within one envelope there is usually a list of books that will either satisfy the ardent collector or frustrate him in the extreme. Beginners will scan the book TITLES, old hands will prefer to scan the list of AUTHORS, while the doyens will merely flick an accomplished eye down the PRICES. Time is of the essence as elsewhere in the country other hawk-like eyes will also be scanning for prey. As soon as a rarity or bargain is spotted there is no time to waste. The technique is to ring the dealer and keep on flicking through the list for further items. If the phone is engaged then wait half a minute, then try again. Lady luck will smile or shake her head but after 30 attempts to dial a number you can be certain that you are too late.

Beware! Book collecting is an obsession and can seriously damage your health, to say nothing of your bank balance. The addict will reach for his cheque book just as surely as the smoker will absent-mindedly light up the next cigarette.

The slippery slope for the mountaineer may start with a harmless guidebook or two - just to go climbing. The next port of call however is the local library to read of great deeds or distant peaks. A birthday present can be the first real fix, or worse still the discovery of the local den of iniquities, the second-hand bookshops. It only needs a few bargains for one to get hooked and then the stakes are raised when one discovers that in Britain alone there are over 700 second-hand and antiquarian booksellers. The final hard drug is the specialised catalogue of mountaineering books sent out by the pusher (book dealer). These are 'hard men' who can tempt a collector to distraction. Keep well clear of anyone called Jarvis, Baines, Baume, O'Reilly, Hudson, Chiltern, Astill or Dickinson etc, as they'll have your cagoule (ie shirt) off your back as soon as look at you. Actually they are also some of my close friends but I don't want my rivals in the book collecting world to know.

Consider the following advert:

'The Ascent of Neverest by Ivor Crampon. n.d. 121p, 20cm, 25 illus, 10 plates (b/w) 14 eng., Poor, No D:W, X Lib, rep, no f.e.p., binding loose, reading copy only. £1.50.'

The description spells disaster and only an extremely gullible person will respond. On the other hand contemplate the following temptation:

'Ascent of the Clatterhorn, 1882, O.G.Jones. 948pp. Handsome full leather de-luxe binding by Zaehnsdorf, 48 hand coloured lithographs on thick card, 160 steel engravings. No. 2 of a signed and limited edition of 30 copies of which only five were for sale. Edward Whymper's personal annotated copy with three postcards of the Matterhorn tipped in by Whymper and all dated the same week as the Matterhorn disaster. weighs 12lb. 'Price negotiable.'

The winner of the race is the first person to arrange a second mortgage on their house to obtain the necessary collateral to purchase the item.

What starts off as a book on the bedside table will soon develop into a bookshelf. A small book-case has a nasty habit of growing into a big one. Floor to ceiling shelving on one wall may seem the ultimate, but a point will inevitably come when the kids will answer the phone and say "Dad's in the library". Or worse still, "Dad's upstairs as he says there's no room for him in the library"

The point is that it is all Neate's fault. Pre-1978 there was no comprehensive bibliography of mountaineering literature available to the general public, and prior to George Bridge's 1970 bibliography no one knew just how many guidebooks were in circulation. Once Bill Neate had produced his bibliography it overnight became a ticklist for all collectors. There were even starred books to chase and...horror of horrors...a list of the top 50 books in the field of mountaineering. It was great. In addition to the main list of 949 titles (I still dream about getting them all) there were also very useful additional subject headings to cover various mountainous areas and topics such as humour, poetry, technique etc. The lists of first ascents for various regions around the world were fascinating, if not quite complete and could well have been updated. The book itself was a sturdy hardback of ideal size and the layout was superbly clear. Each author's books were arranged in a chronological order and it was possible to find a book within seconds.

Alas, since Bill's masterpiece there have been inexplicable changes. I'm tempted to say, 'What

Bill put together, let no Jill put asunder'. However there are plenty of good things to say about the new book; since Bill became obsolete Jill has put a great deal of research into updating the book. Instead of 1,215 references there is now a staggering total of 3,393 titles, if my maths is correct. The main section of the book has more than doubled since the 1978 edition and a welcome addition are the Japanese titles with English summaries, although very few of these are obtainable in Britain. After over 20 years of collecting mountaineering books I have to admit that Neate has found details of many books that I had not previously heard about.

Of the omissions a few of those that are somewhat surprising are: *Two Seasons in Switzerland*, 1895, by Herbert Marsh; *Advetures in the Alps*, 1913, by A.C. Knowles; *The Story of Mountains*, 1950, by F.C. Lane; *One More Cairn*, 1954, by J.C. Lyth; *Lakeland Memories*, 1923, by George Seatree and *Prisoner In Red Tibet*, 1957, by Sidney Wignall. The latter is particularly surprising as there aren't too many Welsh Himalayan Expeditions.

Neate is strong on limited editions but he missed: Conway's Central and Eastern Pennine Alps of which there were only 400 copies produced; Eckenstein's *Alpine Portfolio* had 160 copies; Jean Russell's *Climb If You Will* had only a 200 run (according to Nat Allen), and then of course Neate made mistakes with two of my own books (to say nothng of changing MY name on one of them. What he does with his own name is up to him but he shouldn't change other people's names). She also attempts to change time so that we have the unusual case of Pete Crew writing a Dolomites guide in 1863 while Edward Whymper first writes on Zermatt and the Matterhorn in 1987. Curious! (word processors have a lot to answer for I expect). In fact it is in the world of fiction Neate excels having increased his list from 55 titles to 411 during eight years of research.

My greatest complaint with the book is in the field of guidebooks where Neate seems to have culled material from George Bridge's previous work. There are many errors and ommissions, however and my first question would be "Did Wilf Noyce really co-edit the 1936 Idwal guidebook?" My copy of the book says "No". It is also news to me that the Climbers' Club published the 1976 Chew Valley guidebook. There are lots of ommissions and I suspect Neate knows little about guidebooks. Where are Gogarth 1976 by Alec Sharp, Clogwyn du'r Arddu, 1976 by Alec Sharp; and North Wales Limestone 1981 by Andy Pollitt? This is just a start, I could name many more which are not so blatantly obvious.

Of the trivial errors, I noticed Bickwell (Bicknell), Gilki(n)son, Molemaar(Molenaar), and Chris Bilbeck(Eilbeck), but I have never appeared on a cover as Geoffrey Milburn... Will has got it wrong again. The Introduction page, in my copy, is blank as well! When one considers that this book costs £14.95 it is certainly very expensive for a soft-back book. Important reference books such as this should be hard-backed to give them a reasonable lifetime, and my copy of Neate is already getting so worn that it will have to be replaced before long.

What should be made clear is that Neate is a selected bibliography of the more important items within the field of mountaineering writing. In that it is highly successful but at some point one must resort to using the 1982 Alpine Club Library Catalogue. That has the advantage of including many fringe items but there are two drawbacks. The first is that it includes books not only written in English, a factor which makes it awkward to consult at times. More worrying is that it includes ONLY those books in the possession of the Alpine Club. Consequently there are many many guidebooks that are not included. For this reason it is vital that the next update of Neate is comprehensive.

Throughout the world a great many collectors will rely on this edition of 'Neate' to keep them informed, and if one discounts the latest format then one must acknowledge that it is hugely successful.

Geoff Milburn

Area Notes

North Wales

Looking through the new routes' lists for this year, there appears to have been a huge number of routes climbed, but, and it has to be said, not all of them are worthwhile. We seem to be in the age of the micro-crag, not suprising considering the amount of rock dotted about Llanberis and Ogwen, of a size that would make them crags in the Peak, but are only large boulders here. If this sounds pessimistic, it is not wholly the case, with a number of activists still finding good lines on cliffs both big and small. As I implied a couple of Journals ago, the two branches of climbing that have developed recently still flourish side by side in Snowdonia, perhaps because visitors and locals alike are still prepared to take action, rather than just sit and whine about modern ethics. Well protected desperates can be found on the limestone or the Ormes, and some slate walls, whilst the head games are going strong on Cloggy, Gogarth and the Lley.yn.

Shadows were cast upon the area by one or two events, the most distressing being the blatant and deliberate chipping of runner placements and holds on Cloggy's Great Wall. The blame for this was tossed about like a parcel from Ulster, but the perpetrators remain unknown. Johnny Dawes and Nick Dixon climbed the desecrated line, left of Indian Face at E7 6b, but hope to fill in the chippings and complete the proper route. Dixon, with Dave Green, went on to clean up and straighten out his own line, Dinas in the Oven, before adding *Cathedral Graffiti* E6/7 6b, with Nick Harms. This breaks out left from the crux of Great Wall, and is named after an unfortunate and misplaced piece of artwork, also on Great Wall. It seemed that the chipper had been caught red handed, but it turned out to be Neil Foster and Rory Gregory, placing a peg on their new route, *Opening Bid* E5 6b, which takes a direct line up the Llithrig wall. Paul Williams', apparently excellent, new guide to Cloggy is due out shortly, and weather permitting, is bound to stimulate activity there. It can only be hoped that in future the rock is left in its original state.

Down in Llanberis, Craig y Cwm Glas Bach received a close inspection from a couple of teams, *Noah's Ark* E6 6b and *Over The Beach* E6 6b, both found by Steve Howe with Perry Hawkins and Gwion Hughes respectively, being amongst the harder additions. Iwan Jones and Tim Mitchell also contributed a number of routes here. Pat Littlejohn seemed to run rampant around Snowdonia over the summer, often ably abetted by Jon de Montjoye, Equator Walls being just one of the stopping off points. Here *Alchemy* E6 6c was added to the right of Steel Appeal. Further up the Pass, *Red Giant* E4 6b on Craig Fach climbs the wall right of Pulsar before taking its direct finish, this being the work of Howe and Phil Baxter. Lliwedd, that quiet backwater, had *The Bender* E2 5c freed to provide the hardest route on the cliff, by Martin Crook and Hughes.

Back in the modern world, the slate quarries have seen the usual activity throughout the year, enough in fact to warrant an independent supplement including all of the worthwhile new lines. A glance around the levels reveals the appearance of some big numbers. At Bus Stop Quarry, Trevor ("which route do you want pictures of now, Paul?") Hodgson and Hughes bouldered out *Forsinain Motpur* E6 6c, just left of Solstice. Dawes added a start to Couer de Lion at E7 7a to make that route totally independent, on the Quarryman Wall in Twll Mawr. This wall featured in the recent Alun Hughes' film profile of Dawes, 'Stone Monkey', which used an ascent of The Quarryman as the programme's climax. For those teams seeking an uncrowded Bank Holiday venue, there's not often a queue below these routes! Bill Wayman, with de Montjoye added yet another route to Dali's Wall with *Conquistadors* E5 6b/c, on the steep wall left of Stretch Class. Down in the Vivian Quarry, the main stage was the Prow, at Pool Level, Paul Pritchard, with Piggy Johnstone made the wall his own with *Soap on a Rope* E5 6b, *Artichokes* E6 6b, *Sucked Away With the Scum* E6 6c and *Wishing Well* E6 6b. The latter route was the scene of a big splash, when one would-be solo ascensionist failed to make the crux slap at the top of the route, and took an unintentional plunge from 60 feet up. Opposite Clap Please, *Bobby's Groove* E6 7a eventually fell to Dawes, after repeated attempts by Bob Drury, perhaps explaining the interesting belaying observed in 'Stone Monkey'.

Pritchard was also at work on the Rainbow Slab with *Cure For A Sick Mind* E7 7a, left of Poetry Pink, Harms sharing the honours here with *Prick Up Ureas* E7 6c, a finishing pitch to Stiff Syd's Cap, and *Jai'a'n* E5 6b, taking cracks right of Drury Lane, climbed with Paul Barbier and Jayne Anthoine respectively. Harms also added *Cums The Dogfish* E7 6c to the area right of Over the Rainbow. Elsewhere in the quarries Perry Hawkins and Ed Stone found

Coming Up For Air E5 6b on the Cig Arete Level, and Hawkins also homed in on *Heatseeker* E6 6b, right of Angel on Fire on the Manatee Level. Stone has fortunately recovered from a serious head injury (it was nearly 'Head Stone'), sustained after leading Midsummer's on Cloggy, when a careless team knocked a rock down Great Wall.

The Ogwen Valley has seen some explorations, especially Clogwyn y Tarw (Gribin Facet), where Stone found *Recess Monkey* E5 6a, the blunt arete above the slab routes, and *Couteau* E7 6b, the arete right of the base of the slab routes. George Smith also claimed a couple of lines in this arete orgy, with *Rocking Chair Ridge* E6 6b, and *Le Fin* E7 6b, the aretes left and right of Rocking Horse respectively. Glyder Fach gained *Kaya* E6 6b, the arete left of Direct Route, thanks to Noel Craine and Dawes. Another mountain face gaining its hardest route was the East Face of Tryfan, when Johnstone and Andy Newton wandered up *Zephyr Wall* E2 5b 5a, positioned pleasantly on Terrace Wall left, then right, of Belle Vue Bastion.

The Lledr Valley saw a fair amount of activity, as teams searched for new Crag Xs, the best find being the rediscovery of Clogwyn Yr Adar where a number of routes were added by Smith, Crook, Sue Harland and Pete Kirtton. Over on Carreg Hyll Drem, Pritchard and Hodgson found *The Big Six Fun Book* E5 6b, left of Weir Pig, before Littlejohn and de Montjoye arrived to blitz the crag. *Bay of Pigs* E5 6c, also climbs up to the left of Weirpig, *Going for Gold* E6 6c, takes the blank groove right of the top of Samurai Groove, *Flare Up* E6 6a 6c, climbs the overhanging (!) prow between Primus and Burner, and *Welsh Water Subversion* E5 6b, a traverse through the very steep ground above the Girdle. Littlejohn also found *One Fine Day* E5 6a 5c, a direct line on Hardd, with Tim Jepson.

The esoteric crags of the Llyn have been the subject of much activity, but the picture is a little confused by the lack of a descent guide, so I will but record that many teams, mostly local, have been at work on crags that are often more serious than the most gripping bits of Gogarth. It is hoped that a local devotee will put together a new guide, although many are reluctant to open up their adventure playground to those who might bolt and sanitise one of the last bastions of 'out there' climbing.

Castell Cidwm was another crag to fall to the Littlejohn and de Montjoye roadshow. *Balance of Power* E5 6b 6a takes a direct line up the steep groove through Central Wall, *Potency* E6 6b 6b, a bold route including the crux of The Erg, and *Heading For Heights* E5 6b 5c, the steep groove system left of Vertigo. With Steve Monks, Littlejohn also added *Dwmsday* E5 6a 6b, taking the left hand side of the big roof above Dwm, *Glasnost* E4/5 6a 5c, a leftward line from the foot of Dwm, and *Light Years* E6 6c, which climbs through the middle of the big roof above Curver, climbed on sight and desperate enough for Monks not to follow the pitch!

Gogarth continued to provide a number of fine new routes, and a new guide should appear later this year, so just a brief look at the most impressive routes, in order. Left Hand Red Wall gained a couple of more bold lines from Pritchard and Johnstone, *Outside The Asylum* E5 6c, climbing up to finish on Anarchist, and *Salem* E5 5b 5c 6a-b, a direct on Deygo. In Smurf Zawn, *Free Nelson Mandela Now* E5

was the work of Steve Haston and Paul Trower, taking some very steep rock near King of the Swingers. Pritchard and Crispin Waddy took the arete right of The Cruise, with no little effort, to give *Hang Ten (In The Green Room)* E6 6c, a fine addition to the Upper Tier. On the Main Cliff, Grant Farquhar and Waddy added the superbly positioned *Eraserhead* E6 6a 6a 5c, which takes the aretes left, then right of Positron. Waddy, with Dawes, also added *Ramadan* E5 6b, a direct on the second pitch of Hunger. Waddy also found *The Real Keel* E5 6b, which breaks out left from Exit Chimney in the Easter Island area. Wen Zawn gained an on sight E7 6b, *Hardback Thesaurus* thanks to Dawes and Drury, who climbed the wall right of the start of T.Rex. Some steep ground was taken near Flytrap with *Arachnid* E4 5c, falling to Smith and Hughes, *Seal's Song* E5 to Haston and Celia Bull, and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* E4 6a to Crook and Dave Kendall.

North Stack Wall gained a few more routes, there can't be room for any more can there? Andy Pollitt and Adrian Hughes gained *A Wreath of Deadly Nightshade* E7 6b on the blunt arete right of The Bells, The Bells, then Dave Towse and John Redhead added *The Angelman* E7 6b 6b between The Bells, The Bells and The Cad. Redhead went on to add a direct start to The Cad at E6 6b, and Towse to provide *Light Haulage* E6 6b, a very direct version of The Long Run. Further down the wall, Waddy found *Live at the Witch Trials* E6 6b, which takes the wall and bulges left of Talking Heads. The obvious steep red face in North Stack Quarry provided two fine wet weather routes, with Pritchard providing *The Crimson Crimp* E5 6b,

up the right hand side, and Smith creating *The Terrible Thing* E6 6c on the left hand side, wearing out a mere eight partners in the process.

The Great Orme gained a few routes, Mike Hamill and Maddy Raven added three routes at E4 6b in the Three Musketeers Area. Phil Smith also added a number of routes to Pen Trwyn, including *Watch Your Poison* E5 6c, taking the steep groove right of Poison Rain. On Lower Pen Trwyn, Pollitt climbed two hard lines *Cafe Libre* E7 6c and *Over The Moon* E8 6c, and Mark Pretty provided *I've Been a Bad, Bad Boy* E6 6c. The name of the latter route is a reference to the unfortunate addition of an extra bolt to Wings Of Perception by Pretty, however, the error of his ways was pointed out, and a (belated) apology followed. Corrupt ethics have no place on Welsh crags, and the point has been strongly made.

The Little Orme saw a flurry of activity for a change, with The Diamond Buttress being transformed with a number of difficult lines. Pollitt set the ball rolling with a free version of *The Wall of the Evening Light* E6 6b. Then came *The Water Bouys* E4 6b, Pretty and P. Freeman, *It Came From Beneath The Sea* E5 6a, Pretty, *Rub A Dub Dub* E4 6a, Hughes, *Non Tidal Screamer* E6 6b, *Robinson Cruiser* E6 6b, Smith, and *Boat People* E7 6b/c, from Pritchard.

If these notes seem full of big numbers, there are still fine routes being found at lower grades in all the areas, so don't burn your EBs yet! We can only hope that the diminishing amount of new rock available does not result in a diminishing standard of ethics, and the theft of the next generation's challenges by the ego of the present one.

Andy Newton

Peak District

*'We thought that we had the answers
it was the questions we had wrong'*

Bono, U2

Some of the wrong questions asked in 1988 were.

How can I climb a route without holds?

How do I protect thin shallow cracks in natural gritstone?

How do I lead routes I haven't got the bottle to do?

How do I get up routes I'm not good enough to do?

How do I improve my grade without getting any better.

The answers were.

Chip some holds.

Hammer in pegs.

Add bolts/extra bolts

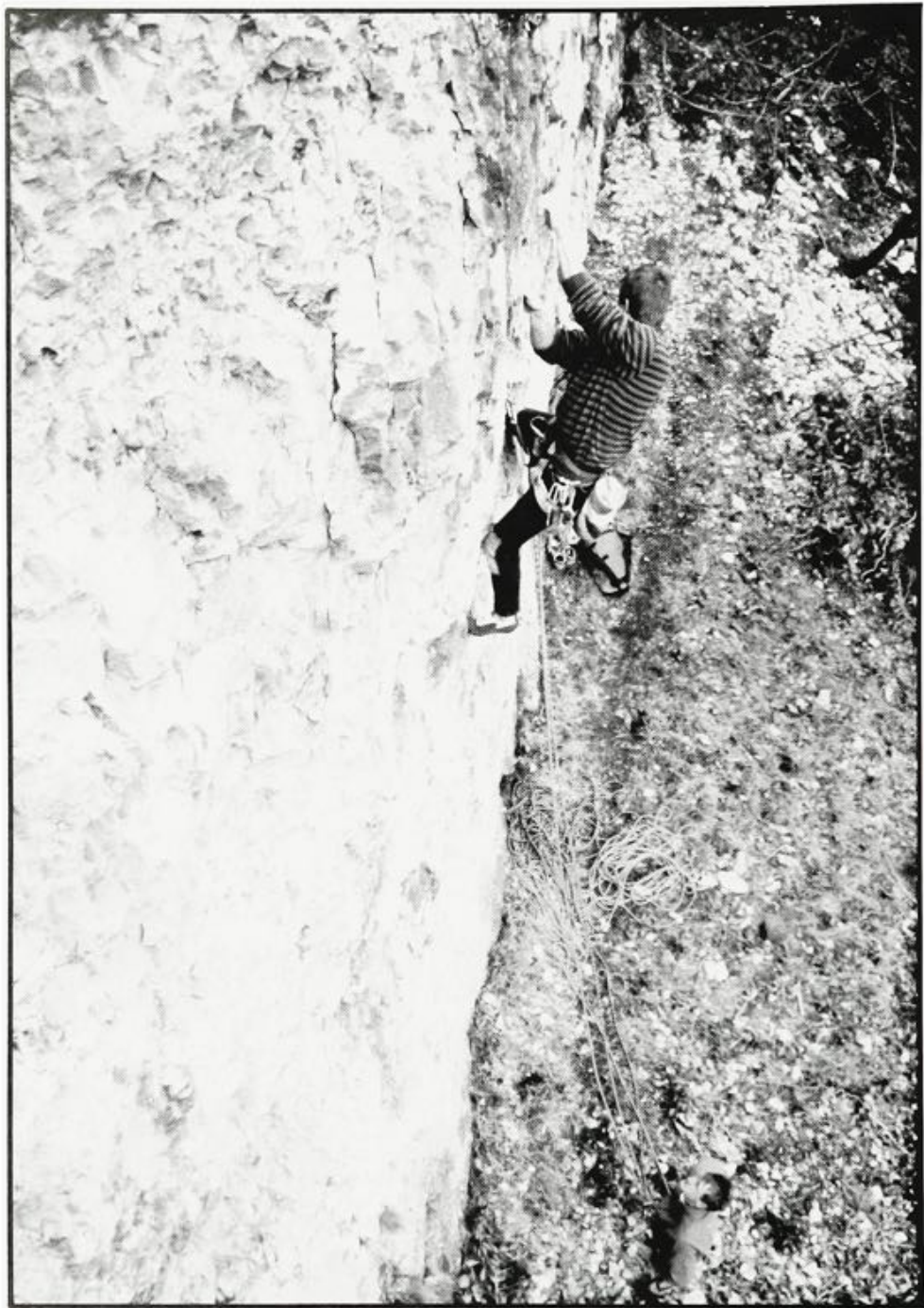
Make holds bigger by chipping.

Spend several days practising, then red point.

The Peak District has suffered badly this year at the hands of egotistical climbers, some of whom should know better. Chipped holds on new routes have become more blatant. Pegs have been hammered in on Curbar and Burbage South Edges. Bolts have been added to existing routes. Worse still, existing routes have been chipped including Perplexity (a savage attack), Edge Lane, Frank Sinatra Bows Out and Blood and Guts on Botty Street at Millstone; DIY and Twin Cam at Stanage; Plague at Rivelin; the low level traverse of Moat Buttress, Water-cum-Jolly, and at Staden Quarry, Welcome to Hard Times. Finally, hard routes at Raven Tor and Chee Dale have become the playground of the E3 leader with time and belayers to spare.

Fortunately this activity is a mere ripple compared with the thousands of routes climbed in good style every week, but one worry is that it is beginning to spread. Some of the best young climbers are unable to place natural protection and have consequently turned to pink pointing, abseiling down and pre-placing protection. This practice could well destroy the unique nature of British rock-climbing if it became widespread. Anyway, enough of the moaning and on to the reporting.

Gritstone continues to produce some good routes. The major talking point was Andy Pollitt's ascent of the slab right of Elder Crack, *Knockin' on Heaven's Door*, to which he gave the awesome grade of E9 7a. Undoubtedly a superb effort, his ascent was flawed by the placing of a peg to protect the crux. Although accounts vary between 'slightly tapped in to seat it' to 'hammered home with a peg hammer', it is generally believed that the peg was not merely



Nigel Slater making the second ascent of 'Happy Days', Moat Buttress, Water-cum-Jolly. Photo Keith Sharples.

placed by hand. In any case you don't carry peg hammers on natural grit to hand place pegs. *Masters of the Universe* E7 6c, was another of Andy's routes on gritstone taking a spectacular line up the hanging right arete of the Cioch Block at Burbage South. The route starts from a hanging belay and is protected by old bolts. In a similar style the bolt route 30 feet left was climbed by Stu Mackay at E4 6b, *Groovamarionation*. Also on this Edge some morons hammered pegs in and out of Braille Trail. Over on Stanage, John Allen has almost had the remaining lines to climb at his leisure. *Smash Your Glasses* climbs the arete right of Fern Groove on its left hand side (thus superseding Spartaciad) and *The Trickledown Fairy*, the blunt arete left of The Stretcher. Both are E5 6b and worthwhile. Also plugged here was the gap between the Unconquerable Cracks at the same grade by Tony Ryan, *Vanquished*. Moving north, Allen was also active on Rivelin Edge. *Itis Moolab*, E5 6b, is an excellent addition up the wall right of New Mediterranean, and *Only Human* takes the line of Alternative Seven on the The Needle climbed by Roger Greatricks several years ago with a peg runner, E5 6c. Over in the Quarry, John avoided the clay pigeons to add the technically desperate *Feet Neet* up the arete left of Teddy Bear's Picnic, also at E5 6c. He was joined by Mark Stokes who added two very fine climbs. *Jack the Groove*, E5 6b, is the groove left of Syrup of Figs, and *Sex Drive* is the true arete of Black Slab, E3 6c.

Bell Hagg has long had the reputation of being a good soloing crag, but Paul Mitchell's latest addition is unlikely to be climbed without a rope. *Burglar in My Bedroom* is the previously top roped line over the roof right of The Wigg at E5 6b. Paul has also been busy at Millstone Edge, *Freight Train* E5 6a, takes the hanging arete right of Cauldron Crack and is reputedly a bit harder than Strapadictomy. The wall between Jermyn Street and Coventry Street fell to him at E5 6c and a 'baby bouncer', *Appletree Yard*, and *The Trumpton Anarchist* takes the bold wall left of the top pitch of Great West Road at around the same grade.

Paul also used a baby bouncer to cross the upper roof right of Pedestal Crack on Froggatt, *Side Show* again at E5 6c. Below this, Jerry Moffat has top roped a particularly heinous problem, *Slingshot* gets a 7b (British) grade but an even harder 8a Fontainebleau grade! Also at Froggatt, the bold arete left of March Hare was finally solved by Tony Coutts to leave *Requiescent Daughters of a Femme Fatale* E6 6b, which gets this year's appalling-route-name award.

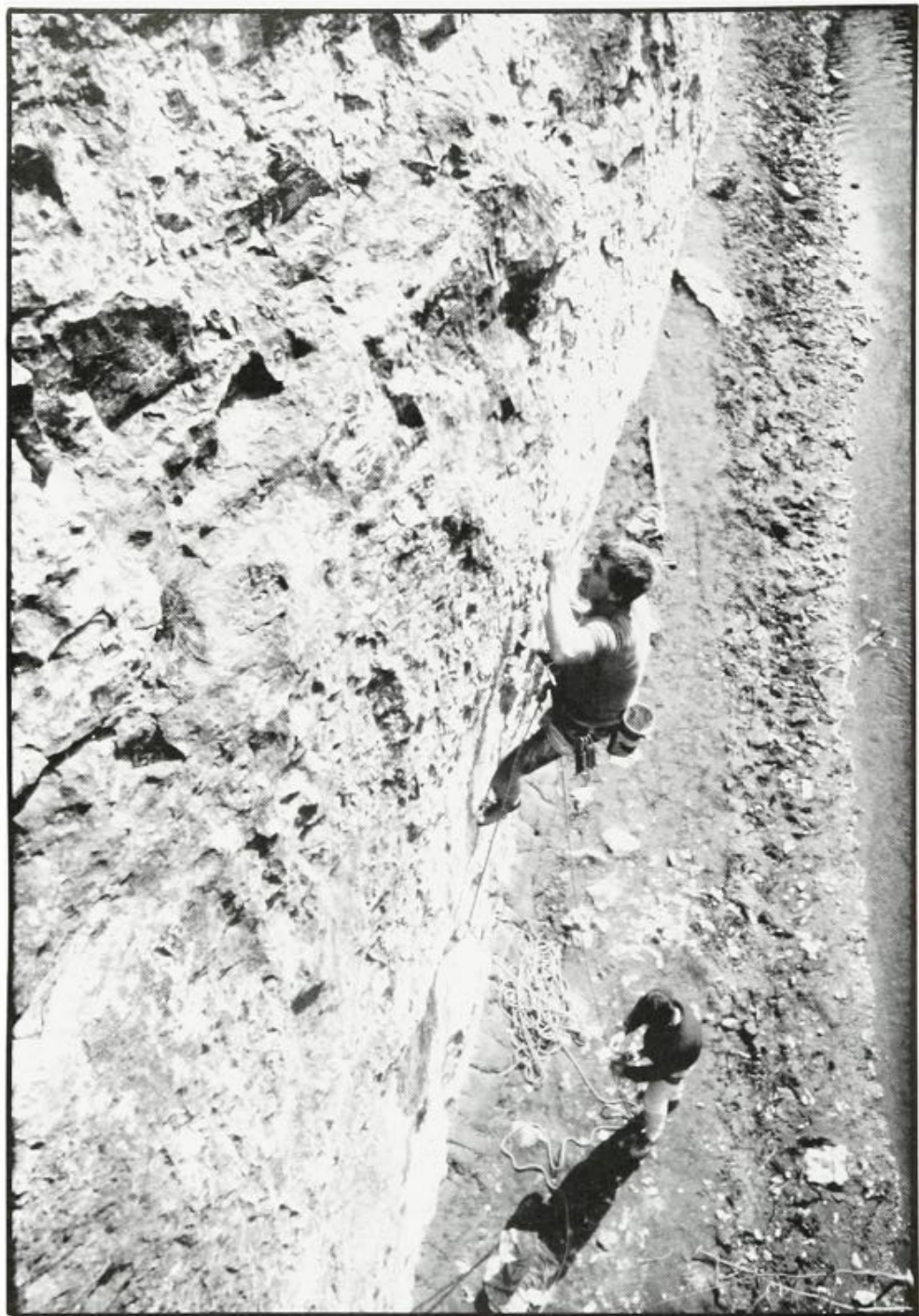
Way down south, Staffordshire way (superb new guidebook soon to be published!) development has been quiet. Nick Dixon, in typically bold style, climbed the overhanging wall and arete above the start of Ant Lives on the Roaches Lower Tier. *Sunday at Chapel* weighs in at E6 6c. At the same grade, but even further south, Simon Nadin climbed *Finger in Every Pie* on the wall left of Alternative Three at Wright's Rock in the Lower Churnet Valley (where?).

Limestone saw the major development in the Peak District, not suprisingly given the now readily accepted use of bolts. Arguments flew however regarding the rebolting of existing routes. Enough of this has featured in the magazines and I won't bore you any more, but suffice to say that with a little better communication between the interested parties none of it would have happened.

On High Tor, Malcom Taylor snatched a major line with his free ascent of Extender. *High Torqueing* goes at E6 6c. A possible second pitch to this is Seb Grieve's *Freeway* which is effectively a direct finish to M1 over the roofs at E6 6b. Across the road, and in direct view from the Tor is Long Tor Quarry. This has also been the scene of some development following Paul Mitchell's earlier explorations. *Ruby Fruit Jungle* is a stunning line up the wall left of Jade and was climbed by Andy Pollitt at E7 6c, whilst Malc Taylor added *Future Primitive* to the right of Jade, E5 6b. Activity is now crossing over to the more natural-looking right hand buttress.

Stoney Middleton has seen a few fillers-in, notably the wall between Wee Doris and Boat Pusher's Wall. *Big Boris* was climbed by Nigel (Voodoo Doll) Slater at E5 6c, but the 'appearance' of a jug has dropped the grade to 6a. Also here Gary Gibson made one of his now relatively rare Derbyshire appearances to fill the gap between Circe and Kink. People have already threatened to fill in the not-very-natural-looking holds on *Gaspara* E5 6c by all accounts. One of the best remaining little gems on limestone, Beginner's Wall, has now another two routes for the lovers of the monodoigt, courtesy of 'the man they now love to hate', Mark Pretty. *Middle Age Spread* takes the wall 10 feet right of Beginner's Wall at E6 6b, and *Lets Get Physical* the wall right of Wall of Fossils. This latter route stretches even the red-point ethic as one bolt was clipped for protection using aid. A 'clean ascent' is predicted to be E8 6c.

Down in Water-cum-Jolly attention has been directed on to the short-lived Moat Buttress,



Nigel Slater on 'Another Moatside Attraction', Moat Buttress, Water-cum-Jolly. Photo: Keith Sharples.

now several feet under water! Some very good routes were added by Keith Sharples, Gary Gibson and Seb Grieve, but exact details at this stage seem superfluous. Still surviving, however is the Cornice to which Ben Masterson has added the inappropriately-named *The Weakling* E6 6c left of Brachiation Dance. Raven Tor remains a source of frustration (or amusement) to many *Sbeik*, *Rattle and Roll* is a very worthwhile addition by Chris Hardy (he of the red tracksuit bottoms in the excellent Chew Valley Guide). At E5 6b and solid, it has become a popular line, climbing the wall left of Koran Direct. Another popular and mainly solid line was added by Pete Oxley just to the left of Hubris, *Ayatollah* E4 6a. The major line to go however was Martin Atkinson's free ascent of the first section of Mecca: Captain Skyhook. Rated at E8 6c (French 8b) it stands as possibly the hardest (protected!) route in the country. The name *Mecca- the mid life crisis*. Also active here was Steve Lewis who provided a couple of warmer-uppers with *In Oil* E5 6b left of Sardine, and *The Toilet* (bog standard E6 6b - arf, arf) right of Obscene Gesture.

Most activity has been directed towards Chee Dale, which still manages to produce lines of quality. On Chee Tor Mark Pretty wittily (?) added *No Bolts Please We're British* E6 6c, left of Boo, and across the river was *Bored of The Lies* E6 6b on the wall right of Big Zipper on The Cornice. He also finished off one of Gary Gibson's earlier efforts with *This is the Sea* up the mud-covered wall left of Old Man River at E6 6c. The hardest route here proved to be Chris Plant's *Powerplant* forcing an excellent line right of Bored of the Lies at E7 6c.

Further up the Dale Nettle Buttress received a fine addition from Dave Pegg who bagged the flakeline left of General Incompetence to leave *Major Incontinence* at E5 6c. Over on Two Tier Buttress, a disillusioned Simon Nadin extended his exploration of the wall right of Goldfinger, this time producing a left to right diagonal line to finish close to his own Gonads. *Aberration* E6 6c, as the name suggests is unlikely to become very popular. On the opposite bank The Embankment has been an extremely popular venue, with lots of bolts, E5s and warm dry rock. A few more goodies appeared in the year, including *The World According to Tommy Trout* E5 6b, the wall left of Hungry Eyes, by Mark Liptrot; *Night of the Guppy* E5 6b, right of Rainbow Trout by Gary Gibson, and *Name that Tuna* E5 gritstone 6c! by Chris Hamper. The latter route is a free version of Ateles, to which much of the credit goes to Keith Sharples who had just cut the aid down from A2 to one point.

Last but not least, the Staffordshire limestone was the scene of much activity. In Dovedale Police and Thieves received an extension by Malc Taylor, *Follow the Bear* E5 6a. Mark Pretty was particularly active here adding *The Archers* E5 6b to the arch left of the Dove Holes and *Bolt it and Believe It* E6 6c up the much-fancied wall left of Tales of The Riverbank. Some very good lines were done on the Chimney Crag in the Manifold Valley, *Manifold Exhaust* E6 6c, and *No Pain No Gain* E5 6b are to the right of Stiltskin Rub. The honours for the most impressive new route however must go to Andy Pollitt's *Thormen's Moth* a free version of Thor at Thor's Cave taking in some 45 feet of upside down climbing, E7 6c.

Well, that just about rounds up 1988, a year of contrast and confusion. Hot news is that John Dunne has just repeated Ron Fawcett's Careless Torque on Stange, one of the few routes to be given gritstone 7a. Oh well, just one more piece of cake and I'll start my training, honest.

Graham Hoey

West Penwith

Writing the new edition of the West Penwith Guide is proving enlightening; although less about climbing and more about the theory of guide books. Because I'm more of a writer than a climber, I favour the traditional approach, of information mixed with entertainment. Yet increasingly, I am edging towards the belief that the ideal guidebook might well be about 90 per cent graphics. Although loving language and its subjective trickery, I'm intrigued with the new style of sequential graphics in the media. It's not that the 'headline' should rule, just yet. But if you are seeking to impart accurate 'information', rather than 'comment', then there are clearer ways of doing so, than through the dangerous ambiguities of language.

That's why, the perfect guidebook might have no written descriptions as now, but instead might consist of high quality photo-diagrams and lay outs of cliffs, with colour code route markings. With high quality photographs, skilled draughtsmanship and the best modern printing techniques, the result could be impeccable. Add to this, topographical information on access and all other essential information in note form and you would have the most boring guidebook

ever, which might not see you through the winter evenings by the fire, but could be a more accurate and practical method of climbing by numbers.

All this is speculative of course. The new Penwith Guide, I can promise you, will be a book, as much as a fact sheet, crammed with libel, laughter and low wit, and coming down on the other extreme, why not entertain while you inform. On which note, I invite anyone with advice, criticism or fresh information on all aspects of West Penwith climbing to write to me at; Trevowhan,
Morvah,
Pendeen,
Penzance.

As to new routes in 1988; apart from jealously guarded activities in the private sector, visiting climbers have once again made significant contributions, especially in the Bosigran Great Zawn area.

At Robin's Rocks, a cliff that has a lot of style and atmosphere, Pete Saunders and G. Butler have climbed *Black Napkin* E2 5c, 100 feet, this follows Tuco the Terrible for 15 feet before making bold moves right into the right-hand of two grooves, then finishing over a roof.

Down on Bosigran Ridge West, a further addition to the area's Pure Granite series of excellent shorts is *Layback and Think of England* (in Cornwall? C'mon lads), a 40 feet E1 5c/6a, this line starts a few feet left of Cure By Choice starting with difficult moves to gain a niche. A. Williams and P. Twomey on this one.

Pat Littlejohn, with Eddie Cooper and Geraldine Taylor, added two routes to Great Zawn headwall, the first, *Prophecy* E5 6a/b 70 feet, takes a line of grooves and cracks left of Omen. *Fated* E5 6a/b 70 feet, takes a prominent leftward slanting dyke running up the left side of the headwall. Grades have been given as 'nominal' since both routes were done in cold and wet April conditions and were relatively uncleaned.

Tony Penning took further action on the headwall a month later, when with Peter Cresswell he climbed *Free Spirit* E4 6a 180 feet, a strenuous route taking the obvious groove just right of Omen, and then the traverse line to the right before making a fundamental exit via Gangrene Chimney. Penning followed this strong effort with *Dead Lucky* E4 6a/b 90 feet, which climbs the initial groove of Free Spirit, before taking the steep wall just right of Omen.

Later in the year, Tony returned to Rosemergy Zawn, where with Roger Lanchbury and Peter Cresswell he put up *Run For Your Wife* E3 5c, 115 feet. This route takes the first pitch of Zebedee before moving left and up, to surmount the Z-shaped overhang, before following a slab and groove above. *Sea Thief* E4 5c, 100 feet gives a strenuous line up the overhanging crack right of Zebedee. In a small zawn between Great Zawn and Rosemergy Zawn, Penning and Co. climbed *The Fifth Horseman*, described as being excellent, at 110 feet and E5 6a, the route follows a central line up the back wall of the zawn. Approach by abseil with the abseil rope useful for a final belay, and for escape up very steep grass. Penning, Cresswell, Lanchbury and Dave Hope also climbed a direct line on the pleasant Monolith Slab, *When The Music Stops* gives 50 feet of E2 5b.

At Whirlpool Buttress, the impressive north facing wall has several additions including a direct start to *The Aggressor*, with an overall drop in adjectival grade from E3 to E2 (5a 5b 5a), Friends being the great leveller in this case. Neighbours being responsible for the next route? *Kylie* E2 5b 110 feet, takes the deep crack 25 feet left of The Aggressor, with a greasy, tidal start leading to fine climbing. Nick Hancock and Pete Saunders on both lines.

Pete Saunders, who is quietly putting his mark on the north coast zawns climbed *Two Tribes* E4 6a, 120 feet, a powerful line taking the crack 10 feet left of Kylie, starting from a hanging belay and climbing left of the crack to a peg. A swing down right gains cracks which are followed via a bulge to finish. P Twomey accompanied. Saunders and Andy Grieve also climbed *Evil Empire* E3 6a 130 feet, a fine route with sparse protection at first, and another 'floating' belay from abseil ropes, 10 feet above the zawn bed and 15 feet left of Two Tribes.

At Trewellard, a high level girdle of Goldsworthy Zawn last year, gave Des Hannigan and Roger Prior 240 feet of good-time climbing; *Chain Link* at VS 4a 4c 4c. Hannigan and Dennis Bateman, a team that can only be described as still creaking after all these years, discovered a pleasant sweep of slabs near Kenidjack. 'Evening Slabs' yielded three routes, *Notidwal V* Diff, 160 feet *Nottrilleachan* Hard Severe 4b, 140 feet, and *Notbad* VS 4c, 120 feet. At Carn Barro, Steve Young and Roger Mitchell have climbed *Hampshire By-Pass* Severe, 70 feet, starting 30 feet right of Hampshire Zig-Zag.



The Tyrolean Traverse between Bosigran and Porthmoina Island. Photo: Robin Quine.
Mark Vallance making the traverse. Photo: Robin Quine.



Pat Littlejohn has also recorded two imaginative little routes from '87, at Porthguarnon East Cliff (St Loy area). This large area of broken rock gives pleasant short climbs with several recorded and unrecorded lines already existing. *Wicked Ways* VS 4c, 90 feet and *Bygone Days* VS 4c, 75 feet take lines up an obvious black slab at the left end of the top tier, before diverging independently, left and right beneath an overhang. Jungle work to start.

At St Loy, in the wide zawn to the west of the main cliff, Hannigan and Bateman have straitened out the latter's *Heelstone* to a more realistic 180 feet V Diff, while incorporating its original second pitch into a 180 feet HVS 4c 4b 4c, *Wreckage*, which starts up the deep groove on the left of the face. (A few weeks later, this attractive line had a second 'descent' by a local bullock, which fell part of the way down it, unscathed. It took the combined efforts of a Coastguard cliff-rescue team, a vet and a Culdrose Sea King, four hours to rescue it. Eat your heart out James Herriot and who said public money was ever wasted on the occasional rescue of a climber?)

Meanwhile, Young and Mitchell have continued their development of Tregiffian Cliff at Tater Du with *Green Streaks* VS 4c, 100 feet taking the thin leftwards trending crackline left of Little Bear of Esmaduna... before traversing left across a weed-covered wall, then up a black groove.

The rest from Penwith is a yawn-ing silence...

Des Hannigan

North Devon and Cornwall

After last year's mini outbreak of new routes on the big cliffs the area returned to its more normal quiet way of life. Tony Penning and Roger Lanchbury made an early start in unseasonal February, adding *Kansas City* HVS 5a, at Carn Gowla. Littlejohn returned too to add the Lizard's first E7 on The Cull wall in May. *Lazarus* 6c, 100 feet, is a fingery, bold and strenuous pitch taking the obvious challenge (aren't they always) of the left-slanting flake crack to the left of The Cull. A day later it was the North Coast's turn with Kellan Head getting the treatment. *Play It Straight* E4 6a and *Solace* 70 feet, Hard Severe (surely a mistake?), were the fruits of labour here.

June heralded some drier weather and Penning and friends made one of their long journeys for a Sunday outing, which turned out a little more successfully than previous visits. A total of nine new routes were added to Carn Gowla, from Diff to E2, opening up the area to the south of Triple Buttress. The best of these were *Alex of Gowla* E1, 100 feet, *Indian Country* E2, 100 feet, *Touch The Earth* VS, 70 feet and *How The West Was Won* an entertaining adventure involving an abseil, a swim, a climb, a Tyrolean back to the main cliff, and lots of gawking tourists.

Dave Hope joined forces with Dave Hillebrandt in early July to wrap up some of the easier routes at Pentire on the smaller buttresses above Touch the Devil, the best being *Silverfish*, a classic hanging groove at Hard Severe, but with a much bigger feel to it. Hope added a further three routes to Indian Buttress at Carn Gowla in the company of Adam Milburn, with *The Hairy Men From The East*, being an interesting contribution at Difficult, again on exciting looking ground that belied the actual grade. The same pair then headed south to Basher's Harbour to add five lines of respectable easiness with *Pumproom Tease* at HVS, being the best.

In September and October, Dave Hillebrandt re-emerged from the wilds of North Devon and made several forays onto the Culm with Dave Waind and Keith Atkinson, producing *Dark Side of the Zawn* VS at Butterhole, *Choss and Chips* Severe, *Romping Robert*, VS, and *Rectory Tearooms* HVS at Vicarage Cliff, Morwenstowe. Finally, Damian Carroll and Dave Viggers spent a fruitful couple of days at Baggy adding *Touch and Go* E5 6a, an eliminate line on Soft Touch, and *The Oldest Swingers In Town* E3 6a, a traverse line above the main pitch of Fools Rush In. Iain Peters's guide to the regions is due out soon, so the spring should hopefully see a resurgence of interest in that most marvellous of mountaineering mediums, Culm! See you on the beach.

Lundy

1987

This year saw the end of six years of domination of the new route scene by the Gibson and Harrison teams with the arrival of the Dave's Pegg and Thomas. This pair were able to take a fresh look at the situation and came up with an impressive series of climbs along selected parts of the west coast. It was also the year of the famous thefts on the Island, which caught national press coverage to the amusement of everybody except the victims. Fortunately the culprits were discovered after detectives from Barnstaple flew in by helicopter, culprits who sadly turned out to be young climbers themselves. A mass of nearly 60 routes were found, mostly during the August period. Old coves like Arch Zawn saw renewed interest and other crags like the Parthenos were amongst the new finds. In addition the satanic Black Crag emerged as the Island's leading cliff for standards, and a concentration of the more tricky ones.

Things began quietly at the northern end in March with *Can I have a Mars bar please?* VS 4c, by A. Williams and A. Pennell. On Knight Templar Rock. Nearby on the Second Knight Templar, E. Cameron found *Blood Crystal* E1 5c, taking the slanting crack right of the south descent gully. The following month on Beef Buttress R. Andrews, E. Cameron, and P. Aisher climbed *The Crinkly End* VS 4c. Cameron soloed *Beef Curtains* VS 4b, whilst Aisher and P. Taylor had a *Sattered Experience* V Diff. Cameron and Aisher then wandered down the Montague Steps to discover *Built To Destroy* HVS 4c to complete their explorations.

It wasn't until June that *Osbun Coming Big* E4 6a girdled the much talked about Wall of Groves on St. Patrick's Buttress, climbed by K. O'Brien and C. Dale it produced four pitches of climbing to finish up to the top pitch of Bertie's Route. In the same period down on Kistvaen Buttress the trio of L. Goldstraw, J. Crees, and B. Crees, put up *First Blood* Severe.

With the lapse of the bird ban at the end of July the bounty hunters arrived with cleaning gear and a burning list of lines that they weren't able to do last year. Gary Gibson opened his account on Black Crag with *Intensive Care* E6 6c, starting up Emergency Ward Ten and finishing up Mayan Skies, an immediate three star route. Having got that off his chest Gary raced off to First Buttress South to add *Nigel Mansell* E3 6a, a somewhat contrived line based on Formula One, and a direct on The Italian Job, *Le Mans* at E5 6b. Twenty four hours later Gibson bolted then led the last major unclimbed line on the Diamond, *Chase The Ace* E5 6a 6b, seconded by Hazel Gibson, clings to the obvious groove between Watching the Ocean and Widespread Ocean of Fear.

With the arrival of Matt Ward to the Island, Gary returned to Black Crag to force the sustained and desperate *Mexico Speaks* 6c 6b to the right of Mayan Skies, Lundy's first E7. Again, with Matt Ward switching leads, this pair produced *Who Can Wait?* E5 6a 6b 5c down on Alpine Buttress. This route shares the same start as *Alpless* E4 6a 6a 5c, before the latter route moves right to join the *Who Can Wait?* finish. Matt and Gary then turned their attention to the underdeveloped Parthenos, a hidden but brilliant crag opposite the St. Marks Stone, with some interesting approach problems. Here Gibson pushed the staggering central overhanging line of the crag *Too Precious* E6 6b left of Cithaeron. At the left end of the cliff a steep ramp plunges into the sea which marks the start of *The Same Old Story* E3 5c, and the potentially classic *Mal de Mer* E4 6a, both routes led by Matt Ward. Finally here Gibson took the lead on *Zorba the Greek* E4 6b right of Cithaeron also reported to be good, rounding off a fine collection of routes hereabouts.

Whilst all this was going on Arch Zawn saw its first new routes for several years. On the Arch itself Mike Snell and Simon Cardy found *Arch Enemy* HVS 5a and *Geoffrey Archer's Whorle* E1 5b. Inside the Arch the right hand hanging fist crack was gained to produce *Archie Gemmill* E2 5b, Cardy with Paul Harrison. Paul and Dave Naul continued on the same theme with *The Archers* V Diff to the left of the Arch. Near the back of the zawn, right of the big Purple People Eater slab Cardy and Harrison varied leads on *Letters to the Editor* E3 5b 5c. Later in the week, after a couple of abortive attempts, Harrison and Cardy timed a low tide abseil to take the striking crack line left of Stop Press, *Today* E4 6a.

Meanwhile Crunchy Toed Zawn (next to The Fortress) was the scene of Dave Pegg and Dave Thomas's campaign with *Bite Size* E5 6a, a route which utilises a head jam rest technique. The Devil's Chimney area was examined by Gibson and Ward who sorted out two good cracks, *Head-strong* and *Arm-strong* both E4 6a and to be found between Deep Zawn and Shy Tot. Last years development of Freak Zawn interested Harrison and Cardy enough to see what was left. Rich pickings were to be had on the north entrance walls with *Hot Dog* E1 5b, *Dog Day*

Afternoon E1 5a and *Deputy Dawg* VS 4c. On the opposite wall they also added *Dealer McDope* HVS 5a right of Fat Freddy. The following day Dave Pegg and Dave Thomas ventured further into the zawn, or should we say The Black Hole (so called because it has routes with "lots of stars" to quote Lynsay Foulkes), to find a *Space Oddity* E5 6a.

Nearby on Needle Rock Ward and Gibson climbed the central line on the south face, *Sea of Tranquility* E4 6a, a route featured on the front cover of New Climbs 1987. Gary, Matt, and Hazel also did the south-west arete, *The Invincible* VS 4c. Back on the Wall of Grooves Gibson and Ward added the steep *Vincent Price* E5 6b. In contrast M. Dale and R. Wilson were *Waiting for the Sun* Hard Severe right up in the North Light area. Gary took the next day off to tour the Island for a photo session of all the crags, which will no doubt produce some interesting future results. Harrison and Cardy poked around the Phantom Zawn area, also known as the Long Cliff, and came up with *Atlantic Grey* E2 5c, a thin crack in the buttress south of Hyperspace Bypass. They also found an alternative pitch to the start of Leigh McGinley and Strappo Hughes's *Dark Power* from 1978, which in itself is well worth seeking out.

The Dave's Pegg and Thomas played one of their aces next in Deep Zawn and came up with the magnificent *Graceland* E6 6b on the pillar right of Genesis, amidst some allegations of a chiselled nut placement which was hotly denied. Whilst we are on the subject of ethics the state of fixed gear should get a mention. Some of the crags are becoming covered in bolts with, in perhaps many people's eyes, undesirable aesthetic effects. Whilst many bolts are well spaced some have been covered with anti-corrosive paste that appear as large white blotches. Black Crag for example is particularly unsightly due to the jet black colouring of the rock combined with various bits of tat. This could be overcome with a bit of paint, or the use of stainless steel, notwithstanding the whole issue of whether the bolts should be placed on Lundy in the first place.

Anyway, such is the *Colour of Life* E6 6b which was Gibson and Ward's last contribution of the year and is a girdle of Black Crag starting up *My Life in My Hands*, crossing Emergency Ward Ten and Intensive Care before terminating, if that's the right word, up Mayan Skies. Another three star E6 was mastered in the Devil's Limekiln by the team of Matt Carr and M. Lasota, *The Antichrist* E6 6a, starts as for *The Exorcist* then moves out across the wall to the right above a dreadful abyss, being the gaping 300 foot hole of the kiln itself, to produce an incredible pitch. Pegg and Thomas rounded off their productive two weeks with a *Voyage of the Acolyte* E6 6b, taking the powerful groove line right of Bleed for Speed on Two Legged Buttress. Just before this pair left the Island they nipped down to the Devil's Chimney Cliff to unearth *Dirty Lundies* E2 5c near the Devil's Tower, which may see some traffic due to its accessible position for climbs in the vicinity. Also on the Tower major gardening took place by Sandy Wilkie and Tony Brabazon with *Fissure Fergus* E2 5b the result, which ascends an audacious line on the face to the left of Hob's Lane to belay on a 'coffin shaped block' according to Sandy's description.

The year ended as quietly as it began with a handful of routes in September. In Arch Zawn R. Lewis and H. Darwin climbed *The Thick Plotter* E1 5c, *Tenex* Severe, and *Stubborn Candle* E1 5a, three lines to the right of the northern descent to the zawn. Another team of A. Evans and J. Evans added four routes to Beaufort Buttress; *Cliche Corner* Hard Severe, *Percy's Paradise* Hard Severe, *Naughty but Niche* Hard Severe, and *Minesweeper* Hard Severe, the last probably being the best of the bunch. Jack Juszczak and Simon Grove squeezed in two more routes in Freak Zawn *Puffin Simon* Severe, and *Puffin L* VS, whilst S. Rogers and A. Macaskill did *Night Moves* Hard Severe on Montague Buttress and *Flintstone* V Diff on Sunset Promontory. Finally N. Steen and G. Wollren went to the Egyptian Slabs and climbed *Tutenkamen* E2 5c, with one aid point highlighting the fact that many aid points exist on the Island in case anyone's interested in a future project.

1988

1988 brought another crop of routes from a seemingly endless supply of quality climbing and adventure. An explosion of interest took place in and around the Phantom Zawn area; the large majority of new routes were due to its easy access and no cleaning required ticket. The year also saw the return on Steve Boydon to the scene with some interesting results, and the firm devotee Dave Thomas who came up with some imaginative and difficult climbs. The Gibson's, Matt Ward, and South Wales activist Roy Thomas together reaped another rich harvest including another 'top end' route on Black Crag.

Quickdraw Hard Severe, by A. Dance and P. Balcombe kicked the year off around Easter, this can be found on the wall left of the descent to Flying Buttress South. There was then a lull in activity as usual until June when D. Carroll and M. Seavers climbed the improbable looking groove next to Redspeed, *Lightspeed* E2 5c 4c, on the back of the Devil's Slide. In July Dave Thomas arrived ahead of the crowds for a two week blitz. His campaign began, along with John Gandy, on Alpine Buttress with a direct finish to Moby Dick, *The Lesser Spotted Finish* E3 5c. In between the showers, this time with Nick White, he pushed *The Day it Rained Forever* E5 6c taking one small rest, a thin crack line in the wall right of the prominent arete of Moby Dick.

Dave then moved up to the Phantom Zawn area to start the first wave of development. *Cunning Devil* E1 5a/b, Gandy and Thomas, *Things That Go Bump In The Night* E2/3 5b and *Something in the Shadows* E4 5c, Thomas and Gandy, all start above various places on the new alternative start to Dark Power. Thomas, this time with Nick White launched out on to the flying arete left of Atlantic Grey which was *On a Wing and a Prayer* E6 6b. Dave, not happy with the original line, went on to solo an alternative finish to this route at the same grade which he described as "committing and dangerous", no kidding! A little further down the coast on Torrey Canyon Thomas and White climbed the ugly looking *Wall of Attrition* at E5/6 6b, said to be Lundy's answer to 'Lord'. To end his first week, down on Two Legged Buttress Dave with Mike Chapman found *The Arc of a Covenant* E5 6b, the central line on the 'Bleed for Speed' section.

With the arrival of Gibson's party the following weekend things began to get very hot. Another big wall was discovered at the back of Heron Zawn which was the focus of immediate attention. Cleaning began in earnest on two big full rope length pitches. On the right hand part of the wall Gibson and Matt Ward pushed *The Demons of Hilti* E6 6b, with protection provided by drilled holes filled with steel pegs, as well as bolts. To the left, taking the obvious central crack line, Steve Boydon and Simon Cardy climbed *The Bosch Street Kids* E4/5 6a without bolts.

The tale continued in Short Story Zawn where Cardy and Boydon ascended the wall left of Pack of Lies, *Clinging to the Wreckage* E4 6a, but resorting to one aid point. Back in Phantom Zawn Paul Harrison and Dave Naul fashioned *Flares Are In* HVS 5a, a man eating chimney left of Atlantic Grey. Further left of the Winston's Bogey wall Harrison and Naul found *The Howling* E3 5c, and later with Steve Boydon, a direct finish, *The Banshee Finish*, at the same grade. To the left of The Howling Boydon, Harrison and Cardy climbed the improbable looking arete at a mild E4 6a, *Seal of Approval*. To the left again Mike Snell entered the picture with his *Ghostbusters* E2 5c, along with Mark Bartley, before he bust his ankle the next morning, playing football. Bartley and Naul seized the opportunity left again for *Achilles Seal* E2 5c. On the Winston's Bogey wall Bartley found *Nous Sommes du Soleil* E2 5c, whilst Cardy straightened out Winston himself at E1 5b, and found another line between that route and Squatter and the Ant which became *Wooooooo!* E2 5c. Also just round the corner here Cardy and Bartley had an *Audience of Seals* at Severe. Later in this frantic period for easy finds Harrison and Naul returned to the slab right of Atlantic Grey to find that *Bed Bugs Bite My Bollocks* VS 4b. Boydon came down for a last look and came up with perhaps the best climb in this area *Friction Impossible* E3 6c, an excellent slab on the promontory opposite Seal Slab. Finally on Seal Slab itself H. Darwin came up with *Wonderlands* E3 6a to the left of the main sweep of slabs.

Meanwhile from out of that Black Hole in Freak Zawn Gibson and Ward emerged with *Out Come the Freaks Again* E6 6b squeezed between Milky Way and Andromeda. In Dihedral Zawn the same pair unfolded *Blood Poison* E4 6a on the black wall right of Dihedral. On the new crag near the Pyramid, Gibson and Ward climbed a hanging brown arete *The Pyramid of Success* E6 6c, bolt-to-bolt then redpointed, obviously this is quite hard. Just to the left of this route Gary, Hazel and Matt did the easier stepped crack system *The Pyramid Game* E1 5b. Over on the Pathfinder cliff a lot of energetic cleaning went into Roy Thomas's as yet unnamed route to produce three pitches at E3 5c, said to be yet another three star E3 along with such notables as Milky Way, Promised Land or Matt Black. The other climb here which also required major cleaning was Gibson's *Roy of the Rovers* E5 6b. Further to Gary's interest last year in the Head- and Arm-Strong routes on Devil's Chimney Cliff, the featureless bulging wall of limpets was tackled by Steve Boydon and party. Three broom sticks taped together on loan from Tibbets were necessary to clip a pre-placed peg in order to start *The Satan Bug* E4 6a, a route destined never to see a repeat unless the peg is replaced with stainless steel. Boydon, again with Harrison

and Cardy, climbed the arete just left of The Reluctant Teamaker, *Beguiled* E3 6a an excellent pitch which is more likely to see a repeat. Steve and Paul also tidied up the aid on *The Reluctant Teamaker*, and changed the route description as the original was very confusing.

Down in the Flying Buttress area Paul Harrison found a brilliant groove line left of Duracell *Supercharged* E4 6a along with Simon Cardy. Alpine Buttress saw more action with a line left of Moby Dick by Gibson and Roy Thomas, *Terrace Warfare* E5 6b. Gary and Roy also bravely ventured onto the large arete between Moby Dick and The Day it Rained Forever to experience *That Semi-Detached Feeling* E6 6b. The next route got the sheer desperation award, Gary, seconded by Hazel, put together *Hey Gringo* E7 6c, taking the big wall left of Mayan Skies. First climbed bolt-to-bolt then redpointed, it is reported to have at least twelve 6b moves stacked on top of each other. The wire brushes took another hammering on the Old Light Cliff to round off another fine year. Gibson and party found two big lines *Asafoetidal* E2 5a 5b, and *Saffron* E3 4c 5c 4c right of Albacore. Last but not least, S. Rogers and M. Hime found *Sepulchre* VS 4b on Second Knight Templar which finishes up Flake Route.

With the number of new routes fast approaching the 200 mark since the last, 1985, guide finding out what route fits in where is becoming difficult. A new guide is unlikely to be commercially viable in the near future but there are plans for a typed supplement to be made available in the Marisco Tavern, book early, if you intend to go.

Simon Cardy

