

**The
Climbers' Club
Journal**

1989/90

The Climbers' Club Journal

Edited by
Ian Smith

1991
The Climbers' Club

This is the one hundred and ninth issue
of the CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL.

Copies of the Journal may be obtained from
Cordee, 3a De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7HD.

Published by the Climbers' Club in 1991 and
produced by Hi-Tec Print, Dinnington,
South Yorkshire. Imageset from Editor's PageMaker
discs by Pickards, Sheffield.

© The Climbers' Club, 1991

The Climbers' Club Journal

Vol. XX No. 3 (New Series) No. 109

1989/90

Contents

	Page
The Quivering Brethren	Peter Harding 4
Cloggy Chimney Revisited	Ted Maden 9
Cloggy 1946-1989	Mike Ball 13
The Return of the Native	Dave Gregory 16
Gone Domeing	Tim Noble 20
Mountaineering 108	Harry Sales 32
Return of the Rat	Geoff Milburn 36
North Face of the Grande Ciamarella	J. A. Sumner 43
Tarf Munros Campaign	Ted Maden 46
A Quiet Life	John Harwood 52
The Old Boy	Dave Gregory 57
In Good Company	Bill Trench 59
The Way of the Dragon	Mike Mortimer 61
B and B on Lliwedd	Dennis Bateman 64
Gogarth and the Flying Cossacks	Geoff Milburn 66
EEsy Og – Hard Clog	Gwyn Evans 70
A Midsummer's Night's Scream	Graham Parkes 71
A Winter Interlude	Dave Gregory 73
Third Time Lucky	Tony Penning 77
The Wall	Bill Mckee 79
Nothing but the Devil	Ed Douglas 82
"What did I tell you"	Dave Cuthbertson 86
Cup Final Day	David Weaver 88
The Longest Day	Nigel Peacock 92
A wet weekend in Wales	Norman Elliott 95
Ruth's first rock climb	Terry Gifford 99
The American Dream	Steve Beresford 101
Running round the mountains	Mike F. Browell 113
The Block	Dave Gregory 117
The Lost Boot Climb	Hal Jacob 120
Obituary	121
Officers and Officials of the Club	128
Reviews	130
Area Notes	183

The Quivering Brethren

Peter Harding

In the early thirties, Helyg habitues at Yuletide would always go out, whatever the weather, and climb on Xmas Day. They sometimes wore the paper hats ejaculated from exploding crackers during a previous evening of revelry. It was a tradition of the Climbers' Club. Not that I remember any of this for in those far-off days I was only a small boy; my later friend and mentor, Alfred William Bridge, told me about such things.

Many years on, when I had joined the Club, poring through Helyg's log on a day of incessant rain, or other excusing circumstance, gave vague hints of these doings and kindled mental caricatures of those halcyon days; of Colin K and A.B.H. creeping crapulent up Cloggy's Curving Crack: "Okay Alan! Climb when you're ready. (Hic!) don't fall off! I'm just tucking-in to this (hic!) lump of Xmas pudding which some little devil stuffed into my jolly (hic!) jacket pocket." "Right (hic!) Colin! I'll try and get that wedge of cake you jammed (hic!) as a running belay." Or maybe shouts from Tryfan's Terrace Wall: "Quick Jack! Send up the Helyg Poker! This bally Belle Vue ice is a bit of a bastion this morning!" "Sorry Ivan! That bugger Bridge has just grabbed it from me and bent it double again." It was always fascinating to turn back the pages and read between their lines about exploits of such famous names; C.F. Kirkus, A.B. Hargreaves, Ivan Waller and A.W. Bridge; many others too.

One or two intriguing entries, by F.A. Pullinger, chronicled the capers of a strange group known, perhaps by few but themselves, as Quivering Brethren. They really captured my imagination. In the mid-forties, war over, Xmas gatherings at Helyg started to bloom once more: I enjoyed the hut company and those small, select sittings at Cobden's for an informal evening dinner. My first such do, in '46, with paper crowns produced by John Barford and Xmas crackers provided by Stuart Chantrell, gave me an idea about reviving that earlier C.C. tradition; to go out next day, what come the weather, and do a climb with companions in coloured crowns. We might even usurp the mantle of those former Quivering Brethren.

Next morning when I surfaced from Helyg's snoring ensemble I roused Richard Meyer, Ernie Phillips and Arnold Carsten; the only brethren who seemed likely to be even capable of quivering on steepish rock in the cold and damp of a dull, December day. After breakfast our quartet made for the nearest crag intent on climbing up those Chalkren Stairs but this was a poor choice and became our dismal failure. It was one of Menlove Edwards' routes, to be Too Difficult in paper hats! My vague ideas for a Xmas re-birth of the Quivering Brethren would have to wait another year.

By '47 I had a plan and on a fine, crisp, Xmas morning led my indefatigable impi across the Black Hound's Head straight to Craig-yr-Ysfa. On the upper bilberry terrace of Amphitheatre Wall, below its residing Grimmett, my Brethren were duly sworn and by going steady on the booze the night before I had remained sharp enough to select someone else to lead! It was Tony Moulam, my

old school chum, prime climbing oppo and co-founder of the Stonnis Mountaineering Club.

First, everyone needed acquainting with the Q.B. rules: No 1 decreed that henceforth the Grimmitt would be climbed at Xmas every year. (Having already led this classic route I knew it well, well enough to direct a mass ascent from the comparative safety of being second on the rope!) No 2 ruled that a new leader be elected each year and Rule No 3 simply said there were no other rules. Moulam set off in fine style and the climb went without a hitch, (he too had done it before, with me, and even then we only used a couple of bowlines!) Arnold Carsten, following me, was singularly silent, still suffering the effects of a nicely newtish night before and climbing in what Dr Richard Meyer diagnosed as a traumatic post-alcoholic coma. Richard himself was not a Doctor of Medicine at all but one of science and he paused on the little slab above the overhangs to give a dazzling display of convulsive calf-quivering; one of those knee tremblers for which he was renowned. Only our last man, Norman Horsefield, guest Quiverer from the Rucksack Club was in the best position to appreciate such mesmeric muscle movements! A thoroughly good day was had by all and, on our return to Helyg, was recorded in the log: the Quivering Brethren had indeed been resurrected to climb again in Arfon.

By 1948 there were many more would-be quiverers and it was time to extend the rules. A new Rule No3 required a balloon to be attached by a length of string, to each climber's right boot and the old Rule 3 became No 4. So it came to pass, on a dry but coolish Xmas Day, a host of climbers, clad in colourful paper hats and with balloons tied to their boots, assembled on Craig-yr-Ysfa. Among their number were Meyer and Carsten again, with Peter Hodgkinson, David Thomas and John Disley. Conspicuous by his absence was Moulam, hospitalised in Oswestry Orthopaedic with a duff leg, so to make up for this undoubted physical weakness in the team it was strengthened by several honorary, acting Q.B.'s from a Stonnis Club Xmas Meet down at Scotty Dwyer's Tal-y-Waen. The Chief Quiverer, having visited Tony during the journey up to Wales, produced a paper hat with initials A.J.J.M. scrawled upon it and with due ceremony this was tied on to the climbing rope: Moulam would be there in spirit! When the Brethren were about to elect their leader it was discovered that one, David Thomas; was missing; he had last been seen lagging behind, limping, it was said as a result of an earlier contretemps with Clachaig Gully, though at least one quivering voice alleged a more devious reason for this gait. As many anxious and suspicious eyes scanned the hillside for any sign of Thomas the Limp, a tiny figure appeared on the skyline ridge. The Q.B. chorussed their hailing shout; but then another figure appeared, and another. They watched incredulously from their bilberry terrace as more tiny figures came into view. In ones and twos, threes and fours, a crowd gradually assembled to ring the wide encircling rim of Amphitheatre Gully. One less tiny of these tiny figures was observed scrambling down the scree opposite to reach a nearer viewpoint. It was quickly recognised as Thomas the One, who was now thought to be connected with the assembly of those watchers above.

In the late '40s, the Welsh climbing fraternity, like those in other areas, was relatively small and tightly knit; if everyone didn't actually know everyone else personally it was probable they did know each other by sight, name or deed. The crowd on the hill above Craig-yr-Ysfa represented a goodly number of this Welsh



Above: Peter Harding and Graham Robinson, two of the 'Quivering Brethren on Cloggy, Whitsun 1948. Photo: Ken Herbert

climbing fraternity and they had turned out in force to watch the C.C.'s annual antics on the Grimmett. Loose talk in 'The Royal', or on the crags, had blown the gaff about the secret event and the prime suspect for this was one Thomas the Leak! It was clear he now planned to photograph the proceedings and his one time climbing lady, one Gwen Goddard, disguised as a heavily pregnant Mrs Moffat, was said to have been seen, later, going round the ring of spectators chinking a large enamel mug labelled St Thomas' Fund for Fallen Climbers.

Meanwhile, back below the Grimmett, the Q.B. had found a leader; with the

blatant defection of Thomas the Lens, across there on the scree, snapping his shutter, it had to be Arnold Carsten. In those days H.A. Carsten was one of our most brilliant climbers — a sort of cross between a young version of an older A.B. Hargreaves and an older version of a young Johnny Dawes; rather diminutive, very determined and a bit of a dynamo! Sadly though, like many of today's rock stars, his climbing ability was affected by alcohol but it didn't just drop from say 5b to 4c like Don Whillans after more than eight pints, in Arnold's case it plummeted from Hard V.S. to Mild V.Diff after only one or two! On that particular day, or rather its night before, H.A.C. was said to have surprised everyone by downing two or three pints and even after the walk up Pen Helgi he was still not himself; now embarked on the first pitch of the Grimmett he became distinctly drowsy. Indeed if it had not been for Rule 3 about those balloons he would probably have dropped off; only a timely bang, as someone's balloon came into sharp contact with a tremulous tricouni nail, prevented Arnold from falling asleep.

After half an hour's slow motion struggle, during which the Q.B.'s lethargic leader complained that he had lost his nerve, then his strength and finally his paper hat, those spectators ringing the amphitheatre were becoming restless. Even the brethren-in-waiting wanted to see some action. Pete Hodge tried to keep up everyone's morale by a quick-fire commentary and wise cracking but this soon began to pall. Suddenly there was some action. Carsten surfaced from his semi-somnambulant state and dyno'd up for a jug; grasping this with one hand he managed to get another to it, then, having run out of hands, he pulled with both arms. But there was little effect; his boot and its balloon had jammed below. Fortunately the latter promptly exploded and startled Arnold into another Kinematic surge which freed his boot and he rocketed up to reach the stance. The spectators in the Amphitheatre went wild; shouting and cheering and even those quivering on the terrace below clapped hands; it warmed a few numb fingers. When all the noise had died down Pete Hodge was more than equal to the moment; he shouted to 'les enfants du Paradis'; "Ladies and Gentlemen! The score is: the Quivering Brethren one pitch and the Grimmett two balloons!"

Now it was my turn and joining Arnold on his stance I whispered advice in his ear. "Look," I murmured, "the honour of the bloody Climbers' Club is at stake. Unless we get a move on those poor buggers down there are going to die of exposure with their arses frozen to the bilberry terrace. Just think what the Club Mandarins will say then!" This did the trick for when Arnold had thought what those Mandarins might say he bombed up the remaining overhangs like a cash crazy competitor in a climbing contest. Then, balanced on his boot nails on the little slab above, it looked as if he was about to play to the crowd; he bent down to do a hand stand. I tightened my grip on the rope but no, thankfully, he was just trying to extricate a tangled string from his tricounis.

At that moment cries of anguish from below heralded some very sad news. It appeared that Moulam, in the ephemeral form of his flimsy hat, had somehow become detached from the rope and floated off the ledge to disappear down the cliff. As a mark of respect, with one accord, the Quivering Brethren doffed their own paper hats; only Carsten, bereft of his and still fumbling with tangled twine and tricounis, was unable to comply.

The remainder of the climb went like clockwork, its leader having finally

shrugged off the shattering effects of his Xmas drinks, but those spectators above were now rather cold and bored. Sensing that no blood was likely to be spilled and the Grimmer had lost its battle with the Quivering Brethren they began to drift away like supporters of the losing side at a soccer match; soon they were gone. Nevertheless the event turned out to be a triumph for all those shivering on the bilberry terrace below; a triumph of matter over minds, for having thought themselves doomed to that dreaded fate of the brass monkeys, with Carsten and their chief now on top, they could now rapidly restore circulation in their own lower parts by grappling with those of the Grimmer.

Next year things were different. In '49 only the ever constant Carsten and Meyer plus John Disley and Gordon Dyke turned out to support the Chief Quiverer. You may think such a lean and powerful team would have conquered the Grimmer in double quick time for no alcohol had passed their lips for at least eight hours but it was not to be. This time the Grimmer was ready, lashing itself with rod-like rain driven on a Force 8 gale, and in the pre-polyurethane period, when anoraks were mostly ex-W.D., and even overtrousers were scarcer than under-pants, such weather was bad news. Balloons on a string would have stood no chance so a quick quorum ruled out Rule No 3. There were grave doubts about the paper hats but Dis observed that if they stayed on they could be no worse, in keeping out rain, than the anoraks! In the event the hats did not but their would-be wearers did, battling against savage elements of rock, wind and water. Led by Richard Meyer they conquered the crucial pitch but another hurried quorum quashed Rule No4 to bring in one which allowed concession to 'force majeure'. Two of the Brethren then clambered off by easier ways to top-rope their companions up the final gale-swept pitches.

During their miserable return to the cosy comforts of Helyg, each of the soaked and shivering Quivering Brethren vowed never again to visit Craig-yr-Ysfa's Amphitheatre Wall, to disturb its Grimmer at Xmas time. Forty years on, so far as is known, none of them ever have, although the short, shrill shriek of a suddenly wakened Grimmer may well have caused a fleeting fibrillation in the heart of some of those Quivering Brethren, at other times or under quite different circumstances.

Author's Notes

The first ascent of the Grimmer was led in 1938 by David Cox, in stockings and seconded by Robert Beaumont. It was named after a tiny legendary animal which was supposed to reside in the navels of virgins and shriek loudly if disturbed by any but the most honourably intentioned sexual advance.

In early post-war years when mainstream climbing in Wales was still based in the Ogwen district, the Grimmer and Lot's Groove, (which was almost 10 years older), were generally spoken of with awe and considered to be as hard, technically, as anything else in Snowdonia. At that time, information about climbs was only generally available from earlier, published guidebooks and so, harder, more recent routes such as Birtwistle's Diagonal on Dinas Mot, Preston's Suicide Wall in Idwal, as well as Campbell/Cox's Sheaf on Cloggy, were unpublished and virtually unknown.

Cloggy Chimney Revisited

Ted Maden

'And then the rains came down....At last, at long last, after the Long Hot Summer, a mighty depression which had been hovering over the Atlantic for some days, burst in a deluge on the Mountains of Snowdonia. Wales was itself again..... It had to happen at the C.C. Dinner Weekend of course...'

B.E.H. Maden, P.M. Gerrard, caught out in the rain on 10th October 1959. (Cloggy Guidebook, 1989).

The many white bits of quartz at the foot of Main Wall were not quartz at all. On closer inspection they were crash-hats and jerseys on a queue of climbers waiting to start on the climb. Bob and William wanted to do the route anyway, but Marian had done it recently and I had done it twice in the remote past, the second time with Dick Isherwood at fell racing speed after a fairly brisk ascent of The Grooves. For these reasons Marian and I did not wish to join the Main Wall queue. Instead we continued up the hill and did two classic V. Diff's under the skyline of the Snowdon Horseshoe, the Gambit Climb and Reade's Route on Crib Goch. The Gambit seemed quite hard in parts but I was determined at the time not to admit anything was hard, having been mildly reprimanded for getting one of the ropes in a fearsome tangle at the foot of the climb. I did not want to admit Reade's Route was hard either, because it was only V. Diff, but frankly it is one of the steepest and most exposed V. Diff's I have ever done.

We walked down from the summit of Clogwyn y Ddysgl, commencing on the ridge between upper Cwm Glas and the railway track. Before dropping down into Cwm Glas I glanced briefly across to Clogwyn du'r Arddu and Llyn Cwellyn gleaming beyond. It was into the sun and hazy and I could not see much, but the big cliff was there all right and something stirred inside me.

I had first climbed on Cloggy towards the end of the legendary, long hot summer of 1959. I had been at Ynys one Saturday evening when a fair-haired lad of 17 proposed a plan. He had been working his way through several Brown-Whillans routes in the Pass and on Cloggy. The route descriptions were written neatly in his note book. He suggested that two of us should accompany him next day on Curving Crack and then up Pinnacle Flake. His name was Peter Crew.

The three of us did Curving Crack, Crew leading it easily. The other climber, John Cole, decided to call it a day after Curving. Crew led up the main pitch of Pinnacle Flake and his Klets slipped and scraped alarmingly as he surmounted the difficult mantelshelf-type moves. I needed a strong tight-rope to follow and Crew acknowledged it was as hard as anything he had (yet) done. It was an important day on Cloggy. Hugh Banner had made an almost successful push on the wall between Curving and Pedestal, which he completed next weekend to create the Troach.

The weekend after that was the Climbers' Club dinner. On Friday night I

bivvied outside Ynys. On Saturday morning it was heavily cloudy and the predominant question was when the rains would start. I wanted to get in another route on Cloggy, this time leading. Peter Gerrard and I went hopefully up to the cliff to do Chimney Route. There were few other climbers around but our determination paid off; the rains held off until we were over the Rickety Innards, a cluster of jammed blocks which then resided in an overhang below the Green Gallery. The heavens opened by the time I started up the Continuation Chimney, but I squirmed my way to the top to complete my first Cloggy lead.

During the next several years I did some 20 climbs on Cloggy, including all the major classics in the Harding guidebook and several of the then newer ones such as Octo and White Slab, leading or sharing the lead on most of the climbs. (I did not lead, but was elated to follow, Shrike).

But that was long ago, and I had subsequently gone through a Rake's Progress from VS to Severe to winter climbing to Munroing and the occasional Diff. Last Spring Marian had rehabilitated me on a few rock climbs, and this Spring (1990) I had been rock climbing regularly for two months. I was leading Hard Severe and was following VS but had yet to make the breakthrough to leading VS again. Now it was May and sunny and suddenly Cloggy seemed possible.

Later that evening, in the hut where we were staying just above Llanberis, we discussed cautiously which Cloggy routes might be feasible and who among us had recently done what. On this latter score, it will be realized, I had nothing to contribute. Sheaf, one of my old favourites, was sensibly rejected on the grounds that it would be too difficult. Our (hypothetical) choice settled on Chimney Route, but I was disturbed to read in the recent guidebook that the Rickety Innards had largely crashed to the base of the cliff, that the remains were too rickety to be climbed safely, and that a diversion up the exposed final pitch of Diglyph was therefore recommended.

I did not sleep well. In the morning the general consensus seemed to be to climb in the Pass. However, Marian did just mention the word, Chimney, and I seized upon the opening. Bob and William drove away to the Pass, leaving us to it. As we walked and talked up the Snowdon path, Cloggy was at first just a shadow at the head of the Cwm. Then at Maen du'r Arddu the great cliff sprang smack into the centre of my life and every feature was revealed. We continued, in awe for my part, along the final stage of the path under the East Buttress to where the Chimney reared up between vertical walls. It was far steeper than I had remembered, and the realization rapidly dawned that there was NOWHERE else to go. I was gripped, especially when I was reminded that during the previous evening's discussions I had specifically expressed a desire to lead.

During the next few hours I went through the whole spectrum of emotions that a climber experiences on a climb that is subjectively hard. After the nervous sorting of gear I moved into the initial chimney and discovered that, contrary to expectation, I could back-and-foot upwards without undue difficulty and could place protection at intervals. I emerged at the first belay ledge, where a large spike and a somewhat constricted stance occupied a position that already felt exposed. It was very different from the Moelwyns where I had done much of my recent climbing.

The next pitch was one of the difficult ones according to the guidebook. Partial back-and-footing led to a narrowing at about 20ft where I was able to fix a couple

of small nuts. I was facing left and needed to attain a standing position on a ledge behind me. The move did not come easily and I was now feeling the exposure considerably. I muttered that the climb was too hard for me but Marian offered encouragement, saying that I was probably missing something. Sure enough, after a few more contortions I found the solution and stood on the ledge and then began to think more about moving up and less about running away. The next section was steep but holds and protection kept coming.

Even so, I was still somewhat anxious at the next stance where the only obvious belay was an ancient peg. I supplemented this with a couple of small nuts. When Marian arrived she further augmented the whole set-up with a Friend. I was gratified to note that she also had not found the pitch easy.

Above us the Chimney reared into an overhanging cleft which is a daunting feature from the foot of the climb. It still looked wicked but it was wide enough to climb on the inside and there were holds. I emerged onto the slab below the Rickety Innards pitch, belaying to another rusty peg on the slab and a good chockstone in the main crack. Again, Marian found a placement for a Friend.

A glance upwards revealed that the Rickety Innards had indeed largely disappeared, but the bottomless and now open crack through the overhang looked repulsive. I decided to take the Diglyph option and traversed downwards and round the corner to the right, joining the third pitch of Diglyph about half way up. This section, a groove, which was described as being 'without special difficulty' in our old guidebook, seemed to offer some of the most technical moves of the day. Out of sight from Marian I fixed some protection and had to take myself in hand, telling myself that I could do such moves at Helsby. Thus emboldened I continued to a good spike and further runners where the last few moves promised to make a very exposed finish overlooking the Great Wall.

Although it was a fine day there were not many climbers on Cloggy, but a team of two were on Great Wall and they seemed to be having a bit of an epic. This and the general ambiance phased me. I was trying to make a somewhat gymnastic finishing move on the steep wall to the right of the groove, overlooking Great Wall. I was still out of sight from Marian, the ropes were running round a corner, and communication was not good. I decided it would be better to belay at the runners. Marian came up and peered round the corner to the right before we changed places. I returned to my gymnastic move but she had seen from her inspection that there were better holds further round to the right. Salvation did indeed lie in that direction and I clambered up and out onto the Green Gallery. These various manoeuvres must have taken some time as the Great Wall team were now also at the top. Travellers tales were exchanged.

However, to complete our chosen climb we still had to do the Continuation Chimney. This gave another 100ft of hard work but the difficulties were no longer of a serious nature. At the top I wound the ropes around an enormous bollard and felt peace and satisfaction replace the intense concentration of the climb. Taking in the ropes for Marian I watched the twin shadows of the Pinnacle and West Buttress creep across the floor of the Cwm in the late afternoon sunshine.

The Cloggy Chimney may not be everyone's scene in the matter of style, but it is a great line, one of Kirkus' brilliant legacy, and it is sobering to picture that great climber of the 30s pioneering the climb in a pair of gym-shoes with hemp line and no runners.

By a curious coincidence exactly a year had passed since I had recommenced rock climbing by seconding Kirkus' Direct Climb in the Moelwyns. Kirkus was one of my heroes. His book 'Let's Go Climbing' had cast its spell on me as a youngster, as embodied in this quote from the chapter 'Why Do We Climb?'

'Then you may see a minute figure moving steadily up the steepest and sheerest part of the crag, with two others standing almost motionless on a ledge below, joined to the leader by the thin white line of the climbing-rope. And if you feel a momentary half-fearful desire to be with them, out there on the face of the cliff, then you are cut out to be a climber.'

Cloggy 1946 -1989

Mike Ball

Petrol and a car to use it in were not available to us till the summer of 1946. The jam ration for breakfast at club meets hadn't really improved much, though it was better. It had stopped looking like a politely generous ration for one person only. We even had a motor-bike, too. There were no huts in the Pass then though the routes were beginning to appear on the Three Cliffs amongst the doomed trees.

We were regulars at Helyg, and it was the only CC hut, so there we were. University Clubs look after their beginners, but in the Long Vac I thought we should look after potential leaders. For the first time the cliffs did not have to be within walking distance of the hut!

One or two senior CUMC members had been on Cloggy in the past but none were on the meet. It was time the cliff became a familiar and regular place to visit. It was 'Cloggy weather', though we did not understand the significance of this then. No rain for a fortnight and the cliff was as dry as a bone.

Ten of us walked up from Llanberis station. As we left the summit track and contoured round below the East Buttress this was for most of us our first view. A superb view it is and as we lined up along the path heading along towards the central cliff the pace remained the same but an utter silence descended on the party. I still find it impressive.

Knowing my history, I had intended to do Longland's. There were, after all only six routes on the West Buttress...It was clear I would be expected to lead the first rope...It was Ken Berrill who broke the spell. "I'm going to do Birthday Crack", he said. Well, he failed (!) but the prod was enough to get me on to the cliff.

All 10 of us got up Longland's though there were no more than three leaders of the difficult pitches. This, much to the annoyance of John Barford, who wanted to reclassify the route for his guidebook and found it occupied all day.

No pegs. No nuts. Just one or two slings with nowhere to put them. We rather liked rubbers, glove-fitting of course. One must use the up-to-date words and attitudes. No hats, either. My improved waterproof anorak had cost an expensive £7.00. I am glad to see the latest trousers can be bought with holes in them.

No protection for the Difficult Step and the Faith and Friction Slab. That didn't come 'til nuts suddenly make the whole thing a good grade easier. The need for extreme caution instead of protecting against a fall of a few feet had made all movements too cautious for exuberant enjoyment. PAs too by the time nuts came, but that seemed less important. Harnesses. Sticht plates. Cams. Fires. One's whole wardrobe. Safety and comfort. Purity and beauty of routes.

They're all worried about The Indian Face now. It seems to have much the same effect on the nerves as an unprotected Longland's used to have. It only needs a subtle new removable protection device. Suction? Placed above one at each move? Must be ethical and not deface or polish the rock!

The overhang pitch was 'possibly harder than section 3' but it was shorter and

the end of the difficulties.

Tommy (Tomlinson) and I were on top of the world so we went and started Great Slab. (Later that holiday he led to the top of The Flake Crack off my shoulders when I failed to lead it). Most of the groove was still occupied by the Green Caterpillar. '(1) Across the slab, keeping low at first, to its left side'. Youth always rebels and I could see it was wrong so I went high and traversed it down. With nuts I use the 'poor form' belay! I only went up Caterpillar once. It was threatening to unroll then as I got high, and had done the next time I went up.

We got lost on pitches 2 and 3. 'The rock traverse right' I found I only did two or three times. It was hard. I avoided the grass traverse below for a long time, then used that twice. Now that's gone and there's quite a neat rock traverse again instead.

The 40ft corner had two loose flakes sticking out about 15ft up. I had quite a time with these. Soon after I took to using the pitch of Central Rib to avoid them. Safe and sensational. Now the loose flakes have gone and there is a clean neat slab all the way. An awful lot of grass and loose rock has come off this climb over the years.

We had one or two sessions in poor weather, once when Tom Bourdillon fell off the overhang pitch of Longland's in the wet on to my shoulders and we played 'who's going to fall off the ledge first?' with Frank Fitzgerald frantically pulling all ropes in sight to prevent this. On another occasion in cloud at the top of Piggott's, Tom tried inserted chockstones ('The climber may insert or throw away chocks and threads according to his taste') but they came out under stress. Eventually he got up to the last pitch and Tommy joined him. I rested in my nailed boots ('Several of the routes have been done since in nails, and all may be possible so') below to keep warm. Their feet being a little cold they lassoed the block on the right. Tommy being the lighter went up the rope and found the rock on the end of the rope lying loose on the ledge. At least he did a little better than Ted Hicks, who had to seize the ledge to prevent a fatal fall. ABH hadn't even got a belay. Tommy was, however, up. Removing my boots, I had to carry three small rucksacks and three pairs of boots. I was able to help Tom with the first few feet of the last pitch. It was now getting dark. It was 'poor form' to carry torches in those days. One was expected to get down on time. Head torches were for miners or ENT Surgeons. With two above to pull at the appropriate moment I got up just before dark. We reached East Gully and started to feel our way down. After a short fall this turned into an abseil on a single rope. We came back for the rope the next day.

When we were on Piggott's someone was trundling boulders over the West Buttress. It was no good shouting. At least it is not so easy to go over the East Buttress, even by accident.

Over the years I have managed to do most of the easier routes I can lead on the West Buttress. At first the problem was the third ascent of Bow Shaped. Arnold Carsten had fallen off the crux when a layback hold broke off, the fall turning his second upside down with his shoulder belay. It is amazing how long it took to stop using those.

I have squeezed on to a Sheffield UMC party on Cloggy. We went there on another fine summer. Giles Barker had commandeered my Dormobile for the meet. We were joined by Andy Parkin for Bloody and White Slab on the same

day. The best day I've ever had on the cliff, as a real 'Alpiniste Sandwich'. The next day we did the Left Edge and I was so tired I nearly fell asleep between Uttoxeter and Derby on the way back, dropping the Sheffield party on the M1 at Trowell, and falling asleep on my bed fully clothed before I could get the Dormobile unloaded.

This year the weather demanded another visit. Even 12 years ago the cliff had been crowded. It was crowded again. The queue for Great Slab was short. Higher up, we had to wait for the parties above. It was nice to find that I knew my way about better than most people. There is a lot of detailed route-finding to do, a real mountaineering cliff. Great stretches of easy cliff across the face with the best ways up, the difficult bits not easy to spot. Daphne hadn't done the route for some time and really enjoyed it. I did, however, seem to be the only person wearing a hat.

Coming down the Eastern Terrace we heard a crash followed by shouts for help. Going back we went down the top of Narrow Slab, the easier bit to where Sheaf joins it. The leader was unharmed but the second was deeply unconscious. One pupil was fixed and dilated, but the other was only half dilated, suggesting possible compression by internal bleeding with an unknown amount of brain damage. There was a severe depressed fracture of the vertex of the skull. He was still alive with a carotid pulse. These eye signs tend to be terminal and proved to be so, death occurring in the helicopter.

This had come very quickly, summoned by radio telephone from the foot of the cliff. It needed a 200ft lower to get a man down. I had felt I ought to go up to look after the victim, but this prospect was distinctly alarming. The man who came down clearly thought that the sooner the injured man was up and away the better for all. With a helicopter roaring away above proper debate is impossible anyway.

The rock passed down and across most of the routes on the left half of the West Buttress. The starts are further apart than the finishes, so it missed several people by only a few feet.

I have only once been hit on the head by a rock, the size of a football, falling about 20-30ft and knocked off by the second descending in the Alps. I dodged the large doorstep he dislodged but the football hit me on the vertex of the helmet. I saw stars, but no more. Helmets do work. Conditions on Cloggy are rarely ideal. It would be a pity if everyone felt they had to keep away because of the danger. The climbing is superb and not to be missed. 'Cloggy weather' doesn't come every year.

A safe armchair is the place where ideal ascents are planned. Standards and group behaviour change with the local conditions. Where the rock is always loose, as in South Wales, hats are always worn.

The mountains will always be there. The trick is to be there as well. And on the West Buttress of Cloggy you can only safely be there in a hat. That's the trick. That's the new, very local, up-to-date attitude!

The Return of the Native

Dave Gregory

This year I went to the Du'r Arddu again. It had taken me a long time to realise that this was 1989, a major anniversary of the best summer ever. It rained, do I remember? on the Wednesday of what was then Whit week and never again until the last Sunday of October half-term. True, the early part of '89 was no inducement to comparison. Whatever the rest of the midweek country had been graced with, Peak District week-ends had been cold and relatively cheerless. Gregory the younger was heavily into exam revision and not seeing much rock. His tortures were to end on Friday June 16th and I set a small light at the end of the tunnel by promising to arrive straight after work and transport us to Wales even if Llyn Padarn had risen to Pen y Pass.

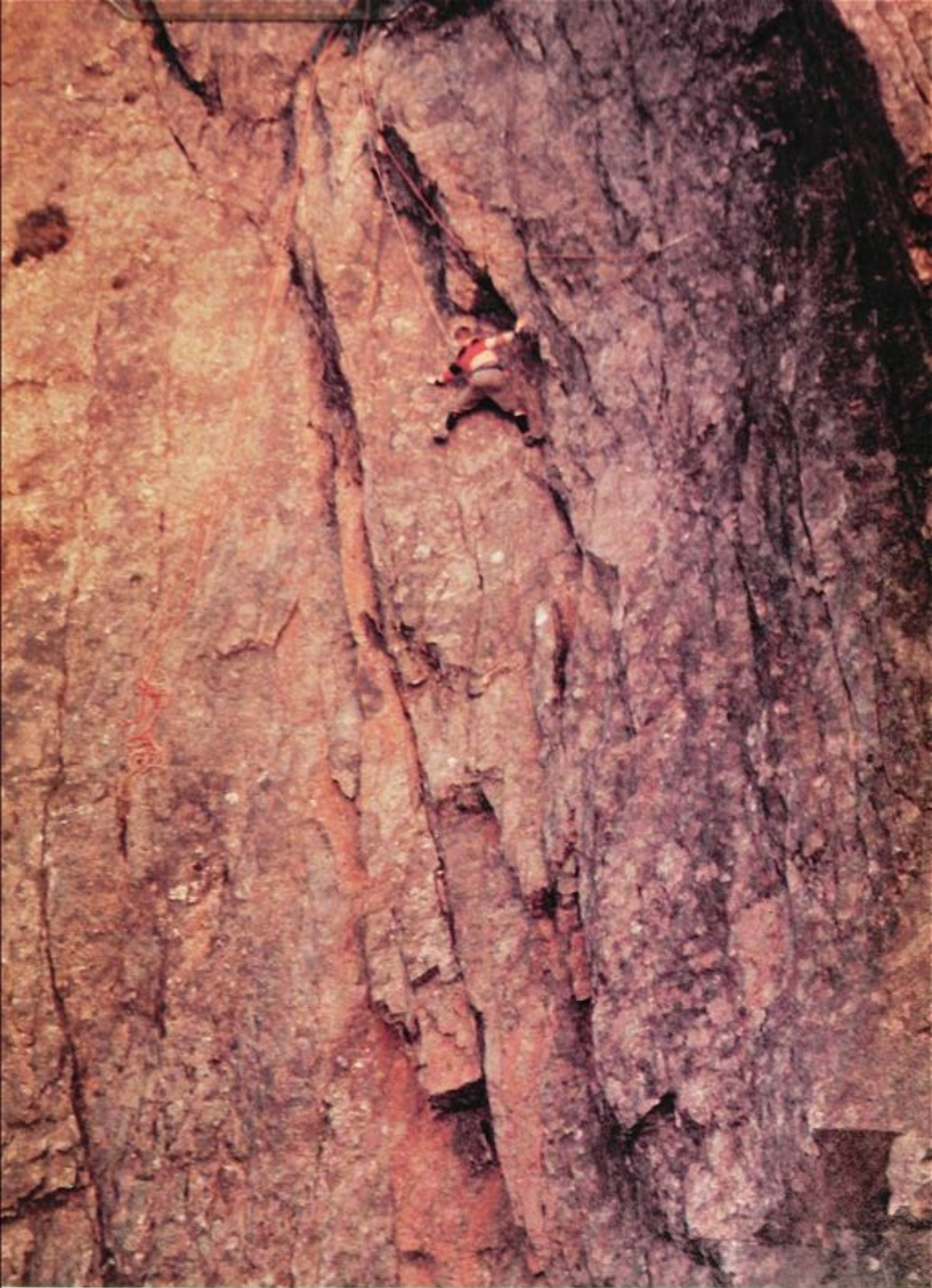
There was no risk of that, lack of water seemed to be the norm, but there was an aogley factor. My usual rope mate was confined to an extension, wiring and plastering and storing brownie points and we finished up as a three, I had my share of exams that week, staring over the rows of bowed and perplexed heads at the cloudless blue square which signified freedom and prompted memories of that other summer, and the realisation that 30 years had passed and Cloggy would be dry again. It would be quite a treat to be a comfortable middleman on a tour of some long remembered classics.

Whit, no, it would have to be Easter 1956, I went to the Pass for the first time. I can remember only the highlights of the early part of the visit. Sabre Cut, dimly, I remember but the last day I shall never forget. Three of us walked up to Cynr Las to do Main Wall. A serviceman and his girlfriend had been killed on it the year before and on that last steep haul up to the rock we found the separate, bleached and rent partners of a pair of RAF plimsolls, a discovery which quietened us during the lower pitches but whose sombre effect was quite forgotten in the euphoria of those top slabs. I, at least, had given no thought to the rest of the day but when Reg had to leave, George suggested that we regain the height we had so thoughtlessly lost and cross the ridge to Cloggy.

I remember grumbling mightily at having to do all the hard work of gaining the height of the crag again, and I shall never forget the sheer wonder as we approached the ridge and the top of the crag came into view, followed by the complexity of its many buttresses above the gunbarrel water. George was ever a crack man and had Curving singled out for us that day, the first of many we spent on the cliff, and the first deposit in a bank of memory to which I am adding still.

We were early away from Manchester but we had to make a detour to see a man about some slides in Dolwyddelan so that we were late to the hut and lucky to grab the last three bunks. Up early though we were, most of the parking spaces were filled indicating a bivvy city among the boulders of Maen Du'r Arddu. Despite the early hour the sweat rolled from us all but the Halfway House was shut and thirst unslaked we plodded on to dump our 'sacks below the East Buttress.

Jon had some knowledge of the crag and had worked some form up so that Bill



Jack Soper (belaying) and Dave Gregory on 'Bloody Slab', Cloggy, 1959. Photo: Rosemary Collier/Gregory Collection

had agreed to leave the choice to us. If every one was a classic what did it matter which one we did? Jon had half mentioned November and there it was just above us. The Drainpipe Crack was wide, still wet and looking decidedly old-fashioned. This, they said, was my pitch, they would do the other two. So it was and the Friend 4 at which they had laughed so cuttingly in the car-park served dutifully and I was soon established on the ramp below Vember while the young stars dealt with the business pitches. I offered to do the third as being just up my street, but the offer was turned down and I had a pleasant few minutes watching the wall artists struggling with a proper pitch.

East, now West; West Buttress Eliminate, a brilliant route but a tactical blunder. The bottleneck of overlaps near Linnell's Leap was a Picadilly Circus. Ropes doing Sheaf were crossing it in both directions. White faces kept appearing around the aretes wanting to know where they were and what route they were on. Lefthanded cowboys were trying the righthanded lasso move above. Teams on a host of routes were queueing for the nasty Longland's finishes instead of the easier more elegant Direct and causing a log jam further down the cliff. I was lucky to be belayed at the bottom of the groove to the right of Walsh's, out of the line of fire, and able to see the harrowing effect that a hand-sized rock from above had on a belayer at the foot of the second slab of White when it landed on his head. I had somehow got to be third again and followed my leaders on the pilgrimage up Walsh's Groove before being let slip up the Direct to get us out of the turmoil.

We were wiser the next day and went in search of solitude ploughing up East Gully into the early sun on Shrike. The new peg does not stick out so invitingly to be lassoed as the old, and the move has become 5c. The wall above, on which the Shrike impales its victims, is still as brilliant, but surely steeper, and I arrived at the top somewhat chastened. Still I earned my ticket by leading them up the ridge to go down beside the Far East to find the broken, disappointing-looking rocks where Woubits starts. Jon made short work of the first pitch and I soon found myself in the righthand groove where my PA skidded off 30 years ago, and I swear that the smell of burning rubber hung there still. The crux move out to the flake in the groove above I could not remember but the old style jammed nuts and slings gave mute testimony to the terrors it once held. The groove above the crux I recognised as an old friend and romped up it to find that the two lying in the sun at the top actually thought that, ancient though it was, it still deserved respect. What was it like with drilled out machine nuts? Who can remember?

We walked back down the ridge and into the highway of the Eastern Terrace to find the lessening crowds below the East talking of a climber on Sheaf hit, and probably killed, by a falling stone. How many more fine days on Cloggy I have left is in the lap of the gods, but I resolved that they would not be week-end middays on the busy West.

Youth shrugged off the horrors of 'there but for the grace of God go I' and was attracted by Troach. I released their anchor, hurrying back along the path, to lie by the ruined huts and watch this generation relive the exploits of the last. While I watched Hugh Banner walked home past me and turned for his ritual last look at the crag. Did he too see a doppelganger from 30 years ago.

We had one more day of freedom and since the crowds would have gone we dumped our 'sacks under the overhang below White and took our lives in our hands up the debris of the Western Terrace. Bloody Slab looked different, except

that it would be a good route to be a middleman on, but Jon having led the first pitch with some stealth and respect it was decided that Bill would go through and do the second leaving experience to creep last across the first pitch looking into history and a monster swing. In the years when the cruxes of Extremes were the linking of Hard VS moves, what is now 5b, Bloody was known to be a maverick, an Extreme with an extreme move at its crux. It seems to be so still. The rock is not the rough knobbled perfection of the other West but a smoother sandpapery rust. The Bonattington Pillar went long since, and the recent rock fall has shattered the tops of the small pillars which gave the holds, and one is very conscious of using small collections of fragile rock-thumbs as hand-holds to sidle across the slab with. The crux above the nut slot has altered. It used to be a layaway above a small bulge but now one solution at least is to straddle the bulge to reach the relative positiveness of a pocket slot before the moves left to the creep round the overhang to the belay. I remember the upper slab as a bit of a doddle, probably because we would have launched across on to the grass caterpillar and staired up that, but today's hot shots despise grass and found an elegant way up the slab to the right of the caterpillar and gave me, as last man, the imagination and vista of another overlap-swooping swing.

Jon and I had both done Curving Arete. Bill and I had both done Great Wall. As a compromise, I would follow Bill up the Arete and Bill follow Jon up the Wall. I did my duty in the Direct Crack and worried a father's thoughts and imagined a mother's blame as Bill methodically dealt with the creaky nearly-spikes and lack of gear on the steep lower section and then raced up the slab to belay miles away to give me the full feeling of exposure.

Three consecutive days on the Clog were taking their toll and I declined their generous offer to follow Great Wall, taking refuge in having been dragged up it fairly recently. I watched from the crag foot for a spell and then walked down the shingle of the Llyn and part way up the further bank to find a suitable patch with a boulder backrest from which to watch them and the crag. The Don once said that you're better off sitting looking at this crag than climbing on many a dozen others and he was right. I stayed there until they reached the Eastern Terrace and then slowly walked across to the path to go down to the car alone leaving them to savour together the euphoria of that gem of a line to crown three days on the jewel of Britain's crags.

In another 30 years I may not be watching from Maen Du'r Arddu but from a cloud. Wherever it is there will be a lot of us hustling for the best view of a summer's day on this best crag in the world. If you're there don't sit by me. You may get elbowed off when it gets exciting.

Gone Domeing

Tim Noble

During the two weeks that we spent there, we never did find out how to say the word 'Tuolumne' properly. Should it be pronounced carefully in three syllables, Indian-style, with vowels changed and ending in an accented syllable thin as dried pine smoke, thus 'Twa-lum-nee'? Or should we rather have said it straight, in good ol' tobaccy-chawing American as, 'Cheww-olommy'? Every other climber we met talked simply about 'The Meadows', so our debate quickly became academic; but the Indian pronunciation certainly seemed more fitting because our campsite at Tenaya Lake was straight out of Hiawatha's childhood:

*Dark behind it rose the forest,
Rose the black and gloomy pine-trees,
Rose the firs with pine cones upon them;
Bright before it beat the water,
Beat the clear and sunny water...*

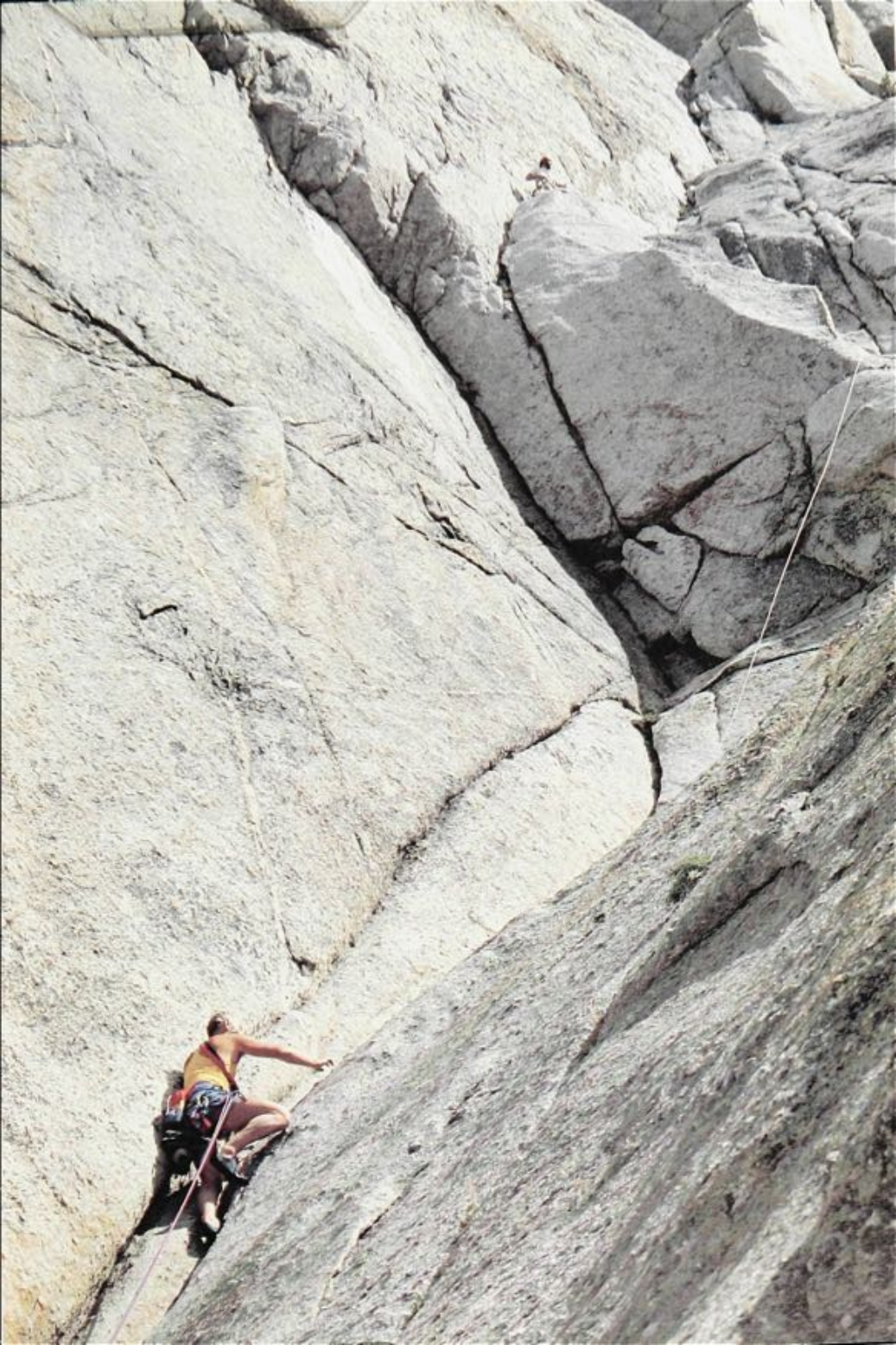
From Larry's canoe on the shapely, sand-encircled water, Stately Pleasure Dome was indeed a graceful stone pavilion while Pywiack and Medlicott domes outshone the biggest of the Kremlin's brass cupolas. Under moonlight, however, the silver tomahawk of Tenaya Peak and the dangerous bright berries of campfires in the pines reminded us that this was strictly Indian country.

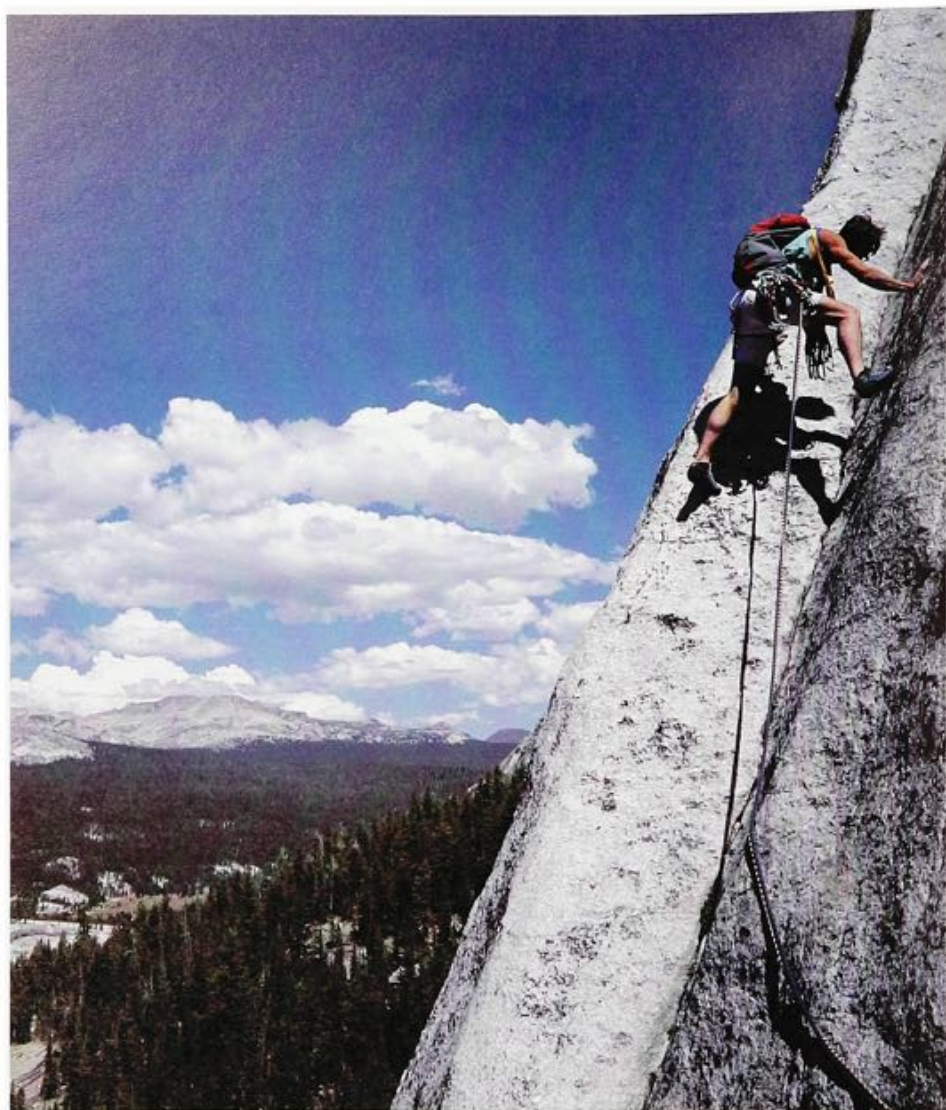
Unfortunately, I got us all off to a poor start by trespassing on someone else's campsite; and it was only after a few cool hours that we discovered (to our mutual benefit, of course), that our hosts were fellow CC member Pat Devine and partner Eleanor. Round the campfire that night, making our peace without pipes, I felt more of a heel when I realised that Pat's broken heel would prevent him from sharing the big classics with us.

Days drooled over each other. Gill and Terry, Sally and I quickly became 'dome-esticated': each morning unpacking the bearbox for breakfast and planning the day's paddling. Paddling that is, not on water, but on what Tom Higgins has called 'the sea of reflective knobs and crystals' that is Tuolumne granite.

Our American host, Larry Giacomino had warned us that we'd find the climbing strange and after listening to his hilarious anecdotes about the antics of Uncle Don and Nat and ex-President Derek on Californian cliffs, I began to think that simple VS climbers like Terry and I would need a miracle of sorts if we were to get up anything. In fact, we could stand on the rock — but it was akin to walking on water to begin with. Great White Book (5.6/7), White Flake (5.7), The Shadow Nose (5.7), and West Country (5.7), all on the Pleasure Dome, gave Terry and I much pleasure and also plenty to think about initially. We made stately progress by dint of frequent swims, long lunches, a very open sports plan and a determined effort to learn new techniques. We even managed to climb a signifi-

Opposite: Terry Gifford on pitch 1 of 'Hobbit Book' (5.7) Photo: Tim Noble





Above: Nick Jones on the 5.6 Dihedral above Crescent Ledge, Regular Route, Fairview Dome. Photo: Tim Noble

cant 300ft 5.8 variant to the classic Walkabout (5.7) on Penny Royal Arches which I called The Dreamtime Finish (because that's what I must have been doing to have missed the obvious 5.5 cracks directly above the second belay).

Larry joined us for a few days in our 'dome-icile' beneath the sighing pines. Each night in our strictly controlled wilderness campsite (max. no. six, tents correctly positioned) we'd light the campfire (with its built in movable barbecue grill); cook on stoves (whilst sitting on the *in situ* six seater combination table and

bench) and drink deeply and unwisely from huge jugs of Californian wine.

Each morning at Tenaya dawned the same (Goddamit, not another perfect day!), in National Park Regulation way: a deep blue, cloudless sky, clamped tight as a hangover around a blazing sun. As you packed the 'sack, you'd know that on the eight or nine belays you'd take that day, there wouldn't be a sliver of shade and that every part of you would cook gently but effectively as you spent the hours facing into the high Sierran sun. A couple of times, I caught myself dreaming of Gimmer in the cloud.

Five days in, however, my calves were like steel cords and my arms were getting stronger. But there was obviously something wrong with the standard of my granite manicuring because I'd stopped leaving finger prints on the wine bottles. Larry thought this an infallible sign that we were doing really well (but then his judgement may be flawed because he lives almost on the San Andreas Fault) and he moved us up a grade. Consequently, after we'd performed well enough sharing leads with him up South Crack (5.8) on Polly Dome, he thought we were ready for some sterner stuff. "You guys will have no trouble on the Dyke", he assured us, laughing at our long faces. Terry and I suspected otherwise, though neither of us said as much. For both of us this was to be something of an 'emotional experience'. Neither of us slipped or got it wrong, but the route was only just within our abilities. I don't know whether Terry wrote a poem about it, but I remember it like this:

It's cool; we started early without water, 'sacks or heavy belts. Five tie offs, several slings and a couple of Friends for the the final pitch are all we carry. We (Terry and I) get frightened quickly, soloing the first pitch, which looks easy but is thin. It is a relief to tie into the first bolt and relax. Larry leads pitch 2, calmly, to the break; he looks so confident I think he must have suckled granite as a baby. Terry follows, all keyed up. There are two bolt runners in a hundred feet. The standard is solid 5a between the bolts. You pinch the dyke as if it were a jewel and hope no one is looking while your fingers fumble, cleaning off incriminating prints. It is very taxing, but we smile and whoop quietly at each other just to keep our spirits up. The sun is coming up, right in our eyes.

Pitch 3 is just the same with bolts at three zones of delicacy. Sometimes the dyke is under our toes; sometimes at arm's length; sometimes gripped in our fists. It is ludicrous, bizarre: a line of rock wax, spilled by the candle of the dome. I have to stop myself thinking as I climb that the dyke is going to strip off the skin of granite underneath.

Larry leads the crux, pitch 4. He falters 15ft out and up. All that's below him is a slabby granite grater waiting to skin the peeler. That, and his pathetic kitchen cabinet of the two of us. Two good bolts protect the (5.9) 5b moves right into a place where movement forward into out and over there is essential, but which hasn't any holds or knobs or cracks or lines or even indentations for VS climbers to hold dearly onto. (It must have had, of course). I remember Terry saying in a rush at the belay that he'd never had to read the rock so fast and under so much pressure with so little to show him the way. By the time he'd reached the stance the world had moved a little and I was facing the sun again, blind, dependent on the granite braille trail and the smell of chalk. It was the finest, most committing climbing (top rope notwithstanding) that I think I've ever done.

After Hobbit Book (5.7) — another world-class VS route, Larry left us for a

while to spend some holiday with his real family. But we found another willing leader who was ready to be co-opted as a guide. Nick James worked for the MOD; he was to become our secret weapon on Fairview's Regular Route (5.9).

Pete Livesey once wrote a lovely little essay about this line — one of Steck and Roper's Fifty Best in America: 1,200ft of brilliant HVS/VS climbing at 5.8, and then 5.7 up straight-in cracks and juggy overhangs. The 5.9 crux is in a wet seep on the first pitch, close to a perfect Friend, and the next three pitches are some of the best jamming and laybacking to be found in the domes. This was obviously something else for us — right out of dreams. With arms miller-white to the elbows and into concentration overdrive, we started early in the shadow-cool, pine-scented morning.

Nick was kind and helpful, generous and keen. Carrying the 'sack at the time, I needed a pull on the crux and that was all the 'encouragement' we had between us. Above the crescent ledge, half way up, the angle eased and 5.6 corners, dihedrals and exposed traverses took us into the sun's eye again and roped up Severe scrambling to a top that seemed almost on a level with the triple adze of Cathedral Peak. It was here, in this high place, I think I succumbed to the temptation to forego whatever else could be provided by the domes so long as I could continue to climb big routes like this at the limit of my grade. Here at least we seemed to have 'dome-inion' over ourselves and half the visible world. Of course, in the real world, such illusions fuel selfishness and separateness. In a way, it was the nadir of the trip.

We did other routes of course; but they felt to me like pale Platonic shadows. We learned to do the Lembert Walk up the pair of Water Cracks (5.7 and 5.8) on Lembert Dome. There were the usual two bolts, to 'protect' full run outs of the strangest climbing either of us had ever tried: one was forced to try a sort of swimming motion up the ice-sliced granite into little tilted quartz pools as smooth and creamy as oyster flesh. If we tried to dome-iner the rock in good old British colonial fashion (searching imperiously for every tiny hold, and then using them cynically), the consequences would have been dire: a dome-ino effect. Larry led our second attempt in North American insouciant style, chimneying, while Terry arm-barred and I swam. And then, quite suddenly, after an evening drinking wine in the sunset on Lembert summit, watching the meadows become a shadow net of grass between the boats of domes, I thought I've 'Dundoamin' now; what can I do in the Valley?

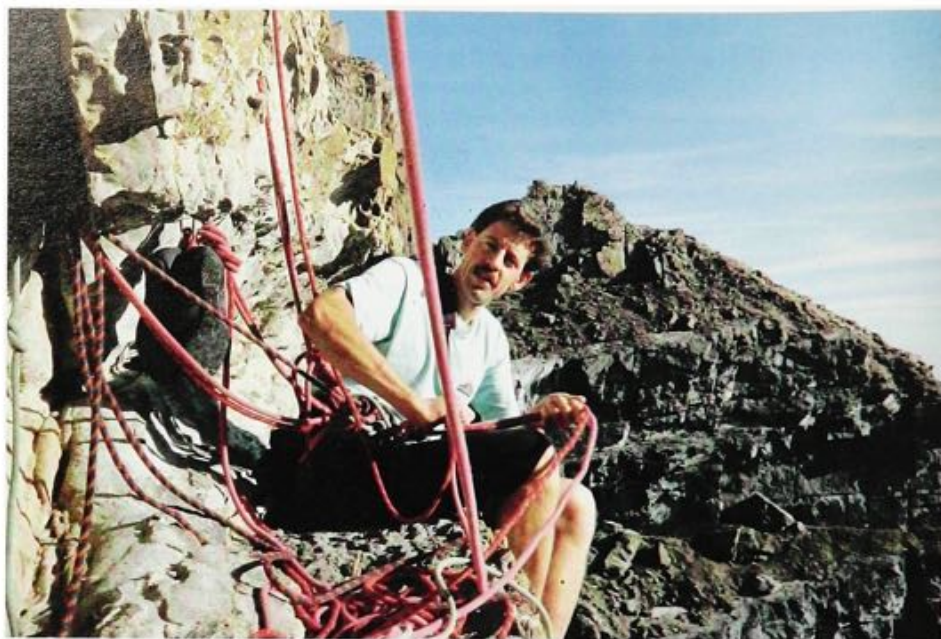
Actually, Yosemite was something of a disappointment after The Meadows. Maybe we'd been spoilt by seeing Mono Lake in Nevada in the rain and bathing in hot springs near Mammoth Lakes while the lightning licked and flickered at the Alpine-looking peaks. Maybe it was because we'd had hash browns for breakfast at Nicely's in the hick mining town of Lee Vining and seen the clouds blowing off the Tioga Pass like prayer flags. Or maybe it was just because Yosemite was hot and crowded, noisy and commercial and by then we all had different agendas, different dreams. I know I felt something of a spoilsport when I tried to push Terry into going down to try Royal Arches or Middle Cathedral — reasoning that he and I could now do much of those routes in style, even if it meant pulling on a sling or two on the 5.9 pitches. Rule-breaking or cheating, I was all for the Valley rock; but in the event, we went our different ways. The spirit of John Muir was calling my partner.

Sally and I had a walk up to Yosemite Point to gaze with longing at the Tyrolean from the Lost Arrow and climbs on The Apron together which were fierce and quiet, but nothing like as beautiful as on the domes. We also tried other attractions. Sally went off alone for two days with a tent to Clouds' Rest and beyond; Gill and Terry walked the 13 miles down Tenaya Canyon to Camp Four and eventually, Terry and I slogged dutifully up the Little Yosemite path one hot afternoon to a bivouac under Half Dome.

He and I spent a night out underneath a roof of stars, hoping we'd find the same contentment as on the earlier climbs. Shooting, one by one into the pines, the stars fell down a velvet sky all night until we slept. The next day, facing bravely into the rising sun again, we climbed Snake Dyke (5.7) up the shorter side of that amazing stranded animal of stone. Two pitches of Tuolumne-type paddling on granite worn into a smoother vein led us to the dyke — a bigger, knottier, wartier version of the Pywiack kind. We were facing into the sun all day, but not lingering long enough to study our shadows. From the summit, somewhat dry, and bemused by the numbers of visitors, we watched the American Dream being re-enacted up and down the descent ladders by tourists from right across the states and Terry blew his bubbles down the North West Face.

Before we had to go home, Larry said he'd meet us up at Lover's Leap, by Lake Tahoe. So by way of Nicely's and Mono Lake again and a long drive through the desert edge of California and Nevada on the eastern side of the Sierra, we made it to Strawberry Lodge at the foot of the Leap. Here Gill and Terry left to fly home early because of a death in the family; and Larry, Sally and I climbed soberly on East Face Route (5.6) up fantastical horizontal dykes on steep walls.

Royal Robbins once thought that The Leap was the best cliff in the States and opened a climbing school there. I could see his point. Larry and I did three more routes of the highest calibre. Surrealistic Pillar (5.7) takes a brilliant jamming crack through mega dykes, then traverses left to climb a slab and crack. But Corrugation Corner (5.7) — though with a crux that's strictly HVS 5a took the prize. This is a 700ft route of sustained and intricate technicality set in a huge cliff between much harder routes. It's almost worth flying to California for just this route alone; but don't! Do it only after you've 'gone domeing' in Tuolumne first.



Above: An enmeshed Hon. Sec. Malcolm Cameron.

Below: An engrossed ex-President, Hugh Banner. Photos: Cameron collection





Climbers starting 'The Skull', Cynr Las. Photo: Terry Gifford

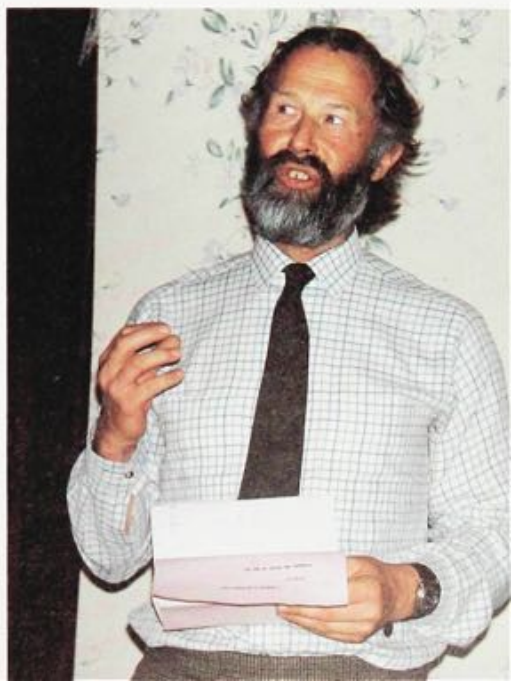


Cir Mohr, Arran. Photo Keith Sharples



Above: Two C.C. Presidents, 85 year old ABH and first lady president, Jancis Allison, at the 60th Anniversary of the Wayfarers Hut in Langdale in June 1990.
Photo: Derek Walker

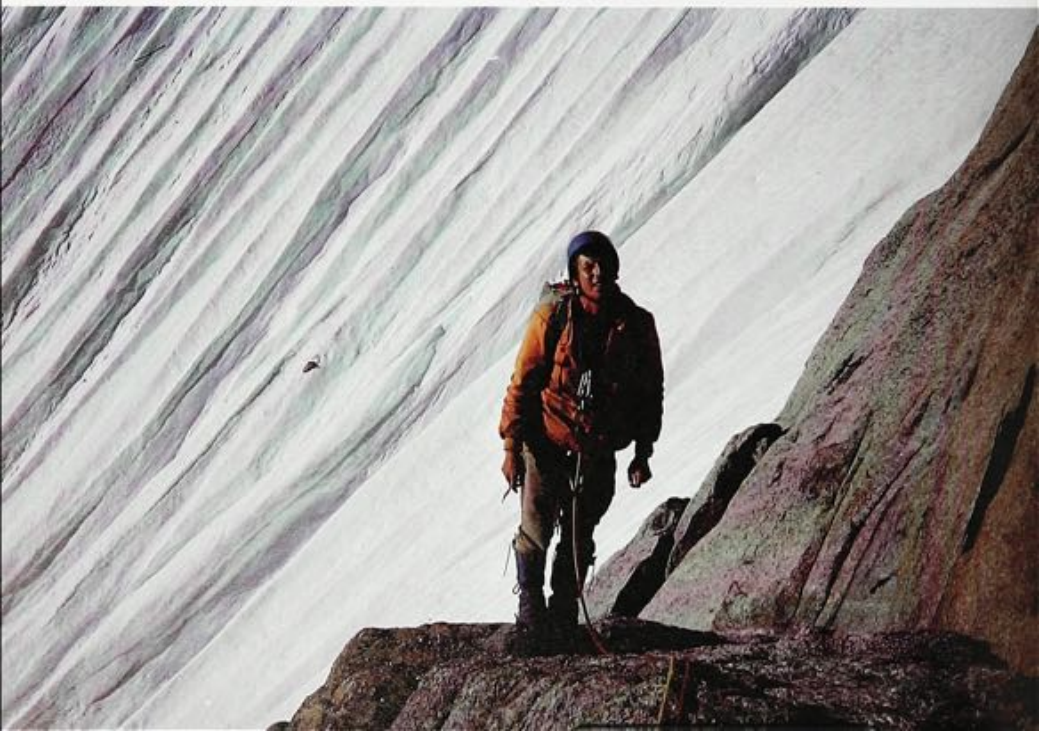
Below: Jim Curran (left) and Chris Bonington at the Welsh Dinner, Feb 1990.
Photos: Steve Foxley





Above: Joe and Claude on top of one of their secret Spanish crags

Below: John Wilkinson on the East Ridge of the Plan, 1979. Photos: Mike Mortimer





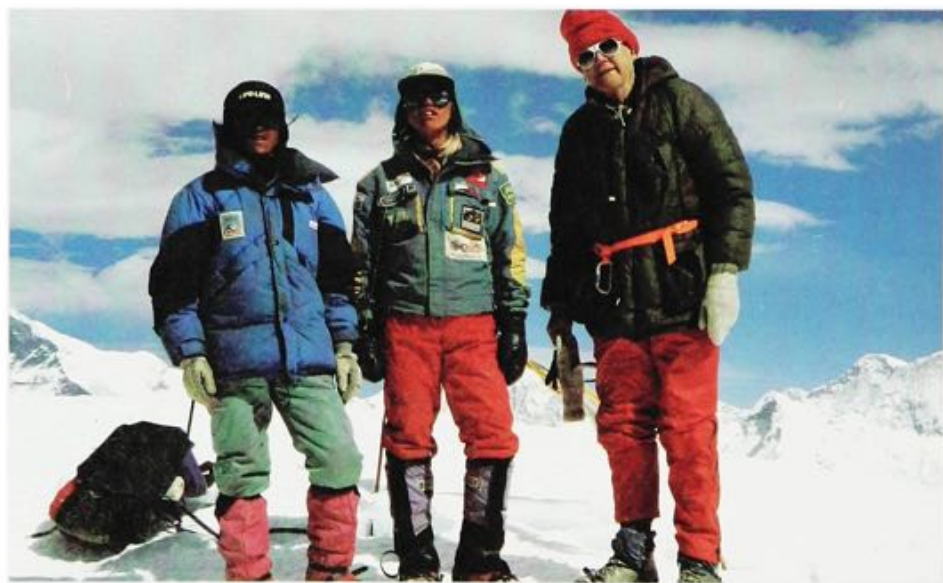
Bob Conway on 'Samurai' (probably), Tyn Towyn Quarries, Llein Peninsula. Photo: Chris Jackson

Mountaineering - 108

Mera and Point Lenana on Kenya

Harry Sales

The title of this article is meant to intrigue and make you start to read it. 108 is not a mystical number but the simple addition of my age to the height in feet of the two mountains I climbed in 1989 which was, for me, a very good year. I have put Mera first because it is the highest, over 21,000ft, and for that matter the highest I have ever climbed. But Point Lenana was first in time and, being lower, just less than 17,000ft, more fun. I had extremely good company on both mountains but, again, the real fun was around Kenya. There I was with my wife, Patricia, and Bob Allen (CC); Pat and I found Bob hilarious in adversity.



Above: Harry (right) with two Sherpas on the summit of Mera

We had hired a Land Rover from Mark Savage, the Poo Bah of the mountaineering world of Kenya, in Nairobi and set off on the 23rd July. It was a rough old Land Rover but to be fair to Mark it was not the one he meant to let us have. We had a driver, Joseph, for the way out. Our plan was to go up from the east side, walk round the whole of Mount Kenya and then climb Point Lenana towards the end; so we set off for Chogoria. We took on three porters there, one being a guide-porter, Charles, one of them took an enormous pile of eggs intended for the people at the Lodge but we never got there.

The track up from Chogoria got slippier and slippier as the drizzle turned to

rain and the rain to downpour. Where the surface was hard it was like driving on ice and Joseph handled the Land Rover magnificently, when it was soft we sank deeper and deeper the higher we got, until we were really stuck. Getting the Land Rover round was a desperate business but round and downwards we went. The eggs survived, as did three drenched and badly equipped Englishmen retreating from the hut to whom we gave a lift down. The only thing to do was to abandon the east side and go round the mountain. We decided to go right round the west, another 150 miles or so.

As darkness was setting the Land Rover, whose troubles with the gears and clutch were possible to deal with, developed a trait which was more difficult to cope with. It could be driven forward or to the left but to turn to the right got increasingly difficult and then impossible. The solution, in pitch dark, was to take off a shock absorber apparently fitted by Mark to the steering underneath to help on the sort of roads which we were encountering. The relief when we were able to steer in all directions and then arrive at Naro Moru was enormous, particularly as we got good food, drink and beds there.

From then on our story must be common with that of many others, by jeep next day to the Met Station huts, which are fairly sordid. Then, leaving the Land Rover and saying goodbye to Joseph, up by the vertical bog, which is neither vertical nor a complete bog but which goes on interminably and unpleasantly, to Mackinder's Camp, which is more sordid. Our food was rather primitive, the best we could get in Nairobi and Bob did wonders with it on a combination of primus and gas. Then next day up to the Austrian Hut, still more primitive and quite basic. We arrived there by lunchtime and, unusually, it did not cloud over so we did the remaining 700ft to the top of Point Lenana straight away. There was a short icy patch towards the top but otherwise no real problem. This was a good job because we had deliberately left our crampons and ice-axes at Nairobi.

After an icy night in the Austrian Hut we came right down to the Met office next day and Bob drove the Land Rover down to the fleshpots of Naro Moru immediately. We abandoned our idea of walking round the mountain only because it turned out that the porters had not got enough food.

I had found the going rather tough, particularly the 7,000 or 8,000 feet of descent, but for some reason we all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and found the trials, tribulations and adversities funny. The quick return enabled us to do a little more on the safari side before rejoining Bob's wife, Lin and Jonathan, his son, at Nairobi, from where we had a week in various choice spots ending in the Masai Mara, but I must keep to mountaineering in this article.

So on to Nepal. Unlike our previous trips to Nepal, Pat could not come and I missed her, but I had excellent company. Hamish Nicol was the organiser-leader, Mary Nicol came and a friend of their's and Mike's, Janet Duke. Mike Westmacott was with us but Sally could not come. John, the fourth CC member, and Joan Atherton from Mousehole were there in spite of the difficult time the Cornish Education Authority had given Janet. Two young lawyers, Amanda Pullein and Beatle, or Alexander Seymour-Williams, helped to bring the average age down. Last but not least, physically and otherwise, there was Charlie Rose from Scotland, a schoolboy friend of Hamish.

There was the usual near disaster at Delhi Airport; we were told we were not on the flight we had booked on. The trouble seemed to be that the King of Nepal

had commandeered the largest plane of the Royal Nepalese Airlines and only the lucky individuals were being put on the smaller plane next morning. Thanks to the persuasiveness of Mary we were amongst the lucky, eventually.

After a day or two in Kathmandu we flew to Baranagar, with fine views of Everest and its neighbours to the north above the clouds. Six hours on a chartered bus took us northwards across the plains and then steeply up to camp in the dark near the village of Hille. Next day the trek started with a foot pounding descent of about 4,000ft to camp near a tributary of the Arun River. The next three days we followed the Arun northwards in scorching heat, relieved by the occasional dip at lunch breaks. Following a river in the Himalaya does not mean the going is always on the flat and one of the uphill took us to Tumlingtar where there is an airstrip and a cafe shop which sells beer. This made our camp near the airstrip especially pleasant. We were to have trouble with porters from this time onwards; they were deserting us for parties who were following our route in the early stages but destined for softer routes later. Thanks to our Sirdar, Tensing Tashi, we managed to recruit enough at later stages, except for the next camp after we had struck west from the Arun valley towards Phedi. We ended in the woods, the dark and the wet without tents or food. The Sherpas rose to the occasion splendidly and got us first food, and then tents from down below. Next day we were allowed to sleep in late until six am, and then waited for news of the porters who had been celebrating Diwali, the Festival of Light. With those who arrived we got to Phedi and camped below the Salpa Pass which we crossed the next day.

This took us down to Gudel, on the east side of the Hunku Khola. Next day, across the Hunka and up through Bung to Surkie Bung to camp and then on to Forest Camp in the snow: hard walking and steep and still more ascent the next day to 4,400 metres ending with a welcome descent, still in the snow to camp near the Holy Lakes at Panch Pokhari, a freezing night.

Next day was a long descent around countless re-entrants until eventually we reached the Hinku Khola, which we followed to Mosam Kharka to camp and have our one and only rest day, a great relief. From there the way up is the Hinku with good camps. At Tangnag, where some isolated Sherpa people live and grow potatoes, Mary and Janet Duke decided to stay and wait for the rest of us. Before ascending to the Mera La poor Mike developed a severe virus infection and had to go down to join Mary and Janet. He continued to suffer for some time. With intermediate camps at Dig Kharka and Khara we started the ascent through the Mera La, putting on crampons as soon as we reached the snout of the glacier. Janet Atherton was feeling very sick by this time, others had had the usual tummy troubles etc, but this was more like mountain sickness. Bravely she came on and we camped well above the Mera La in deep snow, the Sherpas managing to make us a beautiful stew and warm fruit salad. Next day after tea and porridge in our tents at two am we were off at three. Janet was soon in a bad way, as was Amanda and they both had properly to turn back.

This left five out of the ten of us and of the five the fastest goer was Beatie without a doubt; she, with a sherpa, was up the top and passing the rest of us on the way down, then came Hamish and John, neither of whom found it easy work. Last came Charlie and me and we certainly did not find it easy. It was a hard, hard plod all the way and the last bit is very steep particularly coming down. Our two

young Sherpas roped Charlie and me and I was glad of it. For the rest it is just a hard snow and ice plod with the occasional opening up crevasse. Halfway up a young Sherpa, presumably with respect for my slow pace, invited me to retreat but bloodmindedness had set in by then and Charlie and I made it together.

Coming down seemed interminable because we only stopped for a cup of tea from a friendly party at what had been our high camp above the Mera La, and then straight down to Khara where the tent was never more welcome. It had been a long day — three in the morning to five in the afternoon.

After that the welcome sight of the others at Tangnag cheered us on our way down to Hinku on its west bank and down into the cloud. From there the trek west to Lukla takes you over a series of passes and we camped at 14,000ft before ascending the highest pass, the Zatrwala. Going up these passes poor Charlie was in a bad way but managed to make it. Going down from the Zatrwala was desperate, steep steps in the snow that had become ice, with always the danger of a slip without crampons. Every time we seemed to be getting below the snow it started again, a dispiriting process but eventually, after five hours without a stop we came to our first water, drank and ate, and then a little further below, camped, still above 10,000ft.

Our one anxiety then was whether our plane would arrive at Lukla. When we got there we found several others who were waiting at the bottom of the queue, their planes not having arrived. We camped near the airstrip and, only two hours late there was our plane and down the strip we went and into the air above the valley.

Back in Kathmandu came one of the biggest culture shocks I have ever endured. We were directed from our friendly hotel, the Shangri La, to a modern monster, the Sheraton, renamed the Everest, which was entertaining an Eastern Regional Conference of Rotarians from all over the sub-continent, with the Queen of Nepal opening it as we arrived. The difference between the beautifully groomed rotund Rotarians and their beautifully sari'd fat wives and us in our breeches and boots made life seem completely unreal. However, we managed to survive a couple of days in the fleshpots but not without a few of us picking up the odd bug: this hit me, in Delhi transport lounge, which is better than it used to be but not the pleasantest place to spend the night. Meeting Pat at Heathrow was marvellous.

Return of the Rat

Geoff Milburn

John Allan, who provided the unique photo of A.B. Hargreaves, vanquisher of the Helyg Rat in 1931, left behind several fascinating documents which date from the 1920s. His widow's family was called Jennings and her father climbed in the Alps with W.T. Kirkpatrick (author of *Alpine Days and Nights*). Louis Jennings is particularly well known for his book *Rambles Among the Hills*, 1880, from which an extract was taken for the 1984 CCJ. The article was a shortened version of a very vivid description of Kinder Scout in the days before the public had access to the plateau.

The following article has been culled from a 1928 diary of J.B. Allan and his typed reports of the Easter 1930 and 1931 Helyg meets. We should particularly like to thank Mrs Allan for handing over such a wonderful account of the club's activities in the early Helyg days. Essentially this is the story behind the photos which appeared opposite pages 57, 69 and 70 of the Helyg jubilee book.

The Norton roared into life at the second kick despite the steady drizzle and at 2pm powered out of Newcastle. A youthful John Allan bent over his 1920s pride and joy and urged it southwards with an air of expectancy. The miles quickly passed by until near Leeds where after a few coughs the bike paused and demanded that the plugs be cleaned. Sheffield was hidden in a yellow fog and the grimy rider finally entered Derby at 8pm. The Midland Grand looked very much askance at the arrival but John carried off his most disreputable appearance with some degree of panache.

The next morning T.K. (Kingsley) made an appearance and the Nortons raced off through Uttoxeter, Stone, Ruabon, Llangollen and Corwen to Betws y Coed. Lunch was Cheshire cheese, bread and butter washed down by cider. Eventually the meet was complete when the train disgorged Maurice B. at Betws but the party made its first (and last) mistake when M.B. was stung 10 shillings for a private car to Capel.

On Sunday the Nortons were garaged at Pen y Pass where the garage hand was full of stories of 'A Hell of a Bloody Good Mist' and a 'H. of a B.G. Crowd who climbed Snowdon' etc. Consequently Snowdon was duly ascended for a pineapple at the summit and the descent was steeplechased to avoid the worst of the rain. Drinks at P y P were taken in the porch to avoid flooding the little parlour. The hike to Capel built up a healthy appetite then after a good dinner the trio walked towards Ogwen. John was sure that Tryfan would appear round each bend and was finally roundly cursed for being a false prophet before the party finally lost confidence and retraced its steps to Capel.

At Idwal a lot of water and a dead sheep rendered further climbing up the Devil's Kitchen far from desirable and after a retreat along the road Kingsley appeared with 'Billy' to take the party in turn back to Capel on the pillion. After three days of rain:

We woke up at last to a world bathed in sunshine, and decided to climb my old friend

Tryfan (even if the summit be guarded by 100 goats!...) We observe a party of two girls apparently with bare feet starting up the Gribbin — we feel distinctly humbled.

At the end of the holiday the party left Snowdon View and crossed Wales via the Denby Moors. After Mold they enquired about a ferry over the Dee and were told that it ran very frequently. It turned out to be a bridge! The homeward journey to Newcastle was accomplished via an ascent of Whernside.

The same year, 1927, John Allan joined the Climbers' Club then in 1928 they journeyed up to Skye. By 1930 John had paid his first visit to Helyg:

Helyg turns out to be just what I had imagined, but the key is not in the cache and I eventually find that it has been on the summit of Tryfan with two men who turn out to be the remnants of the Cambridge University M.C.

They had a lengthy meal and about 11.30 the Liverpool party arrived: Chantrell, Tilby, Slater, Deakin and Ward.

We spend the next hour or so getting the cars into the garage and the monstrous quantity of food into the cottage.

The first easy day was to be J.B.'s debut in the noble art of rock-climbing. Ward and Deakin made up the first rope while Tilby, J. and Slater were on the second rope which started up Faith.

J. gets into a rare mess; there appears to be only one foothold and no handholds. Clinging in this very precarious position there came up to me from far below the voice of Chantrell "change your feet". This very excellent advice seeming to me to be of a suicidal nature I retired and then once more approached the breach.

A wet and sleeting Saturday brought a battle in Tryfan's Nor Nor Gully, then on the Glyder.

As we climbed the storm got worse and on the summit a cutting wind made life almost unbearable. Moss's neck was so frozen that he could not move the muscles and we feared that we were going to have serious trouble.

During the fierce blizzard the party could not agree on the direction of descent and were eventually helped by a party of Lancastrians who had a compass and 'also be it said two females!' In the valley the rain was coming down in torrents and at Helyg they found Ward and Deakin hard at 'vingty' (vingt-et-un) the former having won 15 shillings and this he soon turned into 25 shillings.

Bell and Balfour arrived back from climbing with their females, and then Marler came in with a bottle of whisky for the troops!

Porridge, kippers, bacon and eggs, bread and marmalade and tea constituted Sunday breakfast for the early risers and:

Ward's story of what he had heard from the loft made up in wit for what it lacked in veracity, and it was noticeable that the next morning he appeared early in pyjamas and carried off with him to the loft a very fine plate of porridge.

Having descended from the tops where deep snow lay, Monolith Crack and the Zigzags were assaulted despite the fact that Ward, who was too large for the chimney, came off when he attempted to scale the wall. After dinner the party adjourned to Cobdens where they proceeded to break the Sunday Welsh Licensing laws.

On arriving back at Helyg we find the garage full up so a smart gang sets to work to remove the undesirable cars, amidst shouts, oaths, orders and counter orders. Two cars are damaged and all are moved in and out of the garage once or twice. The squad then goes in for a feed and Norman Ward acts the true tomato sandwich cutter.



While feelings were still high Balfour and Bell arrived back from Pen y Pass where Geoffrey Young had been holding a party for the elite of the climbing world. To the delight of the onlookers:

Balfour remarks that he is going to put his car away and wonders why everyone laughs — the car in question being a large Daimler. He manages to get the bonnet in and that has to suffice.

The plan for Easter Monday was for a mass assault of the Gambit as Slater had led it the year before.

Deakin was thirsting to show that he could do it a good deal better, in fact he said no-one could have done it worse.

As ever though the weather decided the question and descending from Crib Goch 'at John's colossal pace' the party made for P y P where they broke the Welsh licensing laws yet again.

Balfour departed early on the Tuesday to have a last climb 'with the two damsels at Ogwen Cottage' so J.B.A. set out with Richardson and Morland, the two new arrivals. Having had good sport vaguely following the line of Charity the group came to an abrupt halt.

Richardson then in spite of my warnings tried the first pitch of Holly Tree Wall and, as I feared, came out like a rocket, but fortunately did not hurt himself.

On the return journey the day was so fine that the Milestone Buttress called and:

We delighted a small crowd of motorists and pedestrians by our very noble ascent, my spread-eagle work on the last slab especially seemed to fill them with joy and I hope reverence.

On arrival back at Helyg at about 5.30 for tea they found a newcomer, Peaker (another Cambridge cross-country runner and Alpine climber of some considerable experience).

I had heard from Chantrell that he never brought any food and just lived on the odds and ends left by others. One party had found him living mainly on old pieces of dry bread and stale cheese.

After tea Peaker suggested some mild exercise and the two climbers drove over to the Milestone Buttress where Peaker suggested that his friend should lead:

I protested that I had never led and had only been climbing a few days. To this he replied that the sooner I learned to lead the better.

The pace was frenzied as Peaker considered that speed was the most important thing to acquire before climbing in the Alps. They emerged on the summit of Tryfan just as the sun was setting.

*I revelled in the beauties of nature and Peaker was immersed in thought of the fiancée he had that day left — *chaque un a son gout*.*

Once more within Helyg's walls Peaker announced that he had a tin of beans which would make an excellent supper and after chatting about mountain ghosts and the Helyg tragedy of 1928 they departed for bed.

The return to London was via train from Bangor.

On Crewe station I met Marler who was in a very jovial mood and stood me a taxi across London and told me many interesting tales about Geoffrey Young and the Club. Two things of great moment during the meet were the crease in my climbing bags and Moss's bathe in the stream on the coldest day after his ascent of Tryfan — the only bathe of the meet.

The April 1931 meet of which the photos turned up 54 years later was to be a grand affair.

London was enveloped in a grey blanket as I boarded the train at Euston, and a mirky wetness lay over the Black Country as we steamed north, whilst at Crewe where I had to change the rain was coming down in torrents. But my fellow travellers were in a merry mood, and helped by a sailor and his marmoset which from the safety of his tunic peered round the carriage and feasted on bananas, the time passed quickly.

At Llandudno the train was half an hour late but the Betws connection was still waiting complete with an 'out of doors damsel with the mystic name of Mallory' complete with a very old rucksack which turned their thoughts to the hills. In Betws a man in a jaeger cap turned out to be Chantrell and room was found in his car amidst a heap of rope, food and luggage. The car bowled along to Cobdens for light refreshment and in the famous little parlour they chatted to the old man wearing natty plus fours, in his accustomed seat. They then pressed on to Helyg where they found Hargreaves, Mitchell and Marples. Much later Norman Ward and Deakin arrived 'excusing their tardiness by a wild and vague story about mist, motorsits and St Asaph'.

From hot cocoa I passed to a cold bunk and a decided feeling of nausea, but a deep sleep soon overcame both this and the efforts of the Helyg Rat to force a way through the skirting to the mass of lush viands spread about the cottage, and this in spite of — or was it because of — the fact that according to Hargreaves he had within him a dose of arsenic and six poisoned biscuits — so much for his years of training on Helyg food!

I wakened to the sound of tearing canvas, and looking up saw Mitchell descending

upon me in a heaving mass of blankets from his fast disintegrating bunk...

In the damp and misty circumstances the best hunting ground was deemed to be Craig yr Ysfa. Deakin's party set off for the Great Gully whilst Chantrell, Tilby and Allan plumped for Amphitheatre Buttress. John had a 'decided liver' and was not a bit keen to climb but at last pointed to a misty buttress as being the one. For the first ten minutes he gave a fine gymnastic display on the sodden rocks before finally getting stuck. Eventually after much excitement he escaped off to one side and solemnly pronounced that it was not after all the Amphitheatre Buttress. A good scramble in deep snow then led up to Carnedd Llewelyn and the party descended to the top of the Great Gully where eerie voices floated up from the misty depths. Later it transpired that Deakin's party had failed to locate Great Gully but had in fact climbed Amphitheatre Buttress.

A meal restored enthusiasm and it was back to Cobdens for a game of 'chinqué' which caused endless excitement but the true climax to the events of the day came when the party turned in to sleep. Shortly after silence pervaded the hut the first of many loud splintering noises rent the darkness.

We passed a somewhat disturbed night owing to the efforts of the rat which spent the night tearing the boards to pieces, and did not even heed Norman who seemed to spend most of his time climbing down the ladder to see if "after that last crack the Bugger had got through", to use his own expressive words.

It was to be a long long night as the frenzied efforts of the rat to break through were mirrored by the equally frenzied movements of the occupants of the hut who were vainly trying to grab some sleep.

I was roused by the sound of a scuffle followed by a crash, much rustling about and then a few squeaks. Scrambling from my bunk I hastened to the kitchen and found Hargreaves in his shirt sleeves and armed with a pair of tongs bending over the famous Helyg Rat which was expiring in a pool of blood on the floor. Apparently while sweeping the floor he had seen it peering through the hole it had made in the skirting under the bench overnight. Seizing it by the neck with the tongs he had dragged it from its hole and beaten it to death with the poker. [Note: this contradicts another version of the story which suggests that the rat in fact dragged Hargreaves through the skirting board!] Much praise was bestowed upon his prompt action, though it was suggested that the rat was in a stupor owing to the poison. A photo was taken of the hero and the rat so that we might confound the sceptics in the club who were sure that the rat was an illusion brought on by too many visits to Cobdens, or in the case of Peaker too much stale cheese late at night.

Hargreaves lived to tell the tale but there were other rats which were to carry on waging the war and thus enhancing the story. Leaving the conquering Liverpoolians behind the next day Ward, Mitchell and Allan toiled up to Heather Terrace and having cooled themselves with snow they duly attacked Grooved Arete.

Norman having taken the Knight's Move at a run informed the party that after all he had never been on the climb before, and had feared that if he had looked long at the pitch he would never do it.

Descent was by way of Gashed Crag watched by a crowd of onlookers and with rain threatening it became a race with time.

After the evening meal we motored along to P y G where we had been invited by Bradley to see one of Finch's films. The whole hotel was gathered in the billiard room, and the

garments of the Helygites seemed a trifle outre, especially Hargreaves, but the party were soon ensconced on the floor imbibing the generous drinks provided by Donken, and very much enjoyed the films which gave some wonderful Swiss views. Norman Ward, he it noted, managed to seat himself between two "snappies" and their frequent burst of laughter proved that he was living up to his reputation.

Easter Sunday turned out to be grey and misty and as Hargreaves was not required by G.W. Young he was persuaded to lead a party up the Slab Route on Glyder Fach. First a super-stew was prepared and left to simmer then before the start an 'official' photo was taken on the rock by the cottage door (see Helyg, 1985, opp. page 70). On the way up everyone cursed the day, the distance and the stony ground.

The only interest being provided by Hargreave's solo ascent of the Bochlwyd Buttress, which was distinctly snappy. On arriving at the climb we discovered that rope was short; Hargreaves led with Norman Ward second then Chantrell and after that Wish Slater and I on about two feet of rope.

At one point Slater called down that he was insecure as he was supported by only one nail of his boot. When the nail parted company with the boot off he came. Chantrell too had his problems and slipped on some snow in a grassy corner. All this was just too much for Hargreaves who was roundly cursing the whole party for utter incompetence from the heights above:

...the whole thing being but a walk for him. To make things more interesting he invented a final pitch from the top of which he threw grassy sods on Chantrell as he climbed.

Goodger was met later down at Ogwen Cottage as well as Longland who had just returned from his solo ascent of the Kitchen. Some distance down the A5 the aroma of A1 stew assailed the hungry climbers' nostrils and spurred them on to the finish.

The stew was duly washed down at Cobdens and a large party was assembled in the parlour. Norman and I found ourselves at the side of the 'Gerton snappy' (Miss Applebaum), and ere the night was far spent Norman had promised to lead her up the Milestone, and I had agreed to bring up the rear. Such is the effect of Cobdens beer.

While some were up on Holly Tree Wall the next day jumping for the Thank God hold, getting boots stuck in chimneys and even having problems with the 'thank godder' Ward was pursuing his amorous intent.

At tea we hear of Norman's escapade with the snappy and he informed us that he had a terrible time acting as a crane. The party who climbed nearby to see the fun however said he had a suspiciously long stay in the cave and that his excuse that he lost his braces there and had to borrow hers only added to their fears.

Yet another misty day was spent on Moel Siabod where a lunch of Ryvita was washed down with a touch of brandy brought by the 'be prepared' Bill. Bill also had enough sense to avoid Walker and Proctor's invitation to join them in Great Gully and instead made homeward tracks.

We avoided old Marples who was very keen for a lift in our already overcrowded car and thus made fast time to Llangollen.

Sandwiches at a first-class pub fortified the occupants for the Talbot Arms after Bridgenorth.

A half-timbered exterior covered a comatose hostel where we sat, after ordering ham and eggs from a dubious maid, without any sign of life until our hunger overcame our

scruples, and we crept out like thieves and pushed on to Bromsgrove.

The theory that as there was a school there then there must be a good pub turned out to be false and a certain person received much abuse. Bill's omelette was so bad that he had to rush out after eating it. He cheered up by Warwick but the rudeness of the waiter at Aylesbury sent them on to the Bull's Head. Beckenham was reached at 11.30 and thus ended the meet — weary but happy. But it was not really an end, rather a beginning. Nearly 60 years later you can ask A.B. and he will tell you another version of the story, "Hmm...The Rat...I got the blighter...mine's a pint...Hmmm...Good show... It was all just a long time ago but it happened like this...Hmm..."

North Face of the Grande Ciamarella

J A Sumner

The Grande Ciamarella lies on the south eastern side of the Vanoise just in Italy, approximately 50 miles south of Mont Blanc. We hoped it would be one of the less frequented areas of the Alps, we couldn't have been more wrong. The huts were bulging, the parking places, all full to overflowing.

We decided to have a look at the North East Face of the Petite Ciamarella first, especially as the same approach is used for the Grande. The book 100 Plus Belles Courses of the Vanoise suggests it as a must before tackling the mighty Grande, so who were we to disobey!

The area around the Evettes Hut from which both faces are done, was very similar to Montenvers, people milling everywhere in all types of fancy dress from bikinis to overdressed head-banded climbers in brand new gear.

Alex and myself arrived late at the hut and so had to suffer the packed hut purgatory in the dormitories. I was wedged between two enormous sweating/farting French trippers, whilst Alex found himself next to a greasy sweating something or other with homosexual tendencies.

By three in the morning we were heading up the moraine valley towards the glacier snout. A track on the left brought us out onto the glacier plateau. The temperature was - 4 degrees C, the night perfectly clear. We cramponed up easy angled ice slopes towards the Col Tonini breaking away rightwards to tackle the North East Face. We zigzagged through serac barriers and crevasses to arrive beneath the final steepening snow/ice slope. The sun only just getting us as we arrived on the summit.

A pleasant route just right for starters. The view from the summit was magnificent with Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn and the Dauphine peaks all perfectly clear. We descended the same route as we had come up, passing more and more happy trippers as we approached the hut.

A cold spell with strong winds lasted for a few days before the next *beau temps* arrived and we again plodded up to the Evettes Hut. This time we decided to arrive early at the hut and also have a meal, this resulted in a much better night's kip than before.

We gained the glacier next morning at the same point as before but an hour earlier, the temperature this time - 6 degrees C. New snow had fallen a couple of days before which had hidden all the tracks, nobody in front of us, so we took a big curving line below the Petite Ciamarella towards the Col Tonini.

Topping the Col just as dawn was breaking gave us our first view of the North Face of the Grande Ciamarella. A big concave wall some 500m high, impressive and feeling remote. Nobody was behind us so we had the face to ourselves. The initial pitch over the 'schrund was taken at its easiest point via the avalanche runnel, the snow ice perfect after the hard frost.

Pitch after pitch followed. The ice although stripped of its snow cover was taking the axes well with bombproof snarg knock-ins. A wind sprang up and the cold became intense, feet felt cold in our Asolo double boots. Strange to think of



the incredible heat we had had in the valley.

After ten 50m rope lengths we topped out, having taken four hours on the face, the guidebook time was four and a half, so we felt quite pleased. It was also Alex's first North Face. The South West Face was in complete contrast being in hot sun without the wind. We had some nosh and contemplated the dreadfully tedious looking way back to the hut. The West Col guide gives it as long but technically easy. The alternative was to descend the West Ridge (AD) which looked like a stonefall chute nightmare, ending in a huge 'schrund, we opted for the tedious but safe descent.

It started by descending a huge scree slope to the Ciamarella Glacier, traversing this in incredible heat to the south ridge of the Pointe de Chalanson, and another huge boulder scree descent took us into a moraine filled valley. The thought now of having to ascend some 600m to come out above the Col of the Selle d'Albaron made us feel like giving up.

Another nosh and a drink of snow melt revived us somewhat. The flog which followed was pure misery. We reached the ascent/descent track from the Albaron and negotiated a series of big crevasses. The track zig-zagging down through tricky areas between huge crevasses brought us out at last on the flat Evettes Glacier. We arrived at the hut at six pm having taken about eight hours to get back from the top of the Grande Ciamarella.

Tarf Munros Campaign

Ted Maden

To the north of Blair Atholl lies a hidden wilderness where the River Tarf is encompassed by four Munros: Carn a'Chlamain, Beinn Dearg and the remote peaks of Carn an Fhìdhleir and An Sgarsoch. The book 'The Munros' describes these under three separate walks, the first two peaks being approached separately from Old Blair, the last two in a single walk from the Linn of Dee. However, I regarded the hills as an integral logical group and wanted to walk over them in a way that reflected their distribution around the Tarf. It seemed that an interesting long weekend might be spent by first traversing Beinn Dearg and down to the Tarf Bothy for the night, then over Carn an Fhìdhleir and An Sgarsoch, back to the bothy for a second night, and out over Carn a'Chlamain the following day.

I made a tentative plan to carry out this expedition during Easter 1988 but this was shelved due to other events. Then on the last Saturday evening of April I drove North from Liverpool with the intention of putting into effect a modification of the plan. The revised plan was to walk in over Beinn Dearg on Sunday and to complete the walk on Monday (the May long weekend) by combining the second and third days of the original plan into a single long day. On arriving at Blair Atholl at about midnight and seeking somewhere to sleep in the car I chanced upon an enclosure where snowploughs were parked for the summer. This discovery enabled me to enjoy a secluded and undisturbed night.

Rain and low cloud greeted me in the morning. The prospect of navigating over Beinn Dearg into the wilderness of the Tarf headwaters now seemed singularly unattractive and I repaired to the Atholl Arms to reconsider. The Atholl Arms is one of those fine, all too rare traditional hotels where coffee is served by the pot rather than the cup. In the comfort, warmth and leisure thus afforded I resolved to do at least something that would justify the long car journey. The weather showed no sign of improving and I eventually decided upon a circuit around several summits at the head of Glen Doll. This was accomplished under character-building conditions of continuous moderately heavy rain, cloud which never lifted above 2,000ft, melting snow underfoot during several hours above the cloudbase, and fellrunning shoes! Living now in Liverpool I had overlooked the possibility that snow might still be present in quantity on the Scottish hills at this time of year.

On the next two weekends I was occupied for the most part at home but I discovered the Clwyd range as a fine venue for Sunday evening training outings. Then a lucky combination of circumstances enabled me to realise a long-standing ambition of doing the Welsh Three Thousanders in a day. The less usual north to south direction was chosen, friends coming for much of the way but retiring before the final section. It was a sunny day but with an increasing south-easterly wind, and I had a real fight against a buffeting cross wind on Crib Goch before attaining the summit of Snowdon, pausing briefly there to admire Llyn Quellyn gleaming silver in the evening sun.

Success on the Welsh Three Thousanders suggested a further revision to the Tarf Munros plan. Surely this walk also could be accomplished in a single day, obviating the need for carrying burdensome overnight equipment?

The next weekend, the Whit long weekend, I set off up the M6 on Saturday evening, my destination undetermined. An inward battle was taking place between my conscience, which said I should accept an offer to go climbing in the Lake District, and an obsession to get to grips with the Tarf walk. I delayed the decision by continuing up the M6 to the Penrith exit. I postponed it further by driving into a service area just off the M6 for a rest. The attempt to rest was disrupted every few seconds by cars that roared past toward Keswick and the Lake District. The resulting image of bank holiday crowds in the Lake District, together with a tenuous theory that the weather, which was showing signs of breaking, might be better in Scotland, made up my mind. I continued northwards, and at some time after midnight renewed my acquaintance with the silent company of the snowploughs.

I slept for a few hours and arose at 4.30, consumed a modest breakfast of marmalade sandwiches with coffee from a thermos, drove the short distance to Old Blair, parked the car and set off a 5.15. I had a light day 'sack with a few spare clothes, further packets of assorted sandwiches and a flask for water. Again I wore fellrunning shoes.

The first two or three miles of the approach to Beinn Dearg led on estate roads initially through a delightful green wood and so to open moorland. This section was just off the edge of my map of the Cairngorms and I was glad that I had studied the description in 'The Munros'. Even so, not having a photographic memory for route descriptions, I hoped that I was choosing the correct turnings on the estate roads. It was a hazy morning but in due course I sighted a substantial hill to the north with a further one beyond. Beinn Dearg and Carn a' Fhìdhleir? No such luck. Consultation with the map, whose territory I had now entered, showed the further peak to be Beinn Dearg, the nearer one a subsidiary top called Beinn a' Chait. I suspect this latter is seldom visited because it is below 3,000ft but is not a Corbett either, lacking the 500ft re-ascent qualification.

Haze makes distances look greater than they really are. I made rapid progress on the estate road to a bothy maintained by the Mountain Bothies Association. This was deserted on this occasion but was in good condition and afforded a brief rest. Shortly beyond, a stalkers' path led up from a turning point on an ugly, bulldozed continuation of the estate road to a broad col between Beinn a' Chait and Beinn Dearg. I arrived on the top of Beinn Dearg at 8.10am in just under three hours from Old Blair, which was very encouraging, as the time given in 'The Munros' was four hours and forty minutes.

The summit of Beinn Dearg is an island of pink Cairngorm granite boulders amidst a great area of schist hills. At 3,307ft (1,008 m) it is the highest point for miles around and commands an extensive view. I paused for only a few minutes but the memory of that summit view is indelible. A fresh easterly wind was trying to clear the haze. A grey cloud cover and a few drops of rain heightened my concentration against a possible break in the weather and consequent route finding complications. Under the grey sky the dominant colour was brown, the sombre brown of heather that is not yet in bloom. To the east billowing brown moorlands stretched away to Carn a' Chlamain, which looked quite small from

this vantage point, while still further away the mass of Beinn a'Ghlo loomed colourless on the skyline beyond the unseen defile of Glen Tilt. To the north-east Carn an Fhìdhleir, the next objective, rose seemingly distantly across the emptiness of Glen Tarf. To the north-west and north an array of undulating hills formed the watershed enclosing the remote headwaters of the Tarf, linking eventually with Carn and Fhìdhleir. Westwards empty moorlands stretched far into the distance towards the unseen A9. Not a road or a person was in sight.

A choice between two routes was now available. I could follow the watershed ridge of the Tarf to Carn an Fhìdhleir, but this way appeared to be rough, undulating and circuitous, or I could take a direct line down to the Tarf a few miles below its source and then go over a shoulder and onto the slopes of the Fhìdhleir. Previous study of the map had not resolved this choice but now the direct route appeared to be quicker. I passed over Beinn Garbh, which was formerly classified as a Top of Beinn Dearg in the 1969 edition of Munro's Tables. Compared with its successors this edition is a bumper fun issue of the Tables. It lacks map references, gives distances and directions of the principle Munros from the nearest railway station, and contains many Tops which have since been demoted through being considered insufficiently significant. The decision as to what should or should not be a Top is frequently arbitrary. Surely these demoted Tops are of historical and sentimental value as a record of man's efforts to classify nature, and as such remain worthy of pursuit by fortunate owners of the 1969 edition. At any rate I seek to include them all, as well as the newly promoted and therefore obligatory Munros and Tops in the most recent edition. In the event Beinn Garbh was directly on route and was easily collected on the way down to the Tarf.

The brown waters of the Tarf were only three yards wide where I met them and I crossed dry shod. After following the winding course of the river downstream for half a mile I turned up over the previously mentioned shoulder and so down the other side to a subsidiary glen which descended gently from high on the slopes of the Fhìdhleir. Near the foot of the glen were the stone remains of a croft, little more than a foot high, surrounded by a patch of bright green turf which contrasted with the surrounding brown. I wondered who had formerly inhabited this remote vastness, more than six miles from any path even in today's estate network. I imagined possibly a summer shepherd in the era before deer. Since then a more colourful and romantic theory has come to mind: perhaps the Fiddler himself? I continued up the subsidiary glen, whose stream drained into the Tarf lower down. The stream wound from side to side of the little glen, necessitating frequent recrossings or ascents of the bank by a vague deer path. Eventually I emerged onto the upper slopes which I followed past an old snowslope to the summit of the Fhìdhleir. Six miles of rough, trackless country from Beinn Dearg had taken just two hours.

I stood at the meeting point of the three counties of Perth, Aberdeen and Inverness. The rivers of the surrounding wilderness flowed into the Tay, the Dee and the Spey. A cotton wool cloud that had earlier seemed to be settled on the summit had lifted and conditions were beginning to look good. The haze persisted, however, and to the north-west only a few miles of upper Glen Feshie were clearly visible.

I was still feeling fresh and turned to descend south-eastwards to the col

between the Fhìdhleir and An Sgarsoch. Two hill walkers were coming up from the Tarf bothy and were impressed by the fact that I was jogging down the upper easy slopes. In fact fellrunning shoes, though disapproved of by some authorities, can make hill walking so much easier than boots do. In reasonable conditions, the assessment of which must be judged personally, they enhance not only speed and comfort, but thereby safety margins too, provided always one keeps a close eye on the ground immediately ahead. Moreover, fellrunning shoes are much less damaging to the environment than are big boots, a significant consideration during these days of heavy hill usage. Even so, in the popular areas I seldom see more than one to two percent of hill walkers wearing running shoes.

After a brief halt for refreshments in the shelter of a peat hag at the col I continued up An Sgarsoch and, even on this remote hill, detected traces of an incipient track on the summit moss, presumably formed by booted hillwalkers.

An Sgarsoch, like Carn an Fhìdhleir, is a name that can be conjured with, for Ann Scarsoch was an attractive young lady ornithologist in G.J.F. Dutton's *The Ridiculous Mountains* (Chapter 1, 'A Good Clean Break').

To return to the real mountains, the map revealed two potential subsidiary tops located to the south and east of the main summit. The 1969 Tables list only the eastern one, Druim Sgarsoch, and this has subsequently been deleted, but I took in both for good measure.

On Druim Sgarsoch I rested briefly out of the wind. The sun was shining from a pale blue sky and the haze had cleared sufficiently to reveal the nearer features of the main Cairngorm massif to the north. Across the emptiness of the Feshie-Geldie watershed were Beinn Bhrotain and Monadh Mor, two peaks that had eluded me on a previous occasion due to shortness of time and inauspicious weather. The simplest of mental arithmetic was sufficient to dissuade me from attempting to include them today. Beyond Beinn Bhrotain the Lairig Ghru and flanking Four Thousanders were just visible. Considerably to the south of the main Cairngorm mass and several miles to the east from An Sgarsoch across the headwaters of the Tilt rose Carn an Rìgh, another rather inaccessible peak that had also previously eluded me. On the present occasion I was happy simply to drink in this panorama of mountain wilderness. In due course I started down to the south and was soon picking my way down a deceptively stony hillside to more heather and the middle reaches of the Tarf.

The river was much wider here than it had been upstream, but after the recent dry weather it was little more than ankle deep and fording it presented no difficulty. After heavy rain it would be very different, and dangerous if not impassable. During the mile walk upstream along the flat, idyllic glen to the Tarf bothy I was surprised to discover no trace of a path. Shortly before the bothy a wire bridge spanned the river but it did not appear to be very easy to cross in the event of a spate. I did not test it as I was now on the correct (south) bank for the bothy, which I reached after crossing a subsidiary burn from Carn a'Chlamain.

The bothy boasted an old 'AA Hotel' sign on the door but did not live up to the promise. It was beginning to disintegrate and possessed water-logged earth floors except for one room that had been refurbished and was weather and water proof. Although adequate it was not outstandingly inviting and I was not sorry that I had chosen to do the entire walk in a day.

Even so I did not relish the thought of the pull up to Carn a'Chlamain so I told

myself that the bothy was already half way there when measured from sea level. After only a brief halt I left at 1.30. I followed the burn initially and after about an hour gained the north Top and then the main summit.

A couple had recently come up the other side of the hill from Forest Lodge in Glen Tilt. We exchanged greetings, I was tempted to descent with them and request a ride down the glen. On a previous occasion I had come down from the northern end of Beinn a' Ghlo at dusk one November evening, and, fortunately finding a bridge over the River Tilt, had slogged the full distance down the glen in the dark from three miles above Forest Lodge to Blair Atholl, which is eight miles below the Lodge. The present moment of weakness was prompted by that memory, but was overcome quickly by a firm resolve to complete the planned walk.

To avoid part of Glen Tilt I descended a subsidiary glen which led directly southwards from Carn a'Chlamain, joining the main glen just above Marble Lodge. I had now left the brown moorlands behind and had re-entered the delightful new world of spring green with appreciable numbers of people. Even on this occasion, however, the walk down Glen Tilt seemed endless. I made a mistake in leaving the road to follow a footpath (the old right of way), which started to climb and lead me off course away above the true left bank of the river. Realising the error, I made a hasty descent of a field and rejoined the road just before it crossed a bridge to the right bank. The final section through the woods was covered mostly at a jog. When I emerged at a junction with the road to Old Blair two policemen disconcertingly appeared and asked if I had seen a group of people whom they specified. It was an initially baffling inquiry to a tired walker but the details, which I have since forgotten, were sufficiently defined to enable me to exclude having seen the group. After rendering what information I could about the transient population of the glen I continued along the final short stretch of road to the car, which I reached soon after 5.00, just under 12 hours after setting out.

The walk had afforded an elegant solution to a topographical problem posed by an inaccessible group of Munros; it had taken me into a particularly wild and, I suspect, unfrequented tract of country between Beinn Dearg and Carn an Fhìdhleir, it had been carried out at a good pace throughout and it had given magnificent views, the slight haze emphasising the distances and the emptiness.

During the last half hour dark clouds had gathered, unnoticed by me as I jogged along the wooded estate road. Moments after I entered the car a heavy downpour commenced. As I listened to the rain beating down on the roof of the car my satisfaction was complete.



Andy Sharp on 'Menages a Chien' (E5 6a), South East Wales. Photo: John Harwood

A Quiet Life

John Harwood

Llangattock, a north-facing escarpment near Abergavenny, has been described more than once as one of Wales's most esoteric crags. I've never been sure exactly what such a term means when applied to a cliff but it certainly doesn't sound very complimentary. To me (and a select few), however, Llangattock offers a certain type of climbing which can be immensely rewarding. The best part, Chwar Pant y Rhiw, provides pitches of 100ft or so up steep natural lines spoiled only by the sloping grass slopes above. Far removed from the bolt-protected sports-wall type of climbing of Malham, Llangattock represents the 'real thing' for me.

The recurrent damp themes of recent summers had reduced our visits and it was only for the second time in the year that we lay back in the sun, eating our lunch and planning an attack. For about three years I had been pestering Tony Penning for us to put an alternative finish to *The Hundred Year War*. The line was obvious, up a huge smooth groove, but Tony came up with a series of lame excuses as to why we should try something else. The week before the excuse had been a twenty-foot roof in the centre of the cliff which, surprisingly, went at a relatively easy standard to give *Heaven Can Wait*. This time he had already been at the crag an hour when I arrived and had abseiled down what most people would describe as an awesome line. The parts of the route were several. Central was a massive corner which began above the main roof at 50ft. The corner petered out into bands of overhanging and decidedly loose-looking walls liberally sprinkled with roofs. The way up to the big roof was not at all obvious and the overhang itself could only be realistically surmounted via a huge flake that didn't appear to be attached to anything. Tony had already looked at the top walls and thought that, given enough time, he could find some sound rock. He had also jumped up and down on the huge flake which had still stayed in place. In fact, provided that we could surmount the minor problem of the first 50ft of overhanging rock, it looked as though our route of the year was on.

So I sat munching my sandwiches, drinking my coffee and generally directing operations while Tony, as was only proper, did all the work. He retaliated by using my pegs whenever there was an opportunity. In the middle of all this a climber from Bristol, who was on holiday, arrived. His mouth gaped and his eyes bulged — he couldn't believe we were seriously intending to climb the line! The fact that he was only in his trainers he tried to use as an excuse for not joining us. However, Tony's remark that the foot-holds wouldn't stay in place long enough for him to use them soon quashed that excuse!

Meantime the gardening operations were nearing completion, a fair pile of rubble had accumulated at the cliff's base (unfortunately too far out to shorten the route) and I had to stop soloing easy routes and return to supervise final arrangements. Tony was now cock-a-hoop that the roof, corner and top walls all looked 'on'. Getting up to the roof had not been thought about! I could only see one realistic way up the start and, after Tony had attempted to shift rock off various other bits of cliff, he reached the same conclusion. Unfortunately,

because of the angle of the cliff and the lack of reliable gear it was impossible to garden the way up to the roof properly. Between us we did our best and placed a few pegs at strategic intervals. The whole venture still looked very problematic though and it was only the onward rush of evening that propelled us back to the line.

The first obstacle was a spiky tree 15ft up. The overhanging rock around this could be climbed and a lodgement made behind the tree. Further progress up to the first peg had to be made with great care to avoid ending up as a human kebab on the razor-sharp upright end of the trunk. Now came the first real problem — how to reach a break below the roof. The best option was probably to climb an overhanging finger crack followed by a hand-traverse left along the break to a resting place. Unfortunately, none of this had been (or could be) gardened. The alternative was a steep wall on the left which would probably go free but which was hard enough to need some reasonable protection. The latter being absent meant that the third option was the only alternative to retreat — to use aid. Now 'aid' is a dirty word amongst many new routers but Tony and I are old-fashioned and, provided that we admit honestly what we do, and don't ruin a climb for other people then we don't mind the odd point of aid — after all it gives the jackals something to go at, doesn't it?

So Plan Three came into being with a poor Friend and a nut used to get established on the wall which led by dynamic moves to a haven under the roof. Crouched there under the jutting overhangs was a hell of a place and the atmosphere was obviously getting to Tony. Any fall would almost certainly have resulted in a grounder as he ripped the gear out, and up above him loomed the massive flake poised like a latter day Sword of Damocles. The Bristol lad squatted blinkingly in silence while I made sure I was belayed firmly out of the line of fire. A short holdless corner led up to the roof itself and Tony could not get a peg in properly to use to reach the flake. Eventually two pegs close together were used and, with a not-so-silent prayer, he leapt up for the flake's edge. I waited for the sky to go dark but it didn't and, almost immediately Tony clipped a peg runner above the roof. There was now at least a possibility of holding him if the flake came off — provided I was still alive! Three moves later and he was at the bottom of the corner.

The corner had always been somewhere Tony had dreamed of reaching and I had dreamed of climbing. It was in such an inaccessible position that even to get there was some sort of achievement, but as far as we were concerned it merely opened the way for the delights above.

After a short rest, Tony got stuck into climbing the corner which went quickly in spite of some wet holds. Then a period of bobbing ensued. Two moves up, a loose hold removed, two moves down, attempt at resting etc. A quarter of an hour of this led to high blood pressure in all three of us. Eventually the bobbing resembled a cork released under water and he shot up half of the top wall with hardly a pause.

A slight hitch in the plan now occurred. For some reason the top 20ft hadn't been gardened at all. Tony told us all about this oversight while he tried to go left, or left and up, or up and left, or anywhere but off over the next 20 minutes. At last in a flurry of falling rocks and with what he reliably informed us was his last gasp, he got to the belay. "My God!" muttered the Bristol lad and turned and fled. I was

left to retrieve the gear.

Normally, the business of seconding is an enjoyable, safe process. Securely belayed and looked after by the likes of Andy Sharp I can take pleasure in the difficulties of climbing and the views while nobody minds an old man like me taking the odd rest. Here things were different. I had an exhausted leader above me who even if he could hold the rope for a while would quite likely start laughing and drop me! Moreover, the climb was too steep for the rope to help much, coupled to the fact that any strain was likely to dislodge blocks from the top half.

Accordingly, I climbed very carefully. Apart from the seriousness the climbing was excellent and varied and, needless to say, the situations were 'space-walking'. All went well until near the top of the corner when I lunged up for a sharp edge. A large piece of the latter became detached and smashed onto my knee as I was bridged out. It was only the fear of dislodging blocks from above if I fell that allowed me to swing back down on a two-finger jam and recover myself. The rest of the pitch went stiffly but without further mishap.

As darkness gathered Tony rushed down to the 'sacks and I limped after him. We got back to Tony's car just as night fell, only to be met by an irate farmer's wife. Now I had met her earlier and obeyed her request to park elsewhere whereas Tony had, apparently, stormed up the hillside leaving her shouting after him. She was now having her revenge by blocking our exit with her car and making much of the fact. Tony, ever tactful, escalated the situation by proposing various solutions including knocking her car out of the way! Now everyone knows I like a quiet life and besides which the pubs were open so I went on ahead, talked nicely to her husband and opened the gate. But it was all to no avail. Tony was cracking jokes which seemed lost on the woman who, frothing at the mouth, demanded that her husband do something about the "cheeky English bastard." The farmer, stung into action by her blistering words, strode forward ready to oblige until he saw what a bruiser Penning looked like! He then had to calm his wife down in order to extricate himself. There was a further delay while they each accused the other of losing the car key and then we could finally get to my car and make a belated appearance at the pub.

It was a quiet white-washed stone building with hanging baskets of flowers. The sort of romantic location that young lovers (or old ones) go to and, sure enough, there were three couples cuddling in the bar as we burst in. Tony was covered in soil and dirt with his trusty new-routeing clothes reeking of moss and sweat. My shirt and trousers were ripped badly and an ever-enlarging red stain of blood covered my right leg. The usual starting order of "72 pints of bitter and a scabby dog to eat" set the tone for the rest of the evening. We enjoyed ourselves hugely. Tony described every move in detail several times with actions and pondered on our mental health. I laughed so much the tears ran in rivulets down my cheeks and my stomach ached. The young lovers didn't know what had hit them. The one thing that everyone, especially the landlord, agreed was that *I.Q. Test* was a good name for the route because we had clearly failed ours!

So here as I lie in the Orthopaedic Hospital in Cardiff I think of the X-ray of my right knee, and the operation to come tomorrow. Some days in climbing stand out so much they seem burned in one's memory. Such was that day at Llangattock. No one could ever call *I.Q. Test* esoteric.

P.S. We went back the following week and climbed my groove which we named *Obsession* because of my persistence. It was a superb pitch which I have recommended to many of my friends. Although I would dearly love the like of Fowler and Littlejohn to repeat *IQ Test*, I couldn't in conscience recommend it in case the flake did finally decide to desert the climb. So there it stands in the brooding, dark days of winter, one of the most impressive lines there could be — will it ever be repeated?



Above: Andy Sharp on 'Losing Control', Raming Hole, Pembroke. Photo: John Harwood



T. Forster climbing 'Barbarella' (E4 6a) Pembroke. Photo: John Harwood

The Old Boy

Dave Gregory

I rarely go to the gym, except in the winter evenings. If I get a summer evening free I prefer to get out on the local crags, and office hours I'm deskbound. Occasionally, in the winter, I sneak an hour after lunch and stagger along to display my ineptitude on the wall. There are usually some of the city's young stars working on the multi-gym but I'm not in competition for a place on the masochism machine. Exercise of that sort doesn't do you any good in the long run. There is, as we all learn, no justice in life.

One does as one is told in callow youth, stiffens the upper lip, plays for the side and what does one reap from the earnest sowing of team games? What legacy from the Rugby, Soccer, Water Polo, Hockey? Broken fingers, arthritic toes, slipped discs, fractured knee caps, immobile hips, torn shoulder muscles. The adult population would be much fitter if Physical Education were no longer taught in schools. Given that one has accumulated an average litany of lessons, multi-gyms are best avoided. If one's joints leave the assembly with a given number of thousand flexures on the guarantee form then it seems profligate, if not foolish, to waste them on lumps of metal, and besides pumping iron is such hard work.

As usual I left the heavy metal alone and had a series of short lurches up the wall, interspersed with longer rests on the benches. The young stars adjusted one side of the machine to their needs and worked through the sequence of exercises, checking it off in their record book against last time's total, returning to the benches for a rest before the next session. I thought I recognised one of the youths as he came back to the bench but his returning of my nod when our eyes met was that of a stranger and I lunged my last lurch and left.

He was there a week later, alone this time, and looking very different. His hair, which had been almost shoulder length, was now almost short back and sides, and the disguise gone, I recognised him and searched frantically in my memory for his names. Janes? Jones? What did his mates call him? God, can't call him that. Martin, that's it.

"Martin, isn't it? Martin Jones?"

"Yes" he said, "I'm surprised you remember."

"It was a bit of a fight," I admitted.

"At least you didn't use my nickname."

No, I've stopped falling into that trap. An amazing number of children are condemned by their parents to initials like 'R.C.', 'M.E.S.', 'W.C.' and so on, leading to obvious corruptions. Even single initials are a pitfall. "The Headmaster would like to see Smith P. in his office at once please." Have you met C.R.A.Porter? Believe me, somewhere there is some poor neurotic with a surname like Trickett, or Tate, or Thomas, disguising the fact that his forenames are Stephen Herbert Ivan. Bet on it.

His nickname was fairly scatological so we slid away from that topic and I commented on my not having known he was a climber.

"I didn't start until I left school" he said "and then I got keen on it. I only live half a mile away and I come up here most days. I've worked out when it's not crowded and I spend a couple of hours on the machine and the wall."

"Yes, I've seen you," I said "pumping that iron. You seem to be pretty fit," and I launched into my explanation of why the condition of my discs, elbows, knees, in fact the whole of me made throwing weights about a foolish matter. He was kind enough, or was it residual respect, not to dwell too long on my falling to pieces and I turned the conversation back.

"I thought that one of your reasons for not working in Maths was that you were going to be a professional footballer. What happened to that?"

He smiled at the remembrance of his mathematical apathy and acknowledged the question. "Oh, I did, I did. They took me on. I used to go to the ground every day. Cleaning the team's boots; coach yelling at you; sprinting bursts; running, running, running. Two leg squats, one leg squats, stepping up and down on benches. Running, running, running."

"I packed it in. I couldn't stand the training."

In Good Company

Bill Trench

There are those who can write a story, and unfortunates like myself who find it difficult, the older you get the more the memories become misty, with a few that still make your hands sweat when you re-live them in your mind.

At the end of hostilities in Europe, I ran off to sea. Nothing romantic about it. Just a compulsion to do what I felt like doing, rather than being dictated to all the time. The following five years living by my wits led me into a variety of unusual jobs needless to say. At the butt end of society one of these was my illusions of becoming a trapeze artist. I gave that up, after (through over-confidence) falling off backwards and somersaulting to the ground. Luckily I landed feet first, collapsing heavily. A first hand object lesson in gravitational pull. And never ever forgotten.

There have been other instances when for no reason I can think of I'm still alive (but they have no bearing) my own conclusion is when the time comes, that is it. During a short visit back home, I met Geoff Roberts again, (he was only a boy when I had seen him last) and he briefed me on his climbing interest. At that stage there was no way of knowing how this information was going to lead me to defy the force of gravity, and meet some of the best friends I've ever had.

We arranged to go to the hills after I showed him a pair of Timpson boots with tricouni nails that I had bought. Camping below Ogwen the next day, he kindly showed me how to climb rocks and I improved more rapidly than he expected, but always I remembered how fast the descent could be if you didn't hang on.

Upgrading the routes, we were leading through before long, but soon the partnership ended with Geoff leaving the area on his way to University. Before he left I was introduced to a character called John Lees who was in the Royal Air Force, just posted to Valley. Johnnie was a brilliant climber, he moved clinically



and smoothly, savouring hard moves like he enjoyed them, and laughing when I found difficulty. Never selfish, sharing the best pitches unless I doubted my ability. He always saw the funny side and enjoyed blowing up my ego telling other climbers how I did a route with tricounis missing in the toe of my boots. And the yarn about yet another venture to Cloggy when I didn't fancy leading the first pitch of Great Slab in nails, and I put somebody's discarded pumps on. The old plimsolls had been there for weeks and were about three sizes too big, but I thought they would suit the climb better (being suddenly pushed up front). Gwen Moffat was in the middle and Lees wanted to use his camera. So away we went, oblivious of his desire to do the top traverse.

There was I in these flip flops, encouraged by the other two who had safely belayed. Lees enjoyed taking the mickey, and the decaying rubber managed to at least stay intact. When we reached the Top Traverse it looked daunting, the holds were barely adequate and my rubber plimsolls curled up in protest, but praise must go to the other two, there was a line of runners left on which encouraged me to advance towards them. However every one of the runners fell off before I reached them, had I slipped they would perhaps have slowed me up a little, well I like to think they would have.

John still drags me out on wet days to climb, even at 64 the rock is still magnetic, the tingle of pleasure there as you find a good hold, and the laughs; let us never forget the laughs.

Like, the time down in Cornwall when the rubber dinghy which had taken hours to pump up sank in seconds. Or, foraging for rations to keep going on McRaes Farm in Glen Brittle, and stealing an egg, only to find it was a dummy and having to make do on a mixture of sardines and porridge, mixed. And last, but by no means least, the motor bike stories, the falling off in particular. Thank you friends, for the good times.

The Way of the Dragon

Mike Mortimer

In the sixties Alleghe was a charming, somewhat untidy, village, still unspoilt and little disturbed by its few visitors. A wild campsite on the far side of the lake provided an idyllic base where we ate huge meals and lazed in the heat of the Italian sun. A visit to the shops was almost always an excuse to buy multi-flavoured ice-creams or to polish off a kilo of peaches at one sitting.

A good route was inevitably celebrated with a meal at Pensione Coldai presided over by an old guide (I don't think we ever knew his name) who always took great pleasure in asking about our climbs and who was eager to see that our substantial appetites were satisfied; in this he never once failed.

On one occasion, as Roger Baxter-Jones and I were finishing our meal, another climber came over and asked if he might join us. He was a Belgian dedicated to free-climbing and, on hearing that we were English, thought that he would enquire if we could sell him some Clog wires which he had great difficulty obtaining. Before we could answer he was called away to be interviewed by a journalist concerning his latest new route. This confirmed what I had already suspected, namely that this was the great Claudio Barbier, famous for his solo climbs, especially on the North Faces of the Tre Cima, and so by the time he returned we had sorted out all our surplus wires. After these were gratefully accepted and duly paid for we spent the remainder of the evening drinking wine and listening to Claudio talk about his past exploits, climbing philosophy and plans for the future. It was at that time that Reinhold Messner was denouncing the excessive use of technical aids in mountaineering, 'the murder of the impossible' as he referred to it. Messner argued that climbers should reject the abuse of the peg and the bolt and retain a taste for uncertainty and the unknown. He went on to plead that they should avoid killing the 'mythological dragon' which he hoped still survived in Alpine adventure. Claudio told us that he was searching the Dolomites for new routes which could be climbed in a manner consistent with Messner's ideals. Later that year he established a fine free-climb with the necessary degree of commitment which he felt deserved to be called 'La Voie du Dragon'.

Many years later Marjorie and I caught the early morning bus up the Passo Falzarego. A cold wind was blowing but the mighty southern buttresses of the Tofana glowed invitingly golden in the morning sun. There were no queues for the cable-car at that time and we soon emerged alone from the upper station into a world which seemed composed of only three elements, sun, sky and a face-burning spindrift. To the south we could just see the giants of the Dolomites, their outlines blurred by the wind-driven snow, but soon the biting cold drove us down towards the Forcella Lagazuoi. Having escaped the worst of the wind we turned north and headed for the Rifugio Scotoni and Armentarola.

The easy skiing enabled us to appreciate the wild solitude, such a contrast to the crowded pistes of Cortina and, after a short while, we became aware of series of steep walls to our right. Although of relatively modest dimensions (difficult to

judge anyway under the conditions) it was obvious that these faces possessed all the attributes which make for great classic climbs. The most attractive objectives turned out to be the south and south-west faces of Lagazuoi. First on the agenda was the Cima Scotoni by the Lacedelli, a route for a long time shrouded in obscurity but now recognised as one of the great Dolomite climbs of the post-war years. It can be climbed entirely free with the crux coming as early as pitch 4. Graded VIII- I found it desperate (and serious) using six points of aid. The remaining dozen or so pitches are more reasonable but nevertheless sustained at V and VI with sparse protection, lots of excitement and never without interest. At just over one third height a square-cut overhang bars the way. Our Italian topo indicated a 'stretto cunicolo' to the left and just as progress seemed impossible I discovered that this meant a narrow stomach traverse, at once both gripping and precarious for a good 10 metres. A little higher just as we were totally committed, having traversed back right above the overhangs, a storm broke on the Marmalada. The bulging wall above looked terrifying but this section proved to be the most enjoyable (and the least protected) of the whole climb despite the rapidly deteriorating weather. Carrying no foul-weather gear we avoided the summit by escaping along the ledge-system cutting the upper part of the face and we were soon back in the valley. That night it snowed!

The South-West Diedre of the Cima del Lago is a mini classic, easier and shorter than the Scotoni, but with plenty of character and once in the diedre retreat would be problematic. We did it a year later and just as on the Lacedelli we had the mountain to ourselves.

The face I really wanted to climb, however, was the South-West Face of Lagazuoi Nord for this was taken by Claudio's 'Way of the Dragon' a route now 20 years old and a popular classic, possibly because it is reached by an easy half-hour of downhill walking from the Falzarego cable-car.

So, the following day saw us picking our way through the ruins of First World War barracks and fortifications which litter many of the mountains in this part of the Dolomites and are particularly evident on both sides of the Forcella Lagazuoi. On our previous visit we had skied across a landscape of pristine purity but in summer the devastation declares itself as a memorial to an exceptionally insane period of history. We reflected that here men had once laboured long and hard, living grimly and many must have died hopelessly for some of the fortifications appear quite impregnable.

The route can be likened to the Cassin on the Cima Ovest though on a rather smaller scale. After a couple of introductory pitches some superb climbing, first delicate, then steep and strenuous, leads to a spectacular horizontal traverse above the yellow and black overhangs dominating the face. Like the Cassin the traverse gives access to a series of steep cracks leading more or less directly to ledges just below the summit. Every bit of the way is interesting, elegant and, of course, completely free.

The best descent is notable because it reaches the col to the south by a series of man-made steps and paths dating from the First World War. We found wooden ladders which, despite being bleached by more than 70 years of sun, were still serviceable. This peak was obviously used as a look-out for it commands an excellent view in all directions.

As we carefully followed the steps downwards I pictured those miserable

soldiers many of them far from their homes in the lowlands, not there out of choice as we were, but conscripted to climb up and down this useless pile of stones for the glory of King and Country. In this strange mood I was aware of other ghosts, those of Claudio and Roger who both died in the mountains and wistfully I wondered if those wires of ours had been used in establishing the Way of the Dragon...

Below: Derek Walker on the Cassin, Torre Trieste, Dolomites. Photo: Mike Mortimer



B and B on Lliwedd

Dennis Bateman

Every year countless climbers drive up the road from Pen y Gwryd to the head of the Pass. In clear weather the Snowdon Horseshoe fills the eye, and the huge bulk of Lliwedd is silhouetted against the sky. But few will go nearer than the road at Pen y Pass.

The tide of climbing history has washed over the great buttresses, leaving them high and dry like a stranded Leviathan. But for those who have climbed there, the size and atmosphere are things to be remembered. My first visit was 14 years ago, by which time I was getting a little older.

The dry weather in June 1989 was too good to miss, and the Vice Presidents meet at Ynys seemed an ideal time. Over the 'phone Hugh Banner had kindly agreed to come on to Lliwedd. On the Saturday morning the weather was perfect. Malcolm Cameron kindly brought a message asking me to ring Hugh at work. For some years I had wanted to do Big Deal a 1,000 ft VS on the West Buttress, and I mentioned this to Hugh. He had never done the climb and would be glad to take me up after work.

He got to Ynys at 12.45 and by one o'clock, we were on our way to Pen y Pass. Fortunately we found a space for the car. By this time the sun was high and Hugh made a quick change into shorts and an unspeakable T shirt. Even I took off my pullover and put it in the rucksack. Although we walked up at an easy pace both of us were hot by the time we had reached the mountain. We could see only two other parties on the vast cliff; a contrast to the crowds at Cloggy.

Hugh was due at a Committee meeting at 7.30. There were 13 pitches, plus scrambling, ahead. Would he have time with me in tow? He did not seem unduly worried. So at 2.45 he disappeared up the waterworn groove into a gully, belaying out of sight at 100ft. I joined him without any delay. The next 100ft pitch was up an ever steepening crack which finished on Bilberry Terrace. This had more of a bite in it, for me, but again, did not slow things down.

I had read the route description many times and remembered that somewhere in the next 100ft there was a pitch which involved moving diagonally left on insecure grass steps. As Hugh moved out of sight there was time to speculate as to whether the grass had become even more insecure since Drasdo and Moulam had first done the route in 1968. Or maybe it has disappeared altogether with the passage of time!

The rope continued to move up smoothly which seemed a good omen. Then it was my turn, up carefully and round a steep corner, and there were the grassy steps, with the rope angling up and left to a spike runner. Just to the left and below was a very steep, holdless wall, not the sort of place for a pendulum. I searched in the grass and bilberries for some rock hand holds, but all in vain. Willy nilly my fingers dug into the herbage and pulled up carefully. My stiff left knee would not allow me to get a foothold, so I unashamedly used a knee! Carefully upward movement continued up the grassy steps. At last rock was reached and I gained the spike runner. Then came a hand traverse, on smallish holds to the right

followed by a 50ft corner which brought me to the stance.

Up we went, pitch after pitch on the huge complicated face, always something of interest around the corner. Eventually the route arrived at Matchstick Corner, scene of the rapid descent of the Club President in 1957. The present incumbent had no such trouble and rose decidedly up the awkward crack for a further 50ft. Easier climbing brought us to the Sanctum, a remarkably large grassy platform.

Looking up I could see the outline of Bird Crag, which stands out so well from the mountain side. Hugh did a long run out to the top of the eyrie, and I found the climbing just hard enough to keep me busy, without becoming breathless. I was glad to see that the rock splinter wedged in the top in 1898, was still in place, a nice historical point. Ahead lay about 200ft of easy climbing and scrambling, and we were soon at the top, enjoying the early evening sun. There is always some special satisfaction in completing a long mountain route.

As we prepared to go, a solitary Horseshoe walker suddenly appeared.

"I didn't think anyone climbed on Lliwedd these days" he said breathlessly.

"Had a marvellous day" I replied, in defence of my favourite mountain.

In 15 minutes we were back at the start with a monumental thirst. Neither of us had brought any drink and all I could offer were some glucose tablets, these did not help much as our tongues were like the proverbial tram driver's glove! Now it was downhill all the way and by 8.30 we were at Pen y Pass. Hugh dropped me at Ynys and sped off to the Committee meeting.

An hour later I was sitting outside enjoying a glorious peach and apricot sunset, a perfect end to the day. A day to remember, glorious weather, good company and climbing a long awaited route.

Participation had been much better than anticipation.

Thank you Mr President.

Gogarth and the Flying Cossacks

Geoff Milburn

Truth is stranger than fiction and it is surprising how often the old adage 'truth will out' comes to pass. What climber in 1990 would believe that there were climbers on the Gogarth cliffs over 150 years ago, or that competition climbing actually began in Russia long before 1900? Both of these events have recently come to light. Each one is utterly unique and must be assessed in the light of recent events in the world of mountaineering.

Gogarth Exploration

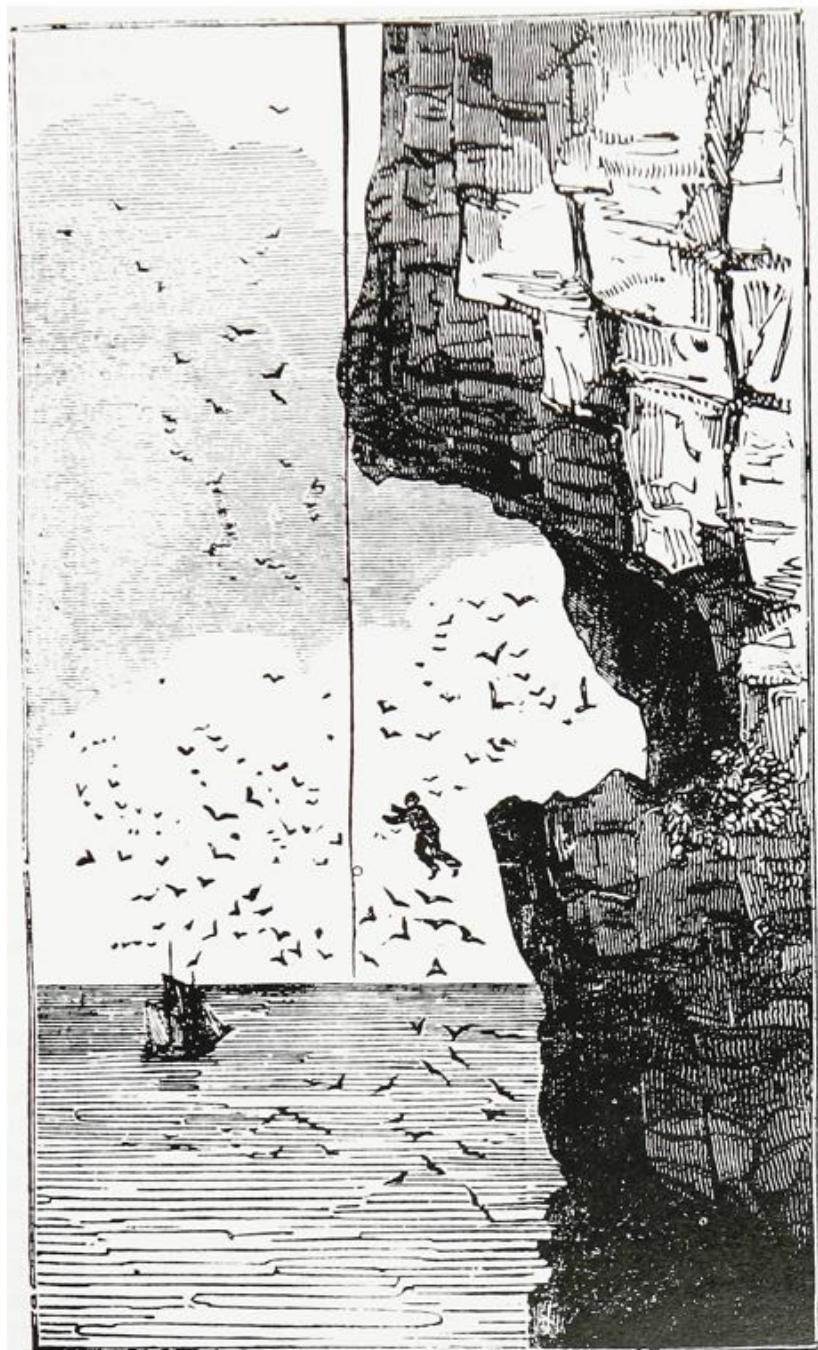
The publication of the Gogarth guidebook in 1990 revealed that Boysen and Ingle were the first climbers to set foot on the crags. However the date of April 4th, 1964 is slightly later than the first exploration which had actually taken place some 128 years previously — if not earlier! In the Saturday Magazine for April 30th 1836 there is a gripping account of wild bird catching:

...this dreadful trade is carried on in the perfection of its horrors; though in some parts of Wales, (as for instance, near the South Stack, in Anglesey) and the Needle Rocks in the Isle of White, adventurous climbers will occasionally exhibit feats of perilous achievement quite sufficient to satisfy most beholders.

The Islanders of St. Kilda have long been known as some of the first people to descend perilous cliffs to gather sea birds and their eggs and the two-hundred-foot ropes made of cows' tails or hides were often part of a St. Kilda girl's dowry. Not surprisingly while the older islanders used to lower down the biggest cliffs using several ropes tied together the youth of the island would descend the top sections of the cliff to lasso unsuspecting birds using a slender pole with a noose at the end. The pranks of these youthful northerners were not however unique, as far to the south the Welsh youths were equally daring.

From the island of South Stack boys may be seen frequently scrambling by themselves, or held on by an urchin or two of their own age, letting themselves down the picturesque precipice opposite the island, by a piece of rope so slender, and apparently rotten, that the wonder is why it does not snap at the first strain. Yet, without a particle of fear, heedless of the consequences, they will swing themselves to a ledge barely wide enough to admit the foot of a goat, and thence pick their way with or without the rope, to pillage the nest of a gull, which if aware of its own powers, might flap them headlong to the bottom.

One might expect that accidents would be fairly common, yet to the contrary they were said to occur only rarely. Near escapes however were said to be common enough and these were frequently sufficiently appalling as to make the blood run cold. One such near miss was recorded as being about two miles from the South Stack, on the rocky coast of Rhoscolyn. Apparently a lady who lived near the cliffs sent a boy in 'search of a samphire' and a trusty servant was also given the instruction to hold the rope at the top of the cliff. While the boy was dangling 'midway between sky and water' the servant felt a cold, sickly, shivering creep over him and this was accompanied by a certainty that he was about to faint. It was assumed that this condition was either caused by a sudden



PERILOUS LEAP OF A BIRD-CATCHER.

dizziness caused by looking down at the boy, or perhaps he had sudden misgivings about whether or not he could continue to support the boy's weight when necessary. There seemed little doubt in his mind that he himself would most likely fall over the cliff at the instant that he lost consciousness.

In this dilemma, he uttered a loud despairing scream, which was fortunately heard by a woman working in an adjoining field, who, running up, was just in time to catch the rope, as the fainting man fell senseless at her feet.

On another occasion a solitary bird-catcher had let himself down and was busy pillaging a nest. During a careless moment the rope slipped out of his hand and swung out into space. After swinging backwards and forwards a few times it came to rest well out of the unfortunate man's reach. To climb the cliffs without a rope was out of the question and what made matters worse was the fact that the man was in a place where his cries would not be heard.

Death stared him in the face. After a few minutes' pause, he made up his mind. By a desperate leap he might regain the rope, but if he failed, and at the distance at which it hung, the chances were against him, his fate was certain amidst the pointed crags ready to receive him, over which the waves were dashing far, far below. Collecting therefore, all his strength, with outstretched arms, he sprang from the rock, and lived to tell the tale, — for the rope was caught!

The Cossacks Climbing Race

In the late 1800s the Eastern Russian city of Orenburg was governed by the Cossacks, a proud race of people who were described as truculent, warlike yet hospitable. As the principal horse breeders for the Russian Empire they were among the finest horsemen in the world, living in a country where almost everyone possessed a horse and was an expert rider. Once a year they used to hold a festival which was semi-religious and semi-military. Named the 'Battle of the Snow Mountain' the festival used to be held in the middle of winter.

Under the control of the military authorities two or three enormous snow mounds had to be erected on a huge plain adjacent to the city. These mounds needing many tons of snow, on occasion reached a height of some 50ft. Finally a flag pole was placed on top of each mound that they could be seen from far across the plain.

On the day of the competition the soldiers' ranks were first inspected before the race could be started. The race on horseback across the plain after a massed start was a wild affair.

The pace is terrific. The horses converge into a wedge-shaped mass; every man is struggling to get through; the Cossack riders, wild-eyed and frantic, spare neither whip nor abjuration on their steeds. Men are unseated and trampled beneath scurrying hooves. No one cares.

During the mad scramble for position heavy thongs were frequently used to lash each other but finally a small group of crack riders would draw ahead from the main bunch. Approaching the huge snow mounds they would fling themselves off their horses and often hard knocks were taken as it was every man for himself. The aim was then to ascend the mound and grasp the flag pole on top.

For over thirty feet the mound rises vertically, and the snow is frozen hard on the surface, but is soft within. Crevices in the snow form slight hand and foot holds, but it frequently happens that, after laboriously climbing halfway up, some excited Cossack will

hang on to a treacherous bit, which gives way, and down he goes like a miniature avalanche, carrying with him half a dozen or more of those who have been toiling in his wake.

During the ascent one assumes that each man would have his work cut out hanging on to the icy surface but as the competitors were in close proximity the no holds barred attitude resulted in dreadful fights often breaking out. For most however the slow but deliberate climb proved to be a strong contrast to the fast and furious race across the plain.

Interestingly the steepness of the mound depended on the quality of the troops and the crack regiments would be given the very steepest mounds. Ethics were non-existent and the more cunning Cossacks would use their whipstocks to jab into the snow to obtain a better purchase.

Two figures are coming down with a terrific rush, after almost having reached the summit. In falling they narrowly missed the man who was two-thirds of the way up on their right, and nearly carried away the earnest competitor on the left who has his whip firmly embedded in the snow, and whose dogged perseverance in the face of all drawbacks would surely render him eligible for membership of the Alpine Club.

On occasions there were so many Cossacks swarming over a mound that the mound itself would collapse under the great weight thus bringing the competition to an abrupt conclusion.

The winner of the Ural Cossacks' festival would be treated as a hero on a large scale and would be respected far and wide. As a side issue there would be many bets placed on the climbing competition, and so great was the excitement that bets would often be placed which the passionate Cossacks would have no earthly chance of meeting. To conclude each competition liberal supplies of vodka would be consumed during wild Russian dances.

The question is, 'Can Nadin and Moffatt ride a horse yet?'

EEsy Og - Hard Clog

Gwyn Evans

Standing on a little ramp barely five feet off the ground the spike was tantalisingly out of reach, I just couldn't get my hands in the right order and I was being pulled off backwards by my 'sack. Why?

It was a sunny day, we were both climbing reasonably well and we fancied a good long day. In the past we'd done the Slabs, Holly Tree Wall, Grey Area, Clogwyn Du round at the Severe/VS level so why not do it at E1/E2? A small 'sack and the ropes, and if time were to run short I could still make the Committee meeting in the Vic from the top of the Glyders while the Youth* walked back down to the car.

Suicide Wall seemed the obvious start but my fitness and competence were being tested in the first few feet. Off with the 'sack, a little judicious tension and I had the spike, after that things went a lot more smoothly.

Picking up the 'sack at the bottom we wondered whether the plan would work. Rowan Tree Slabs went with a minimum of effort, well, I wasn't carrying the 'sack in the final groove. On to the Grey Area. The first pitch of Grey Arete fell out of the sports-plan when the Youth spied the steep slab round to the right. In guidebook parlance 'a more fitting start'. The last 15ft from a ledge were decidedly tenuous, a bit Trilleachanesque but missing the texture. The pock-marked wall and the last pitch were just as good as I remembered, even the almost *a cheval* moves on the final flake.

The plan was coming to fruition, all that remained was my *bete noire* of a good few years previously, Hebenwi. It was to prove a problem again, I just couldn't commit myself on the moves to the old peg. This was just such a position as called for reinforcements. The Youth, with no foreknowledge and a good six inches extra reach, despatched it with a minimum of fuss and I followed delighting in the excellent, if dirty, incut holds and the few runners that needed taking off. The last pitch is different now as the Youth deposited, what had been to my mind, perfectly satisfactory holds somewhere at the bottom of the crag. All that remained was for me to make the sprint to Llanberis for the Committee meeting. I got there, late, but only minutes after the President who had been besporting himself on Cloggy.

The following day, resting in the sun at the top of a sweaty Vember we were called to assist in giving a first-time visitor to the Clog a helicopter ride to oblivion. Some might say it's a good way to go, a sort of Boot Hill, but he'd never enjoy an EEsy day in Ogwen or its equivalent anywhere else again.

*I'll have to find another name for him now he's a Dad and got responsibilities.

A Midsummer's Night's Scream

Graham Parkes

We had trained hard for this holiday, but there was one thing we could not have trained for and that was the Californian weather. We had been in the States for two weeks and had been stormed off Taquitz, baked alive in Joshua Tree, wind blasted in the Needles, and here we were in a very hot and oppressive oven known as Yosemite.

We were sat at the base of what must be the ultimate roadside attraction; Middle Cathedral. It was certainly an impressive sight for boys brought up on a diet of gritstone. I wanted to do a Yosemite classic for my first route in the Valley and the Bircheff/Williams seemed to fit the bill. Chris soon adopted the pose of the belayer in *Yosemite Climber*, plate 32, and I was off on the first pitch. God it was hot, my feet were pulsing and sweat was already stinging my eyes only 10ft up. I ploughed on upwards in a sea of perspiration; if only I'd spent more time in the sauna at the YMCA back in Sheffield perhaps I would have been better prepared. I soon ground to a halt at about 50ft at a bong, I could see it was going to get hard above and I was in no fit state to frig a classic. I retreated, not very gracefully. We decided to try and achieve something that day, so Chris led Pee Pee, and I scared myself shitless on Stoners Highway. We headed for the Merced and, later that weekend, the delights of Tuolumne Meadows.

Ten brilliant days later we were back in Disneyland, tourists, regulations and all. It all seemed a very long way from the perfection we had been experiencing in the High Sierra. Anyway, we were soon back at Middle Cathedral, this time much later in the day, around fourish in fact, we were determined not to get baked. Chris settled in and I was off again.

This time things went much better and I was soon at the bong. As predicted the climb soon toughened up and some desperate thin laybacking above the second bunch of tat led to a leap for a jug. Now, from below I was worried about the next section, I lived in fear of coming across the fabled Yosemite off width and this looked suspiciously like it. Fortunately, for me it wasn't and I laybacked like a man possessed to the sanctuary of a tree belay. Chris joined me, stemming like a good 'un and was soon leading his pitch. This looked and felt very Great North Roadish, in fact, the next few pitches were very much like the quarried grit we were used to climbing on, with odd loose holds and bits of grass thrown in to make us feel at home.

Now, I knew that having led pitch 1 I should not get the 11c traverse, but somehow I found myself looking across the blank slab. However, 20ft above glistened hope in the shape of a peg and 'biner providing overhead protection. I soon had it clipped and made the delicate moves out to the arete and the next groove line. As you may have guessed by now it was getting quite late, but we were only a few pitches from the Kor/Beck and a line of abseil anchors leading home.

So we decided to go for it and try to reach the abseil before dark. We failed, one pitch short. Anxiety and tension were high. I led the last pitch in total darkness,

still sweating and gripped at the thought of a fall. God, I was glad to reach the tree belay and feel for the bunch of slings around it's base! Chris joined me and we pondered our position. After all it had taken all our combined 35 years experience to get us into this situation. Sat on a ledge, half way up a mountain in total darkness dressed only in boxer shorts. We wondered whether to stay put or slide into the darkness below.

The call of the bar beckoned, I headed off first and groped my way downwards. We decided not to tie a knot in the end of the ropes, our patience could not have coped with a tangled mess. I soon found the first stance and Chris joined me. Now, I bet you are all thinking the ropes got stuck as we pulled them down, miraculously they didn't, I still don't believe it. Threading the ropes and tying into the plates was achieved, without a hitch. I had often thought I could do this with my eyes shut, they may as well have been, I couldn't see a thing anyway.

Chris did his stint and I soon joined him. Unfortunately, we had missed the line and he was belayed to a couple of Friends in the middle of nowhere. I stopped 10ft above him in a small chimney. What to do now? This was no longer a challenge, it was just becoming a pain. How long before the ropes snagged, we wondered?

I pawed the bowels of the chimney and discovered a block, but we had no long slings to thread it. Chris suggested our chalk bag straps tied together, Christ, this was all very heroic. I abseiled, holding my breath and wishing I had eaten more carrots and less chilli dogs over the past week.

Things improved and we joined the original line of abseils and a little later we were stumbling around in ankle-breaking scree at the base of the cliff. I must have stubbed my aching toe 20 times on the bushwack back to the car. So much for the roadside crag! We drove like madmen round to the Mountain Room Bar, totally parched, it was 10.55.

The conversation with the barmaid went something like this,

"Two pitchers please."

"But you do know we close in five minutes?"

"Better make it four then!"

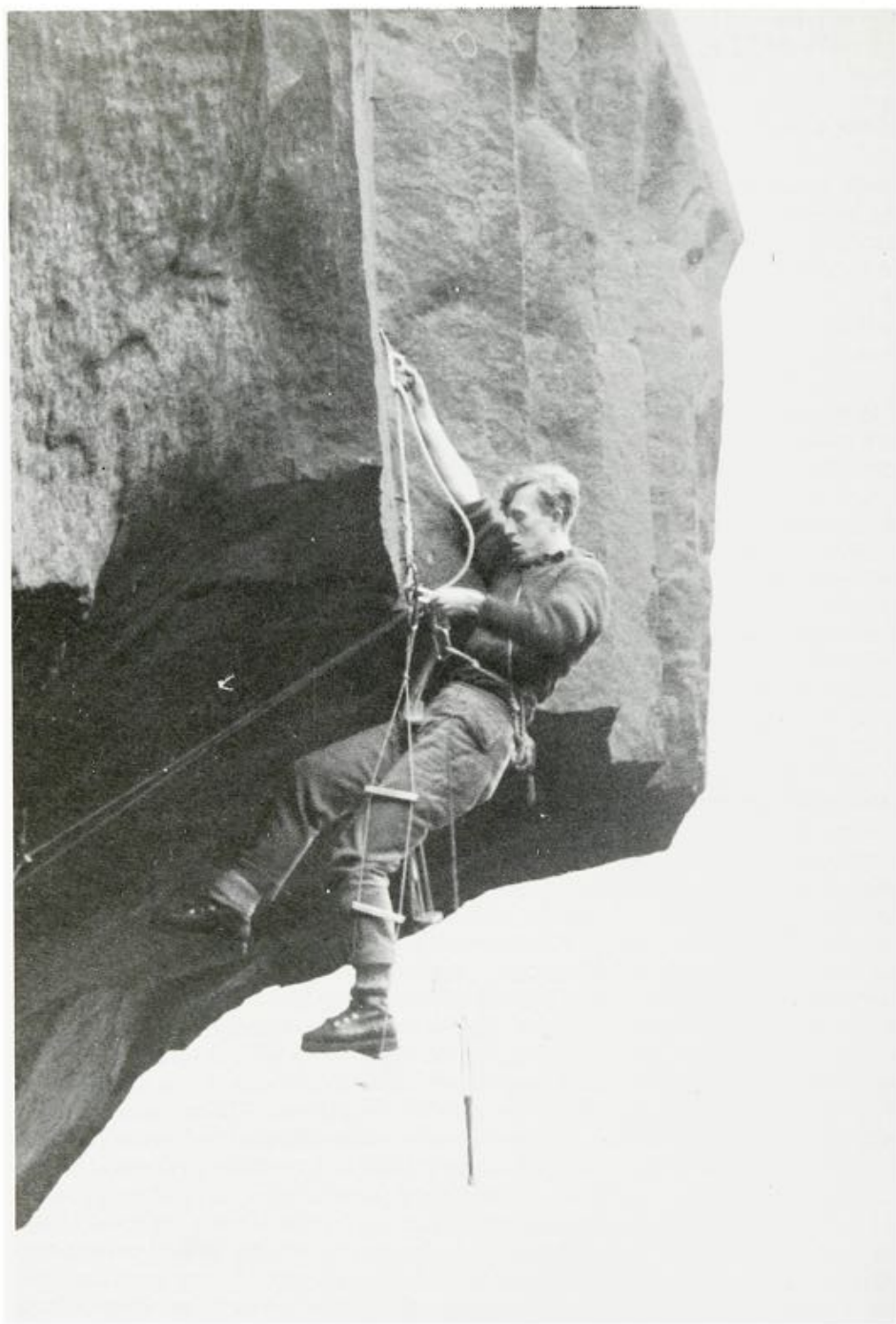
A Winter Interlude

Dave Gregory

Even though the road was fairly level it swung from side to side, trapped between the bends of the river and the steep grassy spurs sticking out from the hillside. Each time that we drove round the outer side of a bend the great black top wall of the crag came tantalisingly into view and then vanished again as we swung back. Annoyingly, a high grass bluff ran parallel to the road below the crag and we could see even less of it as we drew opposite and drove past to park in a gravelled but muddy widening beside the road.

We had been told that the gate was kept closed by a chain held tight by a sturdy lock but the lock and chain had gone and the gate stood drunkenly open, as wide as it could be pushed. Several people must have strained to shift it, scoring a deep arc in the ground as they had swung it round. It must have been the first time that it had been opened for years as the bottom bar, overgrown with grass, had dragged great sods out of the ground with it as it turned. This damage done, the bottom bar rotten from its years of soaking under the grass grown over it, had broken at the upright under the strain and the gate swayed drunkenly back. The ground just inside the gateposts was a quagmire of struggling, slipping bootmarks and revving, slipping, scoring tyre-tracks imprinted into the mass of churned up grass and drying mud. A slithering side-slipping pair of muddy vehicle tracks ran up the steep grass bank and we followed between them to its crest where we sat on our sacks and looked across at the crag.

At its foot below us the ground was bare of grass and fouled with sheep droppings. Several sheep crouched there now, sheltering, although the wind was only light with little more than mist in it. The ground further away from the crag was mostly well grassed except for a huge churned up area where the wheel tracks ended in a swirl of backing, turning cusps and loops. Himself, who had stopped smoking a fortnight before for the *n*th time, succumbed yet again and sat there inscrutable, with the smoke wreathing up his face to his squinting eyes. Cagney? Bogart? Whillans? I did not ask but leaved through the guide to find our own route. It was not necessary -- we both knew the crag, the diagram, the description, the score, by heart but the ritual trading had to be gone through. It was a traverse line, the most obvious line on the crag and easily found. But which was to do it? Free or artificial? Start on the right or the left? It was supposed to have been done free, but not by mere mortals like us and not at this time of year. We'd go for the artificial and hope nobody found out. There seemed to be marginally less jungle on the approach to where the left-hand end of the rake met the hill than on the right. There was a fairly solid tree near the right-hand end to bale out from and we were both right-handed. Reaching to the right for a couple of hundred feet would be less knackered than going left. Unanimity so far. Now the crunch. Who is to lead. Himself is six foot two and long-armed to boot and keen to lead. I shall never be able to reach back to knock out any pegs that he's made a long reach from to put the next one in. I win the war of attrition and we walk down the slope to the crag and gear up.



Norman Elliott in 1964

The fight up the jungle slope was mildly amusing for the one of use who was not momentarily sliding back down the muddy slope into the welcoming barbs of the briar bushes but I got the last laugh as I tied on to the middle and left him belayed to a particularly prehensile specimen while I got myself ten points of aid along the rake. Himself tied on to the rope which went through the aid, joined the two free ends together on a krab and, leaving the loop they made swinging into a huge catenary, followed on.

Matters went pretty well although we got the usual occasional heart stop when the krab holding the etrier was on top of a bunch and one of the lower ones slid from under. Just after one of these minor bits of hubris another climber came on the scene. Fairly typical. Jeans and a fibre-pile jacket, a heavy 'sack and the standard stooped-forward walk. He dropped his sack into the cleaner grass at the foot of one gatepost, leaned back against the other, looked at his watch and began to leaf through his guidebook. A few pegs later I managed to leave my finger under the etrier karabiner when I transferred some weight onto the etrier and left a lump of finger and a trail of blood for the next 20ft. It didn't hurt at first but it stung like fury when it did get through which was about the time when he put his weight on one of the chocks and it flew out in a cloud of rock-dust and he dropped down about four feet. Luckily there was an *in situ* peg in easy reach to the right. I clipped the cow's tail into it and pulled it tight on the Clogger while he climbed back up the rope and clipped into the next peg. We had a rest while we sorted ourselves out. He got the pegs and chocks on his bandoliers unjumbled and passed the pro he'd accumulated to me along the dangling rope. He is a foresighted soul and had some individually wrapped plasters in an inside pocket of his anorak. Bit of a toff, himself. My anorak is khaki and its pockets hold nothing but holes but his jacket is almost new, bright red, and with more places to hide things than Treasure Island. The plasters are in an inside pocket and it was better than watching Houdini seeing him get through two bandoliers, his chest harness and a zip to the pocket but eventually the plasters flitted across on the rope trapped in a karabiner gate and I patched myself up.

It was during this performance that we had another look at the young fellow waiting by the gate into the field. He was now sitting on top of the thick stone gatepost and must have reached the end of his patience because, while we watched, he took one last look at his watch, slipped off the post, swung his 'sack up on to one shoulder and followed the wheel tracks up to the crag. We left him to his own devices and started off again. We had only one setback in the next section. One of the channels which I'd put in had got a bit fond of its placement and would not come out. Backward and forward he welted it but although it would swivel at the touch of a finger it would not come out. We had forgotten about that in our pre-start deliberations. I was putting the stuff in right-handed, easy work, but he was having to get it out left-handed. Hard Cheddar. He put another peg in a crack above the traverse line, clipped his cow's tail into that, linked his waist krab to the offender by a short sling, put his feet up in front of him and pushed. The channel came out as sweet as a nut; so did the extra peg. He went for a beautiful flyer and I rose up to the nearest peg. We were getting quite used to the recovery technique and weren't too long getting underway again.

As I approached the main groove line up the crag the gatepost squatter

appeared below me, untrammelled by hundredweights of gear or the drag of a rope. Just one rack of Rocks he carried and moving smoothly, bridging out across the groove. He reached a ledge on the groove side, put a wire chock into the main groove crack, clipped into it and leaned on the side wall for a rest. He and I were likely to be scrabbling for the same bit of rock in a few minutes but we both kept going. I crossed the groove line when he was just below it and I spoke down to say that I'd stop on the other side and wait until he'd climbed past. He didn't answer, just nodded and half-smiled and came on up, he was very careful as he climbed by not to use any of the pegs or the nest of tat in the corner that people must belay to. An ethical purist. He tested a pinch grip above the tat. It was a small flake which rocked in its crack bed. He jiggled the flake out and smiled, half at it and half at me, before looking out at the crag foot and throwing it free. He moved on up and we moved right until all I could see of him was his E.B. soles. They moved up out of sight and then came back down again, and then up and back into view. It must be hard up there, but he cracked it for the E.B.s vanished into the upper groove, not to return.

A few seconds later we both looked upward, attracted by a cracking sound above us; a small rock fragment fell towards us, followed by a cluster of fragments with light between them. The scream came with it and the spreadeagled body swooping across the sky over us, black solid against the cloud. As it fell the clarity of its outline against the cloud faded and the grey of the winter sky showed through. We followed its flight, open-mouthed and aghast. It became less and less substantial until as we looked beyond it to the ground, dreading its impact, it had faded to beyond our detecting and nothing hit the floor.

Nothing hit the patch of soiled ground muddied by the rescuers' feet and sweeping, backing tracks of the Landrover ambulance, how many days ago?

Third Time Lucky

A new route on the South West Face of the Petit Gruetta

Tony Penning

Pete and I had no set ideas of what we should climb in the Alps this year. We were hoping to find a new route somewhere on the Italian side of Mont Blanc, in the Jorasses/Gruetta area.

When we arrived in Italy we decided not to waste any time as the weather was unsettled, and went straight up into the Frebouze Basin for a look round. On the south west face of the Petit Gruetta there was certainly a line, a huge slanting band, but it started at about 500ft up the face. We dumped our heavy packs on the moraine and slogged up the glacier for a closer look. We found a nice looking crack, 150ft long that would at least give us a starting point on the lower wall. Although it was getting late (six o'clock) we decided to climb the crack and then rope back down to spend the night on the moraine. The climbing up the crack was excellent, finishing with a pleasant little traverse that led to a good belay. It seemed possible to continue to the right from here, but as it was getting gloomy we roped back down, full of excitement that we had found our route.

That night and all the next morning it rained heavily, soaking us and all our gear. We had no choice but to retreat to the valley after leaving a cache of hardware hidden on the moraine.

By noon the next day the storm had spent itself so we went back up that afternoon. The plan this time was to climb as high as was possible in the short time we had left that day and then descend on our two ropes joined together, in one long abseil, to spend the night on the glacier. The next day we could jumal up the rope to our high point to save valuable time.

We climbed the now familiar 150ft crack and then started to work out the next part of the climb, that would hopefully lead us to the Slanting Band. It was like cracking a safe and about E2 5b. At about 8pm we had done some 450ft of climbing and decided it was time to go down for the night. As the climb was heading diagonally right all the time we reckoned that the ropes should just reach the glacier but we couldn't actually see the foot of the wall. Pete went first. After what seemed like an age and a half the rope went slack and I lurched off into the gloom. I found Pete, untied and perched on a tiny knob of rock with hands spreadeagled against the rock. The glacier was there all right — still 70ft below!

"It won't reach," said Pete,

"Why didn't you —ing tell me?"

"Well, I thought you would think of something."

"I can, but it's not going to help you get to the glacier" I hinted darkly.

"There's a ledge over there. I thought you might be able to jump to it!"

I looked at a solitary flower perched precariously over 70ft of 6c to reverse to the glacier. I looked at the 70ft of overhanging rock. I looked at the 6c moves I would have to reverse. I looked at the lonely group of petals flickering in the evening light. I looked at the vague ripples that constituted Pete's ledge. I looked

at the world record long jump that I would have to make to reach that fragile stalk. I declined Pete's invitation to glory, sighed, and began to assemble the prusik loops. Oh yes, the jumars, of course, were safely hidden in our cache back on the glacier. Along with the headtorches!

Two 165ft ropes tied together make a long abseil. They make an even longer prusik. Half an hours' prusiking later I paused beside Pete's shoulder having just taken up the remaining stretch and wondered how long it was going to take us to get back to the belay and sanity. I also realised that Pete was still stood on the tiny knob, not having moved for nearly an hour, still spreadeagled against the rock with no protection whatsoever. I was about 30ft away from him.

"What are you going to do?"

"Oh don't worry about me. I'll jump for the rope end."

The view above was of a series of forbidding overhangs so I worked my way over until the end of the rope reached him and he could tie back on. The next hour and a half constituted some very heavy breathing, a lot of heavy sweating and a great deal of tuneless whistling of "Oh we'll all go together when we go..."

Eventually I reached the belay and Pete followed, but was able to swing across at one rope's length away to reach a belay on the line we had climbed. We eventually collapsed on the moraine at just past midnight, just in time to welcome the rain.

It rained all night and all the next day. We were even wetter than before and retreated once more to the valley, this time leaving several caches of gear behind. As usual the next day was fine but we decided to have the day off in order to dry out on the outside and to get very wet on the inside.

By now the wall was an obsession and Lin, my wife, and our two sons, who waited patiently in a grotty caravan we had dragged out with us, were continuously receiving a hold by hold account of the first 450ft. When we left the next day to continue our struggle with the wall Lin looked almost happy, waved like mad, and although I can't quite be sure, seemed almost to jump up and down at one stage.

This time we would sleep on the moraine and start early the next day, carrying a small amount of bivvy gear with us. When we got back to the moraine all we had to do was to find our caches and we would be set. We did find our caches. All but one that is. Still it wasn't anything important really, only the food.

By 11 the next morning we were back at our high point and by mid-day we had reached the Slanting Band. As per previous script the clouds came along and soon we were being rained on, unusually. We agreed to sit it out and see what happened. As luck finally turned our way it stopped after a couple of hours and we were able to continue. The Slanting Band led us up and to the left for 350ft, mostly at only 5a, although there were two harder sections of 5b and 5c. At the end of the Slanting Band, long grooves took us up to rightwards slanting grooves, which we climbed easily to just below the ridge where we could begin the long, long abseil back. We arrived back at the moraine at 1am after one of the best days I've ever spent in the Alps.

Later that day, when we were back in the valley, it was difficult to know whether Lin was pleased to see us or not as I began my hold by hold description of the best route in the Alps. She even interrupted me several times with her snoring.

The Wall

Bill Mckee

Among the many days of adventurous escapades which it has been my good fortune to partake of on our lofty peaks and crags, there is one which remains uppermost in my memory. It is with no little pleasure that I would like to relate to you our activities on that particular day.

My companion on this occasion was none other than that character of sterling worth, E. Harrison Forbes, of whom some of you will no doubt have heard. Now 'Harry' was a fine friend; amiable, considerate, and above all dependable. He had the rare gift of being able to impart a feeling of safety even on the trickiest of pitches. This latter virtue was one to which I attached especial importance on this day, for I planned to attempt an ascent of the fearsome wall right of 'The Corner'. For such an arduous undertaking I figured that Harry's support might indeed be of great significance in promoting the likelihood of a successful conclusion to the venture.

We were up with the dawn, and what a dawn it was. I have always maintained that a dawn in the mountains is like no other dawn. We breakfasted heartily in the bracing morning sun, feelings of considerable trepidation on my part being dispelled by Harry's relaxed but confident approach to the whole affair. "Just crack on up and give it a damned good go", he would say, happily oblivious to any doubts I had concerning my meagre ability to cope against such titanic odds.

We decided on the precaution of taking a few line slings in case I should reach a rugosity in the wall around which such an implement might be secured in order to afford a degree of protection, a controversial step, as we were well aware, and one which did not endear our plan to some of the older guard in the hut. We nonetheless reasoned that our daring would not be equal to the task without the assistance of such modern appendages. I had also been fortunate enough to be the recipient of a somewhat antiquated snap-link donated by B.J. Farquharson on his hearing of my plan to attempt the wall; "Take it, my boy", he had spluttered, "the damned thing's no use to me." Armed with this paraphernalia, we felt satisfactorily prepared for the undoubted severity of the ascent.

Leaving the road at the stone bridge we shouldered our packs and struck off up the scree towards the looming cliff. The precipitous walls frowned menacingly upon us as we toiled, ant like, to their centre. Harry, being a fine and accomplished fellrunner besides an able mountaineer, was soon striding far ahead of my snail's pace. Apart from pausing momentarily to admire the breathtaking panorama now revealing itself and to remove our woollen breeches, which were found to be exceedingly uncomfortable in the prevailing weather conditions, our ascent to the base of the bastion was uninterrupted.

Perched on a comfortable heather terrace under the sheer face we regained our breath and took in the surroundings. Below us lay a commodious theatre within which we assumed would soon assemble a sizeable group of fellows, for the wall had long been regarded a last great problem. To our left lay the corner, Harry's tale of a glorious epic struggle on this classic climb sprang to mind, told many

times with a twinkle in his eye during fireside conversation in the hut.

Taking my worthy companion's advice, I decided to 'crack on up and give it a go'. I settled on a hundred and twenty foot length of stout hawser, judging this to be sufficient to reach a tiny ledge running across the wall at approximately two-thirds height. My boots had recently been re-shod so I was at least able to expect little trouble on that score. With an encouraging pat on the back and a hearty, "Do your best, old man" I set off alone, for we were both in agreement that to climb simultaneously on a course such as this would be folly of the utmost order.

Inch by inch I gained a toe hold at 15ft. The rock was most sharp and the pulls fierce, quite unlike anything I had encountered before, and most unsettling. Soon I became aware of a strange sensation of pain in my forearms and to my great consternation discovered that they were beginning to swell; not an encouraging prospect when one is clad in rather tight tweed. Spotting a poor spike to the left I draped a length of No.2 line around it and pressed on, hoping my route might take me past a friendlier spot where some semblance of a rest could be obtained. To my great surprise, such a spot was gained in a further 15ft of stiff climbing. It was a delectable haven of repose and quite unexpected for such a precipitous face. I have to admit I was most thankful to grasp the firm holds which were in abundance here, for my arms were tiring remarkably rapidly, the bizarre pain not having subsided, and my feet had at one point momentarily scrambled for a purchase. Carefully assuming a rather peculiar attitude on the ledge, which consisted of sitting facing out, with one leg astride it — an operation which might only be performed with great difficulty by a fellow more clumsy than myself — I was able to bring Harry up to my perch. He managed without undue bother, employing a judicious use of the left knee to ease the most difficult step of the passage, and was soon beside me enthusing over the intricacies of the rock we had climbed.

After my good friend had lashed himself to a tiny thread belay which was anything but stout, I began to work my way leftwards towards a large shallow pocket. Halfway to this destination I reached a *mauvais pas* which was to prove a source of no little trepidation. The problem was, I could not see how to pass the obstacle while maintaining the obligatory four points of contact, as Layton-Smithers observed in his commendable text on rockcraft. After several minutes to-ing and fro-ing, Harry suggested in a laconic and tongue in cheek manner that I should regard each digit as a point of contact, which I suppose it was, logically speaking. After convincing myself of the value of this apparently dubious advice, the impasse was no more and a further delicate posture enabled me to stand on the smallest of projections in the aforementioned pocket. The pain in my forearms had recommenced but seeing no option other than to press on, I did so. With nails biting firmly into small indentations in the rock's smooth surface I was able to raise my body a little. Then, by means of a side pressure hold in a small fissure and a downward motion of the hands in relation to the body, I gained a precarious stance beneath some sound looking holds which apparently led to the ledge we had spotted earlier. Careful to avoid rash movement, for a fall from my present position would not be an attractive proposition, I proceeded steadily to the ledge whereupon I belayed to a comforting spike and announced my safety to Harry.

On his joining me at the ledge we noticed a gaggle of spectators beneath, somewhat spoiling the solitude we sought with their unseemly and boisterous antics. They seemed friendly enough however, and some encouraging remarks were heard to drift up from time to time.

A fierce move left the safety of the ledge. A gymnast would have been more suited to that wall than a rock climber. With the benefit of hindsight, I think I owed a lot to the strange exercises we had practised on the walls of the hut. A small spike appeared a little higher — the climb was certainly yielding ample opportunity to protect an ascent — and I was soon virtually dangling from my arms at a strange porthole in the face, a feature the like of which I was hitherto unaware. If offered a fairly good purchase for the hands although a rather strenuous upward movement was then necessitated by the distribution of the holds. On reaching these, again with no little relief, I traversed some 15ft to the right into a cleft splitting the wall. It immediately became clear to me that we would be able to complete the ascent so, bringing Harry up to where I stood, I began to ponder over the choice of name.

The final cleft 'went' with a minimum of difficulty but the course we had taken was, in its entirety, undoubtedly a severe problem. Had there not been such a large group of 'witnesses' I think we would have considered the ascent unjustifiable. Ever witty, Harry imaginatively suggested the name 'The Wall', being a fitting companion to 'The Corner', I agreed.

After coiling the hawser with the customary difficulty, we lingered awhile, dwelling on the innermost feelings our experience had laid bare, before turning to the valley, the comfort of the hut, and welcome rest.

Nothing but the Devil

Ed Douglas

Turning to face my fans for the final time, I wave once, slowly above my head, in my hand the envelope and in the envelope a cheque for £10,000. Marie tugs gently at my waist and pouts in mock frustration. Once outside in the cool autumn air I stride purposefully towards the bike. In a matter of minutes we are sliding down the autobahn at 100 miles an hour. When I remember how lucky I am, it makes me humble...

"Bollocks. This isn't any good. I may be ambitious but do I have a motorcycle? They're so passe. Anyway, I'm more your anti-hero type."

Flicking his hair from his eyes, Puke stared mournfully at the crowd. He rubbed his greasy palms on the back of his 501s and began to climb. Quietly at first, he'd never edged in Reeboks before, but the higher he got the more he cut loose. The crowd went wild as he double-dynoed for the chain. He reached to his swami belt and clipped the final bolt, calling down to the judges "Chalk one up for the Clean Hand Gang, assholes..."

Fraser Hamilton sighed and moved away from the mirror. Staring at his reflection and day-dreaming wasn't going to get him very far. He wasn't going to get very far with a name like Fraser either, he thought sadly to himself. What can you do with Fraser? "Ladies and Gentlemen, all the way from Boulder, Colorado, Fraser Hamilton!" Not quite the same as Ben or Jerry or Didier even. And Bournemouth was hardly Boulder. Frase? Phrase? Or Frazzer. Fraz. Phraz. And he'd forget the Hamilton altogether. Made him sound like a football club. He'd just be known as Phraz. No, Der Phraz, very alternative. Bored, bored, bored...

Fraser caught sight of himself in the mirror again. Life hadn't been so kind to this 14 year old. Pimples? Check. Lank, greasy hair? Check. He had begged his parents to let him have a semi-skinhead like the guys at the wall but his father had, as he often did, given him his 'and which cesspit did you mutate from' look and Fraser dropped the subject for good. At least his gear was rad. Mauve, Original Sex cotton lycra leggings, Borehole slippers and a slashed Concrete Open official competition vest. He sometimes wore a DUMM T shirt when the spots on his shoulders got bad. Nobody could fault him on his gear.

Fraser was actually quite a good climber. He'd placed fourth in a youth event in Sheffield and several of the crowd had noticed his potential. A lot of the pundits lodged up in the eaves with their cameras also noted, a little cynically, that he'd have tendonitis for a 21st birthday present. None of this made any impression on Fraser. To his tunnelled mind he was forever from reaching his dreamworld, a million years until he too would be chased, as he left the wall victorious, by the cameramen and ageing farts who wanted to know what it felt like to flash 8b. "Damn good, thank you Mr McZero, very fine indeed." Oh, God! Why do I have to live in Bournemouth.

He turned once more from the mirror and leapt for one of the many fingerboards screwed to the beam in his bedroom. He caught a finger-pocket with two

fingers, swept his other hand up and immediately began a series of pull-ups, glancing approvingly at his biceps. He dropped to the floor and as he landed he flung his arms into the air in a mock gymnastic gesture, calling out loud "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who has the least percentage body fat of them all?" He was not expecting a reply, but he got one.

"Do you have to be quite so tiresome, young man?" An old voice, snobby thought Fraser, not his Dad's and anyway they were out and the babysitter for his little sister had taken out a video and the neighbours were in France and who the hell was that? He began to turn slowly round towards the door and the speaker who had so rudely interrupted his musings. The voice came not from a man in the doorway as Fraser had supposed, but from a man in the mirror. Fraser whirled round to face him but he had vanished. He turned back again, sweating slightly, the breath rushing noisily into him. The figure was back in the mirror.

"Oh do stop bobbing around like that, there's a good fellow, I'm in here so you can stop looking over your shoulder." The figure sat neatly down on the edge of Fraser's reflected bed. Very gradually and without taking his eyes from the man in the mirror, Fraser lowered himself on to the mattress exactly where the man was sitting. He did this unconsciously and was shocked to discover that he was now face to face with a mirror image of himself at 65 years of age. He hurriedly stood up again and started talking.

"Who are you? What do you want? Where have you come from? How did you get here? Why are you sitting in my mirror? And..."

"Oh do hush up, old chap, do hush up. All in good time." The old man patted his pockets carefully and extracted a battered pipe. He lit it and began to draw gently at the glowing tobacco. Fraser was astonished. Nothing like this had happened to him before, nor to anyone else he knew. This had nothing to do with puberty. And the clothes he wore were quite simply extraordinary. A vague tweed suit, no...a jacket and britches, long dark socks, a pair of hobnail boots and on his head was a sort of Indiana Jones hat only not as cool. Fraser also noted, rather to his discomfort, that tucked in the crook of his elbow was an antique looking ice-axe. Fraser knew what an ice-axe was from being in climbing shops but he'd never seen one with a wooden shaft. The old man laid the axe down and took the pipe from between his lips. And then he cleared his throat.

"My name is George Mallory," he said flatly.

"But you..."

"...disappeared on Everest in 1924 'pushed strongly for the summit', I think the phrase was. Quite right young man, but I'm not here to talk about me."

"What a load of crap."

"Why does your generation insist on using profanity at every possible opportunity?"

"George Mallory wasn't old when he died."

"Everybody is sixty-five where I come from."

"Doesn't sound like heaven to me."

"That's because they sent me to hell. Now would you quieten down and pay attention." Mallory tapped his pipe testily against the bedstead before continuing. "I am here to dissuade you from continuing on the path to which you have dedicated yourself."

"I don't believe it," Fraser's eyes had suddenly fixed at a spot on the carpet.

"I'm talking to a ghost."

"Oh do pay attention, please, I'm frightfully busy and I haven't much more time to give you. Now, it's extremely important that you stop all this competition nonsense and start putting up new climbs, you know, explore a little." Mallory had stood up as he said this and was now pacing up and down jabbing at the air with his pipe.

"Or else?"

"What?" The ghost seemed surprised by Fraser's directness.

"Or else what will happen to me?" Mallory noticed that the spotty child was staring defiantly at him.

"Why, you'll end up in hell like me. Doomed to be too old to climb but young enough to care." Mallory nodded firmly at this, almost satisfied in its finality.

"God's a bit of a traditionalist is he," sneered Fraser. "I don't suppose he used to edit *Mountain* did he?" Mallory stopped pacing and looked icily at the boy but said nothing. "What's wrong with wanting a little bit of recognition for my efforts then? You're a fine one to talk." Mallory just stood there muttering "all is vanity and vexation of spirit" under his breath while picking at his sleeve with the stem of his pipe. "And moving it indoors will take the heat off the environment, make it safer, control it. I would have thought of that...er...God would have gone for that."

"But he's not terribly keen on money, on sponsorship deals, on endorsements, contracts and guest appearances. Follow the true path. Take up your hemp rope and climb, dear boy. Use your heart, not your greed." The old man's eyes shone as he said this and he started jabbing his pipe stem at Fraser.

"Get stuffed you silly old duffer. It's not my fault that climbing's gone like this. It's the gear manufacturers, it's Ken Wilson, it's the French. I didn't have anything to do with it." Fraser didn't like the way Mallory would lurch around his mirrored room, unexpectedly as though he wasn't really listening. "Look, you wanted to beat the Germans and French to the top of a poxy cardboard crag. Where's the harm?"

"It's not the same thing at all. We did it for the honour of our nation, for our families and..."

"Because it's there? Bollocks. You did it for the same reasons I spend five hours a day in the gym." Fraser sensed a change in the old man. He was not nearly as remote as he had seemed initially. He appeared to be relaxing.

"All right. If that won't persuade you then have a look at this." He flicked an arm out at the TV in the corner of the room. A picture appeared on the screen. Fraser was surprised because it had been broken for months.

"What's this then?"

"It's an operation in progress."

"What sort of operation?"

"A tendon replacement operation." The camera zoomed in at a mess of an arm. The surgeon seemed to be using a pair of clippers to strip away what appeared, even to Fraser's inexperienced eye, to be diseased tendons. "That's you."

"I couldn't give a toss what happens to me in 30 years time."

"Four years time old chap. Four years time." Mallory sucked thoughtfully on his pipe, pausing in mid-stride. "Of course, these days there are carbon fibre implants." Fraser looked up, surprised. The old man held a finger to his lips.

Outside he heard his father's car pull up. "I must go. Remember what I said," he added ambiguously.

"Just a sec."

"What is it?" said Mallory as he picked up his ice-axe and turned away.

"What did they nick you for then?"

"Using oxygen," he called behind him, twirling the axe. "God's a bit of a stickler for Alpine style. You won't get to heaven from the end of a fixed rope, let me assure you." And then he was gone.

Fraser lay back on his bed chuckling to himself, suddenly very comfortable that he'd been talking to a ghost. And then he sat bolt upright. "Oh shit!" he said as his father climbed the stairs. "I forgot to ask him if they made it."

"What did I tell you?"

Dave Cuthbertson

Date: Sunday 15th April 1990.

Location: Observatory Gully, Ben Nevis.

It was a typical 'Ben' day. Wet and warm at 5am. We reached the Golf course at 6.30am and off we trudged.

I'd already spent a lot of time with Ray and Nick. Several outings, plenty of good advice, and, with a little more fitness, and more frequent climbing trips, the lads would turn out to be good climbers. It was, however, a difficult situation. Avalanche risk high (4) on all north facing slopes. So the gullies, it seemed were out.

When we got to the CIC hut at 9am, it was apparent that the ridges were out as well. Certainly for us, with horizontal, wind blown snow, swirling around so much that it found its way into every gap in the protective clothing.

"Bill Murray would have loved it!"

Difficult situation No.2 arose.

"Not much chance of a route today, lads!"

The disappointment was matched by the delight in knowing we weren't going to spend five or six hours scraping our way up one of the ridges in this sort of weather.

To have a dabble and let the lads 'touch the Ben', I went 100ft up the Douglas Boulder. It was desperate. So I planted a knife blade and backed off!

Alternatives were required to salvage the day.

"We'll just go into the bottom of Observatory Gully and I'll point out the gullies, ready for a better day. But not very far up and keep close to the rocks. It's dodgy today!"

I broke trail through thigh deep snow and turned the bend into the gully. At that moment, a large group of J.S.M.T.S. lads galloped past us.

"We're off to do Tower Gully", said the leader of the first four.

"We're just going to play on the Ice on Tower Scoop", said the second four's leader. Off into the murk they charged. Five minutes later they out of sight. No wonder we win wars!

My team and I weren't going any further and the idea of a snow pit was formed.

"No, don't dig there, Ray. Move to the rocks".

"Why's that?"

"In case you get avalanched while you're digging your pit!"

"Oh yes, of course!"

It was fairly safe where we were. Only 100ft past the base of the Douglas Boulder and right in near the rocks. But a perfect slope of unblemished snow to play with, save for the lads' footprints.

I'd just handed Nick the shovel.

"Clear the back wall nice and smooth, so we can test it. It looks very dangerous

snow to me, two feet of new powder on a distinctly bluey shade of old stuff". I couldn't wait to do the tests!

The chance didn't come. I stepped a metre out towards N.E. Buttress and suddenly I toppled over! I stood up and saw that the gully had avalanched on our left. Nick was unmoved in the pit, although he told me afterwards he thought the back wall of the pit had collapsed. Ray was a metre out to the right and was missed completely.

The full force of the avalanche had been almost completely spent by the time it had reached us, but it still crawled down to below the base by a few seconds of frantic activity and it was all over. I couldn't say 'All quiet' because we hadn't heard a thing.

We gazed at the extent of the slide. From the bottom of the Douglas Boulder, almost the complete width of Observatory Gully, and right up to...

"Wait a minute...Isn't that the army lads?"

About 500ft above us, some climbers were emerging from the snow. First one stood up, then another, then another, and eventually all five were shaking snow off. This must have one half of the team that had passed us. They'd come down from not far short of Tower Scoop, maybe 500 or 600ft higher up.

I shouted to see if they were all right. Five arms shot up in the air. By the time I'd got my team on to the rocks and had started up, the army lads were on their way down. Everyone was okay, it appeared, and their colleagues, the other five, had been on the edge of the gully and had been missed. They too, were on their way down. If there was no need to, I wasn't going any further, so we all reunited at the bottom of the Douglas Boulder.

The crown wall had been nearly 100ft wide and about 16" high. The lads had been lucky. No-one buried and only a few axes lost.

I only said a couple more words to my mesmirised partners....

"We're outa here!"

Cup Final Day

David Weaver

He stopped the car and as they got out, it sighed lightly and settled a couple of inches. The air over the moor was light blue; the morning was warm and welcoming. The five of them set out across the track through coarse early spring grasses and mats of dull brown heather. Off in front were the youngsters, nearly making a unity out of a pair in the soft spring sunlight and chill wind. He was looking forward to a day's climbing with his friends, feeling fit-ish and fifty-ish.

The track led them south east and the first rocks appeared, looking like lumps of dark unrefined sugar, jumbled along the edge overlooking Ladybower. Yesterday evening they had sat in The Grouse over a pint or two and had decided on a gentle start to the day. Of the youngsters, she had climbed before on sandstone and last year on Froggatt with boldness and caution, good hands and feet that would learn with practice and a good pair of rock boots. The lad was new and healthily nervous.

A top rope on a modest V Diff seemed a reasonable beginning. Kat led it easily and he followed, getting in a pickle in the middle. David sauntered up it with nonchalant ease; the lad found his way up carefully, without bravado. The release of tension at top produced noisy banter in the cold windy sunshine. He pottered about pulling at holds and searching with his feet — marvellous; distant conversations came and went in the wind. He soloed a V Diff and felt relaxed and confident. Kat went up a Severe in style and from the top talked down the other face to the youngsters. He walked down and round the bottom of the gently creased slab, passing another climber with a gruff "Good day" "Aye". He looked at the hard glittering stuff; the other climber moved up and across, dipping chalk-white fingers into rock pockets and placing sticky feet with thoughtless care. He emerged black against the bright sky and was gone. The sounds of Kat's conversation with her father were indistinct, echoing the hazy landscape. He started to move up from the first edge, only to be somewhat abashed to find white fingers climbing down. He retreated to the coarse dusty ground and sat his bum against the slopes warm roughness; no hurry about anything — nothing pushing him — wonderful, just the ancient rock, cold wind, warm sunshine, and good company. He started up the harsh surface delighting in the balance and security of small things. At the top the rough shell fitted under him. He looked out and down through the thick blue air, soaking in the soft forms and insubstantial, muted colours of the landscape.

On the jumble of rocks below the face they sprawled in luxury, propped up by blocks, grassy tussocks, anoraks and rucksacks, rustling plastic bags, negotiating doorsteps and sharing bottles. The banter dwindled and they dozed. The shadows slowly slid over the grass and the texture of the slabs and towers glittered and shifted. David had read out all one and a half lines of an E1 5c slab next to a Hard V Diff crack and he decided he'd have a look at it. He did — actually at the bottom — and said to himself "Just a bigger version of those sandstone things" but it didn't work — he couldn't move, so he did the bloody

crack instead, but only after Kat had moved the rope and climbed it first.

Nearby two climbers were balancing and clicking up a HVS. He pointed out their gear to the lad — and how good they were, especially the lead — everything in reach and no hurry. He remembered a description from *Classic Rock*, 'sustained, balanced steady judgement'. Time to move; a gentle struggle to the next rock stack, steeper and riven vertically, with cap-like blocks at the skyline. The six metre crack looked as if it would go. He toyed with the idea of placing a runner at arms length — it would probably come out with the upward pull of the rope anyway. The crack was steep but dry, good grip, feet bracing on the angled wall, dark in shadow. Harder now, sweating, rock a bit green, hand-over-hand, hand over slippery hand, come down, down. Down. Impact on folding heel, helmet clattering off, David's strong hands supporting.

Lying propped on rucksacks and anoraks, staring at the dark wall, concentrating on the afternoon sun moving slowly to explain the beautiful subtleties of the surface. Kat talking sense, making sure he was comfortable — David and Carey going to phone — Tom sitting in shorts hunched on a slab in the hot sun his hands clamped around his knees. His own shaking hands relaxed slowly, faces appeared helpfully against the sky and left. A nurse in drag took off his E.B.s with delicate firmness, propping up his expanding heel. Kat was still there — no fuss — just steady and pretty. He remembered the words "serious sustained balanced judgement". The sun gave up explaining and brightly blotted out the fine details of the wall.

Kat said they had thought it looked rather hard when he'd started it. Why not top rope it, he asked, why not? The blue sky had become an insubstantial wall for him with the sunlit slab floor-like beneath and mercifully beyond his foot. He still had two feet but only one insistently demanded his attention. Two strands of blue line snaked across the wall on his left, and Tom gathered one end around his arms and waist in a cat's cradle of security. She tied on and grunted her way up the crack; at about four metres he heard her muttering fiercely; higher, near the bulge, she called for a tight rope and with a balletically horizontal left leg was up and over the top. "Did you hear me swear at it where you came off?" Tom retreated to his sunny rock and Kat gathered up the rope.

Suddenly he was surrounded by noisy, cheerful, sweating men, "Are you okay?", "Fine", "Good, then we'll go home." They gathered around him between the wall and his foot, waist deep in boulders; they paused, put away their radios, passed instructions, asked him questions, made reports, rested with elbows on knees, all at once. One grizzled genial man checked him over to see if he had damaged anything else, "Can you feel this, this, head okay?" Through the ring of rescuers the anxious faces of his friends peered; all this trouble because he'd only toyed with an idea. The long ali sieve was positioned next to him and a very large bag was laid open on it, like an oversized oven-glove, quilted and silvery on the inside. He heaved himself on to it and was strapped firmly against the mesh. Lying like a shrunken Gulliver staring at the sky that lurched about, was like being the camera of a 1950s *cinema verite* production. The perspective of his world made the men carrying him tower and sway on the edges of his vision, with tiny heads, gigantic white knuckled hands and tree-like forearms. When he looked down his nose the landscape heaved and jolted about him. They talked constantly, a jumble of words that moved like the landscape, they told him he was

too bloody heavy and would have to walk, asked him if he was okay, adjusted the packing under his head, made him as comfortable as they could. One of them sang from above his head and asked what he thought of his voice — it was much better than his whistling. Every now and then the boss would call a halt and he was lowered to the ground with ritual safety. David appeared through the fence of straining arms and webbing to raise an enquiring thumb, "Yes, fine" although he'd be glad to get out from inside the strapped-down bag; it reminded him of carrying a sodden body off Hanging Knotts years ago.

The gate was in sight down the side of his nose and he was gleefully threatened with being slid under it, through it, over it and much play was made from the fact that the framing was vertical and diagonal as well as horizontal. David took one handle from the determined and profusely sweating man who had carried the front all the way, and with a chorus of grunts he was hoisted up and over the gate (who had the key?). A young copper asked him his name and address, date of birth, telephone number, was he in a club? The most hazardous part of the day proved to be the transfer into the ambulance, a rubber handle shot off and the stretcher crashed against the door frame "Sod it, you okay?"

In the hospital he lay quiet on a stretcher in a small cubicle looking out at an elderly Italian lady who completely filled a wheelchair. She looked round with an expression like Harpo Marx except that she was frightened. Nurses came and went, touching her shoulders reassuringly; someone brought her a sandwich and a cup of tea. The curtain swished closed around him and the consultant swished through them and talked to him, man to man, he checked him out again and asked him his name, address and telephone number. He found it very hard to understand what he was being told; the accent was curiously difficult, "damaged top surface of heel bone — painful — long time, here until next weekend, no plaster, waiting for swelling to go down, limited lateral movement, take a bit of rib bone and pop it in to that cavity there, at least six weeks off the foot", the curtains swished and he was darkly gone.

He was aware that his foot was increasingly becoming the entire focus of his world. A nurse stuck her head through the curtains, was his foot giving him trouble, it was. She stuck a needle in his thigh and tutted when the pin hole she'd made wouldn't stop bleeding; he didn't mind. "You look after him properly" came a voice "he's a climber." What price individual service — the doctor who admitted him, and whose instruction it was, also climbed but obviously had more sense than to fall off. He was trundled dozily off to the lifts along corridors with very boring ceilings; if Michaelangelo could paint that chapel ceiling, why? — oh never mind.

There were four bodies in his ward, including his, one very much older, one who looked older and a young 'un of about 14. They all ignored him which was fine. The curtains around his bed billowed out to admit a young doctor who sat down and quietly reviewed the situation, then checked him over again, paying particular attention to his spine. He had brought a leg support frame with him which was very welcome. Could he have some food? Two bananas and a litre of water eight hours ago were barely a memory. All he got were three pills and in a few minutes he didn't feel hungry at all.

The night was punctuated by a series of shadowy events each brought into being by deep goat-like bleating exhalations at regular intervals. Shadowy

figures padded about and gentle mutterings gradually subdued the regular sounds, until all was engulfed in dreamless sleep.

Early next afternoon, before his friends arrived to take him south the night's events were played through, with embellishments. "Nurse" (deep bleating about four seconds long), silence, also four seconds, "Nurse", silence, "Nurse", silence, "Nurse". Picture to yourself a lad sitting with a Walkman headset on and imagine him singing a pop song and in several keys at once. In the distance can be heard a sad soft wailing which rises in pitch and volume. We shout at the lad but he can't even hear himself let alone us, so a nurse on her way to quell the bleating tweaks the good foot and he shuts up. All is restored to dozing tranquillity. "Nurse, nurse, nurse", soft footsteps and they gather around him turning him over, changing his sheets and his nightshirt, calling him Charlie in lover's voices. Their ministrations are punctuated by a new chant at the same frequency, "Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear" and they join in "yes, oh dear Charlie, oh dear", and smiling and soft talking they left him. Somewhere down the corridor the sad soft wailing starts again, getting louder and more piercing, the lad starts singing out of tune and as loud as ever, again Charlie starts his braying, nasal chant for "nurse, nurse, nurse" to provide the ground base for the trio; he wanted to beg the nurses not to stop Charlie but he was laughing so much he had no breath left to talk.

The Longest Day

Nigel Peacock

I can never remember whether it was 1975 or 1976. Anyway it was one of those long hot summers in the days one associates more with riots in Chicago than the greenhouse effect and I'd recently returned to Wales after 13 years in the Rockies. Mellor (Jon as he's called by his friends) had first come into my life a couple of years earlier during an epic ascent of Amphitheatre Buttress in more than usually torrential rain and violent gales for the time of year — July. Now, however, it was mid-June, the rocks were bone dry and the roar of even the most persistent torrent had shrunk to silence. The crags beckoned in a way that was irresistible, arrangements for the family to be amused for the weekend had been made and I awaited the rendezvous call.

Was it to be Cloggy or the Pass? The 'phone rang and there was Mellor, "It's too bloody hot to climb, I'm going to paint the house." Cold fury boiled inside me as I slammed the receiver down and, like Achilles, sulked inside the house while the sun streamed down outside. At 11pm I was just making the hardest move of the day — getting into my pyjamas — when Mellor's dulcet tones came purring down the wires. "How about seeing the sunrise from the top of Snowdon? It's the longest day tomorrow." It was agreed that we should meet at Pen y Pass at 2am and I thought it would be wise to find my water bottle before I tucked myself into bed for a couple of hours. The water bottle eventually materialised at 1am, and so I drove over to Pen y Pass never having had my nap.

There was Jon — immaculate in what in the fading moonlight appeared to be midnight blue breeches, and beguilingly unconscious of the fury he'd caused earlier in the day, well yesterday actually.

The Pyg track seemed logical but at the saddle Jon swung right and in the pitch dark we fumbled our torchless way over Crib Goch and the Pinnacles. First light found us on Crib y Ddysgl avoiding the rocky bits by traversing to the right and at 3.45 am we were on the summit of Snowdon. Others had had the same idea and we stood in a huddled group under a leaden sky. The thumping generator from the 'cafe' and its smells had all the charm of the bilges of a North Sea trawler.

It was apparent that there was to be no sunrise that day and, in any case, one can see it in comfort in the middle of the winter if you care to stay in bed long enough. Jon, having been on many major mountains before (and with expedition experience) had brought along a well planned supply of provisions; protein, carbohydrate, fat and vitamins, they were all there, compressed into one Mars Bar. This we shared.

What should we do now? I deciphered a rather glutinous, "What about the 14 peaks?" I wasn't too sure if he was serious but at 4am we zoomed down to Cloggy station and made that knee shattering descent to Nant Peris. We had, of course, left the map behind (who needs one for Snowdon?) and in those days Elidir Fawr was unknown ground, so the fields, fences and gullies of the Nant Peris hinterland presented a bit of a problem but eventually we forced our way through to the great slope of Elidir. We probably took it too far to the left

following the wall to the ridge and thence to the top. It was about 7.30am when we arrived at the summit and immediately fell into a deep slumber. At 10 we awoke to find the overcast had burned away. The sun was blazing down and we were already nicely roasted. Definitely time for a drink. Alas, Peacock had left the water bottle in the car. The summit of Elidir is not renowned for its springs and the nearest water was 1,000ft below in Marchlyn Mawr which the CEGB was currently desecrating. Well, how about breakfast, then? We'd already consumed Mellor's contribution on Y Wyddfa but a well equipped mountaineer always has supplies for emergencies and I was able to produce from the right hand pocket of my anorak no less than six raisins plus a considerable quantity of fluff. Mellor refused the fluff but ate three of the raisins and I ate the others, and a further three from the left pocket which I didn't want to worry him about. It would have only caused confusion.

Lack of sleep, food and water certainly contributed to rather snail-like progress, in fact we may well have been overtaken by some rapid lichen, but we did take in some tops which it seems aren't normally included — Mynydd Perfedd, for one, Foel Goch, for another, and then over Y Garn and down to Llyn y Cwn, water at last. We lay full length on the dry sphagnum lapping it up appropriately enough, like hounds at the end of the hunt. Then in the boiling sun up the grotty scree to Glyder Fawr and on, with views of the Isle of Man, to Glyder Fach, down the scree to the south of Bristly Ridge and then up through the rocks to Adam and Eve and at least a dozen other more nubile girls lying around the summit of Tryfan in bikinis. A memorable sight for any mountaineer.

Maybe it was that display of pulchritude that made our tongues hang out but by now the heat was quite ferocious and instead of descending the west face we dropped down the north ridge keeping in the shade of as many rocks as we could. When I think of the times I've plodded up in pouring rain and slithering peat it is hard to believe that anyone could search for shade there, but it's true.

Blessed A5, and its mobile caff. You don't need money to see the sunrise on Snowdon so our resources weren't great; there was just enough to buy two cups of tea which we laced with so much sugar that the spoon stuck in like Gwendoline's in *The Importance of Being Ernest*.

It was probably the thought of such pampered living that persuaded the eloquent Mellor at this point to announce that enough was enough and he was going to pack it in and hitch back to the Pass. But my home in the Conwy Valley called, only another six peaks away.

I set off for Glan Dena and 60 yards along the road turned round for a final wave to Mellor and what should I spy but his golden tongue wrapping itself round an ice cream cone. Maybe he had seen those three extra raisins on Elidir, or maybe, being a financier of some note, he'd discovered a new source of liquidity.

The bit up to Ffynnon Lloer and up the ridge to Pen yr Ole Wen were both new to me and then, 15 years ago, there wasn't the track there is now. The sun beat down relentlessly and by the time I swung round towards Carnedd Dafydd it was about 6pm. I had the hills to myself — only mad dogs...How wrong can you be? I don't know who was the more surprised but as I plodded up the slope to Carnedd Llewellyn what to my wandering eyes should appear but a chap coming down absolutely stark bollock naked, well, except for his boots, that is. No, I'm

not kidding — he was absolutely starkers, and aside from people like Mike Harris jumping through the ice of Llyn Lyddaw on a February day, I'd not seen a sight like that in Wales before. Certainly it presented a challenge to social niceties.

Seeking for a suitable greeting, I alighted upon, "You don't need pitons on this route, you know." I'll never forget his reply. He said, "Are you Australian or something?" I've been pondering it ever since.

At the top of Llewellyn I remembered Yr Elen so dropped my 'sack and nipped across and back again up that steep fine scree slope — the last painful plod of the day. Then with the sun sinking into the Irish Sea it was away along the ridge to Foel Grach, Carnedd Uchaf and Foel Fras. I had no idea about the best route down to the Conwy Valley but I knew my recently acquired cottage was right by the Afon Dulyn so I took a bearing in deepening twilight on where I thought it must be and set off on a beeline across bog, rocks, thicket, gully and brambles and made it down at 11pm just as darkness was taking over.

Twenty and three quarter hours is not, I am told, a record for the 14 peaks, but I have a feeling that half a Mars bar, six raisins and a cup of tea may be. The odd thing is that Mellor and I are still talking. He has yet to complete the 3,000ers and I am godfather to his youngest daughter. But like water bottles, maps and food I'm afraid I still forget her birthday.

A wet weekend in Wales

Norman Elliott

Friday night. The gale submerged the A5 near Capel and we felt the familiar pangs of disappointment at arriving in the Pass in the rain. The weather forecast had predicted correctly and judging from the lack of vehicles in the pub car-park most climbers and walkers had decided to give this January weekend a miss.

Quite sure that tomorrow was a write off we fortified ourselves at the bar before making a drive and a dash (all of 20 yards) through the deluge to the light and warmth of Ynys Ettws. Inside the hut, a welcome, a fire, a bottle of Scotch and conversation with the few other brave souls quickly subdued the sound of the maelstrom outside. We were not then all that surprised when my watch showed 11am the next morning. A quick look outside confirmed that it really had set in, although a lightening towards the coast gave grounds for hope, if not optimism. A quick breakfast accompanied by the trills from Ronnie's Irish pipes and we determined to at least go and see what Anglesey was like.

"Coming for a look at Gogarth?" said Terry to a startled Daphne, who had arrived earlier that morning, having set off from London at 3am so as to miss the traffic! "What are you going to do?" she enquired. "Well we thought we'd have a go at Britomartis if it's dry. It's a route we've been meaning to do for some time — it's supposed to be very good."

A short time later and the three of us were driving across the Menai. Daphne's engaging conversation broken only by the cascading voices from the tape singing Ruttler's Requiem Mass — a truly beautiful composition that we had played endlessly since discovering it some months earlier and yes, the weather was getting better. A strong drying wind cut across the island charging the white horses towards Castell Helen as we drove into South Stack car-park.

Our walk across the headland to Wen Zawn soon had the blood warming against the searching winter wind. Arriving at the crag there was just one other party in evidence, the leader was just finishing the top pitch of Wen and his second was deeply ensconced in the crack like some dark crouching sheltering from the frigid updraft.

I glanced at my watch as I zipped it into the rucksack pocket. Just enough time I thought as I clipped into the rope and followed the other two down. The abseil follows the line of The Trap, and it was good to see Daphne smiling up from the belay ledge a safe distance above the churning sea.

Britomartis starts just around the corner and the first moves are considered the hardest as one makes an exposed traverse across a steep undercut to reach the soaring vertical crack which splits this steep wall and forms the first pitch. I made the swing down followed by moves which were dripping dark wet and immediately out of sight of the second. The rock felt chilled as I crabbed across to the cleft and prepared to move upwards.

It was then the wave hit me.

Water battered me from every direction with a force which slammed the chest into the rock and left me chocking on the oily Irish sea. The initial shock was

immense as I clutched, shuddering, to the steep holds. Water poured from sodden clothing, the soaking weight of which now threatened to pull me off. Protection, to say the least, was now vital, and I managed to sink a large nut into the back of the fissure, clipping in as my hands froze and floundered on the streaming run-off. Thoughts of Arnis Strapcans being taken by the sea just round the next corner shot through my mind as I moved up to place another runner which I hoped would take me out of reach of another pounding. Sliding up I slithered in another Rock and sat back in the harness to contemplate what to do next. Everything was soaked, hair, boots, rope, slings and every stitch of clothing. I considered throwing my 'sweat' shirt into the sea as its weight alone acted like a drag anchor against the possibility of upward movement. It was cold, very cold. 'Silly Sod' I thought 'that will teach you to climb without socks in January'. If only my hands could be dried. I reached automatically into the chalk bag only to encounter a handful of grey wet slime which I threw at the incoming waves like a soggy ill formed snowball.

It was at this point Daphne put her head round the corner some 30ft away and eyed my dripping state critically. "Is he all right?" Terry enquired from behind her. "It's better not to know" was her curt reply. She shouted round to me, "would it help if you had a dry chalk bag?" and quickly I was pulling it across and using its contents to blot up hands and rock boots. Another five minutes of drip-drying and I was ready for the rest of the route.

To say the climb is only VS+ it is remarkably steep so I took a lot of care to arrange good protection whenever I could. About 80ft up the crack is what Steve Ashton in his topo guide describes as a 'smelly hole'. I had just passed this feature enjoying for the first time the exposed position from the large flakes that the route is noted for, when without warning the wall fell away. I'd tested the holds, and they must have seen regular traffic, but they chose this moment to break away taking a square metre of the face and me with them. The fall thankfully was only about 10 ft into space, and I was left hanging from my last runner which had remained attached to sound strata only an inch below the cleavage line of the rotten flake above.

Daphne looked around the corner for the second time, now some distance away, enquiring after my health. I nodded and she disappeared from sight, conversation with Terry proving more interesting than my welfare. By now I was angry and stormed up past a little overlap to the belay ledge.

Now this narrow stance is far from commodious and I eyed with suspicion the three manky belay pegs. Ever since I snapped off a piton by hand like a piece of muesli bar at Bosigran I have had a dread of sea cliff pegs, and for the life of me I didn't fancy a belay here at this late time in the afternoon. It was whilst I was deciding what to do that a helicopter from Valley beat its way by. The winchman sat eyeing me with clinical regard just 100 metres away, his professional detachment only emphasising my lonlieness. 'Just hope you don't ever have to come any closer', I thought and pressed straight on up the second pitch.

The initial moves were quite hard into a triangular niche, followed by an exposed traverse along a ledge system leading to the final groove. The climbing up the ledge angle was relatively easy. It needed to be as the protection was poor and the ropes were dragging like hell. The total length of these two pitches according to the Paul Williams' guidebook is 190ft, quite an achievement on a



Above: The view from Y Gribin across to Crib Goch. Photo: John Driskell

150ft of rope I reasoned as I exhaustedly pulled the straining rope on to the platform. Sure enough Terry had been traversing into the groove whilst I climbed the final few feet. A tug o' war followed generating a little body warmth as Terry rapidly heaved his way up the climb, pulling over the top as the sun which had just pretended to appear for the first time that day immediately set in an orange ball to be replaced by a rising moon and the intermittent search beam of the lighthouse.

"Daphne's going to be late for her CC Committee meeting" chuckled Terry as I yelled at the darkening sea for Daphne to start climbing. We need not have worried as she shot up the route determined not to be left to the night. She arrived out of the gloom to a heroine's welcome, but immediately confessed that she had left a middle-sized Friend stuck in the crack. "Never mind", I said, "That's what gear is for — better it than you." Knowing full well that it belonged to Terry a gesture of magnanimity seemed in order as I sensed his loss and long face in the dark.

Back to the car by the full moon to dry clothes and warmth, the now cerebral sea rapidly retreating as we hurtled back to Llanberis. A quick goodbye to Daphne (who was only an hour late for her meeting) and last orders at Pete's Eats had lentil and bean curry banishing the last vestige of chill.

It had been in its way a great day so far and it was still only 9pm. We had arranged to meet some friends who were camping below Snowdon at Glaslyn, so dragging ourselves away from the Padarn we shouldered our packs and walked slowly up the Miners Track throwing our moon-shadows on to the path.

It's good to have warm friends and friends who are warm, on occasions like this, although they did let us walk nearly round the lake before answering our yells. The usual banter, a mug of wine and a warm sleeping bag never felt better.

Wet weekend

I slept fitfully, dreaming of huge waves and helicopter rescues as Terry snored his way into his usual foetal position at the bottom of the tent.

Sunday morning and another sea, this time of mist, lay below us, Snowdon splendid in its white topping above. So up the/with the best Brocken Spectre I have ever seen projected on to a rising tide of cloud over the Trinity Gullies. The ground was coated with deep hoar frost driven into diamond currents over the summit rocks. Never have I enjoyed the top of Snowdon more. Sea level seemed a long way away.

On arriving back home on Sunday evening we sorted out the still wet climbing gear. Imagine the delight on Terry's face when he discovered it was my Friend that had been left on Britomartis. As he reminded me "After all that's what Friends are for!"

L Gribben

Below: Sometimes it gets really wet in Wales. Photo: Bill Gregory



Ruth's first rock climb

Terry Gifford

I don't remember ever approaching a crag before with a climbing partner who insisted on singing hymns in the car. From the gleeful glint in Ruth's eyes, I knew she was winding me up rather than her courage. As a matter of fact it was the sceptical grin with which she fielded my well-argued points of view that made her so attractive. "You'll find it's like walking upstairs", I'd said. "Oh yes", she'd said wryly with that glinting grin which made me feel we understood each other for what we were.

Young Tom, my eleven year old son, shouted suddenly "Look, river of purple!" Ruth and I looked, and then smiled. Flowing down the flanks of Cat Bells, starkly lit by the bright morning sun, were purple strips of heather that flowered against the broad burnt patches on either side. Tom was into linguistic discoveries. Already on this journey down Borrowdale Tom had spotted on a tractor 'Flat Caps Rule O.K.' What did it mean? Then on a National Trust Warden's Landrover he read a sticker declaring 'I Support Dry Stone Walling'. It took Ruth all the way to Rosthwaite to help him sort that one out.

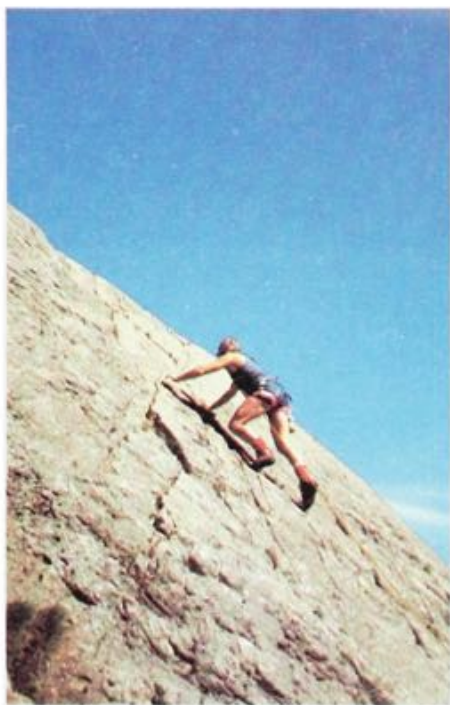
As we approached the little bridge just beyond Rosthwaite I introduced Tom to a bit of climbing folklore. "You see this row of houses beside the bridge? Well, in the 1940s a climber called Jim Birkett used to ride his motorbike so fast over this bridge that he registered his speed by the number of front doors he passed in the air."

"How long ago did he die?" asked Tom.

"He's still alive" I said.

"Oh really? After how many accidents?" Tom joked back. Ruth and I laughed at the knowingness of the age of eleven.

We were bound for another area of climbing folklore, Seathwaite Slabs, first found by old Bentley Beetham, who was into linguistic discoveries himself. I did my first rock-climbs as a Boy Scout from the Fens on Glaciated Slab, high above those Rosthwaite cottages. Bentley Beetham had named the climbs there with Cumbrian sheep-counting numbers: Trod Yan, Trod Tan, Trod Tethera, Trod Methera. For Seathwaite Slabs he transposed the names into a different area of tens. Ruth was to climb



Smoot Methera, Smoot Pimp and Smoot Sether. Bentley Beetham cleaned and climbed these lines on outlying rocks for the purpose of providing ideal first climbs. I'd never climbed on Seathwaite Slabs before, but I trusted his judgement like Ruth trusted her own.

So we set off up the steep path beside Sourmilk Ghyll, Tom carrying the rope, more out of stylishness than gallantry. Ruth's determination soon took her ahead. (It's good for morale if it doesn't expose the leader's unfitness too obviously. 'Looking up ahead is better than looking down at heels,' Baden Powell might well have remarked). I panted up behind in the rather strong September sun. With a late spurt I came over the top, where the floor of Gillercombe opens its choices, just in time to shout for Ruth's return. On our right Seathwaite Slabs lay back amongst the grassy knolls across the Sourmilk stream.

Whilst Tom and I stood looking for a series of boulders to step across on, Ruth had taken off her trainers and was walking across, underwater as it were. Stretching for a foothold underwater she suddenly slipped, lost her balance, put a hand down into the stream and at the same time gave me one of those 'What-have-you-got-me-into-this-time?' looks. But before anything could be said she was up, across and walking straight through the boggy bit that Tom and I hopped across, failing to keep our feet dry.

Thus came Ruth's firm decision to do her first climbs in bare feet. I tried to argue her out of it, but not with much expectation of success. Well, I just thought it would be increasingly painful. In fact her toes found holes I wouldn't have been able to get the toe of my boot into. When her turn came she simply climbed. Her slender fingers found thin cracks. (I'd not even attempted to suggest she might remove her rings). Her bare feet read the dimples of the slab faster than the glance of an eye. Her look never rose to me, but reflected the rock surface. She didn't need speech. She moved in a sequence of self-made narrative. Difficulty didn't enter into it. Rock climbing was taking place, the discovery of a new language of self-expression.

Ruth climbed three of the 100ft routes that aren't even named in the current guidebook. They've been lost to the new esoterics of the latest dug-out crags. History repeats itself, but differently. Ruth and I lounged in philosophical mood in a little dell at the top of the slab. The September sun still shone on my shorts.

Tom soloed up with the sandwiches and we listened to his banter. "Are you any good at burping?" he asked me. I had to admit that I'm not. "I'm not either, but I've been practising for ages," he said solemnly.

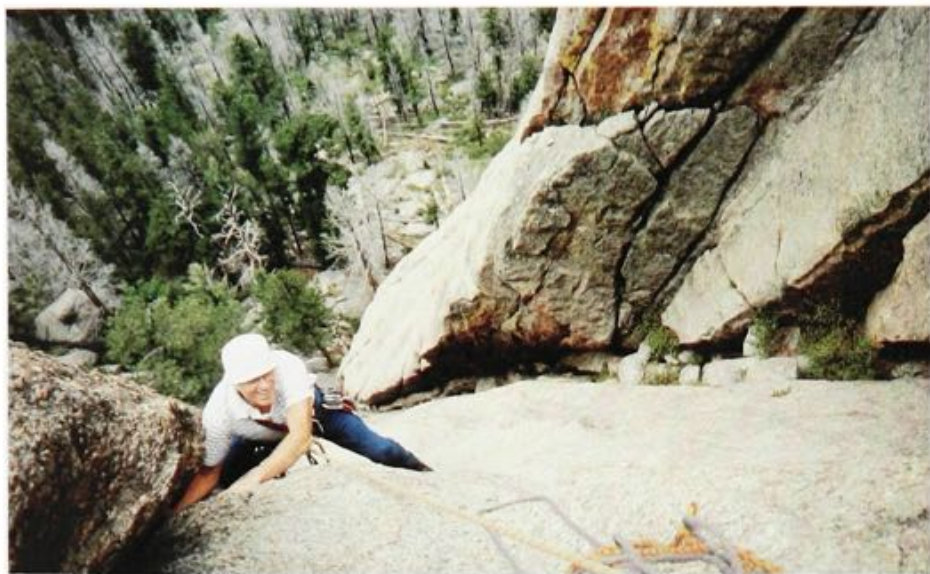
"Strange boy", Ruth said quietly to me.

I reminded her about it when I saw her last Tuesday. This was only a fortnight since her first rock climbs, but it appears that the world has now changed. Somehow, during September, an era has passed. "But they were Infant hymns," she told me last Tuesday, "not Junior hymns like we do now." Now the world is Junior and as big as the hills.

The American Dream

Steve Beresford

It was at the Dovedale Dash that I saw Nat Allen, and in the course of the conversation mentioned that I was going to America the following summer. On his enquiry where, I said I thought the Rockies, but I wasn't sure. A few weeks later I came across a John Harlin Guide for the whole of the Central Rockies and decided to plan vaguely around the guide. Nat had also recommended me to get in touch with Dez Hadlum who lived in Denver and this finally decided our starting point.

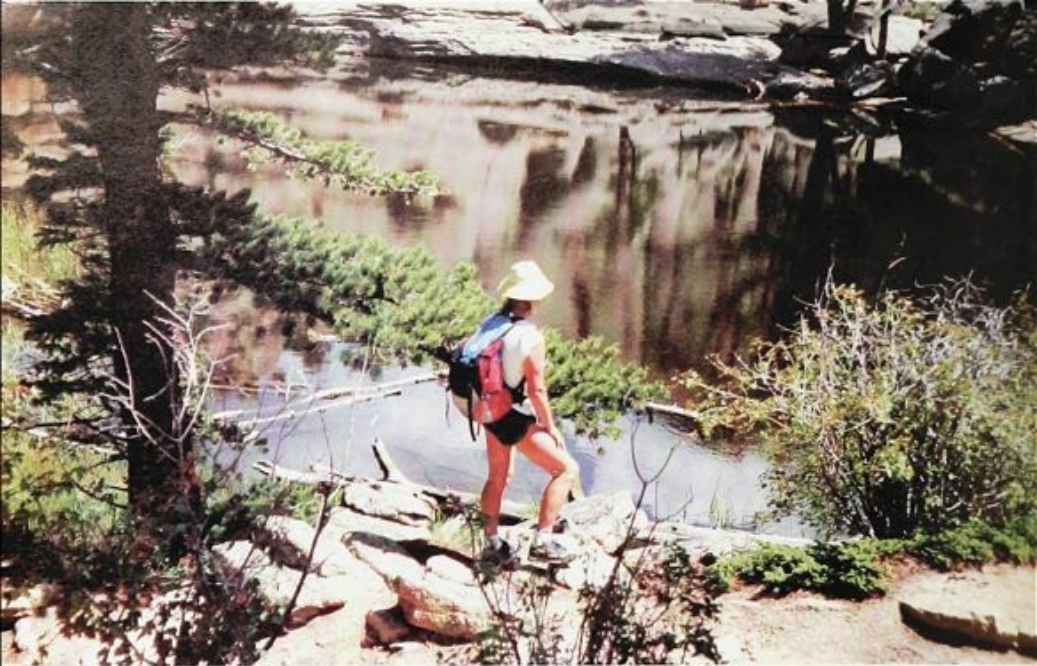


Above: Nat on 'Handbook' (5.9), The Bookend. Photo: Steve Beresford

Dez Hadlum was a name from climbing history, a name I knew from *The Hard Years* and *Rope Boy*. His and Anne's generosity and advice contributed immeasurably to the success of our trip in American rock land.

We flew into Denver (we being myself, my wife Sue, Luke my brother in law, and baby Ruth) at the beginning of August. Within half an hour of negotiating Customs, car hire, the telephone system etc, we were ensconced in Dez's house. Anne had prepared us a huge meal and Dez pumped us full of information until we fell asleep. The first stopping place for anyone visiting the Hadlums is Estes Park where Dez and Anne have a holiday cottage. The cottage is superbly situated about a mile from the Lumpy Ridge crags.

Estes Park is like Keswick complete with lake and mountains. The mountains however are the classic Rocky Mountain National Park peaks such as Longs and Halletts Peaks. Lumpy Ridge on the other side of the town contains at least 10



Above: Ruth Allen at Gem Lake. Photo: Nat Allen

large granite crags, all with a plethora of beautiful routes on them.

The following morning Sue and I started our American Campaign with The Organ Pipes (5.6) on Twin Owls. I found the granite superb and enjoyed the route immensely. Having Ruth with us we tended to do short routes so that Luke would not have prolonged baby sitting duties. The following day saw Luke and I ascend Rock One Route (5.4), and then we all paid a visit to Halletts Peak (12,713ft). On Friday evening Dez, Anne, Nat and Ruth arrived for the weekend.

Saturday morning saw Sue, Nat and Dez ascending Handbook (5.9) on the Bookend while I babysat. Sue's comments were all complimentary about the climbing. In the afternoon Dez and I did Sorcerer (5.8) also on the Bookend. I found the climbing strenuous and being out of condition felt quite pushed on the sharp end. Sunday saw Sue and I at the foot of the Pear while Dez, Nat and Ruth went to attempt Cajun Capers on the Sundance. The whole party was thwarted by prolonged hailstorms which made for spectacular photography but slippery climbing. That evening a motley group of Dez, Ruth, Sue and Luke snatched the classic South Ridge of Window Rock after the showers. Monday was a repeat of the other days with two pitches of Pear Buttress on the Book completed, hail forced a speedy retreat. That evening Dez and Anne went home so the following day we went on a visit to Mecca. The six of us drove down to Boulder picking up East Slab (5.6) on the way down Boulder Canyon. After eating at the Old Chicago and admiring the glitzy lifestyle, while looking in vain for English expatriates, Sue, Luke and I went to look at Eldorado. As we turned round at the top of the Canyon a long, skinny figure shambled between the parked cars. Dirty Derek looked as though he'd never left Stoney. After swapping all our news we headed back to Estes and our last night in the shadow of Lumpy Ridge.

The remaining three weeks of the holiday were to consist of a trip North

visiting climbing areas and tourist attractions and one to the south. We left for Vedanwoo near Laramie the following day. Vedanwoo is a superb collection of granite crags rather like an enlarged version of the Black Rocks of Cromford. The area is famous for its cracks but there is also good slab climbing. On arrival I led Edwards Crack (5.6) belayed by Luke who opted out of informing me that the rope had run through the belay plate as I pulled over the top overhang! I abseiled for my gear in the gathering gloom. The next day Sue and I did three more routes on superb rock.

To the north The Devil's Tower was beckoning. This famous landmark in Northern Wyoming boasts its own guidebook of unique groove and crack climbing. There are two campsites but we opted for luxury and stayed on the K.O.A. complete with swimming pool and restaurant. It was very hot at the Tower and Sue wanted to climb later in the day. This was, for me, a mistake as by the time I had looked at the thing all day I was unrelaxed and uptight when we climbed. What should have been a relatively easy ascent up the classic Durrance Route (5.6) turned into an uneasy graunch up classic stemming cracks. Just below the top of the second pitch I ran out of steam. It was a chastened couple who abbed off and skulked back to the campsite. Unfortunately the schedule didn't allow for failures. The Devil's Tower remains superb climbing in a unique atmosphere with a positive attitude from the Park authorities towards climbers.

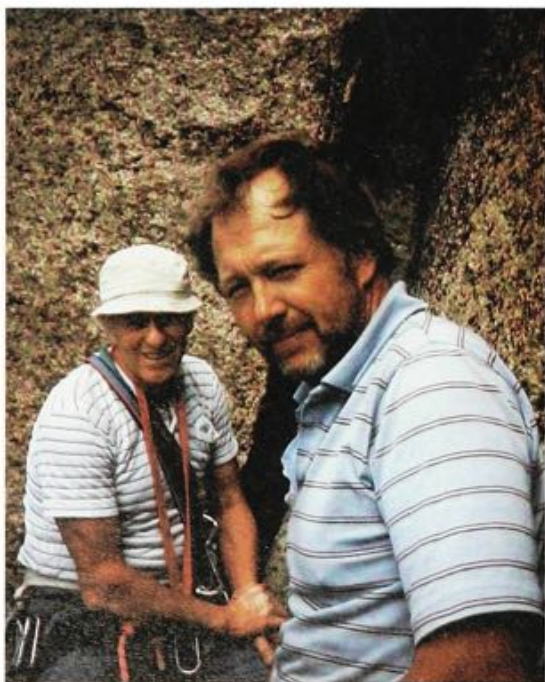
The Black Hills of South Dakota house perhaps one of the wierdest collection of pinnacles in the climbing world. Unfortunately the pace of development is so rapid that an up-to-date guidebook is not forthcoming. *Touch the Sky*, one of two current guidebooks merely sets the scene. The venue was the Gem Lake Campsite, hard to get on to in high season, but right in the centre of the action. With a day lost through car failure our activity was curtailed to three days. The rock here is granite but with huge lumps of feldspar and other intrusions providing most of the hand and footholds. The climbing is steep, unprotected but with generally good, fingery holds. Bolt protection is more widely available on the modern routes and at the summits of the pinnacles. The Needles consist of pinnacles and crags anything from 150ft to 600ft high. Set amongst superb woodland they provide immaculate climbing and are a must for anyone in Wyoming. After doing six routes and ascending Mount Harney, the high point of the Black Hills (during which we were hit by another huge hailstorm, Babe Ruth was not impressed) we moved back to Denver.

The next stage of our tour took us south to see the Grand Canyon. We travelled Interstate 70 West from Denver first staying in Frisco for two nights. Here Sue, who is a runner, came second in a 10 kilometre race at 9,000ft. For the ski buffs in the Club, Frisco is surrounded by big resorts and we visited both Copper Mountain and Brecken Ridge — both look a must for a future winter visit. The next stop was Canyonlands. For anyone into the esoteric these are a definite must. The guidebook *Desert Rock* sets the scene. Based on the 'scrotty' town of Moab, but extending for miles around, the towers, buttes and river bluffs of Canyonlands provide a classic climbing area. This wilderness of sandstone monstrosities is for the devotees of the remote. Superb lines on variable rock dominate. The Americans carry a special desert rack with huge Friends available for the friable cracks. Unfortunately our short brush with Canyonlands was limited to one morning after a tour around the Arches National Park. The dictates

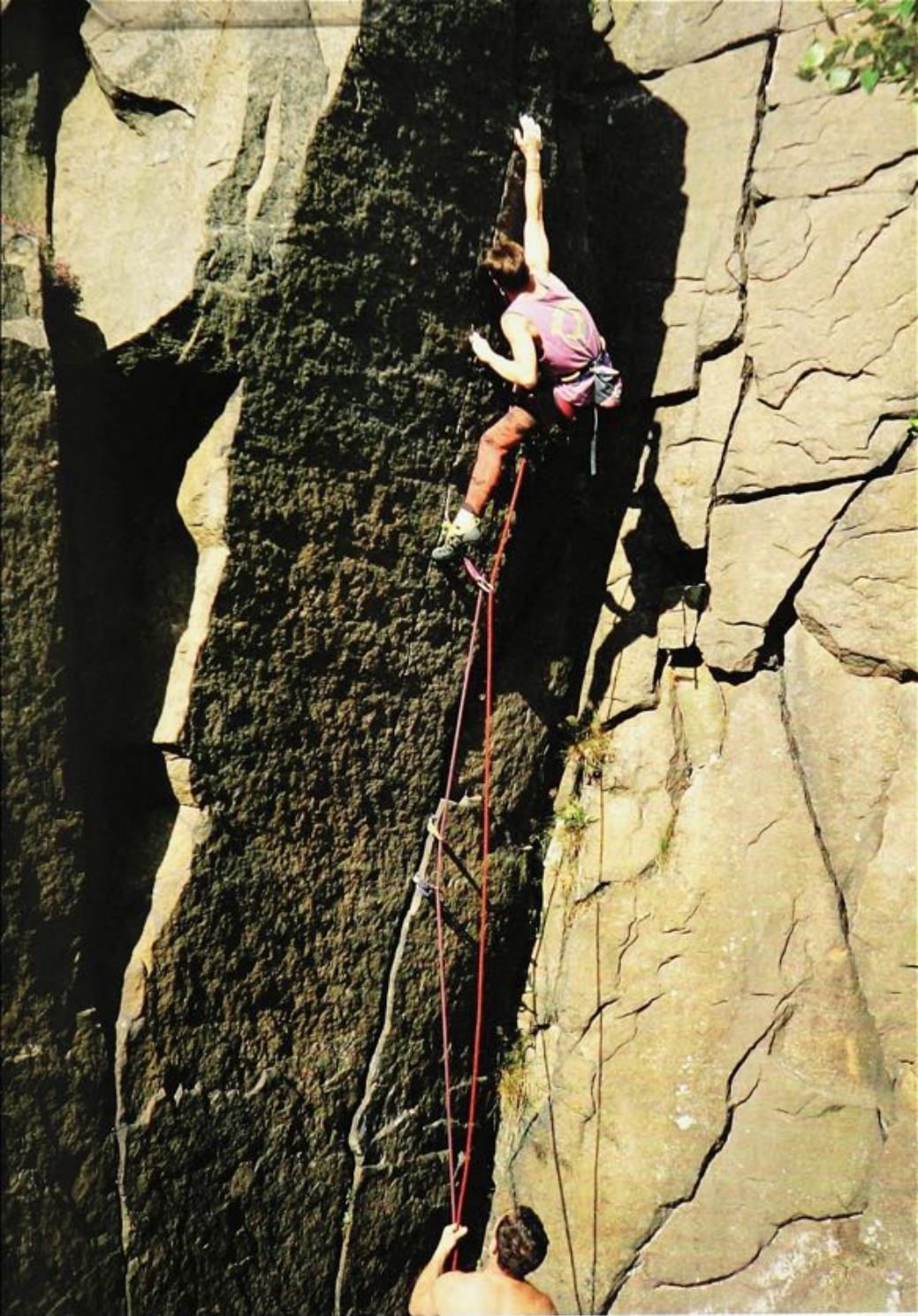
of time and touring were beginning to dominate the holiday.

From Moab we moved south 'doing' Monument Valley, the Grand Canyon and then back north into Southern Colorado to the Indian dwelling at Mesa Verde. The following day we set off for Turkey Rocks near Colorado Springs where we were to end our holiday. It was a superb drive over high passes surrounded by Colorado's numerous 14,000ft peaks. At first the San Juan Mountains dominated our view. This was where Nat and Ruth had been after Estes. Mountain ranges followed each other until we arrived at Turkey Rocks the following day. These rocks and others surrounding them are in an area south of Denver called the South Platte. The whole area is dotted with fabulous granite rocks — climbing enough for a lifetime. At Turkey Rocks there is a superb forestry campsite, basic but free. A short drive along a rough track, a 10 minute walk and you are there. There are several crags, we climbed at Turkey Perch due to the dictates of time and baby. The granite and cracks are superb.

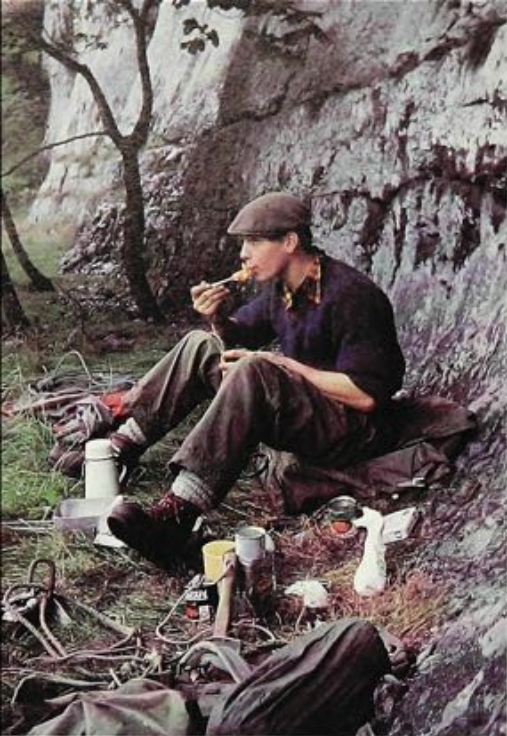
All good things come to an end and the next evening we returned to the Hadlum mansion in Denver, a big meal out and a firm promise to Dez in return. Reflections on the holiday are that we didn't have enough time. We climbed in seven different areas and hardly scratched to surface. Of course we toured as well — who wouldn't in America. The climbing in general was superb, varied and peaceful, crowds are not a problem. We need to go back and spend a fortnight in each place — the mind boggles. The kindness and advice of Dez and Anne Hadlum stand out amongst so many highlights to what was, for us, a memorable trip.



*Nat (in the hat) and Dez.
Photo: Derek Juchua*

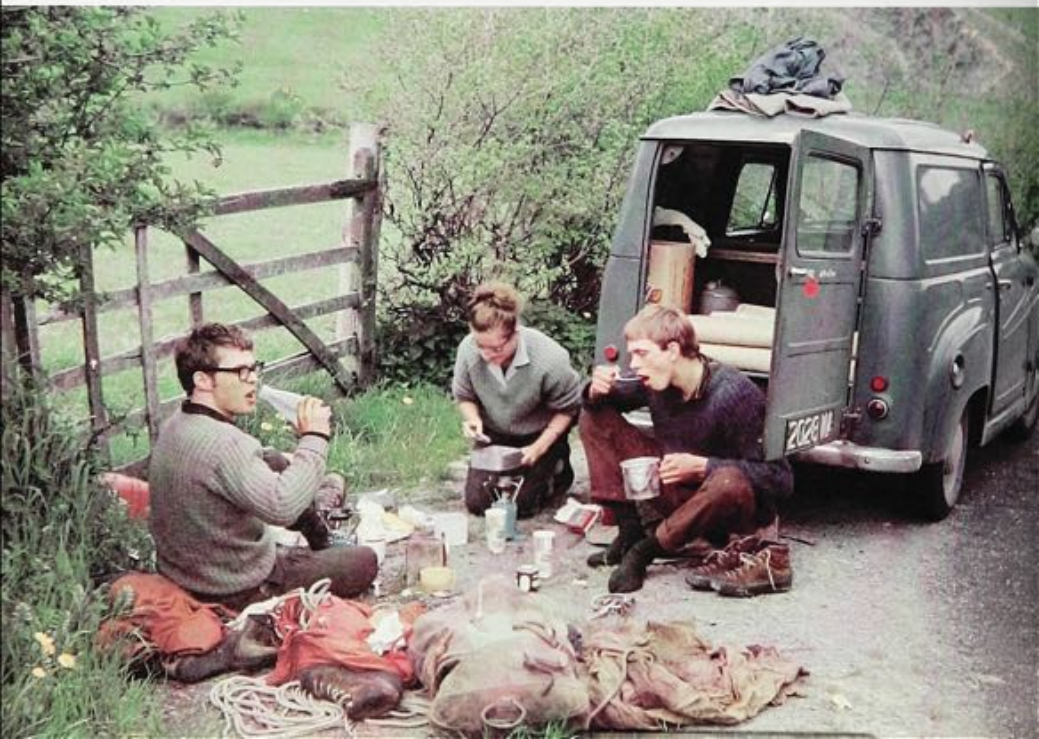


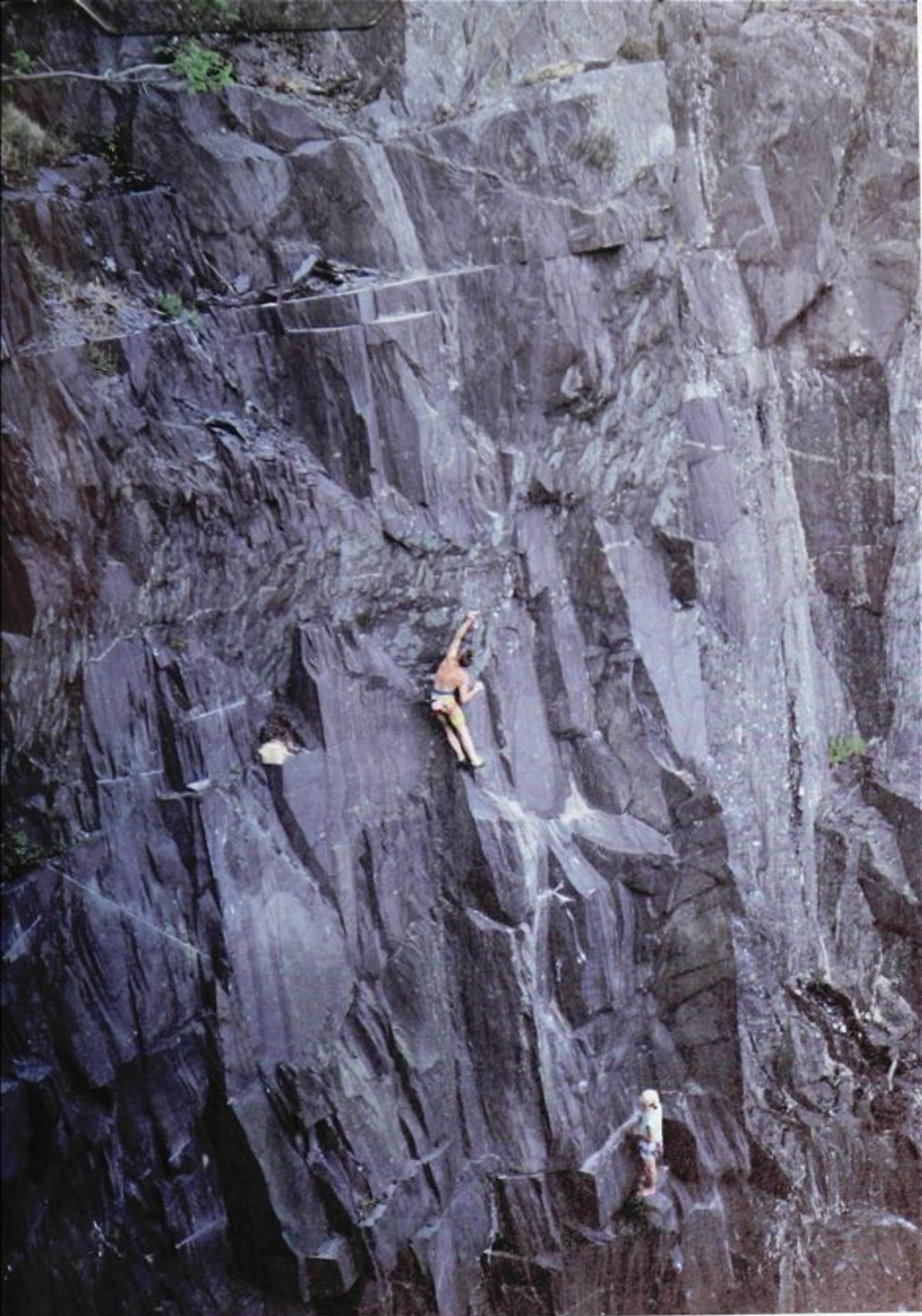
Bill Gregory in action in Tegness Quarry. Photo: Sharon Sworder



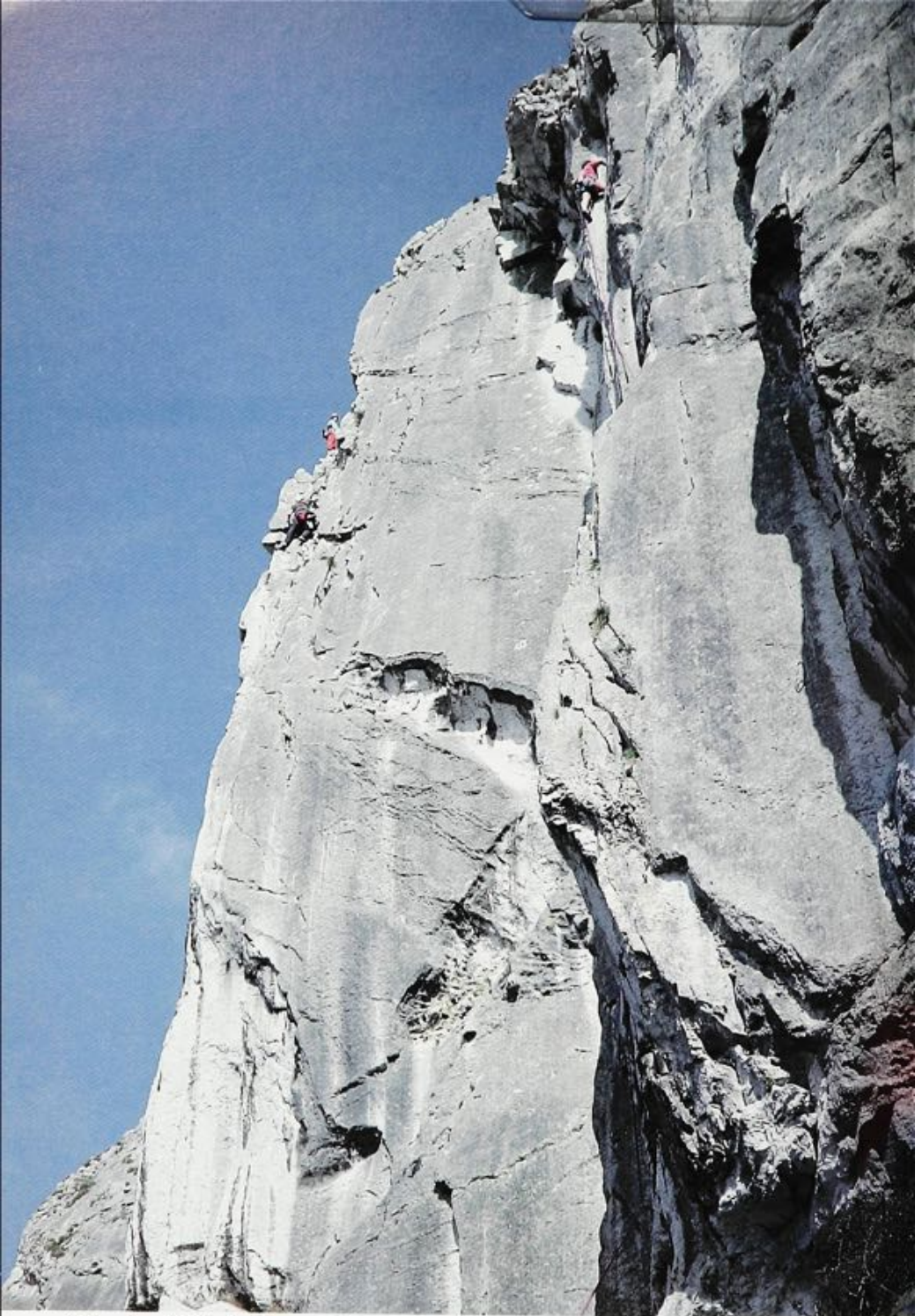
*Left: John 'Ackers' Atkinson apres un bivouac under 'Nemesis', Water-cum-Jolly.
Photos: Chris Jackson*

Below: L to R Dave Nowill, Carol Mk1, Jack Street; somewhere between the A5 and Ruthin





Bill Gregory on the first ascent of 'Shazalzabon' E5 6b, Colossus Wall



'Cinq Anes' VS 4b, Freyr, Belgium. Photo: Chris Craggs



*Above: Some members of the team, which made a rare visit to St Kilda, on top of Mullach Bi
Below: Members of the St. Kilda team enjoying a bracing boat trip. Photos: Mike Mortimer*





Rod Valentine on 'Duke of York' HVS, Northumberland. Photo: Steve Foxley

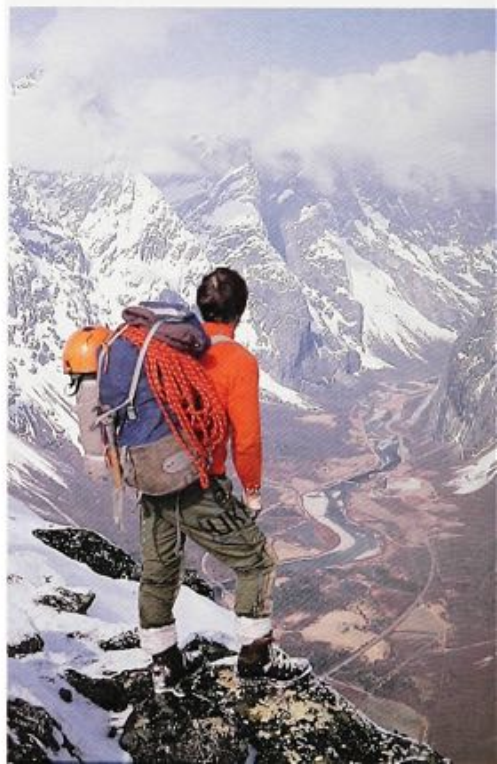


Marjorie Mortimer on Gran Muro, Sasso della Croce (or Crusc). Photo: Mike Mortimer



Left: Colin Binks demonstrating 'Twinkletoes' Baggy Point.

Right: Spring in Romsdal. Photos: Chris Craggs



Running round the mountains

Mike F. Browell

Up before the sparrows in the June dawn, creeping out of Ynys Ettws like thieves to greet the Pass enveloped in conspiratorial mist, the heights and depths of the day's aspirations painlessly concealed in the clouds.

Pen y pass 0.00

Grib Goch 0.41

Mistbound early morning dazed on a summit, myopic Roy glimpses Crib Goch ridge leering through the vapour and indicating the way ahead to the next summit. Wisely ignoring his navigational claims we run in the opposite direction: the compass never lies and cloudwalking is decidedly tricky.

We overtake the first party.

Crib y ddysgl 1.14

Why, we wonder, is there a control kite and encamped army-types on the summit of Crib-y-ddysgl?

We run on to Snowdon; first chugging up then chugging down the iron road, striding from greasy sleeper to greasy sleeper. In the distance we can see and hear the noisy beast of the Black Cliff labouring it's smokey trail upwards carrying cafe supplies. Being suspicious of timetables we decide not to wait, a good move: it did, for half an hour at Half-an-Hour House.

Snowdon 1.24

A good rhythm can be played on the oily iron sleepers, skipping over the rack from time to time to avoid trackside crevasses.

We overtake a second party.

But finally an arbitrary plunge over the righthand horizon on to no path at all results in a break of rhythm to a semi-vertical, semi-controlled plummet down a rarely trafficked gully to an embryonic pathlet; maturing slowly to a trod and finally a tracklet which passes surly early morning cottagers who, feeling threatened by an assault from their rear at daybreak, defer from committing themselves into acknowledging that it might be a good morning.

Nant Peris 2.10

Running mechanically and noisily down the tarmacadam through sleeping Nant Peris, Stuart spots a kiosk, and not having his portable yuppie-phone, dives in to check on developments on the family expansion scene. We fret on up; Stuart thunders after with grins that says "all is well, can continue..."

We overtake our third party. Quite a popular trip this. They look a steady pair, businesslike boots, measured steps, small 'sacks. We must look a terrible trio, trainers, bum-bags and T shirts.

Not so the next party. Big 'sacks, bulging with Karrimats, kitchen sinks, the works. We chat, helpfully suggesting that they might be over-equipped. As a safeguard against becoming benighted they set out from Llanberis at midnight, pretend-bivvied until sleep left them at three, so they set off to look for the dawn and now seven hours and one team member later their path merged with ours, just three hours young. Silently we fear that their fears may be realised.

Stopping for the last water before Ogwen we are mindful of the increasing sun, the three hour crossing and the intelligence supplied by last weekend's recce team that the disappearing stagnant puddle below Y Garn was not fit to drink. We fill all our bottles and now carrying a litre each, plus our sandwiches, we whoop on and up Elidir Fawr.

Elidir Fawr 3.11

Sun now steady but cooled by a breeze. Visibility good just where it needs to be, we avoid wrong slotting, successfully traverse Y Garn and scamper down the scree scattered slope to the allegedly disappearing stagnant puddle.

Y Garn 3.50

Ignoring sandbaggers' advice we drink enthusiastically from this substantial tarnlet and curse the heavy water bottles which we partially discharge.

Then follows a grind up the Glyders, boulder hopping to Bristly Ridge. Many people now out and about, mostly clad in similar kit to ours but with the addition of numbers on their chests and heading in the opposite direction. We ask, they say "Welsh 1,000s Race" and we say "Oh yes" but really none the wiser. We rationalise, remember the encamped squaddies and think probably an army exercise.

Glyder Fawr 4.25

Glyder Fach 4.43

Being a trio of well experienced Welsh crag rats we have never descended Bristly Ridge before and go horribly wrong. The descent becomes an epic of hairy wrong slots and airy traverses across lines of least resistance. Eventually tumbling down a chute and deposited by a wall whose function seems to be to give a purpose to the multiplicity of stiles which cross it.

Tryfan 5.27

Tryfan's summit is too public, a smearing of bodies lounging uncomfortably and making it tortuous to reach the top. We feel self-conscious doing the obligatory jump, too much so to enjoy the most perfect mountain peak of the day so far. Tiring now after five and a half hours running we turn and roll down to Ogwen.

Many runners now slogging sweatily up, a long crocodile stretching down to a cluster then a caterpillar to the road. Down towards Bochlwyd, one moment all together then next, disaster, Stuart disappears. We shout, scan, spread out but he has vanished. This we explain away by fearsome logic: mountains get wider as you descend thereby separating wrong route choices by a rapidly increasing distance. We hammer downwards, sorrowful and concerned, clearly on the right track but mysteriously the crocodile of approaching runners has also disappeared.

Emptying our water bottles as a contribution to the dried up bog we hop over redundant stepping stones and filter onto the Idwal by-pass, a mountain motorway on the grand scale allowing continuous two way traffic flow down to Ogwen.

Arrive Ogwen 6.00

Error number two now becomes apparent. Sandwiches carried for the past six hours and weighing over 500g might have been abandoned in favour of a £5 note weighing 5g. Funds run to two medium cokes and regretting our double error, eat the sandwiches carried at our cost. Ogwen is definitely the last water before

Aber Falls, some four hours away and requires a refill of all our water containers; mainly to make the ascent of the next hill more sporting.

Thirteen minutes later Stuart arrives having visited the organised race refreshment station on his detour. After a small coffee and the obligatory 'phone-home' he is ready to depart.

Depart Ogwen 6.25

Thankfully Pen yr Ole Wen fails to live up to its awesome reputation, no doubt boosted beyond its reality by our dread. It merely becomes a 55 minute mindless grind up featureless and pathless choss, rarely taking the same line but all topping out together. At this point we switch into freewheel mode because it will be mentally all downhill from here.

Pen yr Ole Wen 7.20

The Carneddau blend smoothly into one another, the downhills sooth tired legs and the uphill are gratefully gradual. But they wear away at you, coming as they do as the first bit of seriously runnable terrain after seven hours. Stuart is the first to fall back and we persuade him to hang on by little white lies and a diet of Dextrosol.

Carnedd Dafydd 7.39

Carnedd Llewelyn 8.11

Yr Elen 8.30

Yr Elen scores high points and is one. An outlier from the main ridge and a necessary detour, she proves to be the best hill on the trip, making up for the disappointment of Tryfan. Had we been more on the ball we would have parked our bum-bags before detouring.

Remaining summits are won reasonably painlessly, Stuart now surprisingly leading the pace with a Dextrosol-addicted glint of the finish in his eyes, still lapping up a diet of little white lies. We pass abandoned standing stones leaning at odd angles, daggers plunged carelessly into the peaty soil.

Foel grach 9.04

Garnedd Uchaf 9.14

Foel fras 9.25

Then suddenly it finishes, not with a big crescendo but an innocuous rock strewn lump and we calculate it 8.44 hours between summits, from Grib Goch to Foel fras.

But it isn't finished yet.

The scorpion descent remains to sting the last strength from tired knees. Trackless bogs, thankfully dry and downhill, lead endlessly down to Aber Falls; a shadow of it's normal self in this drought. We can't get close enough to the water to drink without a detour and our water bottles dried out somewhere on the Carneddau.

And it's still not over. A last two kilometres of track leads down to the road. We jog more from bravado (and fear of being caught walking) than enthusiasm, expecting the road to appear over every hump and round every corner but of course it never does.

Finally the road, the car, Marilyn and the pop are found simultaneously.

Bont Newydd 10.23

Roy lies his length on the narrow parapet and makes us nervous about the 10 metre drop. We consume several litres of Lucozade, squash, Coke and beer and

peel off sweat-soaked shorts, T shirts and socks. Stuart's sock removal reveals horrors of decaying blisters and he refuses to walk to the car so Marilyn drives to his perch to chauffer him home, via the nearest telephone kiosk.

In Pete's Eats Stuart fails to eat even half a chilli and instead drinks two pints of coffee; we are all doubtful that he will stay awake long enough to go to the pub.

Roy despatches a Big Jim and goes down in legend.

Summary

An account of a pre-Saunders training run round the 14 summits of the Welsh 3,000s in perfect conditions, dry underfoot, light breeze and sunshine. Times are from Pen y pass car-park from a starting time of 7am.



*Roy Small and Stuart Gascoyne descending to Ogwen.
Photo: Mike Browell*

The Block

Dave Gregory

The sea, more an immense lake, was still and deep. In its depths no light reached, no plants grew. No life braved its saturated waters. Molecule by molecule the carbonate deposited into the thickening ooze of mud, building foot upon foot by the thousand year to the future profit of quarryman and climber. Intermittent storms swept the land beside it and swept littoral beds of shellfish into the ooze, their bodies to decay and contribute to a pocket of some petroleum fraction and their shells to a band of fragments to attract the eye of some future palaeontologist. The depth built up, the ooze compacting, solidifying, strengthening.

The earth's plates fractured in their slide and a great plateau was heaved out of the sea, regularly and horizontally layered in its centre but warped and folded at the edges of the mass. The sea streamed from it and it stood white in the sun, for the air was clean. The rain fell upon it and the trickling drops carried dissolved lime along the hair-line traces to the rivulets and back to the sea. The spray reached high up the edge cliffs and by solution formed a cactus layer of bristle spikes.

The cold came south and brought the ice with it and life fled before it. Just to the sea the ice reached and hid the rock. Clear and flat it swept the rock mass and reached down the hair-lines to its water mates and froze them and the little oozes of water stretched their cold crystals and forced apart the massive blocks of rock, and lifted a little the block. The mass of ice weighed down on the rock mantle, and it sank, but the sea sank before it for the ice stole the water of the sea to make the glacier cap.

The earth swayed on its axis again and the ice receded and the sea rose and the edge cliffs with it, and rock dust and lichens and mosses washed into the widening cracks and water ran through them and widened the finger nail cracks. The cycle repeated itself, cold reaching down into the rock, splitting apart the huge blocks of the plateau with stretching ice-steel fingers reaching down where the water ran.

The heavy seas drove air before them into the recesses of the cracks and caves, compressed it to mega-atmospheres and split the rock apart with air wedges from below to reach the frozen tendrils searching from above. Back and forth the ice went and water searched and ice froze in the cracks round and behind the block. The dust became soil and it froze and thawed and tilted the block upward and forward.

Man came and fought and farmed and scrabbled among the ledges for eggs. Built chapels in the coves; chased about the farmland aping the dragons gone from the land; exploded shells; fired shooting stars into the sea and forbade the public to walk its edge with their dangerous little feet. But people walked the edge and some scrambled down the earthy gullies in a rattle of soil and stones, eggshells, guano and dried weed haulms. They walked along the water-washed platforms, over the boulder fields, marvelling at the hedgehog rock, the soaring cracks, the blocking overhangs and the sun, fierce on the white-grey rock. Many

came and climbed the cracks and some dared out from them on to the steep walls between.

The ropes were differently coloured, both garish, intricately and repetitively woven from fibres, long separated but derived from those shell corpses of so long ago. They led down from the higher climber, crouched on a small ledge beneath the overhang, facing out like a shaded gargoyle. They led down through a zigzag of wires and threads to the lower man, more easily ensconced on a larger ledge to the left of the crack which led up to the left-hand end of the overhang. From him the ropes dangled down catching in loops and whorls on the spiky sea fretted rock. Occasionally one of the loops slid off its fellows to hang clear into the sea and the lower man pulled up several feet and carefully curled the loops on top of each other like a cobra in its basket.

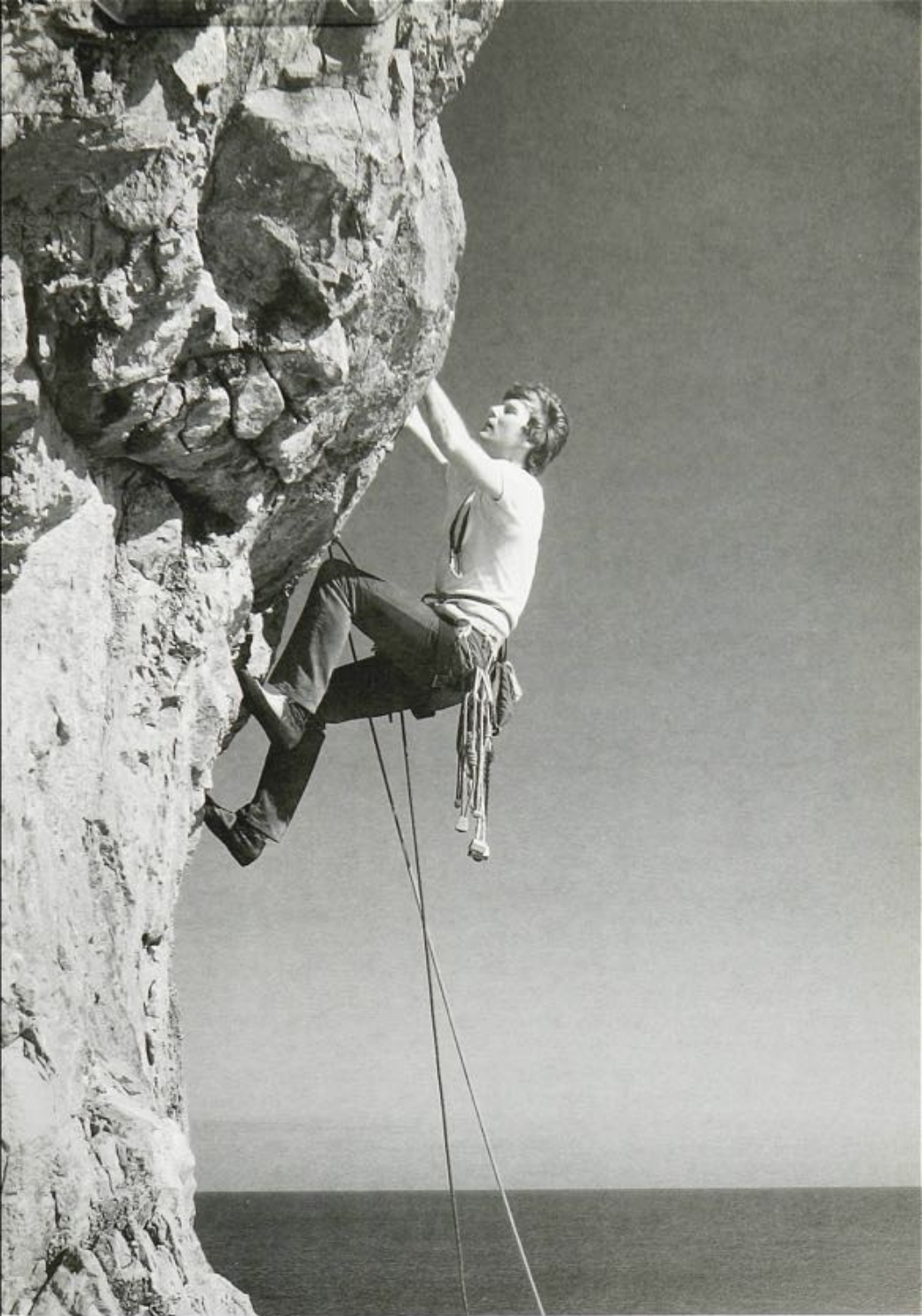
The leader faced the crisis that he had rested as much as he could in the cramped cavity and that any further time spent there would undermine his determination. He turned round, crouched as he was and faced, bunched into the recess. He reached behind his head for the pocket crack in the roof and started to fall oh so gently backward so that as his head passed the hold it became an undercling. The second man, alarmed at this manoeuvre, froze to the ropes, edging them out, little inch by little inch. The leader's other hand explored beyond the lip and found a horizontal crack six inches above it. With these two good holds in opposition and his feet in easy distance on the wall below the recess he could gently ease his head from under the roof, scratching his cheek and ear in the process, and look up the wall. A tear-drop pocket two feet higher up was tailor made for a chock. He kept the left hand under the roof, unclipped the runner with his right, stretched his legs to their tautest and, leaning across himself to the left he saw the pyramid drop in.

"Orange, orange," he yelled and the second threw it free as though it were suddenly red-hot. The leader clipped it in and took some snug. He could not reverse, he would have to go. He shouted this down and moved his left hand fingers into the pocket above the chock. God, the wall was beyond the vertical and only the purchase of his knees on the lip gave him the upward lift to reach his right hand higher up the wall to the bottom of one of the deeply eroded flutings which ran down from the summit crenellations. He pulled on this and got his right foot on that first hold above the lip. Now, for the first time he held all his weight in control on the wall and the wall was moving, the whole damned block was pivoting out.

He could do nothing but cling to it as it fell. The runners below the roof would have held him but the block was tied to him by that tear-drop chock. The second man gripped his ropes with the certainty that this was what he had to do and his hands burned as the orange rope dragged, even through his plate, and snapped under the momentum of that block. The red rope came tight later and chavelled through its mantel and fibre on the needle files of the lower rock.

The second froze there, mind blasted and waited for someone to come to his aid. The leader would lie trapped for ever beneath the block.

Would his skeleton surprise a geologist a few hundred million years from now? Would his flesh broken down and synthesised form a pocket of Irish Sea Light?, some future rock-gymnasts lifeline?



Climber on 'Loco Dementia', E3 5c/6a, Stennis Head, Pembroke. Photo: Steve Foxley

The Lost Boot Climb

Hal Jacob

If further confirmation of the credit for the first ascent of this route is needed, I can provide a footnote to Geoff Milburn's 'A twist of fate' published in the last Journal.

On 2nd July 1932, my friend the late R.G.(Taff) Williams, led me up Tennis Shoe, Lazarus and Central Arete. On the way to the last climb, we saw a party climbing Grey Slab and we witnessed the loss of the boot(s), in whose retrieval we assisted. We cannot have been very far away at the time, but the nearness of the miss never lost anything in the telling. Taff kept a diary which contains the following note:

'We met three men (Manchester University) who had apparently pioneered a new route near Twisting Gully that afternoon. They say it is Severe in parts and comprises 300ft of buttress-like slabs. They cairned it top and bottom. One of them lost his boot on the climb but later found it.'

My memory is not very clear, but it is evident that later in the day we must have met the Manchester climbers and discussed their route with them. We always knew the route as 'The Lost Boot Climb' but when Menlove Edwards's 'Cwm Idwal Group' was published in 1936, I at any rate, did not think about the dates. As was normal and undoubtedly still is, the reaction to the new guide was to look for something the author had not discovered.

Obituary

John Kingston

1970 - 1990

A photograph in the current Gogarth guide reminds me of the exact time when I first met John in 1967. It shows him climbing with Ian McNaught-Davis on A Groove, with Baz Ingle on Another Groove to the right. This was one of John's earliest visits to Wales.

Thereafter he became a keen member of the active group that met at weekly intervals through the sixties and seventies at The Crown, Highgate Hill. This rendezvous had a totally functional purpose — to sort climbers into various car-filling foursomes for frantic weekend attacks on North Wales or Cornwall, or day trips to Swanage, Sandstone, Avon or the Peak. John was in the thick of it, a fast driver, a hard climber, a skilful and laconic conversationalist, an enthusiast *par excellence*.

An appealing characteristic of these Crown 'teams' was the constant variation of the partnerships. There was an absence of close-knit 'buddyism' that others favour. We all took a delight in new faces and diversity, none more so than John who climbed with an incredibly wide selection of people. His gregarious nature made him an avid club man. He joined the CC in 1970 and, after visits to the Lakes when he became friendly with the active FRCC groups, he promptly joined that club revelling in its meets and hut, crag and dinner life. He was involved with so many people, adding his morale-boosting 'good cheer' to so many groupings that it is impossible to do justice to the breadth of his activities in one obituary. I will therefore select incidents known, or personal to me, that reflect just one aspect of his many-faceted social and sporting life in the climbing world.

By the early seventies John had developed from being merely a good climber, to being an outstanding one. He was particularly adept at the big Gogarth climbs of the day. He made his first new route with Lawrie Holliwell when they led through on the fierce Ziggurat (Gogarth) in 1972. With Frank Cannings he had a productive Lundy week in 1973 when they did 14 new routes, including several that have since become classics, including the serious Purple People Eater (E2) in Arch Zawn. Later that year when scouting for new routes on Craig yr Ysfa with Lawrie Holliwell there was a terrible accident. John was suspended on an abseil rope inspecting a line up the wall left of Mur y Niwl (later climbed as Aura by Carrington, Rouse and Hall). Lawrie, keen to have a look as well, fixed up a second abseil rope from a different anchor spike and launched off. Almost immediately the spike broke and Lawrie fell past John to his death into Amphitheatre Gully. This was a savage blow that devastated John, the 'Crown' team and Lawrie's many friends in Wales.

I enjoyed many good days on the crag with John. Both in his working life and in sport he had a 'no nonsense' approach, setting about the task in hand with brisk efficiency. He was very controlled on rock and I never once saw him crack under

pressure. If he was under-performing, then he was just 'unfit' but he would persevere and invariably get up something hard by the end of the day. This is not to say that he displayed any sign of pent-up frustration, he always remained mellow and happy so as not to spoil the enjoyment of others, but if a good lead seemed possible a latent steeliness would emerge and in this mood he was rarely defeated. His lead that impressed me most was on Hypodermic on Gogarth around 1970. This is a long and sustained climb that keeps throwing up technical difficulties in very strenuous situations. John worked his way up this with a workmanlike determination, conserved his strength, protected the climb superbly with runners in the most unlikely places and finished unruffled though I know he was close to dropping off from



fatigue. After a lead he would switch off, sit back and wait for me to do my stint — an attitude which lifted me. Many partnerships have the effect of widening the gulf between climbers of different abilities, but John's rare skill was that with him it seemed to get narrower. I believe he also had this effect on Robin Ford with whom he climbed a lot in the late sixties. These qualities meant that one always felt fulfilled after a day climbing with him. There was never pressure, but just a tacit assumption that everyone would do their job. Yet the possibility of grabbing a good route was never withdrawn. In this, his climbing may have reflected his professional life as a merchant banker where a *sauf* good humour is always underpinned with a shrewd alertness for the next 'bargain' or the time for profit taking.

He revelled in good natured compe-

tion. I remember one snow-swept day on Symonds Yat where the teams were John and I, Ben and Marion Wintringham, and Frank Cannings and a very young and inexperienced (though already good) Chris Gore. Both the temperature and the team situation prompted intense and energetic competition. John and I went for the easier routes and quickly opened a lead over the others and eventually finished with a tally of eight VS-plus climbs. Ben and Marion got stymied on something ridiculously desperate, and Frank and Chris were also slowed by being slightly overambitious, and eventually in pent-up frustration at our chortling speed started soloing to try to catch up. There was nothing serious about this but we both took a mischievous delight in sowing mild panic among such a star-studded opposition. This brisk energetic approach was not to everyone's taste. It had a special London quality, well described by John Porter in Chapter 35 of *Extreme Rock*, the natural characteristic of those who have spent a week of hard city graft, followed by hundreds of miles of hard driving to go climbing.

John was a master of the sea-level girdle and much sought as a partner by the Llanberis-based enthusiasts of this particular activity, not only for his rapid soloing but also for his fiendish swimming. While others held back he took a masochistic glee in plunging into the most turbulent zawns and powering across to fix up the next Tyrolean.

Winter climbing was also his delight, and though he never excelled in that, he was always game to flounder up a gully whatever the conditions. We had two splendid days climbing on the Ben (during the CC's one and only CIC Meet) doing Comb Gully, and then enjoying a rumbustious ascent of the North East Buttress in a semi-blizzard. After pulverising the Mantrap (with no little relief) we arrived at the top and promptly lost the way (to our considerable embarrassment) on the descent.

We had many other good days in Scotland ticking rock classics. One of the best was a summer weekend with a four-strong team of John, Terry King, John Jones and myself. On Day One John and I did Trapeze and Hee Haw. Day Two saw the Kingston/Jones duo on King Kong. On Day Three, partnered by Terry, he did Carnivore. It was this democracy of routes and partners that we all enjoyed, none more so than John. He climbed as much for the people as for the climbs, and one just knew instinctively how deeply he valued the fellowship of the mountains.

There were many other facets to John. He was born in 1945 and grew up and was educated in the Edgware district of North London. He left school and began work as an office boy in a Bank in the City of London steadily gaining in experience until a fully fledged Merchant Banker assiduously sought by many of the leading finance houses. He was a gourmet and *bon vivant*, yet was perfectly happy with a bag of chips and a pint after a late Nevis descent. One pre-Christmas Saturday, after climbing, we repaired to the rather splendid tea shop in the main street of Swanage where on earlier occasions we had admired their somewhat baroque gateaux which measured 18 inches in diameter. As special Christmas treats, and at ridiculous expense, he bought a pink one, and I a brown, and when we got home we exchanged halves for greater variety. On another occasion when driving across Rannoch Moor a flight of duck crossed overhead. Jones, something of a wildlife buff, studied them carefully.

"I think they were Teal...I don't think I have ever come across Teal before" he

observed.

"I have", murmured John as he nudged the car round the icy hairpins leading down to Bridge of Orchy, "dark meat, goes very nicely with orange and a sprig of broccoli".

With Liz, he played host on many welcoming social events. They had a penchant for large bungalows, the second of which was grandly situated amidst paddocks in Ashridge near Berkhamstead. John's climbing friends promptly dubbed it the Bar K as Liz loved horses and John also seemed to fit naturally into the banker's other life as a country gentleman. The Bar K was a focal point for tired climbers heading south, and many other social occasions.

These were happy times, eventful and full of life and incident. As is the way the years and greater job and family responsibilities slowly drew us all apart. My last climb with John was the splendid traverse of the Buis du Baronnie in France that he worked in during the vineyard-sampling, restaurant-visiting holiday in 1989.

He died in a one car crash on the Ashridge road late at night. Our sympathies must be with Liz, and Brendan their son, and indeed all of us who have lost so staunch and happy a friend.

Ken Wilson

D. F. Kemp

1985-1990

When I proposed Dennis Kemp for the Club only a few years ago, lots of members knew him and were quite surprised that he hadn't been a member for the last 30 years! He sported a grey beard, a tatty old whiteish van, usually with a (good) push bike in the back, and would climb with anyone — happily at Hard Very Severe. He had even acted as Hon. Custodian of Ynws Ettws when asked.

He died whilst climbing in Australia; apparently he had finished leading a climb on Mount Arapiles and was belaying when a large block at the top came away with him.

My photos of him are all from over 40 years ago, on sandstone in the South East initially — he originated from the Brighton area and turned up at Harrison's in ex-WD blue PT shorts and got up all the hardest routes of the day. We climbed a lot together in the fifties, summer and winter, when I used to write a 'log' of mountain days — he invented 'Coronatterings' for his and sent odd ones through the post:

'Dear Johnnie. Here is an extract from my log for that weekend (5/6 April 1952) (Parson's Nose). The no. 2, left alone on a stance with nothing to look at but the leader's arse above and the void before has nothing to do but cogitate until his leader falls off or gets up. I have invented a Litte Game for these lonely moments. It is called Coronatterings and takes the form of a dialogue between the local coroner and yourself...

Mr Rees Williams, in opening the inquest said: Do you mean to say you were not roped?

Kemp: Up to then, sir, the climb had been well within our separate capabilities.

Mr Williams: You did not actually see what happened?

Kemp: No sir, I was struggling to get through the little tunnel formed by the chockstone.

Mr Williams: Did the deceased cry out?

Kemp: Well sir, just before I emerged from the hole I heard him say something about needing the rope soon.

Mr Williams: Can you remember his actual words?

The chockboulder formed a very nice stance. JRL was finishing some moves on snow covered rugosities. The third time I went back to the stance I heard him call: Shall we have the rope for the next bit? "I want the b——y thing for this bit!"

Mr Williams: You thought the rope was still unnecessary?

Lees: I was preparing to throw the rope to Kemp, sir, when he evidently decided to follow me.

Mr Williams: Was it a hard pitch?

Lees: Only a Mod., sir.

Mr Williams: What is a Mod?...

We ploughed on up, with about 20 feet of rope, to keep the pitches short so that neither of us froze to a stance. Why is it that any snow the no. 1 clears off a slab always makes for the no. 2 below — usually down the neck?

We went to Chamonix in his Landrover with Bill Trench and weren't amused when Kemp had recorded in his notebook every Franc Bill and I spent on beer or red wine — not expenses to be shared when he'd been quietly but pointedly abstemious! However we did some great routes — we even dragged an Italian tourist, left behind by his mates (no wonder, we realised later) when we got to the top of the Old Brenva — over the top of Mont Blanc as a storm blew up, to the Vallot, and down to Montenvers the next day. He still complained he wanted to go to Torino even though we shared our pemmican and 'soma' with him!

Dennis worked as a photographer for Kodak for many years and advised on how to do it, yet I haven't seen many of his photos, though one of me on Moonlight Arete at Harrison's did feature in an earlier CC guidebook. I gather that Terry Tullis hopes to produce a book of his climbs and photos sometime soon. Since Dennis had been climbing all over the world in the last few years, making friends everywhere, it should be very worthwhile.

Johnnie Brownsort wrote recently... 'his extraordinary ability to make friends with people from all over the world, to be an asset in any company and to stay with people without his ever being an imposition or burden to them. Do you know he actually stayed with the family of a Japanese climber he met in Australia and took him off to climb in Korea'.

Between these trips he lived near Mold and helped with computer studies in the local school in Cilcain. I used to ring him on the way to Wales and we enjoyed some old classics mid week — he led the hardest pitches and got his own back — and really burnt me off in a limestone quarry near his home! At five years my senior he started me thinking of climbing more often instead of gardening or snooker!

His brother Roy's son went to the funeral in Australia and later, in the pub in Cilcain when climbing friends from as far away as USA and Czechoslovakia came for a memorial tree planting ceremony, imitated the Australian parson's eulogy, very brief and to the point: "All of us who climbed with Dennis are sorry

to lose him — he was a bloody good bloke — we'll sing a couple of hymns and say a prayer, and then get on with the party!"

Dennis would like that — and the trees being planted all over the world in his memory.

J.R. Lees

David Owen

1987-1990

The death of Dave Owen came as a great shock to his many friends in the Derby and Nottingham area.

Those who knew him will remember a quiet unassuming man with an easy going nature. This together with his dry sense of humour allowed him to fit in in any circumstance, but there was always an underlying feeling that he was a bit of a loner.

Never the boldest of leaders he was nonetheless a powerful and competent climber and a reassuring second. He paid several visits to the Alps in summer and had a great love of the hills.

He had an unfortunate accident in the Llanberis Pass in 1987, when a nasty fall taken while soloing a gully in the wet, put him in hospital and caused him a loss of memory. Although he recovered from his physical injuries, mentally he had never been the same person and suffered badly from depression.

His death has left us shocked and saddened and left us with a deep sense of guilt at not making more of an effort to help.

Dave took his own life in June 1990. He was 35 years old.

Steve Clegg

John Poole

Addition to obituary in 1986-87 Journal

Harry Sales' excellent obituary of John in the 1986-87 Journal did not mention his important work for the BMC. Soon after the formation of the BMC a Welsh sub-committee was set up, but confined its activities to the certification of guides. In 1960 the increasing need for a local body covering other BMC interests led to proposals for the formation of a North Wales Area Committee. John Poole, who had recently retired from service as town clerk of Uxbridge and had moved to Llangefni in Anglesey, was asked to help with the setting up of such a committee; at an open meeting of BMC member clubs at Pen y Gwryd the North Wales Committee was formed and John was elected Chairman. With Geoff Barker, the Hon. Secretary of the Committee, he soon established the fields of interest in which to operate, the mode of working, contacts with public and other bodies and persons concerned with the problems dealt with, and so on. This pattern was continued successfully by the North Wales Committee, as did (and still does) the Committee for Wales which succeeded it. He himself not only joined the Mountaineering Club of North Wales, the local club for his new home, but went to evening classes in order to learn the Welsh language.

The most pressing problems tackled during his chairmanship were ones concerned with access and camping. The Vaynol Estate, who owned most of the farms in the Llanberis area, started a programme of replacement of existing farm tenancy agreements with new ones severely restricting tenant farmers' abilities to allow public access and camping on their holdings. The North Wales Committee became involved in very long-drawn-out negotiations to try to obtain some mitigation of these restrictions, in so far as they affected climbers, most of the work being carried out by John himself in lengthy discussions and correspondence with the Hon. D.R.M. Stuart, the Agent for the Vaynol Estate. Final agreement was never reached, the whole matter being resolved, after John's time with the Committee, by the purchase by the Government of the major part of the Vaynol Estate and its subsequent resale in sections.

He was more successful in another matter. Caernarvonshire County Council had served notice on Mr Williams of Gwern y Gof Isaf to discontinue the use of his land for camping and caravans. The North Wales Committee supported the farmer so far as camping was concerned, and John appeared at a public enquiry, speaking on the farmer's behalf so effectively that the Secretary of State quashed the council's notice, and Gwern y Gof Isaf camp site has remained in use ever since.

In 1964 John's health was deteriorating to such an extent that he felt he could no longer continue as Chairman (particularly as since 1962 he had also been Chairman of the Club's Huts Sub-committee). I had had contact with him ever since the Club's Norwegian meet in 1946 (you will find mention of John's notable activities during that meet in the 1947 Journal); he put pressure on me to take over as Chairman of the North Wales Committee, which I agreed to do, and accordingly he gave up the chairmanship at the Committee's 1964 AGM. He continued for another year as chairman of the Club's Huts Sub-committee, giving this up at the end of 1965.

John Neill

OFFICERS OF THE CLUB 1989

President:

H.I. BANNER

Vice-Presidents:

C.E. DAVIES A.H. JONES
J.M. ALLISON

Hon.Treasurer:

J.H. BURROWS

Hon. Secretary:

M.J.CAMERON

Hon.Membership Secretary:

J.M. ALLISON

Hon. Meets Secretary:

D.M.PRITCHARD

COMMITTEE

J.H. ADLER J. CHADWICK M.H.R. DAVIS G. EVANS A.D. NEWTON
C.P. WILLIAMS S.G. GLEGG D.J. CUTHBERTSON

OFFICIALS

Hon. Archivist:

J. NEILL

Hon. Librarian:

R.E.OWEN

Chairman Huts Sub-Comm:

R. HEWING

Hon. Guide Book Editors:

D.E. HOPE G. MILBURN

Chairman Publications Sub-Committee:

A.H.JONES

Hon. Hut Booking Secretary:

M.H. BURT

Hon. Journal Editor:

I.J. SMITH

Hon Guide Book Business Manager:

R.D. MOULTON

Chairman Finance Sub-Comm:

C.E.DAVIES.

SUB-COMMITTEES

Huts Sub-Comm:

R. HEWING
M.H. BURT
All custodians

Publications Sub-Comm:

A.H. JONES L.K. AINSWORTH (n.v.) M.J. BALL
D.E. HOPE G. MILBURN R.D. MOULTON J.F. JONES
K.S. VICKERS (n.v.) C.P. WILLIAMS I.J. SMITH

HONORARY CUSTODIANS

D.W.BATEMAN (Bosigran) A.S.G. JONES (Helyg) G.EVANS (May Cottage)
D.CUTHBERTSON (R.W.Lloyd Hut) TO BE APPOINTED (Cwm Glas Mawr)
K.SANDERS (R.O.Downes Hut)

OFFICERS OF THE CLUB 1990

President:

J.M. ALLISON

Vice-Presidents:

M.G. MORTIMER L.BROWN
R.D. MOULTON

Hon.Treasurer:

J.H. BURROWS

Hon. Secretary:

M.J.CAMERON

Hon.Membership Secretary:

J. CHADWICK

Hon. Meets Secretary:

A.J.EVANS

COMMITTEE

J.H. ADLER P.J. BROOKS G. EVANS S.I.FOXLEY C.P. WILLIAMS
S.G. GLEGG D.J. CUTHBERTSON

OFFICIALS

Hon. Archivist:

J. NEILL

Hon. Librarian:

R.E.OWEN

Chairman Huts Sub-Comm:

R. HEWING

Hon. Guide Book Editors:

D.E. HOPE G. MILBURN
J. WILLSON

Chairman Publications Sub-Committee:

A.H.JONES

Hon. Hut Booking Secretary:

M.H. BURT

Hon. Journal Editor:

I.J. SMITH

Hon Guide Book Business Manager:

R.D. MOULTON

Chairman Finance Sub-Comm:

C.E.DAVIES

SUB-COMMITTEES

Huts Sub-Comm:

R. HEWING
M.H. BURT
All custodians

Publications Sub-Comm:

A.H. JONES W.S. ALLEN M.J. BALL J.F. JONES
G. MILBURN R.D. MOULTON K.S. VICKERS (n.v.)
C.P.WILLIAMS I.J. SMITH J. WILLSON

HONORARY CUSTODIANS

D.W.BATEMAN (Bosigran) A.S.G. JONES (Helyg) S. LEWIS (May Cottage)
D.CUTHBERTSON (R.W.Lloyd Hut) D. PRICE (Cwm Glas Mawr)
K.SANDERS (R.O.Downes Hut)

Reviews

Mountaineer by Chris Bonington
Diadem £17.95

Mountaineer has been sitting on my coffee table (almost concealing it, I might add) since Easter; and every non-climber who has come round for coffee in that time has picked it up, leafed through it reverently and exclaimed about the quality and subject matter of the photographs.

In a sense, that simple fact is review enough: Bonington the writer and photographer has always managed to stir the imagination and feelings of laypeople and get them spending freely and eagerly on his lectures and books. Mountaineer will be a huge success and it will also add considerably to the popular myth of Bonington as the very model of a modern mountaineer. Like Everest — the mountain which dominates this book as it has so dominated Bonington's middle aged climbing years — he is there, invariably as much in the public as in the private eye, because, quite simply, there is no other mountain(eer) in Britain of the same order of magnitude. The names, one suspects, are for popular press and public alike, more or less synonymous. Talk of high mountains over coffee in any sitting room in Britain and I'll bet you an old etrier to a new karabiner that the entirely mysterious twin peaks of Bonington and Everest will crop up.

Of course, to be fair to Bonington, he cannot be held personally responsible for these and similar category confusions in the public mind; but he is, as Jim Perrin points out, 'par excellence in the public eye the front-man, the communicator, for the experience of climbing' and as such he does bear the heavy moral responsibility of imparting the experience of climbing as truly as he can. If this seems too much to demand of him, let us remind ourselves that the image of British Himalayan mountaineering in the latter half of this century has in large part been formed, created, fostered and maintained by Bonington himself in hundreds of lectures, media appearances and in his books. Following Tilman and Shipton, Bonington has perfected the style and content of the expedition book, bringing to it a learned, but sturdy workmanlike prose style, which still retains many endearing echoes of 'Boys Own' paper (Livia Gollancz, his first and formative editor, commenting of the first drafts of *I Chose to Climb*, told him to 'Write slightly longer sentences and link them together'); a simple narrative structure, enlivened by the disarming honesty of diary extracts which often disparage his leadership, and a frank and emotional response to tragedy. But above all, his writing exhibits a honed and perfected professionalism bred of the necessity of making a living from the genre. Speaking to an appreciative audience at the Mountaineering Literature Festival on the subject of writing, Bonington confessed to having no grand literary pretensions: he writes so he can go climbing. That may be so, but he has been stunningly successful at it.

The three autobiographies and seven assorted expedition and adventure books occupy a sizable niche on the shelves of most public libraries; they have done most to establish an image of what it takes to make and sustain the successful mountaineer in the minds of mountaineers and the general public alike than we might care to admit. His is the widely read, reputedly authentic voice of high risk, high altitude adventure; and for many middle aged aspirant Alpinists, expeditionaries or humble walkers he is, I suspect, still the ultimate role and clothes model. After all, we all wear coloured Gore-Tex now (as seen on Everest and Chris Bonington) and carry coloured Alpine 'sacks even when out for a stroll in the park. Bonington's personal popularity and continued drawing power in the publishing and communication fields is assured with the publication of *Mountaineer* — what he calls a 'picture book' — and not simply by or because of continued media hype and high profile personal advertisement (incidentally, I can find only one photograph that has been or could be used to promote gear and that is the evocative picture of Haston on the North Face of the Triplet): the book is continually interesting and gives as comprehensive a picture of the games we climbers play as is available in print today.

Actually, *Mountaineer* is rather less like 'a picture book' and more like a retrospective exhibition, a gallery of the great and not so good. Here is a pictorial autobiography of unusual candour and honesty which stands as a testimony to a series of outstanding ascents and deep, personal friendships. It is, too, a very personal book, about Bonington himself. Though some 80 of the photos are by various of his partners and he appears in well under half of all the pictures, one quickly realises that these are pictures about Bonington's climbs. Being single-minded about the sport and its micro culture obviously helped him to bridge the gap between Sandhurst and the Manchester plumbers, to his obvious advantage. And of course, he jumped in to the British and Alpine scenes just as the post war freeze on standards and

opportunities was coming to an end. New and second ascents with the leading names of the day fuelled Bonington's early career; and the early photos in the book give us tantalising glimpses into that world. It is a world of simple equipment (how many of us can remember climbing on red and white kernmantel, carrying wedges and soft steel cassin pegs as a youthful CB is seen doing in the Fissure Brown?) and intense competition (the celebrated races for the Freney Pillar, the first British ascent of the North Face of the Eiger and of course the Eiger Direct). It is quite unsurprising that Bonington confesses to early competitive urges; Mountaineer makes it clear how the drive to succeed in the greater ranges stemmed directly from the forcing ground of diverse partnerships and new routing.

The photographs pick out and highlight most of Bonington's finest achievements and in doing so show us different faces of the man himself. The later chapters give us bearded images of the expedition leader as a patriarchal figure, single-minded, stern even, seated over a clipboard and a caption about the logistics of supplies on the SW Face of Everest. A photo of the Jardine Matheson officials shows Bonington apparently at ease in the financial dealing world while in the final chapter, on Everest again, there he is pondering a sunpowered word processor at Base Camp, writing from the immediacy of experience to a distant sponsor. How significant that this picture has been placed under a photo of a besuited Arne Naess, the leader of the expedition which placed Bonington on the summit of Everest, thus reinforcing the message of Chapter Four: that adventures have to be paid for by commercial photographs and assignments.

The photo-journalism section in Chapter Four, covering the years between Paine and Annapurna South Face is for me a hiatus in the book, important in that we can begin to see a growing confidence in photography in difficult circumstances. In his own words, during these years he was 'using a fantastic amount of my own energies just learning how to write and take photographs'. This is a man, we should remember, who didn't choose to write or choose to photograph; he had to learn the hard way to do those things because, primarily, he chose to climb. But it is the early chapters which are most revealing (as is the first volume conscious and vulnerable: look at him sitting tensely while Tom Patey whops him on the helmet with an axe; or see him sun-burned, round-cheeked, young and impressionable with Whillans after the Freney Pillar; and then again with Whillans, looking almost suspicious, like a schoolboy on his first abseil. In fact this picture is of Bonington on the Hinterstoisser Traverse only 10 years after 'his first real mountain adventure'!

And what a relationship that must have been: The Whillans/Bonington partnership. Turn up the fascinating sequence which covers the 1961 Paine expedition: Whillans, looking like a dishevelled and rueful film star in front of a huge pile of empties; Bonington looking rueful and slightly shamefaced after a fall while Don just looks dour; Bonington relieved and happy with his wife, Wendy at Base. These photos send one back to the autobiographies (Don's as well) to find the different accounts of the events and the words other than these captions. But the photos also help us read the expedition books better. Many mountaineers will pause sadly at the picture of the Kongur summit team and study the faces of Rouse and Boardman and Tasker. Who looks the leader here? Others will be startled by the stark emotional honesty of the photo of Ian Clough's funeral. All lines in the picture draw us to the devastated face of Bonington whose friend is being buried in a simple trench. In pictures such as these, the truth about the mountains is told without embellishment; indeed at times the text seems largely superfluous — especially if you've read the expedition books and autobiographies.

The Ogre chapter grips, not least because of the compelling story of the double fall (it is Bonington's photo of Scott down-climbing on his knees in foul conditions); but after the brief Chapter Seven which registers the huge impact of Nick Estcourt's death rather perfunctorily — 'End of an Era' the best experiences seem to be on Shivling with Jim Fotheringham, though some of the shots of the Everest North East Ridge expedition are quite stunning examples of extreme telephoto work.

At the 1990 Festival of Mountaineering Literature, Bonington paid tribute to his editor, Ken Wilson for the production values of this book. Apparently, he had to write just so many words to fit the Wilson-determined spaces between the Wilson-lay out of the photos. Like Ezra Pound's big editing of Eliot's *Wasteland* poem, one feels an equal talent is at work here, a powerful editorial presence in the boldness of layout and big page spreads. The quality of reproduction and detail of tone is outstanding — especially on the mountain panoramas where one can trace imagined lines of ascent for hours. With this book, Diadem/Hodder and Stoughton sets a standard all other mountaineering books that follow will have to emulate or else be found wanting; and that's rather like Chris Bonington's 30 years of climbing itself.

Tim Noble

Stanage
BMC £10.95

"Brilliant guide — dreadful cover"

The Editor thought that I ought to expand on the above to justify receiving a gratis copy of the guide which would otherwise set me back £10.95, so here goes...

First of all let's get the question of the cover out of the way. The spine brings to mind a first aid manual whilst the cover photograph is a rather boring shot (sorry, Neil) of Johnny Dawes climbing a rounded horror on the Cowper Stone; hardly the sort of thing to inspire a devotee of grit let alone the average rock climber in Hathersage High Street.

Once inside things improve markedly. The colour photographs are of a high standard, most are, at least, interesting and many are evocative of those perfect summer evenings on grit, my favourite being the double-page spread of Geoff Radcliffe soloing Desperation. I also appreciated the photographs which demonstrate perfectly the rope technique as used on today's hard routes particularly those of Neil Foster and John Allen on pages 152 and 159 respectively.

The (clever?) captions which may amuse or annoy are probably overdone — I certainly think references to Graham Hoey's hairline are wearing a bit thin these days, though I laughed at 'Nic Hallam Crossover the lack of protection'.

A fine complement to the modern colour shots is the addition of black and white archival material recording the early years of Stanage exploration when it was possible to sit amongst the bilberries at the Popular End. Many people consider that a guide stands or falls on the quality of its diagrams. I don't really subscribe to this view but certainly this guide is enhanced by the excellent crag drawings which are very clear and aesthetically pleasing. Their value is augmented by the use of colour for the route lines, and an appropriate dispersal amongst the text.

An innovation (for a grit guide) is the inclusion of first ascent lists, the preparation of which obviously consumed much time and effort, not least the seeking out of witness and testimony to events previously unrecorded or misrecorded. Points of confusion such as the first ascent of Count's Buttress have been cleared up and the result gives an absorbing read, especially for the Stanage Edge section. It might be argued as to whether the effect is really justified, especially as these lists add to what is a particularly thick book — much too thick for the back pocket. (Okay, I know tights don't have back pockets!)

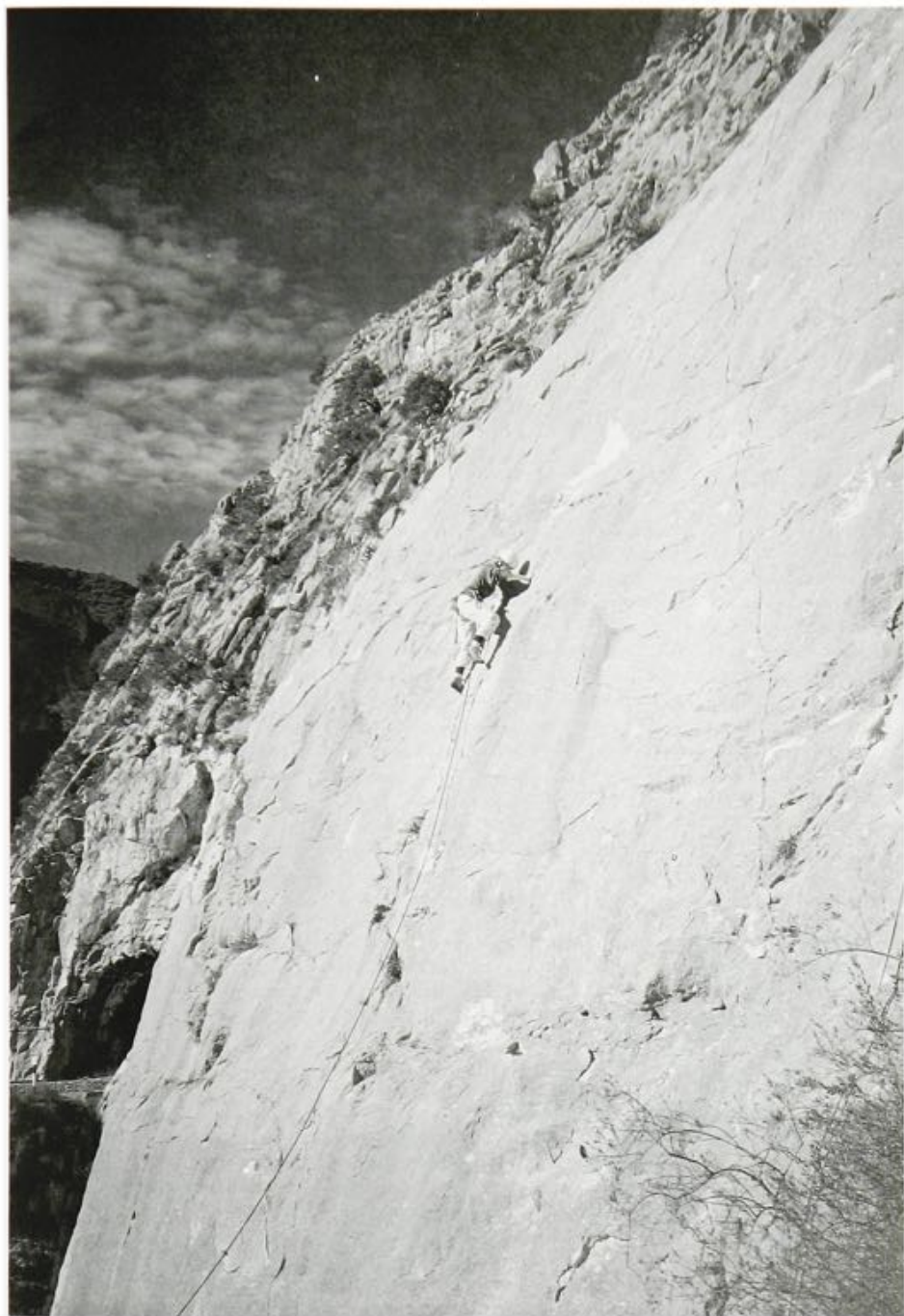
It is always possible to criticise gradings, star-ratings and graded lists but, in general, I found these to be quite reasonable with no blatant anomalies. One point worthy of mention, however, is the grading of a few poorly protected routes, where the principle seems to be to err very much on the safe side. Thus, routes such as Brush Off and The Strangler seem overgraded at E4; on the other hand, it is always nice to have a few soft touches.

The publication of a new guide to the Stanage area is always an important event for Peak District climbers and such a guide has high standards to uphold. If this latest offering is to be judged on its contents I would suggest that those very high standards have been surpassed and the guidebook team deserve congratulations for a production which captures the history, atmosphere and excitement of one of our most important climbing areas, a guide to rank with the best. (Just get the cover right next time, lads).

Mike Mortimer

Mountains and Other Ghosts by Dermot Somers
Diadem £12.95 (Hardback)

Was there ever another nation the equal of the Irish for the telling of a story? I think not. The whole nation, even those whom one would not expect to be noticeably literate have a happy skill with a turn of phrase which points to a fluency with words which we on this side of the sad water cannot match. I worked as shovelman once to a pneumatic hammer-driver who had his local paper sent to him 'from home'. Assuming that as a 'stoudent' I would be up to, and not resent the task, he asked me to read this to him, in the mashing cabin, during breaks. None of the rest of the gang mocked the little ritual. Who would risk a knuckle confrontation with six foot six of bone and brawn merely because the parish news from rural Eire disturbed the mashing can slurpings. My hammer-man once told me an involved story concerning a labourer on a building site 'a very well-uneducated man' he said 'not at all like yourself'.



Unknown climber on 'Alucinosis' VS 4c, El Chorro, Spain. Photo: Chris Craggs

A nation which can produce a near-illiterate with a feeling for words like that will produce writers by the twenty score from grade school while sophisticated writing schools in other nations produce pedestrian pastiches of no great charm.

We have the great good fortune that invariably writers from John Bull's Other Island have the politeness to write in a language which we can understand. Here is another volume to which we are given the key by our common tongue. Not that the door is easy to unlock. You have to work at these stories, not paperback pap these. Intricate, convoluted thoughts and sentences. Skip a line or let the attention wander and you're lost.

Let me pass quickly over mundane matters. The book is well produced; has clear print; is better value than Diadem's other offering this year of one author's short stories. For the dust cover I care little; why use a primitive representation of mountains when the story centring on the Walker Spur begs the cover to carry the ecstasy and agony of that great blade of white-streaked rock across it as an invitation to the tales within.

There are 14 tales in the collection, over half of them with a mountaineering setting, the others born, in some bitterness, out of the unhappy background which history has given the author's country. All of them are well-crafted and compel interest. They race along carrying the reader with them. More than once I found myself well into a story borne along by the rush of it, suddenly realising that I had lost the thread, and would have to begin again, with some control and the concentration which the stories deserve. Some of them I did not understand on the first reading will have a further probe and hopefully arrive at their meaning.

One story I must pick out as a personal favourite. It is a story which parallels one of Peter Lars Sandberg's in Gabe's Fall. It relates the ascent of the Walker Spur by a male climber and his onetime female partner, it is more straightforward in the telling than some of the others but Somers' insight into the growing confidence of the girl and the gradual erosion of that of the man as his eagerness for the climb degenerates into fear is an insight into someone's soul. Mine? Yours?

Dermot Somers has the fine choice of phrase of my onetime hammerman. The singer with a 'fine nasal abrasion like hard chalk whining over slate.' The whore who 'slotted him in between nine and ten'. The phrases catch you as you hurry by, dragging admiration from you. This aptness of phrase is not his only talent. He has a greater. A gift of writing, of expressing the tension in a situation, the suppressed imminent violence, which few writers have and which makes this collection cheap at twice the price. Someone somewhere should have given him a prize. Diadem has given him to us. We should be grateful.

Dave Gregory

North Devon and Cornwall by Iain Peters Climbers' Club £9.95

Over 10 years since the last North Devon guide comes the new Bumper Fun Book. Was it worth waiting for — I think an unequivocal yes has to be the answer. Iain Peters has done an excellent job with this monumental task of cataloguing all the routes on this extensive and complicated coast line. The guide proves to be very readable with a subtle blend of much needed detail interspersed with historical interest and a sense of humour. It is good to see a happy medium between the terse (boring) guide of some areas and the overblown or 'in' humour of others.

Some of the approach sections are a bit scanty though these are at least aided by an excellent set of map drawings and photo diagrams. I hope the next Pat Littlejohn South West Climbs takes a leaf from this book and upgrades the maps and approach notes to a sensible level.

The history of the period is catalogued in a 15 page essay that makes an excellent and interesting read, as is pointed out there is still plenty to go at for those prepared to look. Quibbles about grades and stars would belittle the efforts of the author — all that is needed is an open mind and slight sense of adventure (something we all need to carry with us but appears to have atrophied somewhat in recent years).

The photographs contain some of the best shots seen in recent guidebooks. The front cover is especially evocative — doesn't matter what or where the rock is — you just want to be there above the churning sea in the final rays of the dying sun. This is a great contrast to, for example, the recent Stanage guide, showing a drab grey boulder in the middle of a drab green bog. The atmospheric frontispiece, and the shot of Berlin make a nice change from stick men hanging from a couple of fingers, within inches

of their last bolt. The shot of Darkinbad is also excellent capturing the atmosphere of leading on a big serious cliff. These photographs remind us there is more to climbing than just the moves — the setting and the company still count for something.

The geological notes are an interesting and humorous attempt at explaining the long and complicated history of the area, and goes some way to explain the method of formation of the different rocks in the area, and in West Penwith.

There are doubtless plenty of people who believe that this guide is not worth buying because the majority of the cliffs consist of seaward bound tottering piles of shale with about as much permanence as a house of cards. These folks could spend a very pleasant couple of weeks re-educating themselves, escaping from the crowds and enjoying this mighty coastline. Baggy is of course superb, but a bit too easy angled for most of today's rock jocks, though that doesn't mean all the routes are a pushover. For those who prefer steeper sport Sharpnose, Pentire and Carn Gowla are all well worth a visit. Exmansionworthy, Doyden Point and Compass Point are also worth seeking out, they would doubtless be much more popular if they were situated a little nearer the main stream. Scattered between these areas is a lot of rock and a fair bag of stars. Some of these other crags definitely come under the heading of esoteric. The 'best of the rock' being probably Blackchurch. I must confess it is not one of my favourite cliffs but it has certainly got something. Most folks go there to sample Sacre Couer on the tower in front of the main crag and then run away before they are lured into something silly on the great sinister pile that lurks behind.

Anyhow there it is. I don't suppose even a guide as good as this will lure a lot of people away from the fashionable sport of Stanage, the Cromlech or Avon, but that's no bad thing, this coast will long remain one where you can go for a bit of peace and quiet, or a God Almighty epic — whatever turns you on.

Chris Craggs

One Step in the Clouds Diadem £16.95

During a discussion of some 'great work' or other, my college tutor suddenly closed her book and looked up. "Literature," she opined, "is concerned principally with sex and death. But especially death." I am pleased to report that Diadem's new compilation of mountaineering fiction adequately fulfils these criteria.

Weighing in at 2lbs 12oz and measuring a whopping two inches thick, this tome provides considerable food for thought, although many climbers will find it unpalatable. It sometimes seems hard to counter the argument that all a climber needs to read is a guidebook (and there are those who would balk at this). Those who support this view may stop reading now.

It has occasionally been noted that the sea and sailing have provided ample matter for writers (see Melville, Hemingway et al) whereas the book that takes mountains as its source has yet to be written. This is obviously untrue. A cursory observation of the world of literature should reveal that mountains have formed the backdrop, the metaphor, the *raison d'être* for work reaching back to the Old Testament, The Koran or whatever culture you choose.

It is the business of mountaineering that has failed to produce the goods, at least in terms of fiction. The act of ascending a mountain is such an old cliché; the winds of history have eroded its value to that of a handful of dust. Climbing mountains, rubbing your nose in them just for the hell of it, to escape a society that sanitises our everyday existence, has been pursued most successfully in non-fiction. So is there a point to making it up? Do we need to embellish the truth?

My natural response would be to say not. And the chief service this book provides is to prove me wrong. It is true that some of the stories are included because they are fiction and feature climbing. Others are pure escapism — nothing wrong with that but it ain't literature. A few, and I include David Harris's exciting, if clichéd, Vortex among this number, make the difficult cross-over to appeal to non-climber and climber alike. The nuggets that remain require sifting for. Some writers, Al Alvarez for example, make occasional contributions and these are to be treasured. But the specialists, David Roberts and Dermot Somers especially, are to be admired. They take the stuff of sacred myth and transform it into approachable reality. Our lives, the divorces, the sorrow, the rebellion against family or lovers, the awkward paraphernalia, where else would they go. The benefit of fictionalising should be to pinpoint truths.

Subjectivity plays the central role in anthologies and I would not presume to judge this one's choices. It is enough that so much has been allowed between the covers. My only specific complaint, and the compilers assure me it was not of their doing, is the ridiculous grading system in the bibliography. When will we lose our predilection for lists?

Ed Douglas

The Handbook of Climbing by Allen Fyffe and Iain Peter Pelham Books/Stephen Greene Press £20

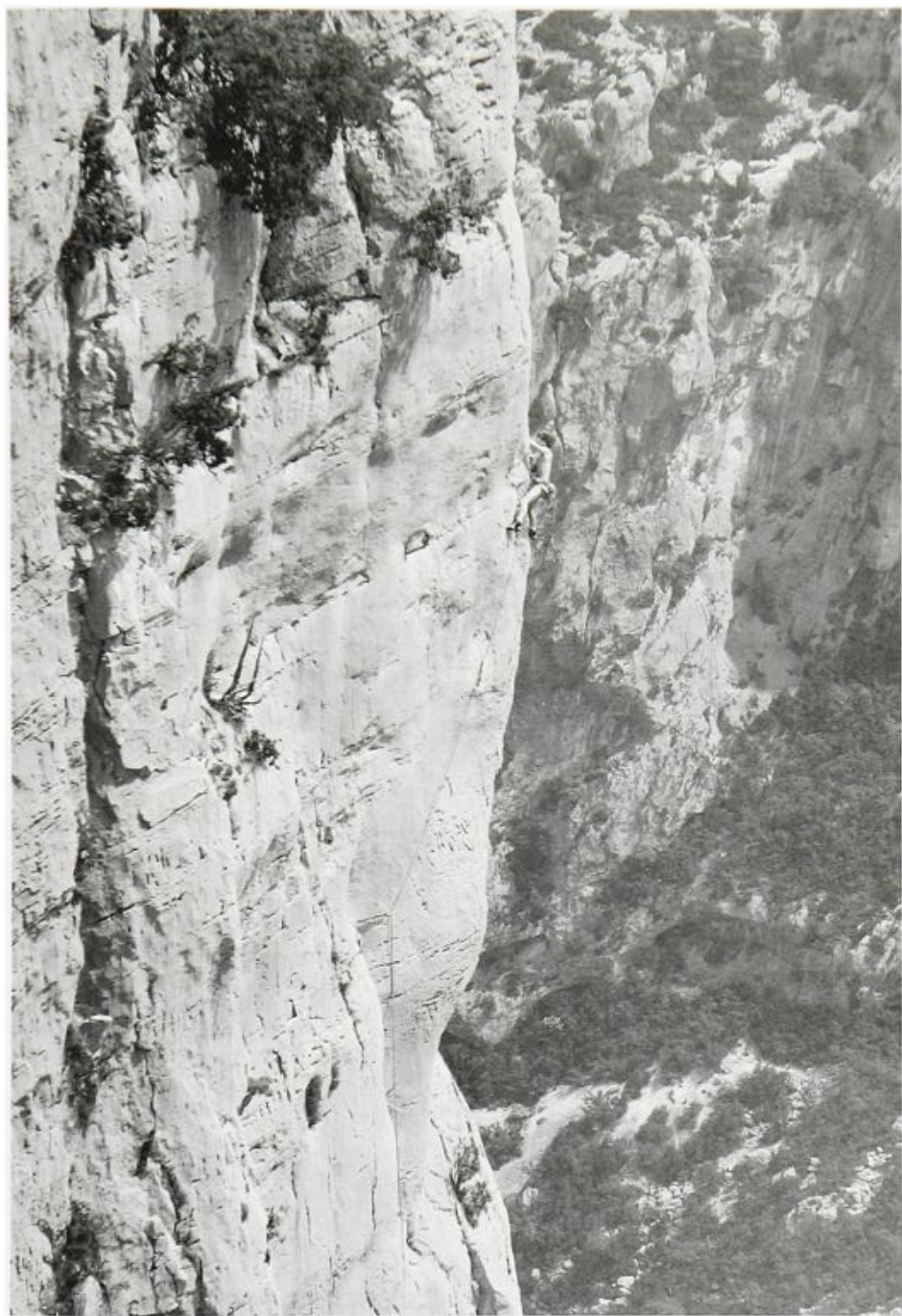
If I were to start this review by saying "Hands up!", it wouldn't be because that was the first instruction in section one of this handbook (even though the authors concede in their opening sentence that because rock climbing is such 'a natural activity, to begin with, few specialised techniques are required'). No, it would be to discover how many club members had read or consulted a 'Climbing Handbook' recently. I say 'Handbook' rather than 'Manual' because the latter title reminds one rather too much of the skills needed to strip a Cortina down rather than climb rock or ice; and because the title refers us to the actual part of the body used in climbing, as the authors point out: 'the ascent of rock, snow or ice...generally requires the use of hands for progress or for safety'. Yes; quite.

But this is a serious question. Who is buying these books? Surely there aren't thousands of young hopefuls out there eager to spend the equivalent of four or five tie offs just to read about the world beyond the sports wall? Well there must be, because barely a month goes by without the appearance of yet another well-meaning, generally well-produced, more or less well-written 'handbook'. There's a plethora of them; and quite interestingly, they are usually written by the 'big name'. Now it is a universal truth that publishers like 'big names' because 'big names' and their books are what is known in the parlance as 'market leaders'; and publishers reason that climbers will want to read and admire instructional books by 'big names' because they can then learn from them how to do the sorts of things 'big names' do in the book's colour plates and still stay alive. And laypeople are keen, too. Anxious Aunts and Uncles who watch adventure television sometimes recognise a few 'big names' and buy their books to give to ageing nieces and nephews at Christmas with an inscription that reads something similar to: 'If you must continue to do this sort of thing at 40, do it like Ron/Steve/Bill/John does it, dear'. Indeed, one of the great unanswered questions of our time is why some 'big names' have not yet written their own version of a handbook.

Another curious feature of the genre, as Martin Boysen pointed out in a recent review, is that the books invariably star the 'big name's' friends in various posed instructional photos. I'm sure this isn't the authors consciously indulging in a pictorial version of namedropping — a sort of 'Christian's hims' or 'Perrin's pals' syndrome. Though it must obviously be helpful to have pictures of Glenmore instructors doing desperate things in a book, because at the very least, it's bound to flatter ex-pupils who might then feel constrained to buy the book. I've even heard it rumoured that some people who harbour secret desires of one day writing their own 'Climbing Handbook', look through these 'handbooks' just to try and spot who the 'big name's' regular climbing partners are (since the cult of personality fostered by magazines has taught us all to emulate certain stars), or to have a giggle at the self-conscious partners embarrassingly displaying various knots as if they were some sort of private fetish. For some reason these knot photos are nearly always black and white. Perhaps this is because the photos are not usually taken by a 'big name' photographer, but culled from the writer's own slide box and taken on an off day at the local crag.

Now not many people realise how difficult it is to find a piece of rock that can double as a blackboard. How many little local crags do you know where you can demonstrate every aspect of rock climbing and belaying technique and all preferably only five feet off the ground? Remember, too, this crag must be sufficiently near enough to persuade your partners to go there regularly until all the photos are in the bag, but far enough away from the madding crowd because you will have to bash pegs into it to demonstrate aid climbing. I mean, can you imagine trying to persuade the locals at Millstone, now, that you're doing an update of Blackshaw and that London Wall is the most perfect place to show how to aid climb?

You know, I'm convinced that this is at least another reason why people read 'Climbing Handbooks': to find the perfect practice crag. That's certainly why Blackshaw's Mountaineering was so popular. Not because so few people then knew about the mysteries of the direct body belay or wanted to learn how to layback. Oh no, it was because in 1965 hardly anyone knew about sea cliffs. The surge



Unknown climber on 'Dingomaniaque', Verdon Gorge. Photo: Keith Sharples

in climbing on Cornish granite occurred because thousands of aspirant Alpinists saw photos of a jolly chap in big boots and a Black's ventile anorak, climbing huge juggy overhangs and pulling up steep walls on big spikes. And they discovered, you could put pegs in with impunity because there were already some big aid routes at Bosigran! Fyffe and Peter seem to have found just such a crag. Their chapters on rock climbing techniques and belaying and rope management feature a sort of schisty granite crag with outstanding features — and what's more, it's obviously beside the sea.

If no 'big name' photographer is available, the next best thing is obviously to get a 'Really Big Name' to write you a Foreword which claims that your handbook is 'one of the best to be produced in the English Language'. I imagine some Norwegians (if they could ever bring themselves to do it) might get Arne Randers Heen to write just the same about their language in a handbook about 'fjellklattering'; but it will certainly be difficult for the next British 'big name' to follow that sort of endorsement.

But when all's said and done, this book is beautifully produced. Diagrams are clear and often reinforced by a photo of the real thing (I'm still longing to see a real 'Baboon hang' done, though), and the writing, too, is a model of clarity. Many of the esoteric techniques of climbing are difficult to write about without making the process impossible to visualise. A case in point is the apparently simple process of clipping rope into a runner karabiner. The authors realise that there are many different ways of achieving the same end and sensibly make this a central concern of the book; so they offer us three different versions of runner clipping. This is the problem-solving approach to climbing; it's just beginning to figure in the National Curriculum in schools. I, however, needed to get the rope out and practice while I read, partly because I began to get fingers, steel and perlon all confused in spite of the authors' clear description. But this, surely is the limitation of the 'Handbook' as a teaching mode: like its counterpart, the encyclopaedia or the school textbook, 'doing the knowledge' in climbing must mean experiencing it as well as reading about it. To be fair, the authors themselves point this out, and the book is the better for being written always with this in mind.

Fyffe and Peter have aimed their book at the climber who wants to 'improve personal performance' and knowledge of the sport's 'Technical Aspects'; and there is indeed a wealth of knowledge here, together with useful tips. It is salutary every now and then to recheck techniques. With the winter season approaching, I turned avidly to the winter section for guidance and got thoroughly frightened by reading more about axe torquing. Maybe I'll try and improve my performance on the Mantrap this year — if only I can find something to torque in that is!

But if you already possess definitive 'handbooks' by, for instance, Chouinard, March, Livesey, Robbins and Scott and you've got a current Mountain Leadership handbook, there will not be much that is new to you here. There is less than Blackshaw on mountain first aid and mountain weather, for instance, and no list of recommended texts — a serious omission, this. But we do get two essays on training and psychological skills in climbing. In the 25 years since Blackshaw, things have moved on apace. It is now not so important to know the Welsh or Gaelic place names for mountain features as to know how to improve 'Progressive Muscular Relaxation' and 'Attention Control'. But, even this advice, is I suspect, available elsewhere already at half the cost. However, any self-respecting club ought to have a copy of this book on the hut shelf, if only to stimulate members to go out and see if they could compile their own handbook for aspirant members. At least we could fill it with pictures of every club member and guarantee sales by making everyone into a 'big name'!

Tim Noble

**Everest: Kangshung Face by Stephen Venables
Hodder & Stoughton £14.95**

High praise for this book. One of the finest feats of Himalayan mountaineering is described with a literary skill that does full justice to the achievement. This is a rare combination for which the author, Stephen Venables, deserves double congratulation. His pioneering ascent of Everest by a new, hard route ensure him a respected place in mountaineering history. We can only be grateful that he also has the talent to describe his searing experiences with sensitivity, candour and humour.

The bare facts are that a four man team led by Robert Anderson with fellow American Ed Webster, Canadian Paul Teare and Stephen Venables climbed the Kangshung Face of Everest via the formidable 'Neverest' Buttress to the South Col and on to the summit. They did it without oxygen or Sherpa support. Only Venables made it all the way to the summit. It was the smallest expedition to make a new

route on Everest.

The narrative falls into four phases and Venables adapts his style accordingly. There is the inevitable tangle and obstructiveness of Chinese bureaucracy before getting to Base Camp. Then the battle to surmount the intimidating 'Neverest' Buttress. After much hard technical climbing a monster crevasse barred further progress. This called for high grade artificial ice climbing before a hair-raising Tyrolean traverse was rigged.

They arrived on the South Col half clobbered. Paul Tzare feared that he was developing cerebral oedema and descended alone. After a day's dangerous delay the other three set off for the summit. Only Venables made it and from the moment he attained the South Summit and decided to drive his flagging body on to the summit the narrative takes on a new tension. It can only be compared with Joe Simpson's *Touching the Void*.

With extraordinary recall Venables lets the reader enter his disturbed mind, lurching from rational thought to hallucination. His mental and physical strength triumphed but he was faced with a descent in bad visibility, late in the day. Exactly the conditions, but without the wind, that killed Mick Burke.

From now on it becomes a survival, rather than a climbing, story. Venables faced a night out and was frostbitten in the feet. His two friends had a marginally more sheltered night in an abandoned tent. They staggered down to the South Col, their minds almost blown, and here Venables gives us a rare insight into the mental dangers of lingering in the 'death zone' above 8,000m where they were to spend a total of four nights.

Next morning 'It was pitiful to witness our own deterioration as we sprawled on our backs, mumbling feebly about the imperative need to descend but failing to do anything about it'. It was nearly four pm before they could get their act together and leave.

Descending from the col both Venables and Anderson fell, losing their ice-axes. By now they were all not only badly dehydrated but also mentally bombed out. Here Venables is at his best, letting us enter his freewheeling mind, now hallucinating, now returning to reality but often just switched off. Events become even more Simpsonsque and eventually it was a case of every man for himself. One by one they all got down safely, duly recovered and parted without recrimination, but not without a touch of remorse that an overriding instinct for survival had on occasion overcome a feeling of compassion. An outsider is not entitled to criticise. The book is excellently illustrated by the climbers' pictures and those of the expedition photographer, Joe Blackburn.

Like many people, I had reached the stage when I never really wanted to read another Everest book. This one is a shining exception.

Mike Banks

Southern Sandstone by Dave Turner Climbers' Club £8.95

What a pleasure it is to see a new guide to those wonderful little crags that have given so much pleasure to rock climbers condemned to live on the periphery of the British climbing scene. Not that one is really essential since the sandstone cliffs are all very well known and it would be possible to summarise the guide into one sentence. 'All the obvious lines have been climbed, the ones that look hard are grade 5, the ones that look easy, are easy; all the impossible looking faces, cracks and rugosities have also been climbed, they are grade 6'. But that would take all the fun out of the game. Who would go to the trouble of agonising over the name of a fifteen foot muddy crack they had just top roped if they didn't expect to see it in print one day? And why not? The names of the famous climbs bring back memories of youthful struggles. The Niblick, (by the way, not Niblick which is what everyone calls it), Slimfinger Crack (what a perfect description), Long Layback (all 20 feet of it), Fandango Right Hand, Simian Progress, Edwards's Effort, and so they go on.

Yet the guide doesn't quite resolve which is the best sandstone crag, Harrison's, undoubtedly the most frequented and I suppose the most popular. Two hundred and twenty seven climbs, almost half of them grade 5, a third easier and no fewer than 58 grade 6 finger pullers that I suppose I'll never get up. That compares with the connoisseurs cliff, High Rocks. Great atmosphere, horrendous slimy overhanging cracks, I was sure that this must have many more hard climbs than Harrison's, but the number and spread of difficulty is about the same and no more than 55 grade 6 climbs that I will never be able to get up. Bowles Rocks really comes out a poor third with about half as many climbs, but since almost half of them are below grade 5 it is ideal for beginners which is why, I suppose, that it has an

'Outdoor Pursuits Centre', although why an 'Outdoor Pursuits Centre' needs the indoor swimming pool that they have erected at the foot of the cliff, beats me. Anyway I suppose we should be grateful that they do allow stray climbers on to the rock (for the payment of a nominal fee). Although the climbing is good, and there are some very hard climbs indeed, as the skiers mournfully tramp past to the depressing plastic ski slope, it fails to generate the crowded rumbustious atmosphere of Harrison's or the dark sombre thrill of High.

I have always had a deep admiration for anyone who has the patience and determination to write a guidebook covering climbs from Denny Bottom Rocks (which as far as I can make out is a boulder in someone's back garden) to the amazing 300/400 foot vertical nightmares on the chalk cliffs of the south coast. The photograph of Phil Thornhill climbing Great White Fright makes the book worth buying on its own. The pictures of the sandstone climbs are outstanding, but give the impression that the cliffs are deserted which they certainly are not whenever I go. Presumably they are taken when Bowles and High are closed but how can you explain no one at Harrison's. Trick photography? The maps and plans of the cliffs are neat, the diagrams seem to be a bit superfluous, but the photos, all in colour and lots of them, make up for that.

Since protection is worse than useless, it doesn't work and in failing actually damages the rock, climbs that haven't been led are graded NS (Not Soloed) which I like. But how does the writer know that someone hasn't slipped down one summer dawn and nipped up some 6b and told not a soul. Is there somewhere where all this minutiae is recorded? I checked all the NS routes and I hadn't secretly soloed any of them but I have climbed Birchden Corner 5c blindfolded and I have always found Birchden Wall (downgraded to 5b) quite desperate. Does this mean anything? Maybe easy climbs are getting harder and harder climbs easier which means that you can brag about the 5cs that are now 6as and get up the 5cs that were 6as. But have they really got easier or is it just an opinion? I'm going to go once again and find out. Maybe I'll be able to find another 'micro-eliminate' as hard as 'Take That Effing Chalk Bag Off, or I'll Nick Your Rope and Give It to Terry 'The Chainsaw' Tullis and He'll Keep it for Ever and Ever' (6a), and put the guidebook out of date. But then again maybe I won't, the grade 6s don't really seem to be getting any easier. For those fortunates who find them feasible if you don't buy this book to go and try the hundred or so new ones since Tim Daniell's guide, then you are not taking life seriously enough.

Ian McNaught-Davis

Alpine Pass Route — Switzerland by Kev Reynolds Cicerone £6.95

This is a meticulously prepared, detailed walking guide by one who is an old hand at this game, with many other such guides already published and more in the pipeline. It includes quite excellent route maps for each of the 15 stages from Sargans to Montreux, with separate altitude profiles as well as everything you would wish to know about accommodation, transport options, places to see etc. There are many photographs, some better than others, in colour and in b & w, and appendices cover additional bits of useful information. Delightful little sketches by Brian Evans further enhance the overall feel.

Taking Kev's advice from the introductory chapters and putting the guide into your pocket, not forgetting your reading glasses (this trek is for strong walkers of all ages as well as superannuated climbers!) you cannot fail to complete this magnificent pass route, be it probably during more than one single holiday. The author is most concerned that you should enjoy it to the full without excessive fatigue, nor unnecessary hardships, by making helpful alternative suggestions, such as a little cheating with the likes of cable cars, the odd bus trip instead of trudging along a country road and the occasional more extravagant overnight stop.

The Alpine Pass Route is of course not a painfully constructed long-distance way but an itinerary enabling the enthusiastic walker to traverse the whole of Switzerland from east to west along old-established Alpine footpaths, some at times perhaps a little crowded but others quite remote and lonely, and virtually everywhere graced with wonderful views. Moreover, civilisation of a high order is always pretty near at hand giving one the opportunity occasionally to adjust one's exertions to suit. There should, however, be no doubt in anyone's mind about the serious effort required, with some long daily stages and much ascending and descending, to do full justice to this outstanding route. We must thank Kev Reynolds for making it easier.

Henry Adler

The Alpine Journal 1989/90
The Alpine Club/Muller £16.95

In his third year of editorship Ernst Sondheimer has produced a second large (new house style) volume and it is now clear that a big commercial push is on to present the AJ to a world market. Such a policy is both ambitious and risky as who wants to start collecting a run which is at volume 93 or 94? Perhaps the Club should have waited until Volume 100 and then started off a new series in a totally different house style.

The leading article for volume 94 is Everest-Kangshung Face by Stephen Venables and this is followed by Cho Oyu with Dave Walsh writing on the first British ascent, and Menlungtse by Chris Bonington. Then, after a procession of Lana, Kish, Shan and Dag, we arrive at 'One Man's (Alpine) Fourthousanders', an interesting article by Peter Fleming. Much of the thrust of this year's journal is a fascinating sequence of African articles to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1st ascent of Kilimanjaro.

Less pleasing, however, was an article 'The Land Below the Wind', about the First International Climbathon 1988 sponsored by Malaysian Airlines. Perhaps future competitive events can be given less prominence in an effort to deter the 244 competitors who did come out of Borneo alive.

Of far more interest was the Caucasus Centenary Memorial Service to remember the death of Harry Fox and William Donkin. Eckenstein and Loria (in the biggest mountaineering book that I have ever seen) referred to Donkin as the person who 'first raised mountain photography to the dignity of a fine art'. One-third of the Alpine Portfolio photographs had in fact been taken by Donkin despite competition from the likes of Vittorio Sella. Donkin's death was a real tragedy as he would undoubtedly have greatly influenced the art of photography during its infancy. The impending tragedy was well portrayed in one of Willinck's sketches entitled 'the last bivouac'. The name Donkin is particularly significant to the CC as two Donkins have been presidents of the Club.

What concerns me most about the AJ is the indifference to climbing in Britain where so many of the world's top mountaineers have learnt their art. During the early 1970s it was policy to give a summary of the major new routes in Scotland, Wales, the Lakes, Ireland and the Pennines. Later this developed into an article 'Events and Trends' over a four year period. From 1984 on it has all been Scotland's winter routes until the present volume when British climbing now seems to mean winter climbing. This is a pity as the longest running and most authoritative journal should reflect not only the peripheral great mountains of the earth but also the epicentre from whence all truth (and lies) and skills (and ineptitudes) emanate.

The Alpine Journal Index 1969-87

Of no concern to most climbers but indispensable to the literate minority and journal and magazine editors (not necessarily in the minority!) is this fifth volume whose predecessors have previously appeared in 1892, 1929, 1954 and 1970. Without these vital indexes it is a labour of love to consult the 94 volumes of the AJ — to say nothing of the time element and countless distractions to read the odd bits and pieces which catch the eye.

Looking at the latest volume it takes me about 10 seconds to discover that Shipton's obituary is in volume 83 on page 271, while there is a tribute to Tilman in volume 84 on page 132. In a similar length of time I tracked down six separate references to the Atlas Mountains. By now readers should have decided whether or not they need to order this volume.

Now! Someone recently challenged me to do a graded list to highlight some aspect of the Alpine Club. This was the chance that I had been waiting for. How many times have the various members of the CC (plus notorious characters) appeared in the AJ? I first looked for Brown, J. and Walker, D.W. (you can't get more prominent than that can you?) — but to no avail. How strange. A cursory tot-up while in the bath revealed a startling set of statistics which are translated below into R grades with a number to indicate the number of times a name is referenced.

R1	R2	R3
Williams, P.	Bere, R.	Livesey, P. Hodgkin, P.
Alcock, D.	Fawcett, R.	Blackshaw, A. Poucher, W.
Chorley, R.	Gifford, T.	Carr, H.
Moulam, A.J.J.	Jones, C.T.	Rouse, A.

R4 Warren, C.	R5 Bicknell, P. Fitzgerald, K.	R6 Wilson, K. Milburn, G. Hunt, J.	R7 McInnes, H.	R8 Messner, R. Collister, R.	R9 Gray, D. Unsworth, W.
R10 Scott, D. Cleare, J.	R15 Bonington, C.J.S.	R23 Pyatt, E.C.			

And so it can be demonstrated mathematically who were the most important 'climbers' (certainly not mountaineers!) between 1969 and 1987! In the great world of mountaineering Mike Browell is thus more prominent than Ron Fawcett, while Dennis Gray is higher up the mountain than Reinhold Messner. Wonder of wonders, however, is that enthroned high on the pinnacle of the gods is NOT Bonington (or even Wilson for that matter) but Super-Ted. Looking ahead to the future who will be the star of volume 6 in the year 2008? — that is if the world lasts that long.

Geoff Milburn

**The Alpine Journal 1990/91 edited by Ernst Sondheimer
Alpine Club/Muller £17.99**

The cat howled in pain as the AJ bounced off its head to dent the floorboards of the hall, and this bizarre incident added weight to the old adage that there are more ways than one to kill a cat. The noise also woke me up just as I was in the middle of negotiating the world's first E12; and with a foul sore throat as well which had kept me off work for the day.

A name that I read took me back 37 years to my youth. For hours as a small boy I used to stand in front of a mirror while I practised the lightning draw with reverse-handled twin-six-guns as per the legendary Wild Bill Hickock. Other mega-heroes of that era were the sailor Sir Richard Grenville of the Revenge (though I never really knew why), Batman and Wilson of The Wizard. The two latter characters I suspected weren't real, but to have doubted their authenticity for a moment would have been to shatter a boyhood dream. In the golden pre-television days I longed to meet a hero in the flesh, but in North Yorkshire they seemed a scarce breed. At the age of 11 I joined Richmond Grammar School and suffered the trials of Latin, but there were occasional bonuses. In 1954 Tony Streather came to lecture on Mt. Godwin Austen, which for some inexplicable reason at the time, he also referred to as K2. For part of the lecture we thought he was attempting two mountains at the same time. In the aftermath of the Everest success mountaineers were high up our hero list but not quite in the dizzy realm of cricketers and footballers. Streather was enthusiastic over his slides of the expedition but we couldn't understand why the expedition had failed. After all the second highest mountain in the world was only about 94 sprints of 100 yards — uphill. Thirty six years later I note with some pleasure that Tony Streather has succeeded at last and is the new President of the AC.

Although under the weather my medical state improved dramatically to the point where I was able to flick through the pages of the journal. The first thing that I read was, 'I became progressively more ill with a raging sore throat'. That, however, was Hamish Nicol way back in 1953 in the Alps. At least I was cosy in bed and could relax to enjoy his fine portrayal of the Alps in the fifties. The only irritation was the fact that the photos illustrating the article were sixty-odd pages farther on. It struck me that it would be a superb project for someone such as Hamish to write a definitive book on the beginnings of British Alpine climbing and its place in the history of aid and free climbing. A typical intriguing statement in the article was the fact that Bernard Pierre's post-war lectures were partly responsible for the surge in British activity (shades of the effect that Streather had on myself).

Having avidly mopped up Waller's Crack by Stephen Reid I all too quickly finished Ivan's own article 'Not Much of a Mountaineer'. The Himalayan and World articles seemed bittier than usual and did not hold my attention for long. This forced me to head for the Obituary column in search of John Noel and Marco Pallis. Utter disappointment — they were there but not in the detail for which I had hoped. The gem turned out to be a well-written obituary for Eric Bentley Beauman (1891-19890). "Who?", you might say. Well, he was an early aviator and yet another unique character of the old brigade. He witnessed the first ascent of CB, Scafell, and for many years held the altitude record for skiing with 23,500ft to his credit during Smythe's Kamet expedition. There seems little doubt that he would have done well if he had been included on the 1933 Everest expedition. Such was the man whose



Below Buckden Pike. Photo: Chris Jackson

responsibility was to defend London in 1914 with a sole Caudron biplane.

At the other extreme I still chuckle at the incongruous photo of the 'Alpine Club and Ice' in the Netherlands — a far cry from Everest for Messrs Westmacott and Band.

George Band's Valedictory Address ends with perhaps the most important message, which firmly embraces the problem of the club's *raison d'être* (we can't all manage Greek quotes!) and recent pointed criticism. The three main issues highlighted were:

a) 'If the Club is to speak with authority and influence in the mountaineering world, then it must regain a membership which represents the best British mountaineering.' Somehow the Club must shed its cloak of academic affluence and make it easier for prominent climbers of all social strata to join — perhaps initially by invitation as a modified form of Honorary Membership (perhaps with reduced rights).

b) 'The Club should maintain its conscious shift of concentration from the Alpine to the Greater Ranges of the world.'

c) 'The unique scientific, literary and historical role of the Club should be nurtured and widened.'

It was certainly good to read that there was to be an effort made to hold both meetings and lectures outside London, though where the North will fit in the plans is anyone's guess. It would be nice to think that the club's library would become both more definitive and more accessible — though not to the extent of the Rouse collection where it has recently been stated that the guidebooks have already been nicked. The club hopes to have better links with the BMC, but that august body also suffers from attack at regular intervals by down to earth cynics in the climbing world. Somehow we need a national club of which we can be proud, but which is not selective — and that in itself seems to be a contradiction. Imagine who YOU would blackball from joining such a club, add up all our choices...and who is left? No, the Alpine Club will trundle on, having made a few concessions to the odd budding Whillans here and there — and will still observe the great majority of the climbing world from afar.

Geoff Milburn

Yorkshire Gritstone YMC £15

The previous edition of Yorkshire Gritstone was reviewed for the CCJ some eight years ago by Geoff Milburn in verse, presumably, to soften the criticism which was heaped upon it. No such treatment is required here for Graham 'Streaky Bacon' Desroy and his team, drawing on their experience of producing Yorkshire Limestone, have pulled out all the stops and delivered a guide which should last the remainder of the millenium. What a blockbuster this long-awaited guidebook is, with a hard back enclosing 650 pages, 24 colour plates, much humour, first ascent lists, a graded list of 'sandbags' and (wait for it) P grades.

An attractive first impression is created by the front cover photograph of a youth in vest and shorts, poised below the crux of Big Greenie, belying its name as the North-West Face of Almscliff takes on a golden hue in the light of the evening sun. Further inspection reveals a very professional lay-out together with almost universally excellent colour photographs superbly reproduced. In fact, the art work is marred only by some of the diagrams which, though clear and accurate, lack the aesthetic appeal of, say, those in the latest Stanage guide. The use of colour to mark the lines of the routes would, I suspect, have improved both their clarity and appeal. Deserving a special mention, however, is the revelation of the secrets of Caley through the combination of a plan, and simple but very clear drawings of the boulders with 'difficulty-coded' route lines; a very worthwhile innovation.

A great deal of effort has gone into sorting out the history; many old-timers were contacted to set the record straight and access was gained to Arthur Dolphin's notes by kind permission of Marie Ball, his girlfriend at the time of his death. Many interesting tales are told and no punches pulled. 'Livesey's three aces, Wellington Crack, Guillotine and Beyond The Fringe, all looked unbeatable until his gamesmanship was exposed: aid on Wellington Crack was corrected later, but chipped holds on Guillotine were left for all to see and side-runners on Beyond The Fringe only became apparent when a first ascent photograph appeared in the 1982 guide'. The histories seem to be accurate (Dennis will probably disagree) but I found several mistakes in the first ascent lists including the statement that Ken Wood was one of the main activists at Shipley Glen 1950-60 (that is before he was 16).

The innovatory P grades denote what is referred to as the Prang Potential, P1 being well protected (or protectable to keep the CC pedants happy) whilst P3 suggests serious 'crater' possibilities. On

balance they seem a good idea; whether they are here to stay remains to be seen.

Attempts have been made to sort out the notorious Yorkshire sandbag grading but there still remain a number of anomalies to upset Ken Wilson, such as Cow Udder, ridiculously undergraded at HVS. So, whilst not suggesting they deserve a Government Health Warning I think caution is advised with respect to grades and also the graded list which is more idiosyncratic than most of its kind.

The use of humour seems a necessary feature of guidebooks these days and this is no exception with its own brand soaked in Yorkshire chauvinism. The reader is informed that a Yorkshire black spot equates with a Northumberland three star route and in the minor crags section (headed *Connoisseurs Crags*) we find Stanage Edge 'A cluttered little edge and too far south to bother with'. Either you hate it or you love it!

In summary, this is a guidebook to rank amongst the best, an essential purchase for all lovers of gritstone.

Mike Mortimer

Lake District: 100 Classic Climbs by Stephen Reid & Steve Ashton
Crowood £9.95

This selected climbs guide contains over 170 routes, from all over Lakeland, set out in the 'topo' house style of the series. Most of the routes are rock climbs but a selection of winter climbs is also included (none of which have been in condition during the past three winters!) Information is given about the first ascensionists, best conditions, approaches, starting point and descent, although, for the latter, we are not always told whether to face in or out before moving left or right. This could lead to some interesting excursions.

Each route, or group of routes, occupies two pages which includes the basic information, a description of the character of the route and the route topo. The stated aim of the guide is to provide sufficient climbs on each crag to allow at least a full day's climbing and, in this, the book is very successful. As with all selective guides, one can argue about the routes included and omitted but this choice seems pretty well balanced.

Whether or not you like the guide will probably depend, mainly, on how well you take to the topo style of route description. Personally, I can see its value on large crags in, say Verdon or Yosemite. Here, however, many routes require a whole page to give the same effective information as that contained in a few lines of the definitive FRCC guides. The complexity of the route finding also needs a 'symbol-laden' topo: look at the Laugh Not topo, which only needs a couple of lines of prose and is not a complex route at all. I need to translate the topos into words, so why not use words in the first place? That said, the draughtsmanship shown in the topos is first class.

One major problem is that pitch lengths are not given. This is fine if all the topos are to the same scale and all the pitch lengths are relatively correct. Unfortunately, the 33m pitch of Samson (High Crag) appears to be of the same length as the 45m pitch of Extol (Dovedale). Pity the leader whose second has used the 45m main rope to tie into three belay points! Overall route lengths are clearly and accurately described, however, so that reasonable guesses could, perhaps, be made.

After the evocative front cover photograph of Needle Ridge, those inside the guide are a real disappointment. Black and white photographs are now old hat and, when the quality of their reproduction is as mediocre as these, they do nothing to enhance the book. Other guides have shown that it is possible to achieve high quality colour reproduction and there are better shots around than most of these.

This guide may be purchased by climbers who visit the Lakes occasionally and who want a good, all-over coverage of the gems that the area has to offer. If you are happy with the topo approach then you may well be satisfied but, at the price, I think that it gives rather less value for money than its main rival.

Adey Hubbard

**Coming Through by Andy Fanshawe
Hodder and Stoughton £14.95**

This is Andy Fanshawe's first book and he sets himself a high standard of achievement if he intends to write any more.

It begins with a chapter aptly entitled 'Creating the Space' which runs from nearly losing three toes from frostbite on a winter Plan/Midi traverse, via getting the BMC National Officer's post, to the almost obligatory last minute panic in setting off for Chogolisa.

This trip is covered in the next chapters with enough detail to make it both readable and enjoyable but without dwelling on the problems inherent in employing porters and so on. The description of the walk in from Dasso is very vivid and includes what appears to be almost standard practices, such as being reprimanded for photographing a bridge (which is against the military regulations) and buying a goat at Askole, which later gets turned into a curry. They continue higher up the Baltoro and establish a Base Camp, followed by a trip to the various K2 expedition's Base Camps, which proves very successful in terms of the amount of food which they manage to acquire.

The serious business of climbing starts with a recce trip and then a week back at Base grounded by bad weather. They complete their planned traverse so the trip is a success in this respect, again described in enough detail for the reader to share the tension and excitement, but without ever becoming tedious. Shortly after, tragedy strikes as it did for so many during that summer in those mountains. Andy and one of the others have left for Skardu whilst the three others decide to attempt Broad Peak. In a twisted mirroring of Herman Buhl's death on Chogolisa after success on Broad Peak, one of the party falls to his death through a cornice.

The remainder of this part of the book deals well with coping with the death of a friend whilst trying to get through all the formalities and get home.

After returning to take up the BMC job an outing on the Ben over New Year ends in a second similar accident with, this time, an even closer friend dying. It says a lot for his spirit and also his literary skill that these two deaths coming so close together are dealt with in a way which doesn't shock, but neither ignores nor tries to hide their impact on him.

Next, after a year or so he's off on Chris Bonington's Menlungtse trip sold to the media as a search for the Yeti. This, with its attendant media circus, and seemingly never ending help from whoever was asked, is contrasted well against the background of the previous frugal expedition where every penny counted.

He covers the long journey in, and as far as, Base Camp with the now familiar relaxed yet detailed style which, if you close your eyes, lets you almost walk alongside him. This vein continues through an abortive first attempt on the West Face and a visit round to see if the East Ridge is feasible. The sight of it triggers a reaction in some of the climbers which comes close to ending the whole attempt, as it leaves Andy the only one keen to try again. Fortunately a solution is at hand teaming Andy with Alan Hinkes.

Their subsequent attempt and success as far as the west summit are captured using enough dialogue to seem real and of a kind which will seem familiar to most in its vulgar simplicity.

The book concludes with a trip to Makalu when Andy takes the difficult yet honest decision to not attempt the peak, a successful winter ascent of the Eiger Nordwand, and the usual selection of appendices.

One of its main strengths is that it includes a selection of different trips and so maintains a high level of interest rather than attempting to squeeze a whole book out of just one. All in all, this book is extremely readable and enjoyable. It captures what for me at least, is what climbing is about: part adventure and part fun, interspersed with tricky bits.

Pete Brooks

**100 Classic Climbs; Yorkshire and the Peak District by Steve Ashton
Crowood £10.95**

The vast majority of guidebook reviews take the same format; the reviewer provides a few platitudes about the nice size of the book or the excellence of the colour photographs, the selection of the climbs etc, and then in the interests of a balanced approach does a bit of nit picking, about grades, routes missed out, or any other details to make the reader think that the book has been meticulously studied. In the

end these reviews are fairly well neutered giving a grey 'well it's okay but nothing special' over-view of the book. It is very easy for a reviewer to be critical in a piece of writing that takes perhaps 30 minutes to throw together. This ignores or overlooks the simple fact that the book under the magnifying glass may represent a year or more of sweat, toil and sleepless nights for the poor author who is now told 'Well it's not bad'. Reviewing is easy, writing less so.

I was not overly impressed with the first three volumes in this Crowood series. I don't much care for the topo approach much beloved of continental guidebook producers. They seem a singularly sterile way of recording rock climbs. There is not a lot of incentive to go and sit on the toilet with a sheet of topos, what you need is something to get your adrenalin (and more besides) flowing. The new Gogarth guide does a great job in this respect, high adventure oozing from the words on the page, making you want to be there, dancing above the ocean or battling with overhanging rock in the gathering gloom. Where's the fun in another dotted line and a number on a piece of paper; it is about as stimulating as a supermarket check out ticket.

Enough of the generalities, what about this book? To put it succinctly I love it. Here is a piece of work that the author has obviously lavished a massive amount of love and care over. By his own admission he has done every route in the book, (I have to admit that there are six of them I have not done). Each one is illustrated by quite superb diagrams, drawn from where the visiting climber will be stood. Now there's a novel idea! We have come to expect diagrams to be drawn from an aeroplane, from across the valley using a telescope, or even from out at sea. This idea of Steve's is a bit outlandish but who knows it might actually catch on.

The descriptions are concise though adequate often with a bit of humour or some detailed snippet of useful information. As to the selection of climbs on God's own rock, it goes from Diff to E1 and includes most of the real belters. I would like to have seen Sloth in there one way or the other, you will have to read the comments at the front of the book to see why it is missing, maybe it will make the second edition.

As to gripes; I have a couple, though these are personal opinions rather than criticisms of the book. First and foremost the title of the book is a bit of a con. You buy a book expecting a hundred routes and end up with over 350, that does not seem fair somehow. However of those 350 only 84 are 'classics' ie deserving of three stars. But as explained in the intro '84 Gritstone Classics & 270 routes that are Nearly Classics' is a bit of a mouthful for a book title, so I must let it stand. Secondly the colour cover shots are not titled, is it only me that finds this common fault really irritating? If not, the front cover is Arete Direct, VS, at Simon's Seat and the rear cover is Boomerang, Diff, on Ramshaw, so now you know. And finally I see the old system of Diff+, VS-, etc has re-emerged. I think this was first used by Ron James in his Welsh selected climbs in Nineteen Bow and Arrow and, I thought it had died a death. It must be a Welsh peculiarity but I have always reckoned that if a route is hard enough to deserve VS+ then it's HVS. It is perhaps time to introduce a system where each grade is split into tenths so hardish VS would be VS.8 and an easy HVS would be HVS.2, and a standard V.Diff would be VD.5? That concept should provide enough material for pub talk for the next 50 years!

Anyway, in summary, this little book really is something quite special, if you operate in the Diff to E1 category it is a must for your rucksack, if you climb in the higher grades maybe it should find a place on your bookshelf, you can solo the routes in trainers in mid-winter, or save them all up for your dotage.

Chris Craggs

Mid Wales by John Sumner Climbers' Club £10.95

The colourful and enticing Mid Wales is the Club's first venture to update and rationalise the rather drab West Col editions of Central Wales and the Dolgellau Area, both previously published in the early seventies. Sensibly the original author, John (Fritz) Sumner has been retained and if credentials were needed an inspirational example and nearly 35 years of first ascents in the area must surely suffice.

Access difficulties in Mid Wales and particularly at Cwm Cywarch existed long before they became fashionable elsewhere and only time will tell if the probable tenfold increase in climbers will upset the present delicate balance between landowner, farmer, conservationist and the modern climbing fraternity. Certainly, anyone who climbed before the eighties (1980 that is, not 80 per crag!) must now accept we just can't do some of the things we used to do. The gentle 20 minute stroll from car to crag at Gist Ddu on a sunny seventies Sunday is now only a memory to relish. The daunting approach along

the Courtesy Path will put off all but the most dedicated. Strangely the said path is not fully described even though the alternatives are 'strictly forbidden'. There are also overtones of the rather rigid BMC jargon 'No access No climbing' where perhaps an influential and persuasive style may bring results more successfully.

The most striking feature of Mid Wales is the number of photographs and crag diagrams. Most of the colour photos are excellent action shots although sadly the black and white shots are disappointing and could be omitted without any great loss. Having said that, the crag diagrams are truly a work of art and demonstrate Phil Gibson's skill as an accomplished artist.

Good artwork can be spoiled and wasted without sympathetic route lines and good author/artist co-operation and co-ordination. There is no such threat here as accurate red lines and clear reference numbers make the empathy and knowledge of both author and artist very apparent.

A possible advantage of such quality and accuracy would be the ease of converting say Tap-y-Gigfran (South Face) to a topo guide by adding stances and technical grades, or should this be a thing of the future? Perhaps as guides get thicker and heavier a pull-out topo diagram could supplement the main written description enabling the guidebook to be left in a rucksack and the topo carried on the route.

There are two significant differences from the previous editions, the change back to feet for pitch lengths, and the introduction of Welsh names to the crags. The former seems entirely appropriate as 'feet' are more meaningful and user friendly, let's keep them! The Welsh seems to sit more uncomfortably. Craig yr Aderyn is much more evocative than Bird Rock, but Ffenestr y Graig sounds rather like a Celtic double glazing firm, and Creigiau Sawdl Efa? Unless there really is an established Welsh name for each facet why not stick with the traditional North Face and North Buttress.

Technically the route descriptions and grading are excellent although compared to other contemporary guides the style is a shade formal and impersonal. This extends to the Historical section and First Ascents list. The prolific 20 years prior to publication are allocated barely a single page of Historical and no mention of Bentham and Shaw's 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness picking off routes on Cader from under the very nose of Fritz. Also as Darker Angel gets such prominence is it not relevant that the aid was dispensed with on the second ascent, which took two full weekends to track the line and unearth a vertical jungle to gain entry?

Noting all of the above it is true to say on balance Mid Wales is a good guide with all the right things a modern guide needs to be successful. In reading guidebook reviews, particularly to unusual areas most people really want to know about the climbing and the answer to that is try it! Mid Wales has probably got something for all, be they mountaineer, rock jock or even sport climber. Try it with this guidebook and you will get a pleasant surprise.

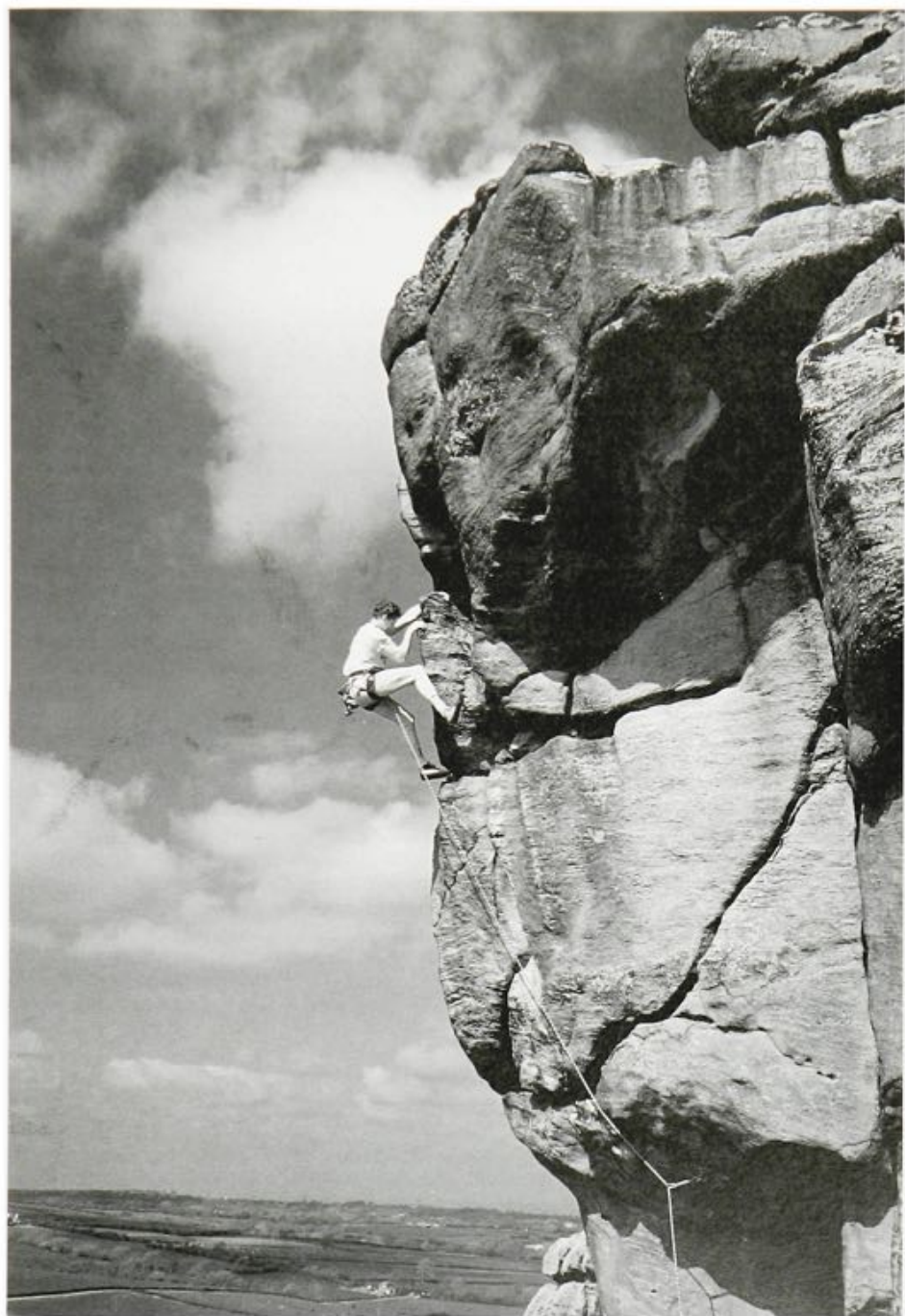
Malcolm Cameron

Snowdonia To The Gower by John Gillham Diadem £14.95

In my heart I want to say "don't buy this book, don't even open it." Its not that there's anything wrong with it, you understand, far from it, it's just that between its covers are many of the quiet and secret parts of Wales that I selfishly want to keep to myself. Places that over the years, Suzy and I have wandered, high days and teeming holidays, often not seeing a soul, moor and mountain to the far horizon. Enough of the lyrical waxing, what does the book offer us?

Its a day by day description of a 200 mile walk from Conway Bay on the North Wales coast to the Gower Peninsula in the south. John Gillham's descriptions are conveniently divided into 11 daily sections, starting with the Carneddau, the Glyders and Snowdon, then crossing the Rhinogs and Cader, over Pumlumon, past the great reservoirs of central Wales, Fan Hill and Black Mountain, leading finally to the Gower. Its more than a guidebook however and is designed to fit a coffee table rather than a rucksack. Curl up with this book in front of the fire on a winter's evening, the text makes good reading, with route details and anecdotes, John obviously knows and loves this part of the world and there is a host of useful maps and diagrams. The book also contains some brief historical and foresterial notes and, more importantly a day-by-day list of possible accommodation. If all this doesn't get you reaching for your route planner, the 150 colour photographs taken by the author and Van Greaves certainly will, they're gobsmacking. I expect I'll see you out there...

Chris Jackson.



Chris Craggs on 'Western Front' E3 5c Almscliff. Photo: Craggs collection

The Mountains of Europe edited by Kev Reynolds
Oxford Illustrated Press £19.95

This is a series of essays by knowledgeable enthusiasts, designed to give inspiration and information to first-time visitors to areas as diverse as Corsica and the Caucasus. A factsheet for each of the 20 areas covered by the book leaves the authors free to conjure up something of the culture around the climbing, as well as the character of the mountaineering currently practiced in each area. A judicious choice of authors seems to have produced very successful results. Joss Lynam's chapter on Ireland, for example, covers a lot of ground with a lot of useful detail, but also with an overview that is alert to diversity too.

If ever a book sold on the strength of its cover alone, this book will do. The contents will not let it down.

Terry Gifford

A Manual of Modern Rope Techniques by Nigel Shepherd
Constable £8.95

This is not the type of book that will have climbers queuing up at Joe Brown's for a copy — more's the pity, when you see some of the rope work on the crags these days! The book's main audience will be instructors, rescue team members and people like myself who are involved in the growing business of industrial roped access. You would certainly need a good working knowledge of rope work to get the full benefit from the book. Climbers and mountaineers should never be too old to learn new tricks and there are plenty of techniques to be learnt here. How many climbers can tie an Alpine butterfly knot or set up an abseil to retrieve the tubular ice screw that has been used as the anchor? What could happen if you thread a figure of eight the wrong way? The answers are in the book. I get to see a lot of technical books on rope techniques, the best ones are those written for cavers. This book is on a par with the best caving technical books. I will be using this book not only as a reference book for my work but to improve my climbing/mountaineering ropework, as I said earlier on, you're never too old to learn or improve your rope techniques.

Bill Wintrip

Rock Climbing in Snowdonia by Paul Williams
Constable £9.95

Superb! Paul Williams has done it again, producing an excellent selected climbing guide to 500 of the finest climbs in Wales.

All the best are here from the favourite old Diffs on the Milestone to the latest desperates on Pen Trwyn and Slate. You will be reminded of earlier forays to popular crags of your youth and tempted to hidden haunts, rarely, if ever visited, such as the unfrequented cliffs of Central Wales and the Llyn Peninsula.

Wearing my BMC hat I have to remind readers that some of the access details contained in the book are out of date, especially at Craig y Forwen where, for the time being, the landowner will actively stop anyone climbing there.

Derek Walker

New Climbs 1988 compiled by Gary Gibson
BMC £5.50

New Climbs 1988 is the third volume in the second series of New Climbs guidebooks produced by the British Mountaineering Council. Once again Gary has done an excellent job providing clear and concise information to keep us up to date with the last year's offerings of new climbs.

The format for the '88 volume is exactly the same as the two previous volumes and once again the areas of Scotland and The Lakes are not included. Regrettably, we are again informed that the future edition of the long-awaited Avon and Cheddar guide will be published later in the year. I wonder if indeed it will be? If not, then why not?

Flicking through the pages of New Climbs 1988, it becomes apparent that over half of the guide is taken up by the South of England and The Channel Islands (139 pages), whilst the more popular areas

of Wales, The Peak and Yorkshire between them only cover 100 pages. Most climbers don't venture away from these traditional forcing grounds; consequently they will be unlikely to purchase a volume which includes vast pages of new climbs in which they will be uninterested. However, to those of us who are adventurous enough to travel far and wide, these volumes have represented value for money — and this latest volume is obviously no exception to this rule.

When using the guide, it becomes apparent that the two previous volumes are necessary, along with the relevant definitive guide, to aid the first time visitor to identify his chosen climb. This problem comes to light particularly at crags where there has been considerable development following publication of the original guide. For example, Anstey's Cove is one such nightmare I have experienced, without having either guides or the presence of local 'experts' to get me to the foot of my chosen climb. Take heed — you have been warned. Best spend some money on these volumes then to save you wasting valuable cragging time!

The only mistakes I can find are on page 11. Firstly, Predator is in fact the next line right of Zoolook and the grade seems to be E8 not E7. And secondly, the direct start to Baboo Baboo can hardly justify 3 stars - best to deduct 2 stars and give them to Mark Pretty / Chris Hamper's excellent 'unnamed' route on the Cornice (see page 24).

On a final note it is most likely that this volume will be the last in the current series, due to poor sales of the first two editions. This is contrary to a very real need for up-to-date new route information, especially concerning the forcing grounds of Wales, Yorkshire and The Peak. Shame, therefore, as indeed next year's volume would have been the best one yet, given all the activities in The Dales and at Kilnsey this year.

Come what may, the climbing fraternity owes a lot to the diligent efforts of Gary Gibson. Thanks.
Mike Owen

**At The Sharp End by Paul Nunn
Unwin Hyman £14.95**

Blood oozing from his hands, a sticky sensation and a sour taste in the mouth, sweat running down his face. These are the sensations many of us have experienced when climbing at one's limit — Paul Nunn's account of a solo ascent of Bastion Route on High Tor 27 years ago. This must have been not unlike a modern-day solo of an E5 or E6 by one of today's young hot-shots.

For 30 years Paul Nunn has been a prominent celebrity in British climbing, either through his climbing exploits, or his writings on the subject. In the early sixties, on a damp gritstone edge I first met Paul — he was soloing around 'at the sharp end!' He has been there ever since. His horizons have become wider, and he has climbed almost everywhere in Britain and in many other parts of the world. Paul has a passion for climbing and has been involved in the sport in many different ways — as a high standard rock climber, an explorer, an Alpinist, a Himalayan climber, a writer and author, and also a committee man. This broad experience, coupled with the ability to record his experiences and emotions in writing, places Paul amongst a handful of today's mountaineers.

His book *At The Sharp End* is a collection of 74 essays which have been written over the past 30 years. Some are personal, some are funny, others are sad and some serious. All are thoughtful and reflect the great understanding and immense pleasure Paul gets from climbing and the companionship of those who climb with him.

If you want to read a book that is a colourful mosaic of climbing and mountaineering, then go out and buy it. It will cost you only £14.95 and is worth every penny — a true collection of literary gems!
Dave Alcock

**Exploring the Hidden Himalaya by Soli Mehta and Harish Kapadia
Hodder and Stoughton £20**

This book was published as a part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Himalayan Club in 1988. The authors have between them edited both the Himalayan Journal and the Himalayan Club Newsletter since 1969. This book pulls together information both from their wide personal experiences and also two decades of editing. The maps which are very clear and readable have been drawn especially for the book by Arun Samant. Unfortunately Soli Mehta died in 1989.

When reviewing a book there is the problem of what standard or expectation to review it against. In this case it's easy, the dust cover states;

'The purpose of this book is to excite and inspire the climber and trekker to take advantage of the vast possibilities the Himalaya has to offer. It ignores the 8,000 metre peaks as having been more than adequately covered elsewhere. But it draws attention to the less familiar and more challenging aspects of the known 7,000 and 6,000metre peaks'.

It succeeds brilliantly. The text is split into sections covering the Indian Himalaya only and working from Sikkim and Assam in the south east through Kumaon and Garhwal; Kinnaur; Spiti; Kulu and Lahul; Kishtwar; Kashmir, Ladakh and Zaskar to the eastern Karakoram in the north west stopping just short of K2.

Each section starts with a map and then runs through a brief history from the early western explorers up to recent times. This is then followed by a list of all the reference material for that area and a series of photographs, each with a potted history of the peak. If this doesn't remove enough of the pain from your research there's also a comprehensive bibliography at the end.

This is really a very high quality piece of work and if in trying to do it justice I've made it seem a bit dry, it isn't. For instance, did you know that the most beautiful mountain in the world was Siniolchu, or that the most lovely Himalayan valley was the Baspa? After the recent debate of K2 versus Everest for the highest peak there's an even better challenge for the cartographers. The neighbouring Papsura and Dharamsura, according to legend gain ascendancy over each other periodically according to whether the forces of evil (Pap), or good (Dharm) in the world are prevailing. In fact why leave it to them? Next time it rains and you're forced off the crags into a pub, work out for yourself which is the highest at the moment. That should pass a few hours.

Going back to the objectives of the book, I've been excited and inspired, I just need the opportunity to take the advantage!

Pete Brooks

Classic Rock Climbs in Northern England by Bill Birkett Oxford Illustrated Press £16.95

The 57 climbs described in this picture book cover mostly the Peak District, Yorkshire and Northumberland, with two crags each in Lancashire and North Yorks, plus Lazonby in the Eden Valley. Thirty four of the selected climbs are 5a or below. There are four classic climbs at Caley and three at Stanage. Of course, you don't get here the nine routes from Northern England in Bill Birkett's *Classic Rock Climbs In Great Britain*. The photographs are rather static and posey, but do give a good indication of the line of the routes. The writing might give too much away for what are inevitably short, intense routes, however the prose is in no danger of being short or intense. I particularly appreciate the advice for a boulder at Caley: 'Straight cranking pulls alone will not suffice and advanced science, utilising both hands and feet, must extract the maximum from this line of vague possibility'.

I do try not to extract the maximum so let me say that there are some excellent recommendations in this well illustrated book (did you know about Nightwatch, for example?) and I shall certainly use it to good effect. But I can't see why anyone would buy it instead of, or even as well as, Birkett and White's *Selected Climbs in Northern England* from Constable.

Terry Gifford

The Trekking Peaks of Nepal by Bill O'Connor Crowood 14.95

This book will sell well, I am surprised no one put it out a long time ago as trekking in Nepal is rather popular these days, as anyone who has been there will testify. Bill O'Connor is the ideal author for this area. His obvious love of Nepal comes across very well and I would imagine he had a fight with his conscience, as any book of this genre will increase the popularity of its subject. However, the book would have been written no matter what, so at least it has been done by an expert in his field and not some publishing house author.

Bill O'Connor gives ecological advice to trekkers and climbers throughout the book and I found his comments about the westerners lack of understanding of the Nepalese way of life spot on, particularly

with reference to Lukla airfield. Having spent a few days there myself, waiting for a flight out, listening to westerners complaining about the service as if it was Gatwick!

The book is well researched with reference to the climbing routes up each peak. It would have been easy just to list the popular routes but the author has found out from other climbers — usually the first ascensionists — the low down on the less known routes. In a lot of instances, these other routes are hard undertakings and certainly dispel the trekking peak myth, no Himalayan peak over 5,500m is a trek! One amazing fact is the amount of unclimbed routes that there are still to do on the peaks in this book. He certainly encourages the reader to be a bit more adventurous by doing self sufficient trips, trying new routes and taking an alternative trek out from the chosen objective.

There are interesting historical snippets throughout the book, which help make it a good read, as all guidebooks should be. I would have liked to have seen an overall map of the peaks, perhaps inside the front cover, the map for each peak was adequate, and linked with the photos will point you in the right direction for your chosen route.

The book is split into two sections. Part 1 is The Treks and Climbs. The second part is the bit you need to read if you are to actually get out of Britain — Advice on Trekking Peak Expeditions. Most of us like to think we do not need to refer to the check lists in expedition style books and it is only when you are at Base Camp, about to split up the food into mountain rations, that you wished you had bought some of those plastic containers that were on the list in the book that you never bothered to read.

This book will become a reference piece for all those climbers and trekkers planning a trip to Nepal. I hope they learn enough from the book to realise that they are going to an ecologically finely balanced country and Lukla airstrip has not got a monorail between terminals — yet!

Bill Wintrip

**Yes, To Dance by Jim Perrin
Oxford Illustrated Press £14.95**

The cover photograph shows a further stage in the route which featured on *On and Off The Rocks*. The climber is now swinging free on the overhang of The Hanging Stone. An allegory? Is he sticking his neck out too far? on that route?, in producing this second such volume? I hope the climber and the volume make it. What will the next cover show?

Read the introduction with care. There you see, I have assumed that you will buy the book. The introduction pares back the first layer of skin from the many-faceted enthusiasms of the author. The rest of the book takes one closer and closer to the spirit of the man, he has used the recipe before for what the jacket prose describes as 'a collection of essays' is not quite that. It is a collection of articles previously published in a wide variety of outlets which there is no need to list. They are ordered into five sections of which the first is easiest to categorise.

Here, in *Keeping Company*, are pieces from his regular series in *Climber* (in its various guises) in which he climbs with and cross-examines some companion of his choice. Joe Brown, Stevie Haston, Duncan Campbell, John Beatty, Cathy Powell (work that out), Colin Mortlock, Steve Dean (an excuse to discuss Colin Kirkus), Ken Wilson and Judy Yates.

In the second section, *Friends and Fellow Travellers*, actual climbing is dismissed to the background while conversation with the protagonists is the mainspring of each piece. For conversation read explanation, and defence in the case of his anti-establishment gods Tilman and Shipton, and the three obituaries, of Len Chadwick, John Syrett, and Mo Anthoine. Most of the others are still very much alive: Jack Longland, Benny Rothman, Fawcett, and Dawes take my fancy; mould-breakers all. Of these Benny Rothman is something of a surprise. Here, as in places in the first collection, we get close to Perrin's heart. Benny is to most of us merely the almost accidental leader of the Mass Trespass on Kinder Scout in 1932 and for that alone hallowed. Here is a greater insight into his forming into a fighter for democracy and freedom. Freedom to live and roam, in peace both.

Green Pieces, the third section, gives this volume a more bitter heart than the first. Four years on the threats to what should be our open lands are no less and probably greater. The National Trust earns a broadside for its pusillanimous abdication to military agencies of properties left in its care. The despoliation of North Wales, the restriction of our access to mountain and moorland deserve his critical spotlight and he shines a powerful beam.

Words and Things is a collection of 10 book reviews. He defends *Climbers* by M John Harrison with

great energy and ranks it as 'the finest piece of imaginative writing ever to have taken the sport of rock climbing as its subject matter'. (I edit a little). Certainly it describes in sad precision the run-down urbanisation in which some of the North's rock climbers may have to live and, if they are fortunate, work, but little comes through of the anarchic humour never far from the surface in any gathering of the scrabblers on the vertical. Some of the other books are as well-known: *Touching the Void* and *Native Stones* need no further publicity. *Forbidden Land* by Tom Stephenson and *The Country We Want* by Charlie Pye-Smith and Chris Hall (of the Ramblers' Association) are treatises pointing again to the threats to our outdoor future. In an era when climbing seems to be misdirecting itself into the dead ends of competitions and sport climbing (something of a misnomer?) we may be losing sight of the looming danger of our losing our high hills. These books, and Perrin, try to draw our attention to the perils ahead. More power to their elbows.

His final section, *Life in the Climbing Village*, needs no further explanation. He is in among the throng of the climbing multitude. At the Harrogate Trade Fair, lashing the Holzel expedition which set out to find the bodies of Mallory and Irvine and mildly pleased when it proved to be 'something of a fiasco'. Tales of epics in the evolution of climbing. Bouldering. Like many of today's climbers he is a bouldering addict and includes a panegyric on Fachwen. October from *The Book of the Climbing Year* makes a reappearance with its tales of Wallasey orgies, the anarchy and bohemia that climbing can be. Trespassing on Craig y Forwen. A climbing spectrum.

One hopes that the appearance of this second volume with the jacket description 'from the best of our young (he will like that) writers on mountain themes' implies that the first was a success. Perhaps the present suspicion of prose in the short form is weakening. As a nation we have a tradition of essayists and I am pleased to see the genre alive and well. My precis of the contents has been too brief but seems to have run on somewhat. To a conclusion.

Were this his first book of essays it would be a treasure trove. As it is the second could we be a little satiated? What a churlish response. The quality is as good, the range as great. His emotions are as strong, his cares and fears for the world we misuse as heartfelt and well-founded and as well-expressed. Armchair mountaineer or activist, here is a second treasure chest. Sink your arms into the doubloons to the armpits. Take this chance to have them within easy reach on your bookshelf. You will need this one to complete the eventual set.

Dave Gregory

Wild Country Camping by Kevin Walker. Constable £8.95

This well produced and robust little book is a receptacle of valuable basic information for the aspirant backpacker, and the occasional 'tip' for the more experienced lightweight camper. For example, did you know that it is said 'that a course of multivitamins started about a month before a proposed trip will act as a good insect repellent!'

It provides concise and comprehensive information on all the major issues which arise when planning and preparing a camping trip in this country, eg tents, cooking and diet, sleeping arrangements, carrying equipment etc. It is not an expedition book but provides a solid foundation of advice on which to plan the big trip.

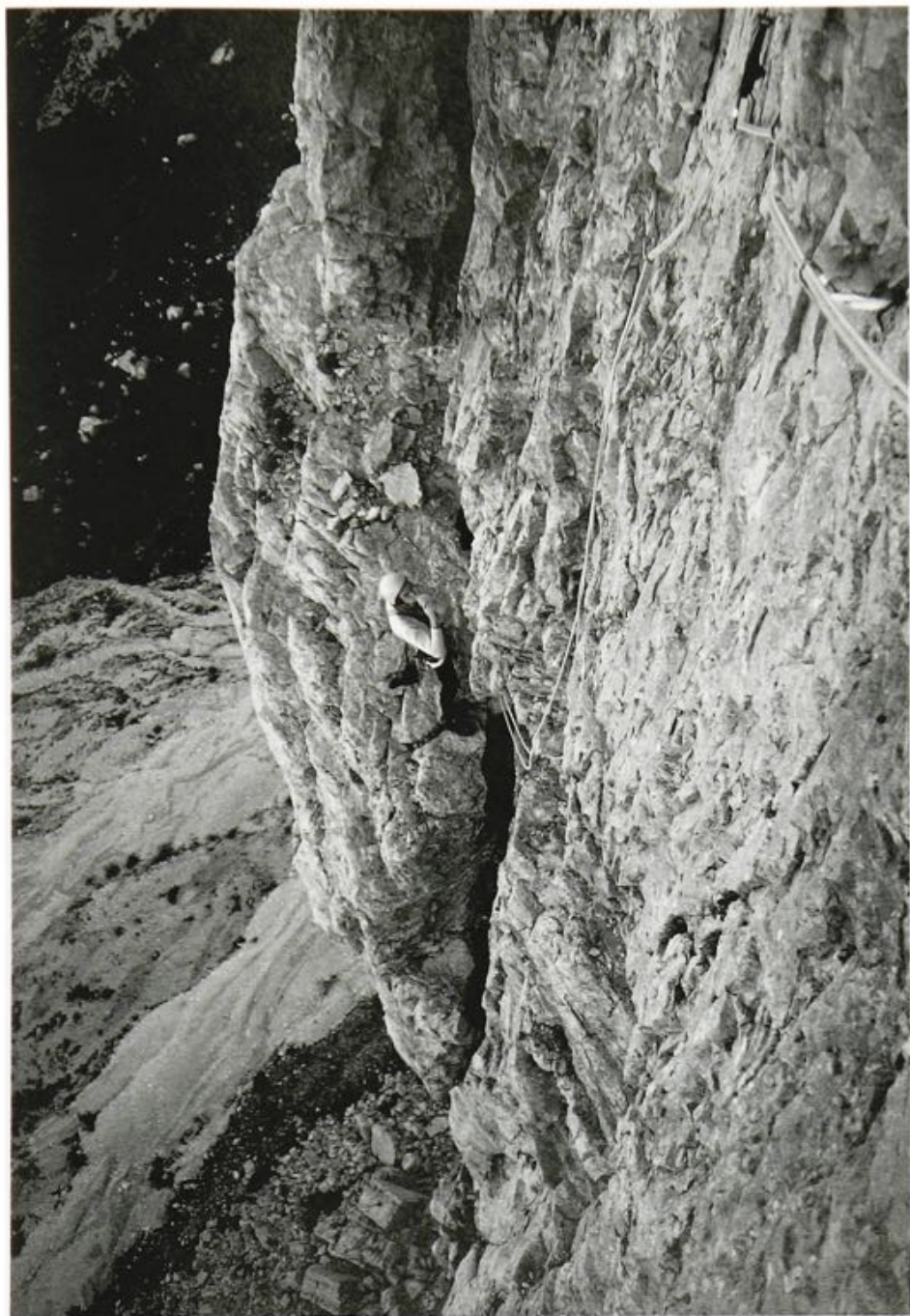
The author goes out of his way to be even-handed when evaluating the enormous range of equipment now on the market. Personally I would have liked to see him display his preferences and prejudices a little more as this inevitably leads to a more lively read.

The book is reasonably priced and should provide a basic text for some years to come. No doubt it will become a standard reference for schools, outdoor centres and the youth service — no matter how old.

Norman Elliott

Clogwyn Du'r Arddu by Paul Williams Climbers' Club £8.95

Paul's Llanberis guide was judged, quite rightly, to be one of the best ever, the result of much hands on experience (the rock, I mean) meticulous research and a characteristic brand of humour which seems to me entirely appropriate and ensures a good read. So how does the new Cloggy guide compare?



Bob Conway on 'Spigolo Strobel', Bosconero Group, Dolomites. Photo: Chris Jackson

First impressions are good with a superb and gripping shot of the late Jim Jewel, the dedicatee, making the first solo ascent of The Axe gently lit by the early morning sun with the screes of Cwm Brwynog barely visible in the depths below. The lay-out is attractive, well up to modern standards and the art-work is first class — the excellent clear diagrams by Greg Griffith are very successful with the route lines picked out in red. On looking further though, the photographs are a big disappointment, the black and whites are poorly reproduced whilst the colour ones are mainly boring, common-place and so blue as to be almost monochrome; only a few give more than a hint of the magnificence of this the greatest of British crags.

As one might expect, the text is a very thorough and, as far as I can tell, accurate piece of work. It is always possible to quibble about stars and grades but these seem generally okay with a number of past anomalies put right. The first ascent list incorporates an extensive anthology of first-hand accounts from past journals, magazines, various published works as well as hut-books. This makes for interesting reading though in some places it might be considered to be just a little excessive. As always there is room for disagreement over some of the first ascent details, more so concerning many of the first free ascent claims. Paul's punchy style works well for many of the route descriptions, but occasionally it begins to annoy a little and in a few places, just like a Monty Python sketch, he flogs the humour to death. Where I think he really comes unstuck is in the description of The Indian Face; this is done as a parody of early CC guides and it runs to over two pages. It may be funny on the first reading but it is not really suitable in a guidebook, especially when there is another two pages on the route in the first ascent anthology.

Though offering these criticisms I would not want to create the impression that this is a poor guide, on the contrary it is an excellent piece of work, maybe not up to the extremely high standard of Llanberis, but it will serve us well into the next millenium (if the cover lasts that is!).

Mike Mortimer

P.S. to Cloggy guidebook review

It's strange how the truth will out, and first ascent lists are constantly being revised in the light of new information. Herbert Carr's diary yielded several corrections for the new Cloggy guide and since then Steve Dean, who is writing the biography of Colin Kirkus, has had access to Graham Macphee's diary. It shed new light on the first ascent of Bridge Groove.

Sunday October 1931

'Lovely fine, clear, sunny frosty day and very cold. Up to Cloggy. We took photos, and then started on a new climb. The rock was perfectly dry but VERY cold. I got absolutely chilled at the stances, particularly at the last one where I stood for nearly two hours, but finally CFK got up. It was a real snorter! My 280-foot line got jammed down below in an overhang, and I had to cut that bit off and abandon it. We got it again at the foot, about 4.30pm having started the climb at 11 and finishing at 4. Having no food we hurried down to Llanberis.'

Clearly the date fits with our existing record, Kirkus was the leader, it was stated to be a new route — and there was no time to do another climb as it took so long. One can only assume that the groove had to be 'bridged' and that the reference was not to Alf Bridge — in which case it would have been Bridge's Groove.

Of further interest is the fact that in the latest guidebook the route is graded as E1 5a which makes it a very significant and important lead for 1931.

Geoff Milburn

200 Challenging Walks in Britain and Ireland by Richard Gilbert Diadem £14.95

Let's agree that you always carry a map on a walk. Then this field guide to all of the Big Walks, Classic Walks, and Wild Walks can be seen as a route-planning reference book rather than a Wainwright that takes you over every stile, book in hand. As such it is a superb hardback format book containing all the essential information, plus diagram, within a single page, but managing to catch the character of each walk within the route description. Eighty seven of these walks are in Scotland, including some on spectacular ridges which involve hands-on experience. The 16 walks in Ireland will come in handy for

rare days when the rock is wet. And the 21 walks south of the Peaks should tempt purchases from members of the Alpine Club who don't like to be based too far from London. Once again a few, well actually 32 colour pictures, give this the feel of being an inspirational book just like another Big Long Classic Wild Walks.

I can't help wishing that Richard Gilbert had not identified his favourite mountain in Scotland because the John Muir Trust, which bought it to preserve its free access for walkers, is now concerned about the new erosion scars developing on its summit and its ridges, caused by Munro Baggers, Big Walkers and now Challenging Walkers. It's a problem to which this book will add, but it's also bigger than Big Walkers. Perhaps we ought to look round the corner from these 200 routes for our own challenging walks.

Terry Gifford

**Northumberland
Northumbrian M.C. £8.95**

My own introduction to Northumberland climbing was as long ago as 1976. I, like most people who visit this northernmost tip of England, was immediately 'hooked' on both the county and the climbing. During the seventies and eighties climbing in Northumberland has, like most other areas, seen an incredible transformation. What however separates Northumberland from other areas is the relatively few climbers living in the area. The development of climbing, and for that matter the definitive guidebook, is therefore all the more impressive. During this period there has been no fewer than five guidebooks and/or supplements! My pleasant task is to review the latest in this long and fruitful line.

It is appropriate to begin with a discussion of the guidebook layout. Simple and basic yet thorough and wholly competent. Relatively small print and lots of white space gives the guide an easy-to-read, though traditional appearance. Colour photographs, both on the covers and within the text, make their first appearance in a Northumberland guide.

The text is simple yet descriptive, brief where appropriate, more descriptive where it benefits the readability and functionality, but never verbose. Although it is always helpful it seldom contains any 'funnies' and the corny humour so reminiscent of the eighties guides, has been left out (phew!). All the usual sections are included: an introduction, technical notes, access and conservation, geology, historical overview and graded lists, together with a heart-felt acknowledgement from the editor. All are relevant though perhaps not so much as the access and conservation section. I don't think I would be letting the cat out of the bag if I was to predict that this section in all guides through the nineties will become ever larger and crucial. We, as climbers, must evolve but we must be ever more aware of the environment in which we play. The environment in Northumberland is as delicate as most places that climbers visit. It is however the locally held view that outdoor education groups are largely responsible for much of the 'disbenefit' experienced in the area. Skip over this section at our peril. But I digress.

As has already been mentioned, colour photographs, 16 plus two cover shots, have made their first appearance in this 1989 guide. This is a new and most welcome departure and one which we, the climbing public, seem to demand these days. There is no better way of conveying the nature of the area and the climbs than in a number of colour photos. The front cover photo conveys many of the facets of Northumberland climbing. Short, steep gritstone-like climbs requiring a bold, technical and competent climbing style. The rear cover and the picture of Back Bowden Doors opposite page 24 give an indication of the settings of the climbs. I can almost taste the atmosphere and beauty. If you have an overriding impression that all the routes are short solo affairs, then the pics of Great Wanney (opp pg 192) and Ravensheugh Crag (opp pg 264) should dispel that feeling. If you think that because many of the routes are short and should be safe enough to fall/jump off, then check out Bob Smith on Back Bowden Doors (opp pg 25). Incidentally I understand that this route is probably a knocking bet for the area's first E7.

The diagrams are functional and as such complete their task. Perhaps the use of artline and also coloured route lines, and Letraset numbers would add a little professionalism. Mind you, this might introduce a degree of sterility that was not wanted. Rebellious lot these Northumberland lads! Neither am I very keen on the printing of diagrams any other than by running them horizontally across the page. The 'windscreen wiper' guide has, I feel, had its day.

As for the routes themselves, well what can one say. Visitors will do well to remember that the locals, as well as being very talented climbers, have perfected the dynamic retreat to a high level of skill.

Visitors are just as likely to need this ability, but will have significantly less skill. The whereabouts of the local accident and emergency hospital might be useful knowledge. That said there are plenty of routes which are safe and 'leadable'. Graham Hoey and myself remember vividly doing an early repeat (second ascent?) of Barbarian on Bowden Doors and finding perfect nut protection on what had hitherto been regarded as a solo! Mind you, the converse is just as likely to be true as well. If you fancy your hand at steady E2 or E3 try Overhanging Crack (Bowden Doors) and Australia Crack (Kylloe Crags). I felt at the time I did them that the former was harder than Ramshaw Crack and the latter harder than Strapadictomy and Moon Crack! Still, Northumberland Wall, (Great Wanney) more than makes up for Overhanging Crack. In general though, gradings are on the stiff side, which perhaps fits the talent of the locals and their ethics.

It might be fitting to conclude this review by pointing out two other essential elements of the guide. One is the glossary of Northumberland climbing terms which, as the guide suggests, may not be helpful in communicating with the locals. They don't however suggest how you might recognise a local! If you can flash the glossary, then you are ready for the routes. The other essential is the blank pages right at the end of the guide. I suspect you will have to write the new routes in very small print for although space is limited, I'm sure the locals' new route lists aren't! You had better make a start on the routes in this guide before they bring the next out. I'm off now — where are the car keys?

Keith Sharples

French Rock Climbs by Martin Atkinson Cordee £8.95

Don't be misled by the title. This is really a guide to the Verdon, Buoux and some of the Saussois, plus brief descriptions of selected climbs on seven other crags. First the good parts. From the introduction to each crag, you can be pretty sure of finding it, recognising which bit is which, knowing which bits the gendarmes will chase you off, knowing where to drown your sorrows and where to camp. All this in a lively, easy-flowing style. The hard-back cover is handsome. Now the mixed parts. All routes are assigned a name, English and French grades and a star rating, but no length is given (haven't the French discovered the ruler yet?). The level of detail given on individual routes varies considerably. On the three main crags many are fully described in best CC style (well almost). But even on these crags some routes are effectively just named and then shown as a line on a crag diagram. In at least one case (Secteur Styx at Buoux), there is neither a description nor a diagram to show where the route goes, just a name in a list.

There are some well-reproduced, pretty, colour photographs; but in my copy, in two cases, a photograph splits a double-spread crag diagram. Then I wanted to know the what, where and who for these photographs. "Damn! There's no caption. Lets look for a list of photo credits somewhere at the front. Ah, here it is at the bottom of the contents page. But hang on, two of the page numbers referenced haven't got photos on. Four of the photos are on different pages from those stated and there are two spelling mistakes, all in eleven lines!" This was the first page I read. Bad start. I hoped more care had been taken with abseil points, pitch lengths, lines on diagrams... As I read on, confidence increased. Looks like a proof reading failure. The main text seems much more reliable.

I was annoyed at being unable, easily, to find out what crags are covered by the guide, and where they are in the book. The introduction doesn't tell me and the contents list doesn't distinguish between crags and parts of crags.

Descriptions of the routes on the 'other' crags, namely Sisteron, Cimai, Le Piade, Volx, Mouries, Falaise d'Ayen and St Crepin vary from perfectly adequate (Cimai with comprehensive diagrams and descriptions for most of the routes) through the meagre (eg St Crepin with some attempt at description and location) to Le Minimum (eg Mouries with only lists of route names and their grades, and this on only some secteurs). Anyway, why these crags? Any why not tell me what other crags there are in the area?

My verdict: 'Could do better'. If you're off to Verdon, Buoux or the Saussois buy this guide. It will be a pleasure to know what you're climbing, whether it's supposed to be good, what grade it is and to be able to walk down memory lane when you get home. For the other crags, you're probably better off buying French.

John Jones

Scottish Islands by Charlie Waite
Constable £15.95

This is a book of landscape photography, where the pictures are expected to do the talking, therefore no text apart from some simple captions and a short Introduction. The islands of the title are the Inner and Outer Hebrides. The important judgements on such a book are difficult as photography like this should depend totally on personal response and taste. So, as reviewer I have my opinions, but they are likely to be different from yours, there are however some other points of a technical nature that can be made, but I will come to them later.

Do I like the pictures, in the main, yes. They do seem to catch the atmosphere and tranquility of these bleakly beautiful places. Waite obviously feels for the places he photographs, and takes a lot of trouble to get out and into interesting positions to take them. A refreshing change from some books I have seen recently where the 'landscapes' have been photographed from next to a road.

Technically they are well executed, as you would expect from an experienced professional. The often tricky lighting conditions seem well exposed and the compositions are sound, Waite has got his side of the process right; the same cannot, however, be said for the printer. In my copy some of the plates are slightly out of register, spoiling the images, and wasting the time and trouble that Waite probably took to get sharp originals. Also I am disappointed by the quality of the paper used to print the photos on to. I would guess that Waite took his photos on a medium or large format camera, using a tripod, and on colour transparency film stock, producing originals with a superb depth and vibrancy. Unfortunately in this book they look just a bit flat and dull.

However that's to be pedantic, it is still an enjoyable volume to leaf through on a miserable winter's day, and will stimulate any lover of islands to get to some of the smaller Hebridean gems not yet visited.

Ian Smith

Backpacker's Africa: East and Southern by Hilary Bradt
Bradt Publications £6.95

You can tell a good travel book. As you skip through the chapters you gradually slow down 'til you're reading whole pages. In no time it's total absorption, a need to go, and the tickets are in the post. A couple of previous trips left me wanting to see more of Africa, and these guides have brought back the urge to go again.

Backpacker's Africa covers a vast continent in a small book. The information is useful and enough to get you interested and heading in the right direction. Fortunately the author stops short of the total deluge of information provided in the South American Handbook, leaving you to find out up-to-date information for yourself on arrival.

Talking of the SAH, brilliant as it is, it still makes the best emergency toilet paper, there's so much of it that a few pages of obscure Bolivian Hotels are never missed.

It's good to see a travel book encouraging us to be thoughtful tourists, this theme runs through the chapters with useful information about each region's culture and traditions. Particularly important if you're getting off the beaten track, which is what this book is about. We all think we're 'good' travellers and we've all seen bad ones. But often we don't see the times we cause offence and abuse hospitality.

Camping Kenya, Guide to Kenya by David Else
Bradt Publications £7.95

The Camping Guide to Kenya is in the same series as Backpacker's Africa. On first impressions it does not seem as good quality. There are too many cartoons padding out pages and the maps are cruder than Backpacker's Africa. I expect most backpackers and climbers going to Kenya will buy the Kenya and Kilimanjaro guide by West Col, as this covers these areas in great detail and looks good on the guidebook shelf at home.

But the Camping Guide does have the advantage of being more up to date. It covers the whole country and offers lots of alternative trips after the efforts on the hill. There is basic information on each camp site ie, cost, access, facilities and most importantly in Kenya, security.

With this book and the information you get talking with travellers in Kenya, you should be able to find some interesting camping to say the least.

If you're heading for Africa and Kenya, it's worth finding a space in your 'sack for one of these guides.

Bill Dark

Modern Rock and Ice Climbing by Bill Birkett

A & C Black £12.50

Reading this book I couldn't decide how to review it. Climbing instruction books all become much the same after a while. It seems everything is there, all competently described and illustrated, although I'm sure someone will find some hairs to split. There's really nothing particularly revolutionary in this design that will put it above all the others in this market.

The author points out at the start that this book is about the mechanics and techniques of rock and ice climbing, pure and simple. He feels that today many climbers are good at one particular aspect of climbing, but hopelessly lost on another, like Lycra in a blizzard. The author has tried to 'detail the essential requirements of a modern climber', for all types of climbing. I can see his point, but this is nothing new, people don't necessarily want to be all-round mountaineers anymore. I'm sure that image has put people off in the past and is now changing, hence the phenomenal growth in rock climbing. Obviously there are dangers in this philosophy, but as an American climber once said, 'A man's gotta know his limitations'.

But if you're just starting out and want the total climbing experience, and let's face it, it's the only way, this book can be of use. Although I wonder if at £12.50 it will be the first off the shelf.

Bill Dark

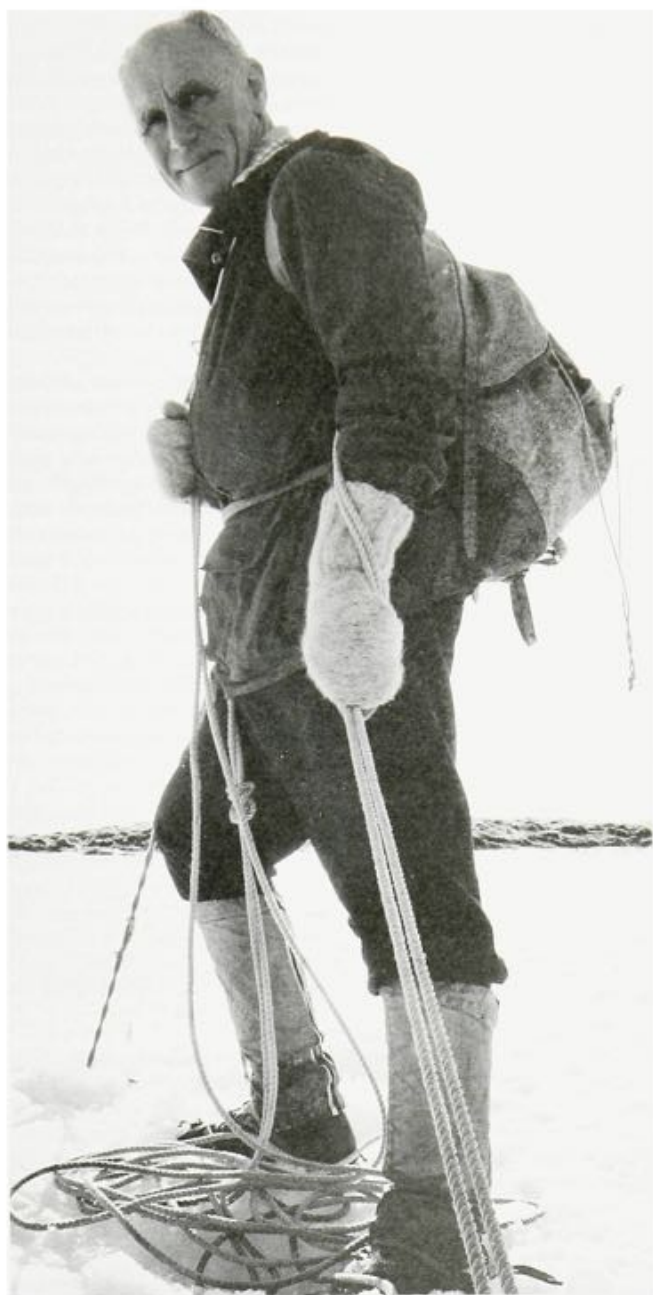
Borrowdale

F&RCC £10.95

It only seems like five minutes since I wrote a review of the last edition of the Fell and Rock guide to Borrowdale. Such is the pace of guidebook publishing that even within my own relatively short climbing career I have four editions in my library. This current edition to the valley is in fact the seventh of its kind. Since 1937 the Fell and Rock have, to their credit, consistently reduced the time span between successive editions. There was 16 years between the 1937 and the 1968 guides. Thereafter, guides were published at 15, 10 and eight year intervals, until the current guide was published only four years after its predecessor! At this rate I'll be reviewing the next guide in time for our next Journal.

So much for the chatty introduction, but what of the substance of the guide? As I said this is the seventh edition of the Borrowdale guide, yet it looks more like a clone of the 1986 edition. It has exactly the same format as its predecessor, has approximately the same number of photos, the same text font is used, the same, though excellent (I hasten to add) diagrams, graded list, first ascent lists and is approximately the same physical size as its predecessor. So what is different? The management, the paper, the units of measurement (metres have replaced feet), the size of the stars and the new routes, that's what.

Dave Miller, the previous editor has stepped down in favour of Dave Armstrong, who co-wrote the previous edition with Ron Kenyon. Ron Kenyon in fact has broken a Fell and Rock record in that he has the distinction of being the first author to be involved in two successive Borrowdale guides. Paper weight has been reduced to squeeze 323 pages between the covers where previously 265 pages lived. Al Phizacklea has not, it would seem, been wholly resident in Dunnerdale Valley (see his excellent, low price and now sold-out topo guide) and he has strayed into Borrowdale long enough to draw an extra diagram or two, as well as throwing in one or two re-draws for good measure. All of these diagrams are excellent. The right hand side of Black Crag however, seems to have decreased in size considerably since the last guide, though I suspect that this has been done to show this side as the same size as the left hand side of the crag which appears on the previous page. This guide has followed the lead of the 1986 guide and again a number of crag diagrams have appeared in the main body of text. I still feel that this is inappropriate and I must say that I am disappointed that the FRCC have not grasped the nettle on this one and eliminated the obvious confusion over 'house style'. Also, the FRCC has, and this has



*Ivan Waller belaying at
the top of Central
Gully, Great End,
sometime in the early
seventies. Photo:
George Warburton*

presumably been a deliberate policy but for reasons which escape me, omitted Phizacklea's name from each diagram.

On a purely pedantic point, the physical appearance of the stars accompanying the routes in the main text have doubled in size. Previously of a modest size, the stars are now so large that they are almost overpowering. The number of stars has also increased with more of the established routes getting the accolade of stardom. A new inclusion, however is the dreaded 'black spot'. No less than 23 routes 'attract' the black spot, with Horrible Arete on National Trust Crag getting a total of three all to itself. Lavish praise indeed! Ron Kenyon and Dave Armstrong, in their historical update, record the fact that in total, 130 new routes have been added since the previous edition. Searching through the guide it seems, sadly, that many of these routes, though not of a standard that today is considered high, have not been checked and have therefore been awarded a dagger. Many of these routes are on small new crags and their worth will only be established over the next few years.

The photographs in the guide are generally disappointing. The majority are of the 'up-the-bum' variety which, as usual, are not exactly complimentary to the climbing in the valley and especially not to the person to whom the 'bum' belongs. Take away the shots of Illusion, Torture Board and Little Chamonix and the rest wouldn't sell Borrowdale to me. Photos are always a problem in a guide, but the FRCC could do worse than advertise in the popular climbing press for contributions if these photos are representative of the standard of shots available from members of the club. If it isn't, then let's see the good stuff!

The route grades seem about right in most places with some routes getting a deserved upgrading. One such deserving case, Grand Alliance, has gone up from top-of-the-grade E3 to bottom-of-the-grade E4. Similar treatment has gone to The Verdict, Fear and Loathing and Cyclotron. Nagasaki Grooves and Lucifer all but change places in the graded lists and I know why too! Squashed Raquets rises over 30 places in this guide, from nearly top of the E3s to nearly top of the E4s without any obvious reason. Close inspection of the descriptions in each guide reveals however that a direct start has been added. Although the addition of a direct start isn't mentioned in the description, it is hidden away in the first ascent list; naughty house-keeping! Also on Reecastle crag, Guillotine and Thumbscrew have both risen several notches but Thumbscrew, a solid, but not-so-sustained E2 has been elevated to E3. It is now a give-away at this grade. This is not so for Guillotine which is very sustained and strenuous and definitely harder than Thumbscrew. I did them both in the same afternoon last summer and was, unfortunately, witness to a keen young climber 'pushing the boat out' on Thumbscrew in such a manner that if he had been on Guillotine he would have been a lot nearer to getting the chop.

What I am really saying about this guide is that although it has been prepared in double-quick time, the very speed at which it has been prepared seems to have overtaken the editorial team. Insufficient time appears to have been available for checking new routes, the photographs are in the main poor, but my main criticism is that it 'looks the same' as the previous edition. Whilst the previous edition was itself a very significant revamp of the FRCC house style, and I accept that not every new edition has to be radically different, I do feel that this edition comes across, to me at least, just too much like a reprint of the old guide with the new routes added for good measure. However, I know from personal experience that new designs are not easy to develop, so the FRCC might well have been wise not to try to attempt this given the tight time scale involved. What I must say though is that with a bit more haste and less speed a better guide could have been published. It is nevertheless a perfectly functional guide which will allow 90% of the users to get to the crags and identify their chosen routes. In that respect it will undoubtedly be a success. For me though, it is an opportunity lost.

Keith Sharples

High Asia — An Illustrated History of the 7,000 metre Peaks by Jill Neate Unwin Hyman £25

On first impression High Asia appears to be another coffee table book, although closer inspection proves it to be otherwise. Essentially the meat of the book is listing all peaks from Everest downwards to Saraghrar West at 7,000m amounting to over 300 main peaks and about 110 subsidiary summits.

The text of the book divides the vast area of Central Asia into 13 sub-sections including the Pamirs, Tien Shan, Klima and Tibet. The sub-sections describe the principal summits, generally those with a history of ascents, or attempts, together with landscape photos, occasional historical photos and short biographical sections on past activists. Peaks described are located by latitude and longitude and are

often shown on thumbnail sketch maps.

Although dubbed a history book I can't help feeling it is more likely to be of interest to those looking to the future rather than the past. With the 8,000m peaks battered into submission future exploration is bound to favour the many unclimbed peaks and faces available from among those in High Asia. This emphasises the feeling that the book has an identity crisis — is it a history book or is it a super guidebook?

On the history theme there is plenty of it in a readable form. Sometimes it is a bit parochial as there is a lot about British attempts and successes and not so much about the rest. An annoying thing is the reference to 'Four Frenchmen from Chamonix', 'three Japanese' or 'A British Forces expedition' when I'm sure the names would have added interest.

The historical photos are nearly all good and add to the flavour, the same is not always true of the contemporary photos. Some are not good enough to grace a chocolate box and some are badly disposed. Compare the superb photo of Baintha Brakk and the watercolour of the Panmah Glacier with the Pik Lenin memorial photo which gets full page treatment against their inadequate one third of a page allowance. Actually the 50 x 50 Pik Lenin detail on Page 168 seems visually better. This may be an unfair criticism, but at a cost of £25 people expect stunning photos and layout.

Finally, on the historical side the short inserts giving biographical details of early explorers are welcome. Again the inclusion is a bit parochial with half British and the rest an assortment of German, French, Dutch, Austrian, Russian and Swedish. These inserts, as the pictures are not front indexed, makes specific reference tedious. The book could have carried more biographical details without detracting from its theme. What about Odell, Diemberger Jnr, Terray, Pierre, Hunt or eastern Europeans, or Indian or Japanese mountaineers? There are no contemporary explorers so names like Bonington, Messner and Scott are missing, more's the pity.

As a reference book for those anticipating a Himalayan trip High Asia is probably the best reference book available but there are some faults. Apart from the inside covers there is no general location map. The book would benefit greatly from an overall map in the text and area maps for each sub-section. This would improve the small peak diagrams and help to mentally locate peaks in what for most readers will be a complex and unknown geography.

I suspect a lot of the effort in writing High Asia was compiling the 450 or so peaks and their details. I have to admit here to (thankfully for 10 shillings and sixpence) obtaining a copy of David Mordecai's Illustrated Summary of the World's Highest Mountain Ranges in about 1967 and the details seem similar. Taking Jill Neate's list to be almost definitive it would be better if the main peaks had been emphasised to differentiate from the secondary peaks and including the latitude and longitude. Some form of cross reference with the text by perhaps numbering might also have made reference easier. Possibly these points could be countered by considering the book as history and expect the reader to get immersed in the text.

On balance High Asia is a well researched book by a committed author, although it is expensive relative to its gloss factor. It will be popular with those interested in the Himalaya both past and future. So — a good book to whet the appetite or just for reference. How about one now for the 6,000 metre peaks!

Malcolm Cameron

**Classic Rock compiled by Ken Wilson
Diadem £19.95**

I didn't see this book on its previous printing. I think originally I rebelled against it on principle, after the effects of Hard Rock had hit our crags with increased numbers going for the 'tick' — myself included! Time seems to have eased that situation, although on a recent trip to the Old Man of Hoy this year, the number of ascents posted up in the bothy for 1989 were pretty impressive. Were any of the climbers on a Hard Rock tick or were they just doing a classic climb? This is the problem with all of the 'best of' books that we have been bombarded with of late — the routes are all classics and probably would not need a book to advertise the fact — so there would always be climbers queuing for the routes, so why not have a book listing them? — so the usual argument goes.

The stable that Classic Rock comes from is second to none (forget all the European ones, who did do this format first?) The quality of writing, pictures and production is brilliant, on a par with Hard and

Extreme Rock. I do not intend listing examples of routes included in Classic Rock — if you do not already own a copy of the book, be assured the routes included are the ones that should be there — well almost.

Having had a long gap between reading a 'Rock' book I found this one very enjoyable to read, it actually inspired me to do the Cuillin Ridge on a recent trip to Scotland, the time when I was up there for the Old Man of Hoy in fact, two major 'Rock' ticks in one trip. Pretty good eh? Oh no, its happening again, these type of books causing overcrowding on the crags...

Bill Wintrip

**Everest by Walt Unsworth
Oxford Illustrated Press £19.95**

In the ten years since the first edition of this book was published, there have been almost three times as many expeditions as there were in the entire previous history of the mountain. It is almost inevitable that the summary of these recent years lack a sense of perspective, but this is not a history which attempts an analysis of trends and technicalities. It is an indispensable and thoroughly readable labour of love, backed by clearly presented appendices and bibliography. It should provide the essential springboard for the twenty first century's histories: the history of the cultural meaning of Everest and the history of the climber's concept of Everest.

Terry Gifford

**The Himalayan Experience — An Introduction to Trekking and Climbing in the Himalaya
by Jonathan Chester
Harrap Columbus**

This is an invaluable book. It is practical, informative, realistic, lively and beautifully illustrated. For anyone planning a first (or second or third...) trip to any of the Himalayan countries and ranges this book is a must. It treads a nice balance between chunks of advice and sections of anecdotal example with writings from (amongst others) Doug Scott, Greg Child, and Warwick Deacock. I really cannot praise this book too highly or come up with any serious criticism, except to regret that inevitably much of its most specific information will date and become redundant. It is to be hoped that a book like this will be constantly revised and reissued, for it is an essential aide to the inexperienced traveller/mountaineer. I thoroughly recommend it.

Jim Curran

**Great VS Climbs in the Lake District by Tim Noble
David and Charles £16**

A thoroughbred; by Native Stones out of Classic Rock. The title tells the bald truth but closer scrutiny is needed to clarify the full aim, which is to coax some of us away from days of roadside hot-dogging to full old-fashioned mountain days. The author estimates that a fit team might repeat the climbs in eight or nine days. Perhaps, but if they can fit in the linking walks as well — they will be fit. A fortnight's holiday of good weather sounds more like the scenario.

Each of the 10 sections of the book links together VS rock climbs on two or more crags in one area of the Lake District. Ennerdale is an exception in that the walk in and out from Wasdale Head and one Pillar classic is taken to be enough of a day for anyone.

Cause for praise is easy to find. What a Noble aim to drag us away from our valley-bottom scabbings back to the high hills. His target is the climbers of middle grade but the effect may spread to other capabilities and good luck to him.

The colour photographs are good and anyone who has climbed in Britain these last few years in which he wrote the book will appreciate the difficulty of getting them. The black and whites are less so, some even poor and one hopes that the poor conditions on the day explain this and not the reproduction process.

The book is a curious amalgam. The passages of text accompanying each route are much more than route descriptions, much more than the personal accounts of the Wilson Rock series. Descriptions of the

ascents they are but heavily mixed with personal philosophy and background information culled from his extensive reading and acquaintance. He works something of a minor miracle in writing accounts of 27 routes without becoming tedious. Of course, occasionally minutiae irritate. The curved chock we all use is a Rock not a rock. Why must he so defer to metrication by quoting scrupulously (in brackets) the metric equivalent when he quotes a distance in feet? One broddles in a crack, not broddells. Isn't a return to the crag-foot to regain one's 'sack 'energy expensive' and not 'expensive'. To carry on from the crag top and leave the 'sack would be expensive. Trivialities, the sort of thing reviewers feel honour bound to find, but not important.

I have some more serious criticisms. The price for one. I would have liked each chapter to begin with the name of the official FRCC guidebook to the area; and even the map used; the account of each climb to be headed by a typical guidebook description of the route. Had the FRCC not given permission for the inclusion of theirs he could have used one of his own.

I would have liked a diagram of each route or its line sketched on a photo, with the pitch grades and belays indicated. There are some photographs of whole crags or buttresses (and how scrappy some crags can seem when seen from above despite the excellent routes they hold) for which the accompanying text tries to describe the line of the route up the photo. Why couldn't an actual line have been used for greater precision?

I don't like the contrived titles to each route section, they mean little, add nothing, and I find little point in most of the quotations underlining each route but perhaps I am not well-enough read, or my nature is not poetic enough to make the connections.

Too prosaic or not I fully appreciate what the author has done. He has produced a fascinating book, full of interesting detail, which deserves solid reading and can be browsed through time after time. Surely climbers at this grade will have their interest raised in these routes and the wealth of others which surround them. For that matter climbers at a much higher grade might find their hands full with Grooved Wall in the conditions shown on page 110. I have done them nearly all and yet the desire to go back is becoming irresistible. If only we get another summer like that of '89.

Dave Gregory

Gogarth Climbers' Club £10.95

Wen Zawn. 1982. The day before my mock maths O-Level.

"Bloody hell, Kev, that looks like a scary route."

"That's okay Ed, I'll do all the leading."

"Thanks Kev, and what's it called anyway?"

"A Dream of White Horses."

Such naivete cannot survive. That day, just after unclipping one of three pieces of gear on the final pitch, I performed the only one-armed pull-up of my climbing career as my footholds snapped. I am one man who knows fully the meaning of the word 'traverse'.

If Cloggy is the ageing father of British climbing dozing on his flank of Snowdon then Gogarth is his mad brother, locked away in the attic for safety's sake. Those who go to visit, do not do so, I would suggest, for relaxation. It is, to all and intents and purposes, an Extreme leaders crag: there are only 20 routes below HVS starred in this new guide to the area, out of a total of 250.

Reading through the first ascensionists section, the feeling you get, as the crag is fleshed out by the human minutiae, is a perspective of the contribution Gogarth and its inmates make to the overall plan of British climbing, and this provides one the main delights of the guide. The roll of honour includes many of the prophets and men of vision that have made it so rich and diverse; Crew, Boysen, Brown, Drummond, Moran, Redhead, Haston, Dawes, Pritchard....

Many of the stories that shock most, that immediately force you to rub your palms across the back of your jeans, originate here. Dawes soloing Citadel, the disappearance of whole routes, Pritchard on The Super Calabrese, Redhead and Pollitt on The Bells, all stories about rock and people that are somehow richer and, dare I say it, more heroic than almost anywhere else.

This edition, so long in the formulation, strives to capture this special feeling and to a large extent it succeeds. There is an impassioned historical section, a clear layout and some excellent work from

Greg Griffith and the photographs, though variable through lack of choice, do hold some gems. Shots of the calibre of that facing page 123, John Cleare's shot of The Baron on Spider's Web, enriches a guide's appeal more than anything; similarly Bernard Newman's photo on the front cover. The different phases of development, so reliant on the appearance of fresh blood and new vision, are all well represented. It is, as guidebooks always should be, robust in every sense.

There are, however, some extraordinary anomalies which require attention. First of all there is, to the guide's benefit, a wealth of historical detail which gives the lie to one or two myths that some like to perpetuate. On the subject of Syringe Ken Wilson is quoted as saying, 'One could hardly fail to notice that Scott's earlier route had used 3 slings and 4 pegs for aid, which even for Craig Gogarth seemed extravagant'. Further down the page he comments on Dinosaur, on the same crag and using 10 points of aid, but no criticism is made. Indeed the phrase 'one of the most formidable expeditions in Wales' sticks in the mind. Eight days separate the ascents. I am struck at the speed with which ethical standpoints can develop.

Less positively from the guide's point of view is the historical section's closing paragraph which overreaches in its claims for Gogarth's place in posterity. 'When egotistical and paranoic *prima-donas* (sic) spend more time putting down their fellows...Gogarth has remained relatively unaffected by this irrelevant nonsense'. There are several points to be made from this invective. Several of Gogarth's principal activists could easily fall into this definition. One advertised in the classified section of a magazine offering to guide clients up the hardest route on the crag as a show of bravado, so richly parodied by Al Harris's repeat of Strand with his own client. Others have posed and puffed up their self-image through an association with Gogarth and modern problems of bolting and 'pre-inspection' have affected the crag like any other. Gogarth climbers are not saints, the place itself is not Nirvana and claiming too much seems a little churlish. Gogarth in the mid-eighties provided an adventurous alternative to the more commercial path being pursued in Yorkshire and the Peak. However, many of the names that appear at the back of the guide are now firm converts, at least for part of the time, to the practices that the guide so roundly condemns at its front. I think that on balance this section detracts from what is a successful documentation of a crucible which provides all that is most important to us.

I will not go into a long examination of the grades although some might think The Cad a surprise at E6. Anyway there are only four grades, the two technical (possible and impossible) and the two adjectival (scary and jolly scary). What concerns me is that most of Gogarth is graded jolly scary, impossible.

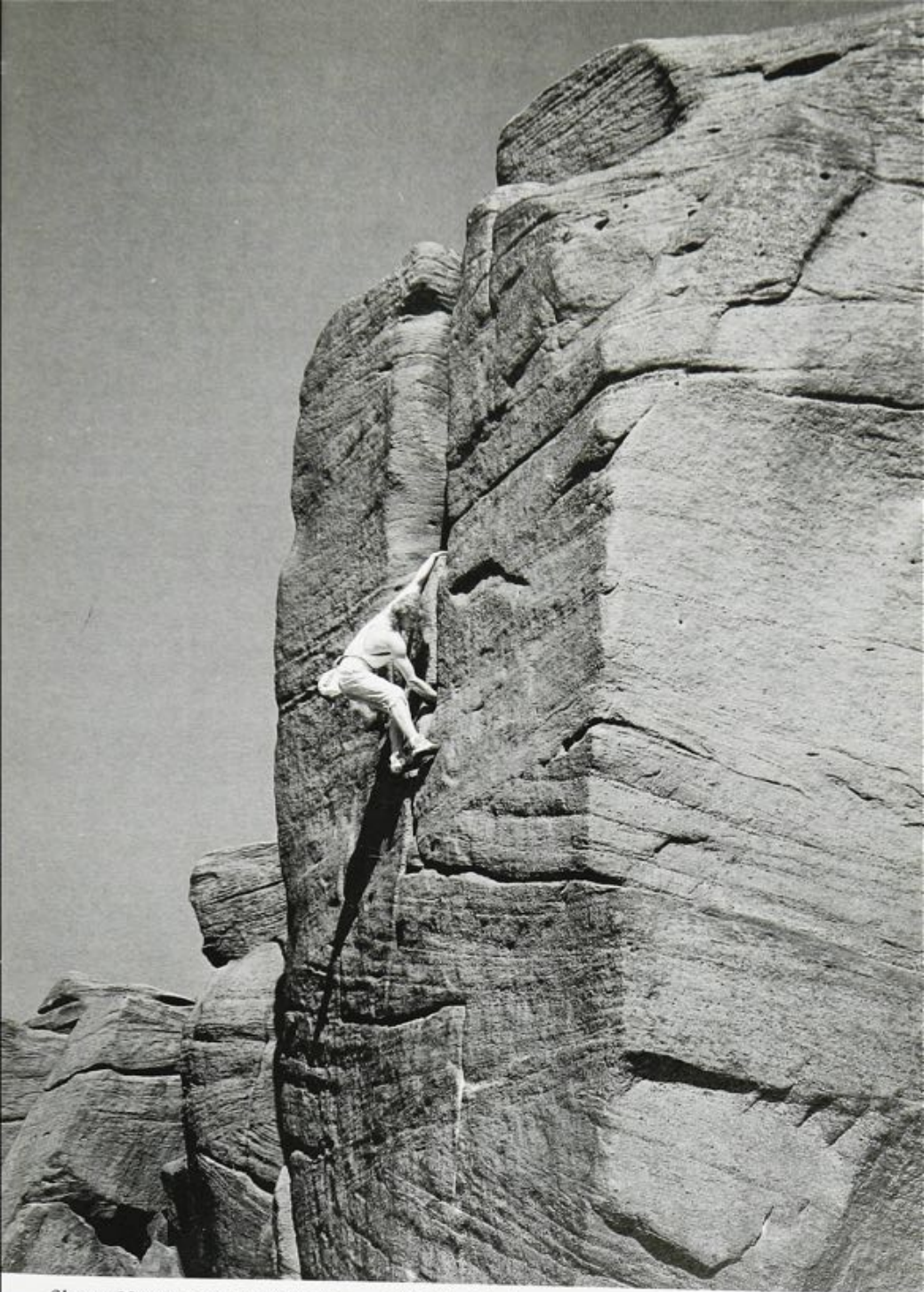
Ed Douglas

Lightweight Expeditions by Rob Collister Crowood £12.95

Having just returned from a successful lightweight expedition that still had its share of problems I was interested to see if this book could show me anything new. Although not our first such expedition it was interesting comparing the author's advice and experience to the sort of things we had learnt by trial and error. But I will be interested to see if this book is bought by the people it's aimed at. As the author points out, anyone contemplating this kind of trip should have a good depth of Alpine experience, as well as some years climbing in our own country. The book testifies to this by not including any chapters on technique, except river crossing. Anyone in this position will already be pretty familiar with the things covered in the book through reading and meeting other experienced climbers.

The book is easy to read with plenty of pictures, although it is a shame that the black and white shots are so poorly reproduced. This does give a generally uninspiring impression when you open it. Without a doubt the best parts of the book are the chapters on planning, choosing an objective and sources of information. These sections help you with the hardest things, 'where and how'. The author does make some good points, like don't bother with spending time getting major sponsorships, you've more chance of winning the pools! Save your cash and go for the grants. I did enjoy the final chapter, an article the author had published in the Alpine Journal, but I hope people don't take it too literally. For example, leaving behind gas and paraffin and burning wood for fuel. This would seriously damage many areas. Also his advice on ignoring red tape and peak fees in foreign countries is dangerous for all of us. In my experience it is still possible to have a two month trip for around £1,000 without avoiding fees.

It is worth reading this book if you are going on this type of trip, but at £12.95, I don't think many



Shaun Hutson solo on 'The Boggart' E2 6a, Burbage South. Photo: Ian Smith

people will buy it. It is unfortunate that the most useful sections will go out of date soon. Perhaps what is needed is a yearly updated booklet with accurate information on the main countries, covering things like access, red tape, fees etc for the main mountain areas. Any takers?

Bill Dark

Moorland Gritstone Chew Valley BMC £9.50

On making the decision to keep Chew Valley a separate guide the BMC is merely following the tradition of the area. Chew Valley has always been something of a backwater in climbing terms, this guide rectifies that. The team of local enthusiasts who have written the guide have guaranteed that in future Chew Valley will never be peaceful.

All the features of modernity are presented in the guide, a graded list, first ascent details and a comprehensive E grading system. The decision to retain feet for metres is quirky but not a good idea in the long run.

The crags in Chew tend to be high and lonely, taking time to dry out. This summer (1989) was a perfect start for the guide. Everyone knew about the excellence of Wimberry, but no longer can anyone be sure of a quiet day on The Standing Stones, The Ravenstones or The Dovestones. All summer the chatter of teams climbing many of the excellent new routes in the guide has echoed round the valley. These three crags in particular deserve the popularity the guide has bestowed on them.

Like most guidebooks there are grouses. The photographs are generally very good, but more variety of personnel would have been welcome. Grading is always controversial, but some mention of it is inevitable. On the traditional edges the established routes are well graded but in the more obscure corners of Chew VS can range from 4a to 5b. Ocean Wall (E1 5b) on Standing Stones is a brilliant route but the average E1 leader would find the lack of protection very intimidating!!

The guide's arrival and the area's popularity prompt two observations for prospective visitors. Please observe the access requirements, especially on Mr Crowther's land, as they are very reasonable. Secondly the dreaded chipper has arrived in Chew. Dougie Hall's technical masterpiece Scoop De Grace (E5 7a) now sports an obvious chipped handhold. If you can't climb it — go away — leave it for those who can.

The guide is well worth the money. It modernises an area long neglected due to inertia and lack of information. The guidebook team can be well pleased with their efforts.

Chew Valley has joined the 1980s!

Steve Beresford

Mont Blanc Massif - Volume 1 Selected Climbs by Lindsay Griffin Alpine Club £12.50

The production of a new guidebook, especially to an area as well known to British climbers as this one, is a long and unenviable task. Lindsay Griffin and the Alpine Club are to be praised for their continued excellent work in this area (they also produced the last series of three British guides to this area).

This new volume of selected climbs offers around 500 route descriptions, supported by topo diagrams and photographs. Griffin has taken the decision to give only brief descriptions for some routes, in some cases only an indication of where the route is and its grade. This is eminently sensible in a region as popular as the Mont Blanc area. After all if you want to make an ascent of an unrepeatable route on the North Face of the Jorasses you should be able to find a route description for yourself! This means that most of the space in the guide can be devoted to established lines, and those which will in their turn become classics — and at every grade.

The new topos (a first for an Alpine Club guidebook) work very well — particularly when describing and showing the large number of rock climbs this area now boasts. They are also clearly indexed and linked to the text thereby making the guide straightforward to use and follow. However a map of the area covered by the guide and an alphabetical index of routes would make the guide much easier to use, otherwise the layout and organisation cannot be faulted.

Griffin has also chosen to use a new open ended version of the traditional Alpine adjectival grading system. This brave step forward works by adding a number after the ED to indicate the seriousness and

the level of commitment needed for an ascent of the route in addition to the normal technical grade. For example the Walker Spur is ED1 whereas the Japanese route is given ED3.

The only other gripe (apart from the lack of map and index) relates to the procedure for summoning help as shown inside the back cover — it is wrong! To summon help both arms should be raised above the head, not one as indicated here — that means we are okay.

I obtained a copy of the guide, with its nice soft plastic cover, just before a trip to the Alps this summer. I also took a copy of the old guide and Piola's topo guide with me, but in the event I never used them. On both established classics and on more obscure routes the new guide was first class — well done Lindsay, and well done Alpine club.

Iain Peters

Classic Rock Climbs in the Lake District by Bill Birkett
Oxford Illustrated Press £14.95

Classic Rock Climbs in the Lake District is one of an extended series of 'classic' books, including Classic Rock Climbs in Great Britain by the same author. This is a guide to just over 50 climbs illustrated with diagrams, and both crag and action photographs. I was immediately puzzled by the exclusion of some of the obvious candidates for the Lakes' best routes until I realised that these had been included in the Great Britain selection. Although the logic behind this is obvious, it inevitably detracts from the present volume, especially if you don't possess both. The Lake District is divided into six areas each receiving a brief introduction and a 'three dimensional representation clearly showing the juxtaposition of the crags as they lie on the fells'. This works very well for the homogeneous areas such as Borrowdale and Langdale but it is not quite so successful for the composite areas such as Wasdale (which includes Esk Buttress) and Buttermere (which includes Pillar). The combination of the general sketches with the mainly excellent crag photo-diagrams should enable the newcomer to locate the climbs which are indicated with respect to line and stances.

The accounts of the climbs are divided into 'Summary', which is actually conventional route description and 'Description', an essay on the climb, often including history. For me it was in these essays that the strength of the book lies. Interlaced with both personal and historical anecdotes they give the author the opportunity to express his great love of the Lake District and its climbing in a manner which seems at odds with modern attitudes. I say this not as a criticism but applaud his emphasis on the more romantic and spiritual aspects of the relationship between the climber and the whole crag environment. He recommends the reader to enjoy all the experience offered by the fells in different weather conditions and scorns the Ambleside wall for an ascent of the New West on Pillar in the cloud and rain. In fact Bill writes just as enthusiastically about the easy routes such as Giants Crawl on Dow as he does about E5s on Esk Buttress or the terrifying North Buttress of Dove Crag. His recurrent themes of adventure and enjoyment are reinforced by the photographs, many of which capture the atmosphere and spirit of the Lake District crags.

Mike Mortimer

Rock Climbing in Scotland by Kevin Howett
Constable £9.95

Almost 20 years after Hamish MacInnes' two volume guide to Scottish climbs this guide from the same publisher seeks to do a similar job on the rock climbing as was then attempted for winter and summer. Much has happened in the interim, as this guide shows, both by the conscious choices of its author and by underlying emphases.

The guide tries to be modern, as did Hamish many years ago. His modernity was laced with delightful eccentricity, a love of the remote for its own sake, a grading system which was different not only from current English practice but from any known to the climbing species. The reference system, beginning from the pictures, was a good idea but arguably least applicable to large and irregular mountain rock masses which dominated the books. Yet those guides served a purpose, jolted the 'official' system, and played a part in securing the shift to at least a pretence of a UK grading system for rock. Nevertheless those guides were never simple to use, requiring a labyrinthine mentality, fortunately not confined to Hamish among the adventurous climbers of that era. Then few people knew

where a lot of these climbs were, or even where to begin looking beyond traditional centres. Winter was better known than summer, and at some levels still is. The CIC hut in summer was often deserted.

Perhaps a problem today is that less has changed than some wish to believe. This is a problem for Kevin Howett in choosing what to include. The modern equivalent of the cragrat has increased his physical power, but concentrated imagination into ferociously steep places, preferably in lay-bys. As with Wainright in his dotage, everything is perceived from the car-park. This may be exaggerated, but it is a tendency which makes for difficulty in discussing modern Scottish rock. Though it is sunny a little more than some like to imagine when the canaille call for Buoux, it is not sunny enough to compete with that sort of package holiday. Even its nearer cliffs are often Lake District walks away. So, while nearby climbing exists the emphasis must still be on adventure, big days out and even high places. That could have made this guide old fashioned, which I think it is not. The other temptation was to just choose the 'modern' accessible seeming places and forget about many of the more classic high cliffs as belonging to 'the past'. There is a little of that, as with the omission of Sgurr a Mhadaidh on Skye, despite its associations with Smith and the fact that Thor was for long the island's hardest route, but not too much. Instead old and new have been combined, but wrapped and synthesised in a new way, and very effectively too.

It is a big book, near 500 pages. There is a powerful sense of order about them, a logic in design and graphics rarely found in the distant past, and sometimes tending to get lost again among the fashionable but uninformative colour action shots of modern guides elsewhere. The maps and diagrams incorporated are arguably the book's finest feature, very models of clarity produced from initially obscure photographic evidence. There are a lot of them too, excellent value in themselves, apart from the specific text of the book. They often achieve what Hamish set out to do photographically so many years ago, making the identification of climbs on large rambling cliffs easier by far. There is a hint of sorrow there, as the adventure element diminishes as damned accuracy grows.

The range of routes available is vast, and must owe much to both Kevin's travels and the knowledge of his friends. Doubtless some of the SMC official record will have been picked over. A guide to a whole country could not avoid it. The selection is probably as judicious as any individual could make it. As always one tends to disagree with selections on cliffs one once knew a lot about, where the original classic routes, perhaps equivalent to Unicorn or Haste Not, have been left out or fitted into the framework of a straightening out E4. Doubtless the E4 is great climbing, but would not more people do the slightly more devious but often totally natural Hard VS in the context of Loch Maree. The criticism is that an anxiety to show that great modern (but not much bolted and not very safe) climbing exists in these fastnesses, and that there are even lay-bys, may have obscured the need to keep the range of grades available on some of these crags. Okay, one can always combine this with the SMC guide, but in some of these places none are in print and by the time they are again, much might have been forgotten. The Lowland crags, Aberdeen and some outcrops will always be welcome to visitors as well as locals. Some favourites were missed, like the crags near Inverness, but maybe they are already becoming a little too centre and army used. Unfortunately the black and white pictures suffer from a light paper and a lack of contrast so common today with re-rendered slides. For all that this is a fine book, a well digested treatment in a field no angel would contemplate. Since there are not too many of those in the climbing firmament, Kevin Howett will have found his critics in every Scottish climbing bar. As a Sassenach too, I do not envy him.

Paul Nunn

Elusive Summits by Victor Saunders Hodder and Stoughton £14.95

I have to confess that from the outset my only minor quibble with this, the 1990 Boardman Tasker Award winner, is its dreary title. Surely Hodders could have thought up something better than a re-run of Kongur-China's Elusive Summit. Even Slippery Summits by Elusive Saunders, would have been better. Having said that, this is a thoroughly good read, a romp through four expeditions of which only one, to the Golden Pillar of Spantik is actually successful. But this does not matter, Victor is more interested in the journey than the end. For my money the best section is Part Two — an unsuccessful (but only just) attempt on the unclimbed Bojoghaghur in the Karakoram, chosen because distance from the roadhead was even shorter than the walk to Craig Meghaidh! Here Victor and Lobby (Phil Butler) had a protracted 14 day attempt that left the author hallucinating and both men drained and exhausted.

Paradoxically the ascent with Mick Fowler of the superbly elegant Golden Pillar left me wanting a bit more.

Between these exploits Victor writes with humour and irony about dropped rucksacks on Rimo, and dropped Japanese down a big hole on Latok IV, an almost Simpsonsque epic that is hilariously told by Saunders, and brought the house down when it was read at the Mountain Literature Festival at Bretton Hall in 1989.

This then is a first book that is well worth the read, not the price. It is a slender tome and £14.95 might feel a bit steep for its 185 pages of rather large type and averagely mediocre set of snaps. But this seems to be the way of the world these days and should not distract from its undoubted quality. I hope Victor carries on the good work and look forward to reading more of his own brand of lighthearted yet forward looking adventures within the extremes of Himalayan achievement.

Jim Curran

**A Lakeland Mountain Diary by A. Harry Griffin
Crowood £14.95**

It is said that more has been written about the English Lake District than about any other single mountain area in the world. True or not, any town library will have twice as many books about the Lakes than anywhere else, and most of it written by visitors to the region. Nor is the range limited: plays, poems, guides, novels, diaries continue to tumble out of the publishing houses year by year. And just think: it probably all started unintentionally as a little (Dove) cottage industry. The problem with much of this writing however, is that it is either thin and derivative, or is based on too fleeting an impression and acquaintance with the place. Of course a deep and lifelong attachment to the Lakes does not of itself guarantee a mature and perceptive style of writing about the region — as at least one famous novelist and media figure ought to know. But there is one writer who can always be relied upon to catch and hold attention and who will always have a book or two about the Lakes in every town library: Harry Griffin.

This book is a collection of 240 pieces from The Guardian 'Country Diary' section, written over the last 15 years, when he was between 65 and 80 years of age. These facts alone make it worth reading. For 40 years Harry Griffin has been the unofficial voice of the Lake District for Guardian readers, delighting those of us bound to towns with his chronicles of the seasons, people, places, flora and fauna; and all credit to Crowood for seizing the chance of publishing the author's own selection to celebrate the fact.

Harry has ordered the pieces to give a picture of a Lakeland Mountain Year, keeping, as he puts it, 'on the high ground'. And there we follow him, up hill and down dale; across frozen tarns or plunging in them; on ski or foot or in a plane, looking down on the high ground rather than out from it. For Harry's style invites you to share the experiences with him and his companions. That is and always has been his delight.

These pieces are little epiphanies, diary distillations of experience gained for the love of mountains rather than for gain. Next time you are tempted to find a piece of quiet unsullied Lakeland, read through this book. Harry's been there, seen it and recorded its beauty. And next time you are tempted to write at length about your holiday in the Lakes, study Harry's style first: few metaphors, a strong but simple sentence structure; sturdy adjectives, but above all a disciplined narrative confidence that can encompass the full range of perception, adventure and simple delight. He notices things, too, — things that matter; and he makes us feel they matter too. Whether drawing our attention to Herdwick lambs or railing quietly at the destruction wreaked by commercial exploitation of the land, he sees things clearly for what they are, not what they might be. He is in effect writing the real green manifesto in the form of bulletins from an increasingly beleaguered home front. If politicians read Harry Griffin every night, the integrity of the Lake District and all our National Parks would be guaranteed now. Send a copy to your MP.

Tim Noble

**Tremadog and Cwm Silyn
Climbers' Club £10.95**

A bumper volume combining areas previously held in two separate volumes; it's hard to believe that it's seven years since Leigh McGinley's previous Tremadog guide was published. Produced in hardback, a deviation from the style of past guidebooks, and only time will tell whether this was the

right decision; chunky too as one would expect from a book containing so much information. Ambitious in concept, the guide contains some disappointments, perhaps indicative of a rush to publish before the guide was really ready for the shelves. There are inaccuracies in some descriptions and in some of the line diagrams, Carreg Hyll-Drem seems particularly poorly served and the diagram of Craig Cwm Du seems to be a waste of Greg Griffith's effort on what I know must have been a difficult subject. Grading, well these are always in contention but there are one or two eye openers, for instance, The Atomic Finger Flake at E3 is going to severely damage one or two egos, not to mention the peg. I'm probably being over critical here, we've come to expect peerless production from an essentially unpaid job and Geoff must have had a monstrous task in finalising this guide. There's a huge amount of information here despite the warts, and in the end the book offers good value for money. Essential reading — buy it.

Chris Jackson

The Islands of Scotland Including Skye by D.J. Fabian, G.E. Little and W.N. Williams
SMC £18.95

This is a fascinating, thorough and well designed book that should be essential reading for those interested in wilderness climbing away from the crowds in superb locations, and not always in mist and midgets if you go around Whitsun. There is a case for saying that this carefully researched book should go no further than to indicate possibilities for quiet enjoyment rather than invite more and more recording and colonising. So let me quote from the sections on Rock Climbing for Five Islands and let you either guess them, look them up in this book, or go and find them: (1) 'It is hard to believe that any rock climbing is possible, but the island holds many surprises'. (2) 'The climbing in the area does not attract as much attention as it deserves'. (3) 'Surprisingly, considering the amount of rock available, very little has been recorded'. (4) 'Over one kilometre in length, with a southern aspect and reaching a maximum height of 60m, these cliffs have, surprisingly received little attention'. (5) 'It is doubtful, however, if any top quality climbing will be discovered on the island'.

This is a book that will have some people smiling quietly into their drams. Long may they do so. They dig their own peats.

Terry Gifford

Staffordshire Gritstone
BMC £9.95

In climbing as in other human activities, eras pass. For this reviewer no area reflects the inexorable passage of time more than this one, where for me it all began. One begins to reflect upon what it is that you value so passionately, when a particular few thousand acres stir passionate memories and attachments, beyond the ken of less inspirational soil.

Guidebooks have to do much more than instruct us where climbs are supposed to be. Their prosaic task, of recording what climbs there are, and possibly giving some idea of their order of difficulty so that beginners do not attempt things that are suicidal for them, and waning experts can climb back down through the grades while retaining some of the 'Newspeak' of the leading edge of the game, these functions are only the beginning.

The climbing guides are the major means whereby collective memory is expressed and recorded among climbers. They are probably more important than magazines, club journals, lectures, films of all kinds, because most people wishing to rock climb from novices to experts believe they need them or like to own them. Yet in reality many climbers know a good proportion of the areas they visit and can recite the moves, the names and the numbers. Yet they keep on buying these elaborate little books, their means of recording this specialized knowledge.

Most do not use them as a means to discover new routes in the way that Gary Gibson did. They buy them to use, they say, but really of as much significance is the purchaser's wish to maintain a link with the places which have provided so much memorable experience. The practical surface purpose provides a guise for a range of deeper identifications, with one's own epics and pleasures in the past, with distinguished ancestors like J.W. Puttrell or Don Whillans, with memories of the activities of one's friends. That is why illustration is better if engendered from the action described, rather than grafted on afterwards like a wig or false nose.

When is he going to reach the subject, Staffordshire Gritstone, some will already say. First note that this little diatribe is in a key club journal, not among the innocent readers of the gutter press. It is worth thinking seriously about what purpose guides serve. Those who think they are primarily about information, or worse still information processing, don't know their heads from their...It is far more serious than that. It involves not just the misused 'ethics' of the game but its whole meaning.

Eras pass, and climbers too, guidebooks and guidebook writers even more often, and relatively, despite our fears, the climbs remain. Despite the environmental damage mankind does, as individuals we are so transient that the crags look permanent. They may acquire a few scars, denuded of vegetation, but their sense of permanence is one of their gifts to us. Since this prevents us taking them home, we buy guidebooks instead. They are the 'junk bonds' of the climbing obsession, like the stuffed pheasants or fish that remain of the bag.

These cranky perceptions are not obtuse in relation to the subject of this guidebook. As befits a guide to a precious and bizarre landscape, it is well-proportioned, prettily packaged, in the last of the old series plastic covers. Its photographs and diagrams must have intended to convey atmosphere in which this area abounds, and something too of its mystery, once the obvious crags are left behind. It is a guide to an area which foists the benefits of scenery, variety, interest and landscape upon any visitor, and more so on climbers, with their incentive to visit less known corners. Here the rock and the land are too impressive to be demoted by even the most devoted narcissist.

So here are climbs innumerable, above all to be enjoyed in a feast of action amid brilliant surroundings. This is not Horseshoe Quarry or an armpit of a sports centre. It is a brilliant mysterious cocktail of potential experience. It is fitting that a guide reflecting an era carries its photo of 'Dougie, Lord of the Roaches', and attempts a first full scale reconstruction of the evidence of first ascents and a thematic history by Vivienne Smith. The latter was difficult, as information was not collected so systematically hereabouts as on the eastern edges, but the effort has paid off, and the result is what to many people is a fine, and for its time, definitive guide, a suitable finale to the series which began with the best Stanage guide then published.

Of course this created difficulty for the future, where the guides have been planned and produced that look different in order to ensure their individuality. This can be a mistake. I am glad to see Staffordshire Gritstone as the last flagship of the old fine standard, balanced, aesthetically aware, historicized, in tune with its themes. It is a suitable catechism for its area's devotees for some time to come and a frontline defence against boastful vulgarity.

Paul Nunn

**Women Climbing — 200 Years of Achievement by Bill Birkett and Bill Peascod
A & C Black £12.95**

On a basic level Bill Birkett and Bill Peascod's book functions as the first attempt to compile a historical record of female climbing to date. I had looked forward to learning more about a topic I felt ignorant of myself, but I'm afraid I didn't find it an enjoyable read, it touched more than a few raw nerves.

Initially I found the style of writing rather clumsy, particularly the use of lists, tables, explanations bracketed, making it seem very 'school textbookish'. The standard of photographs was, in general, poor. The authors chose to concentrate on outstanding individuals, but I felt the outcome in most cases was still shallow. Perhaps it would have been better to expand on the theme of investigating how social conditioning had affected these women in order to develop a future strategy to guard against further wastage of women, talent and time — so apparent from the text.

My greatest criticism is the patronising way women and events are described. There is a distinct abundance of words like 'petite' 'graceful' 'nurtured' 'blossomed and glowed' and only once did I see the word 'power' used to describe a woman climber. Personally I sure as hell don't float delicately up my climbs, 'thugging it' would be an apt description. Also by referring to male friends and spouses as 'playing such a large part in her life' infuriatingly infers that 'They' still had as much influence on that woman's accomplishments as the woman herself, when, after all, those early female climbers desired only to be 'manless'. Even in the chronological lists this attitude strikes discord, why is Gwen Moffatt's honeymoon date of such significance to her climbing career.

So in conclusion I would hope that now the subject has been broached it will serve to encourage more women climber/writers out of their closets, not only to balance the overdominance of male climbing

literature in general but, it would, I think be a refreshing change for us all!

Andrea Stimson

Rock Climbing in Northern England by Bill Birkett and John White
Constable £9.95

There is hardly an area in the UK that Constable have not published a rock climbing or walking guide to, and now we have Rock Climbing in Northern England. The authors, in their introduction, remark upon the lack of a single guide covering selected climbs from Lancashire, Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland. A guide to this area has been talked about for a long time, but now at last one has been published. By taking the best climbs of this area Birkett and White have assembled a plethora of very fine climbs within the bounds of a single cover and all for the princely sum of a tenner.

So how have they done? Well you certainly get a good thick guide for your money; but then again the telephone directory is thick. Nearly two pages out of a six and a half page introduction are dedicated to a discussion on grades and grading comparisons. We are treated to no less than two grade tables; one of which is given to compare British adjectival grades with technical grades, whilst the other compares British grades to International grades. In the former, the band of technical grades given with each adjectival grade is so narrow that it can only relate to a 'normal' route. According to the tables routes with grades such as E6 6a or E6 7a, for example, don't exist. The table giving the comparison of International grades fares no better and is, if anything, even further off the mark. French 7a/7a+, for instance, are said by the authors to equate to British 6a/6b. For those of you who care, French 7a starts at British 5c and French 7a+ goes through to British 6c. The fluctuation of grades and their overlap make grade comparisons in a tabular form difficult if not impossible.

There is a map of England showing the location of the areas described, as well as individual maps covering, in more detail, each of the areas. The individual maps, though clear and well drawn, are difficult to relate to the text which describes the crag approaches. Incidentally, I noticed that none of the maps have North points which is surely an omission. The approach description for Anglezarke Quarry, the first crag in the book, refers to numerous local landmarks, towns and road numbers which are not marked on the map. Fair enough, the instructions are detailed and are probably sufficient to get you there, but you can't relate them to the map, which I think is poor.

What of the photo-diagrams and the routes themselves? Well the black and white crag shots have, in general, been photographed and printed well, which is a refreshing change. At first the route coverage of the photo-diagrams achieves good value; six routes on the diagram on page 2, a full page shot and 12 on the strip diagram on pages 6 and 7 (though you can't find the page numbers on those pages). The two full page shots on pages 25 and 26 (which again have no page numbers) only manage a meagre four routes between them. Where the photo-diagram adequately directs the reader, no further description is given, which is fine. Where the authors feel that additional information relating to a route, such as historical information, is needed, this is given. In this respect they have achieved a sensible balance and the guide works well.

A number of action shots have been included throughout the book to give an insight to the nature of the climbing. Many of these photographs show the nature of the crag and the setting rather than that of the climb (or the climber). We are however 'treated' to a number of 'close-up' action shots. That on page 5 (no page number again) shows more of Trevor Jones, and probably far more than he would have liked, than of the Golden Tower. The value of the headless climber on Mohammed The Mad Monk of Moorside's Home for Mental Misfits must be questioned, still it is a great route name and one which predates most of its modern counterparts by some 20 to 30 years. Another photo of questionable worth is that of Recessed Slab on Attmire Scar, which shows an ageing star, who shall remain nameless, posing for a pic whilst seemingly sitting on a runner. The real depths are still to come. Page 397 (no page number necessary) shows someone seemingly abailing down Endless Flight at Great Wanney after failing to lead it. One is left with the impression that there must be no decent photos of climbing in this area, which, as we all know, is not the case at all. It is perhaps understandable that the climbers in the photos are not credited, probably they wouldn't want to be.

'White space' in the text has been kept fairly high to give a spacious 'read'. As this is a matter of taste I am reluctant to comment but as white space has become a 'waste-of-space' in several instances, then I shall. Flicking through the guide I was struck by the 25mm or so of 'white space' at the bottom of the

diagram on pages 30 and 31. In a guide where space is at a premium, such space cannot be left blank. This occurs again on pages 56 and 57, where despite all that 'white space', nearly 50mm this time, they still couldn't find room to slip in the page numbers. This shows a sloppy approach to the production of the guide and one which lets it down. In a guide of this nature, it is essential to devise some means of adding/deleting text/diagrams to achieve full page coverage. That such a publisher as Constable should fail in this respect I find quite remarkable.

What of the route choice and grading accuracy? I'll take you back to Anglezarke Quarry again if I may. Hands up those of you who are surprised that Gates of Perception, one of the best routes in the Quarry and featured on the front cover of the previous edition of the Lancashire guide, has not been included? And for that matter why is the Grey Buttress covered and the Coal Measure Crag left out? No fame and glory for The Lean Mean Fightin' Machine, and such a good route name too. The authors take the opportunity to slip a few new routes in to the guide that have not yet appeared in the definitive guides and that is fair enough. A number of the harder, and already published routes, have also been included, though their descriptions are wholly inadequate. Take Bob Smith's route on Back Bowden (page 349) for example, what I would like to know is what good is including an obviously desperate route without any description or comment? And whilst we are in Northumberland why no stars for First Born? Similarly what is achieved by identifying Relax at Kilnsey, a totally serious route if ever there was one, without any description and no warning as to its seriousness. Any ascent of this route is likely to be the second ascent, and as such it is hardly the sort of route that should be in a selected climbs guide which purports to describe popular and frequently ascended routes.

The authors include at the rear of their guide a bibliography. All the definitive guides have been used throughout the preparation of this selected climbs guide and the heavy dependence is all too obvious to see. This is especially so in the Northumberland and Yorkshire Limestone areas where mistakes, omissions and layout and grading inaccuracies which are evident in the definitive guide have also 'appeared' in the Constable guide. This explains why First Born at Kyloe is E4 6a and has no stars; why the authors are the only climbers left that think Australia Crack is only worth 6a and one star; why Balas at Kilnsey Crag is only E4 when everybody knows it is good E5; why Wise Blood (an infrequently climbed and non-too-special looking route, and a strange choice for a guide like this) appears in the same order after The Superdirectissima and Deja Vu as in the definitive guide. Copy-cats always did get found out. What a shame that the authors didn't get more help from people who know the area better than they obviously do. Those writing the definitive guide must be spitting feathers.

I feel in conclusion that the guide will best serve the climber who is active on routes up to mid Extreme. In this respect, the authors have given the climber just enough information on how to get to the crags and which routes he/she should include on their agenda. If it was this market that the authors were aiming at then they have done their job satisfactorily. They should have been content at that. Instead they have included a high number of harder routes, which are regrettably riddled with errors both of judgement and description. These may, at the very least be misleading, but may prove to be downright dangerous without the caveats that should have accompanied them. An all-too-obvious dependence on the definitive guides is evident, as too is the lack of up-to-date information. Regular visitors to Malham for example, know that for the last 18 months at least, double yellow lines have prevented car parking where the authors advocate. No, a poor show for the first-time visitor to the area, and especially so for those doing hard routes. Again it is an opportunity lost.

Keith Sharples

On Foot in North Wales and The Peak by Patrick Monkhouse Diadem £11.95

Republished here in one volume are two rather different books by the Manchester Guardian journalist Patrick Monkhouse. Although published within two years of each other in the 30s, one is a labour of love and the other is a labour of leisure, as Monkhouse himself admits: 'The Peak is my own country. I was born in it...But North Wales has always been, to me, a holiday country. I have never got used to it. The Peak, then, is in my thoughts a place to live in; North Wales a place to walk in'. The result is that the earlier book on the Peak is richly described with a good-humoured familiarity ('The dale is tense with expectation. Something is going to happen. The Lathkill is going to appear'.) whilst the second book on North Wales is a well-researched carefully considered walking guide ('Cnicht is justly praised as a

watch tower. The westward outlook is as impressive as anything in Wales'.) For Monkhouse on the less popular Welsh hills, for his brilliant apology for his 'humanising' the Peak, and for the political undercurrents of walking in the 30s these books are worth reprinting.

Unfortunately the design loses the feel of the original books because the modern horizontal format has been used to best display the admittedly well chosen and printed black and white period photographs. I also cannot understand why the book is back-to-front. On the last page there is that instantly recognisable cover-design for *On Foot in The Peak* and because the books appear in reverse order of original publication this book begins with Monkhouse telling his publisher that he can't have another book like the last one. Still, you'll buy this for Monkhouse's texts — readable, informative and good-humoured period-pieces that will still work as inspirational guides today.

Terry Gifford

Rock Climbs in the Verdon — An Introduction by Rick Newcombe

Cicerone £5.50

I wish this guide had been around when I first visited the gorge back in the '70s. I remember we were thrashing around on frightening abseils trying to make sense of a little French guidebook. On subsequent trips we went armed with the topo guide and Livesey's book. This one by Rick Newcombe would have been just the job — for a first visit it is ideal, giving clear maps and descriptions of how to get to the routes, and English grades for those not used to the French system. The photos (far too few!), like most Verdon shots, help to inspire and the numbers of stars given to the routes in the index, say it all for the quality of the climbing in the Verdon.

I have not been back to the area for a few years now and I will probably wait until its popularity dies down a bit, but this book will make a very useful addition to my topo guide when I do return.

Bill Wintrip

Arran, Arrochar & The Southern Uplands by K.V.Crocket & A.Walker

SMC £9.95

This is the latest of the new generation of 'modern' Scottish Mountaineering Club guidebooks. As with the earlier ones in this series the book describes a selection of rock and ice climbs in one compact 360 page volume. To maximise the number of routes included the guide contains the Scottish tradition of describing the major routes in detail whilst the lesser ones are given a more perfunctory treatment, there may be a message here for the editors of ever larger definitive guides to climbing areas south of the border.

The covers of the book are a functional plastic with the photographs printed directly onto them, rather than the more traditional colour picture inside a clear plastic sleeve. I hope this new material is robust enough to stand the use and abuse it is sure to get. I know that my new Stanage guide, which uses a similar construction, began to shed its cover photographs after it had only been out of the house a couple of times. Talking of photographs, the two cover shots (the only photos in the guide) are evocative ones. The front cover is of three tiny figures lost in a sea of grey granite (Sou'wester Slabs? it does not actually say in the guide), judging by the sky they are in for a wetting if they don't get a move on. The rear cover (on The Cobbler?) is a moody shot of a figure on a snow slope with the sun shining out of a classic washed out wintry sky; there's a storm on the way, does Scotland ever change?

In keeping with what has long been the norm south of the border, the guide uses the E grade system, technical grades for individual pitches, and (wait for it) the star system for recommending routes. It is about time too, a guidebook is intended as a service to the climbing community, and the better it fulfils this function the better a guide it is. Guides which give little indication of the relative merits of routes, or inaccurate grade information are hardly worth the paper they are printed on.

Thank goodness there is no sign of the largely meaningless graded lists that still appear in some English and Welsh guidebooks. It is also good to see a grade VI used for ice routes, it differentiates between old and relatively straightforward grade Vs on pure ice, and more modern horrors involving heroics on much more uncompromising territory.

The guide covers a large and varied area of south west Scotland, from the beautiful Isle of Arran to the rolling hills around Tyndrum, and the rock peaks above Arrochar. The climbs vary from short pitches (25ft!) on road side cliffs in Glen Croe, through mid-grade granite classics on Arran, to major

snow and ice routes on Bienns Dorain and Dothiadh, and lots more in between.

Now to weaknesses in the guide. I have already hinted at the lack of action photographs mixed in with the text, this is not really excusable in this day and age. Climbers have come to expect at least a taster of the style and variety of experiences available in an area once they have shelled out hard earned cash. A good set of photographs can keep you fired up when the weather is doing its best to dampen your enthusiasm.

The diagrams are servicable enough though some (notably the Arran ones which have been used before) have been printed very darkly. In contrast some of the others are rather faint and spidery, but again perfectly functional.

This perhaps sums up the guide; it is a very workmanlike guidebook and is absolutely essential if you are climbing regularly in the area, summer or winter. But despite the valiant attempt to bring Scottish guides in line with other areas, the lack of photographs, the rather dowdy diagrams and especially the old fashioned looking typeface give the guide a very dated feel. It may be argued that the relatively small sales of guides to Scotland precludes spending money on 'tarting them up', but then again if they were a little more user friendly they might sell better.

Chris Craggs

Rock Climbs in the West Midlands by Doug Kerr Cicerone £4.95

If you have a broad concept of the West Midlands, a wild imagination as to the possibilities on rock, and you live smack bang in the middle of the country, 60 miles from the nearest crag, this is the guide for you. After several years of bravery Doug 'Too jugless for Dougless' Kerr has come up with a useful and informative guide which covers essentially Shropshire Limestone and Sandstone, which is, West of the Midlands I suppose. In addition it also includes a few Worcestershire outcrops, one of which, Castle Rock near Cheltenham, gets a brief mention in Pat Littlejohn's South West Climbs. Originally the guide was part of a masterplan not only to the West Midlands, but to take in everything from Shropshire, bits of Staffordshire, the East Midlands and Leicestershire. However what we have is an up-date of the much missed Pontesford Rocks guide which has been out of print for years, and Gordon Caine's Llanymynech paperback. Wenlock Edge, the Shrewsbury Sandstone, and various other piles of rubble make up the rest, piles of rubble where the likes of Peter Harding and Ed Drummond cut their teeth.

The guide is reasonably well laid out with a good supply of maps and diagrams, some of which suffer from lack of nomenclature and are incomplete. The photos are poor, but being printed on the same paper as the typeface no doubt keeps the costs down. Standard format is adopted and the Pex Hill system is followed for the Sandstone crags. It is these that have perhaps the most interest as somewhere to visit in the region. There are some huge unclimbed walls which might lend themselves to some East European sandstone techniques ie big run outs and ring bolts.

The other thing Rock Climbs in the West Midlands does is, thankfully, put a lot of outcrops out of their misery. Places like Kinver Edge are dead and buried and from this perspective the guide is a sound investment which will save you time and money from wasted journeys. In the meantime there are some worthwhile routes like; Live Evil, Varsity Buttress, Marlene, and The Nomad, that are well worth seeking out if you are in striking distance.

In short this is very much a local guide for local climbers and for £4.95 you can't go wrong. The proof is in the pudding as they say and since publication they've been selling like there's no tomorrow in Birmingham.

Simon Cardy

In Balance by Peter Gillman Hodder and Stoughton £12.95

I first read Peter Gillman's work in 1969 when he wrote an article called 'A Walter Mitty on Craig Gogarth' for The Sunday Times. This serious, yet compelling, story of hoax routes claimed on the then newly discovered crags of Anglesey was then, as it is now, a rare example of a newspaper journalist writing responsibly and accurately about climbing; a job Gillman has done since 1966. This should hardly be surprising as Gillman started climbing in 1964, about the same time he got his first proper job

in journalism. His first major climbing assignment was to cover the attempt by John Harlin team's to climb the Eiger via a new Direct route, for the Daily Telegraph. (He later wrote the book *Eiger Direct* with Dougal Haston detailing the climb). Since then he seems to have interviewed, written about, and occasionally climbed with, many of the major climbing figures of the last 20 years; this book is a collection of that writing, the majority of which appeared first in *The Sunday Times*.

This is a rich and varied tapestry of fascinating insights into people and events, which is good to read just straight through, or as a volume to dip into as the mood strikes, or to research those little details to solve the pub argument, or even to help the harrassed editor. Recommended.

Ian Smith

**Ascent. Edited by Allen Steck and Steve Roper
Sierra Club Books/Hodder and Stoughton £14.95**

I look forward to *Ascent*, even though I know there will be writing therein that I won't like, yet there will also be material that will excite, inspire and thrill. 'Two nations divided by a common language' may be a cliché but when it comes to writing about climbing it does have some currency, not all English readers find American writing, as evidenced in *Ascent*, accessible. This, the 1989 offering contains some absolute gems; the two essays on friendship, 'The Best of Times, the Worst of Times' by Joe Kelsey and 'Karass and Granfallons' by Alison Osius (you'll have to read it to discover the meaning of that title), are wonderful and will cross all divides. Two essays in translation, 'Aniel's Accident' by Stanislaw Lem (a rare example of climbing in Science Fiction) and 'The Collector' by Anne Sauvy (her writing does remind me favourably of that great French short story writer Guy de Maupassant) lead the non-American offerings.

'Headwall' by Tim Ahern, is a wonderful piece which tells the story of an immensely talented climber who upsets the locals at his mentor's local crag, not because he shows great ability whilst being a relative novice, but because he is gay. The story details common prejudices found nowadays, particularly the unfairness of homophobia and refutes them totally without resorting to hectoring or didactic argument, instead it is done in a fine, fluid story-telling style built around a climbing scene which may be thousands of miles from England but was still all too recognisable.

These are only a few of my highlights, there is much more between these covers, not only stories and essays but several poems and a number of drawings and photographs, including a lovely set of colour shots entitled 'Mount Everest and Environs' showcasing the excellent work of Ed Webster. My only criticism of this edition of *Ascent* is that the quality of the reproduction of the black and white photographs is very patchy, and at times, really quite poor.

Ian Smith

**Gabe's Fall by Peter Lars Sandberg
Diadem £12.95 (Hardback)**

This collection of seven stories, which leads off with *Gabe's Fall*, was first published in the USA in 1988, but the stories were written in the sixties and seventies. Despite my being an Americanophobe I found that the spelling seldom irritated and only once (in the introduction) did my teeth actually grate, at anthologized. Friends better-travelled that I tell me that 'a jelly sandwich' is a jam butty and with that all need for a glossary is gone.

Although *The Old Bull Moose of the Woods* is written in what I take to be a phonetic representation of the Southern drawl I was mightily taken with it, Yes Sirree. That piece has apparently been criticised by some feminists but dare I say that I welcome it as a piece of light-hearted leaven of humour in the climbing writing of our times and one which points the range of expertise Peter Sandberg deploys. He manages in these stories to convey the magnetism of climbing to the aficionado without the feeling of writing down, despite having to include minor snatches of explanation for the non-climber reader. He conveys, in separate stories, the interaction between several different pairs of personalities: old and young climbers; a married couple whose relationship is becoming acid; an arrogant male and his younger and potentially more talented girlfriend; and others, it does not do to give all the game away, and all this within a context of climbing.

The stories are well written and I was delighted with the short introduction to each piece explaining a little of its genesis although I was annoyed that this introduction was not headed by the title of the piece. The writing dates given for each piece explain the slightly old-fashioned techniques and ethics used by the climbers in some of them but this does not detract from their appeal. Despite falls and death figuring in some of the stories the scare and tension of climbing does not really strike through. These are gently written stories but none the worse for that. We live in a fortunate age. Increasingly more climbing fiction is being published and we should be grateful for this contribution to the growing store. Of the book's production there can be no criticism. It is of the quality one expects of the house. There are no mistakes, the print is clear.

I have one major criticism. The price. However I imagine that American writers expect American-sized royalties and this is reflected in the price. Think positively however. It is not many pints or doubles and before you can turn round guidebooks will be 20 pounds a copy. Get this while stocks last. It will not take up much space on the bookshelf and can be read again and again, with lasting pleasure. A jewel from Diadem.

Dave Gregory

A Response to the Feminist Critics of the Short story 'The Old Bull Moose of the Woods'
A guest appearance by American writer, Peter Lars Sandberg, author of the above.

In a recent review of *Gabe's Fall, and Other Climbing Stories*, a writer has harshly criticised my story 'The Old Bull Moose of the Woods', condemning it as outrageously sexist * ('...the age-old justification of the rapist in yet another of its slippery disguises: "But she wanted it really, your Honour..."' etc). The writer goes on to say that if I, as author of the piece, 'cannot understand even that simple point you will have the measure of his work'.

I hope it will be of some relief to this reviewer when I assure him here that I understand his point very well. My problem with it is I believe it is not well taken, and that he has mis-read the story, as hard-line feminists are inclined to do.

When I wrote 'The Old Bull Moose of the Woods' in 1971, I intended to satirize, in a good-natured way, both the male and the female in the war between the sexes, to resolve the conflict in favour of the female, and, having done that, to bring them together, affectionately, at the end. I believe I succeeded in doing this and that the story, if intelligently read, will bear me out.

First, it should be evident from the opening passage that the story is not meant to be read in a strictly literal way (our Indian chiefs are hard men, but even they don't live to be 150 years old!) JD Wicker is the quintessential male chauvinist; Amanda Barrymore Fitzgerald the quintessential women's libber. Both characters are greatly exaggerated for comic/satiric effect, and have symbolic as well as specific values in the narrative — as does the climb of Cholla Rock.

Throughout the early story, JD views Amanda as little more than a sex object (he is surprised to discover she too is a climber) and he tries to seduce her in all the old ways. Amanda is properly outraged and rejects him out of hand.

During the climb itself, however, JD's attitude towards Amanda begins to develop from the purely glandular (without giving up the gland!) and he begins to see her for the able individual she clearly is. This occurs specifically when Amanda informs JD that she has free-climbed a difficult overhang: 'Whee-oo,' JD said. Respectfully'. (Emphasis added.) He is sufficiently impressed that he says it again, and he will only pass this overhang with explicit instructions from Amanda. He has already relied on one of her pitons, has had difficulty climbing other pitches that she has climbed smoothly — and very soon, unlike her, he will take a fall and end up (significantly) 'hung by his own petard'.

On the final pitch, that will lead to the unclimbed summit, Amanda knows she has won; but she elects to borrow a nut from JD rather than deface the route with a bolt. (Amanda operates on a generally higher plane than JD throughout the story, and is generally ahead of him in her perceptions of the female/male relationship, and more than once will act as his mentor, here while refusing to turn the lead over to JD, she begins to see the climb as something they have done together — 'we have managed to ascend'...etc. — and that through co-operation they can complete it in an aesthetically pleasing way). JD, clearly having met his match, reluctantly surrenders the nut. There is symbolic value here, in

addition to the comic play on the word; and I think in the proper context it is fair to see this moment not only as the crux of the climb, but of the story as well. If JD/Male Chauvinist expires in this story (and I strongly submit that he does), then I think the expiration occurs in this particular scene.

Once on the summit (and only after a critical exchange of dialogue between them and some reflection on Amanda's part), Amanda suggests to JD that they bathe together in a pool of meltwater on the summit. They proceed to do this, and subsequently make love.

It is at this point in the story that hard-line feminists become outraged. This happens, I believe, because they read the love scene in a narrow and literal way, without allowing for its symbolic value, or for the fact that significant change has taken place in the relationship between the characters as a result of the climb. 'Look at this!' the feminists exclaim. 'What the author is saying in this story is that the Women's Libber/Amanda wanted to be taken by the Male Chauvinist/JD from the start!' ('But she wanted it really, your Honour'...etc.).

But this is not what the author is saying at all (aside from endorsing heterosexual sex between consenting heterosexuals), and I think if the story is intelligently and fairly read it will bear me out.

When the climb is over — speaking now in symbolic terms (and the story has from the start allowed for this) — the war between the sexes is clearly over as well. The Libber has won; the Chauvinist has lost. Standing on ground where no man and woman ever have stood before, Amanda sees this. Confident in her own identity she believes, in fact, that this war between the sexes has been 'anachronistic' for some time. JD however, is devastated. His identity (Male Chauvinist) has been stripped from him and he has no idea what will take its place. He stands 'like a sweat-soaked question mark not far from the ultimate edge'. It is in his vulnerability at this point, his complete lack of defence (as well as her awareness of the transitory nature of life, evident in the falcon's kill) that Amanda/Female begins to view JD/Male (no longer Chauvinist) in a more sympathetic and affectionate way. A relationship between the Female and the Male that has been impossible up until now (ie loving and sexual) becomes, through the 'elimination' of the chauvinist male, not only possible, but desirable too.

Given these symbolic values, and I do not think they are far-fetched, there would seem to me to be no justification for any reader to interpret the final love scene as a 'rape' of the female by the male in 'yet another of its slippery disguises'. The Amanda who said 'No' throughout the early and middle story not only meant it, but meant it in spades. There is no evidence I can find in the story to suggest otherwise. And if the male chauvinist had not undergone significant change as a result of the action of the story (moving from an overbearing and quintessential chauvinism to a vulnerable and — from Amanda's point of view, at least — a much more sympathetic male), we may be quite sure, I think, that she would have gone on saying 'No' in a deeply felt and inflexible way.

As it is, Amanda/Female, having won the war between the sexes, aware of the transitory nature of life, and having developed a certain 'fondness' for JD/Male (no longer chauvinist), feels free to seduce him and does — turning the tables on him, so to speak. When JD feels the need to hide his conspicuous maleness behind his bush hat (which heretofore has been used to trumpet it), Amanda is delighted. His embarrassment can be read sensibly as her final assurance that he is no longer the aggressive chauvinist male. 'Come here,' she says. 'You silly boy'. The act that follows is described so indirectly that I myself am not altogether sure exactly what happens here. The specific language describes it as 'an interim of exploration, of discovery, of gentleness and liberation'. Before it is over, JD will speak of it with 'reverence'.

In the final passage, we see the male and female, who have entered the canyon separately and locked inside their egocentric and adversarial shells, leave it in harmony. The 'Ark' is now complete: 'One of this and one of that'. The two characters are heading 'not into the west (JD's territory) but toward the east (Amanda's territory)'. I submit that no objective reader, having watched this very able, strong-willed female operate throughout the story can possibly imagine she will ever be submissive to JD Wicker (or any other male!) whatever their future together might be.

Now because I have trusted my defence of the story very much to what I take to be its symbolic values, I realise I am obliged to deal with Amanda's line, spoken to JD shortly after their arrival at the summit, when she says, 'Furthermore, there is absolutely no justification for raising the climb we have just completed to the level of a metaphor'.

This line surprised me as I was preparing this paper in defence of 'The Old Bull Moose of the Woods,' for it seemed so clearly to be at odds with the obvious symbolism in the story (JD/Male Chauvinist, Amanda/Women's Libber, Climb of Cholla Rock/War Between the Sexes, etc.). If ever a climb was a 'metaphor' — that is, representing something other and larger than itself — this one certainly is.

So why on earth does Amanda not only deny the climb as metaphor, but deny it so emphatically?

The honest answer is I don't have a clue. Almost 20 years have passed since I wrote the story, and all I can think is that it probably seemed to me at the time to be the sort of thing Amanda would say in that satiric/pedantic way of hers.

But here the line is, waiting for the unkind critic to snatch from the story and use to beat my defence: 'Look at this, you poor clown! Your own character negates your argument!'

Well, perhaps; but I really don't think so. My argument seems sound to me in spite of this apparently anomalous line, and is supported, I see, by the author himself who walks into the narrative two pages later and reminds the reader of the 'epic structure of the piece (and setting, too, symbolic)'. So it is Amanda herself and not my defence that seems to be out of kilter here — but maybe, after all, she is not.

When the two characters finally arrive at the summit of Cholla Rock, their respective states of mind could not be more different. Amanda is full of confidence and joy, JD full of doubt and despair. She asks him what's wrong, and he replies that he has never 'lost' to a female before and that by doing so he has let down his side (the obvious reference here being to the war between the sexes). Amanda, on hearing this, is completely exasperated. She tells JD 'The idea that men and women make up opposing sides in some kind of sexual war is not only absurd but also in light of recent years, anachronistic'. This is followed by the line in question where Amanda denies the climb as a metaphor.

I think that if we accept Amanda/Female as a person who from the start has been confident of her abilities and therefore her identity, her impatience with JD/Male in this summit scene makes good sense. By bringing up the old baggage of the 'war' — which Amanda clearly sees as over — JD threatens to spoil the 'exquisite' atmosphere of the hard-won summit, and to jeopardise the relationship that is now possible for them (which Amanda will soon initiate when, for the first time in the story, she will ask him for his name).

Now I don't mean for a minute to imply here that this is what I intended when I wrote the line so long ago — only that it seems to me it could be fairly read that way.

Because 'The Old Bull Moose of the Woods' has, over the span of 20 years, drawn the same outraged response from hard-line feminist readers on both sides of the Atlantic, I would be dull-witted, indeed, if I did not acknowledge that for these readers there is a real problem here — and I regret that, because the message they take from the story ('She said no, but she meant yes') is as deeply offensive to me as it is to them. And if I have written the story so ineptly that this has become its message, then I have failed as a writer.

But as I have tried to demonstrate here, I do not believe the story, if intelligently and fairly read, conveys this message at all — and I think the hard-line feminist reader is perhaps inclined to invest the end-of-story in 'The Old Bull Moose of the Woods' with her/his own biases, and to ignore what has taken place through the action of the story itself and what is revealed through its symbolic values.

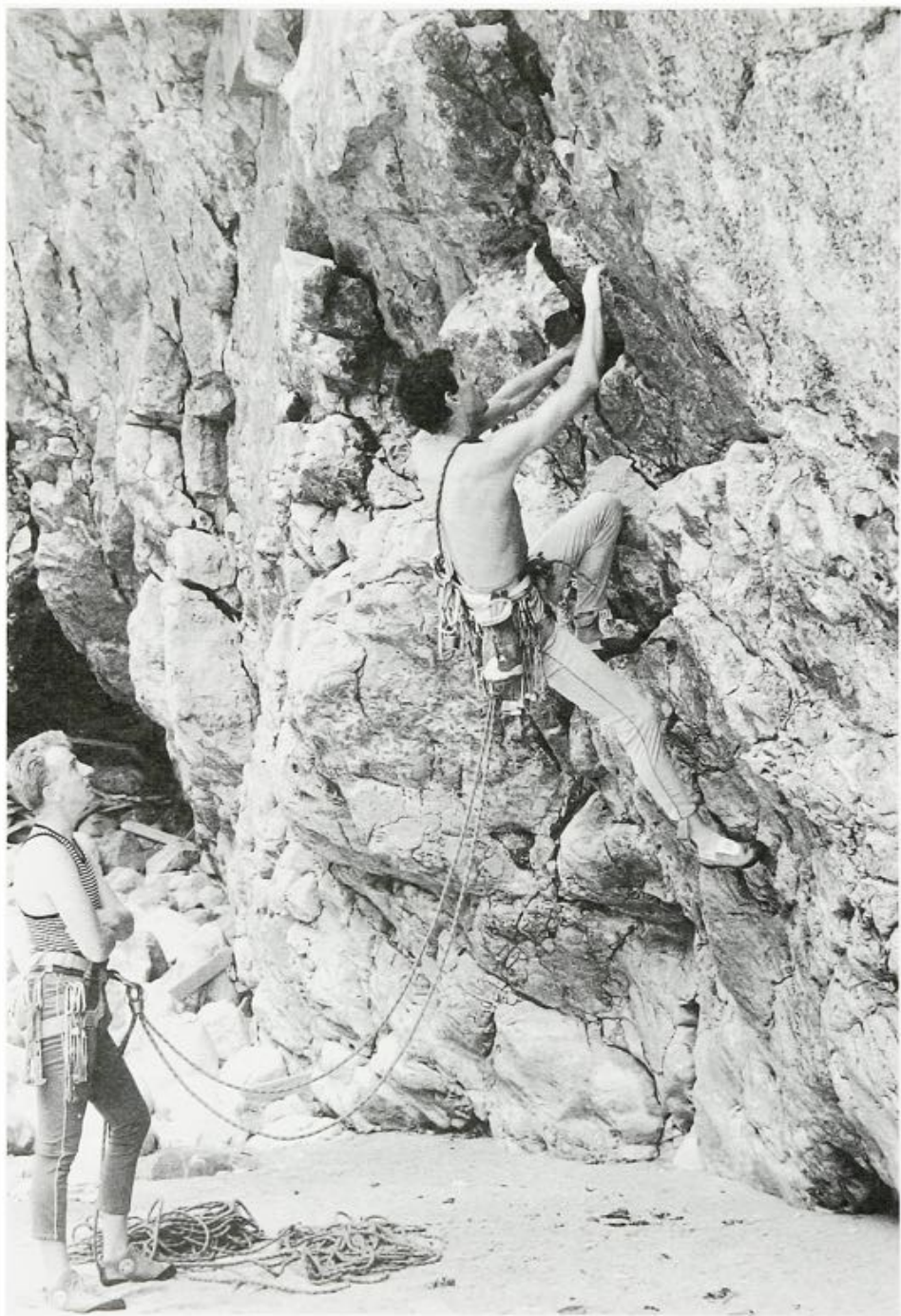
It is not too much to say, I think, that in her forgiveness of JD at the end of the story, Amanda achieves a state of grace.

When 'The Old Bull Moose of the Woods' first appeared in *Playboy* in 1972, an author friend whose opinions I respect called to tell me how much he had enjoyed the piece. He also told me he was 'amazed' that *Playboy* had published it. He felt they had not understood what it was I was doing in the story, that I had slipped right under their noses, in the character of JD Wicker, a devastating if good-natured satire of everything they stood for. He went on to say that with regards to *Playboy*, 'The Old Bull Moose of the Woods' was like a 'Trojan Horse'.

Be that as it may, I fully expect, say 20 years from now — if the story is once again reissued and I am lucky enough to be alive and women have achieved full parity in life — that I will receive some bitter and angry letters from outraged men (and, yes, some women, too), taking me to task for having presented such an infuriating and gender-biased portrait of poor old JD Wicker: 'My god, he hasn't got a single redeeming feature apart from his trust fund; and in the end, having humiliated him in every conceivable way, you let this patronising, emasculating female dominate him sexually!'

Meanwhile, as I wait for these letters to start coming in, I urge my feminist critics to lighten up. Amanda's got it right, you know: Life really is quite short.

Peter Lars Sandberg
Franklin, Virginia U.S.A.
10th December 1990



'The alert belayer' Pete Lewis and Andy Sharp in Pembroke. Photo: John Harwood

Area Notes

Peak District 1989/90

Among the multitude of animals which scamper, fly, burrow and swim around us, man is the only one who is not locked into his environment. His imagination, his reason, his emotional subtlety and toughness, make it possible for him not to accept the environment but to change it.

J Bronowski: The Ascent of Man

Here in the Peak, development has continued unabated since the last area report, with limestone suffering from the ascents of man much more so than gritstone. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the use of bolt protection on limestone is now standard practice creating safe and popular 'sport climbs'. Secondly, and more controversially, it is much easier to create holds on limestone whilst 'cleaning' and not be accused of chipping. It never ceases to amaze me just how much looser the blank pieces of rock are than those possessing holds. Indeed, in some cases the whole argument is turned on its head, with any obviously loose holds being cemented on, and any solid area receiving a vigorous cleaning. One final act of banality has been the bolting and cementing-on of a hold on a previously blank piece of rock. Whether this 'hold' will receive the same treatment as its neighbour at Malham remains to be seen. There is no doubt that these practices have produced some very good 'routes', but with good rock becoming scarcer, the Peak could well have been robbed of the 8cs and grade 9s of the future.

Anyway, back to more honest rock where art, rather than craftsmanship is required — gritstone. Relatively little has been done, but the quality of one route in particular makes up for the lack of quantity. Having been brought to the notice of climbers nationwide via Johnny Dawes' *Stone Monkey* video, The Prow at Burbage South was finally led by John Dunne. It only seems yesterday that Jonny Woodward produced the stunning Beau Geste which looked set to remain as the route of the '80s. Dunne's route, *Partheon Shot*, was given the grade of HXS 7a, reflecting the difficulty of grading serious routes on gritstone. If Hubble on limestone gets E9+ for well-protected 7b and 7a moves, what does a route with 6c/7a moves at possible death or eating-through-a-straw-for-the-rest-of-your-life height deserve?

Johnny Dawes has been much less active in the Peak of late and only managed to ascend a couple of desperates. The horribly leaning arete right of Leaning Block Crack on Burbage North fell to him at E7+ 6c with as yet no name. Despite an RP0 for protection queues have been slow to form. He also climbed the arete and bulge left of Morridge Business at Gib Torr, *The Stall* E4 7a.

What with John Dunne, Jonny Woodward, Johnny Dawes and John Allen you would think it impossible to be any good on grit if your name isn't John. Well, almost, but not quite. Simon (middle name John?) Nadin was able to fit in a visit to his home ground, The Roaches, in between World Championships, opening climbing walls and flashing some of the hardest routes in the country. His new route climbs the steep slab left of Ascent of Man on pebbles and smears at E7 6c, *KP Nuts*.

Othersnippets on grit include Andy Barker's *Woodwo*, which climbs the obvious overhang on White Tor (Derwent Edge!) at E6 6c, and a couple of goodies at Stanage. *Turtle Power* (Yeuk) E6 6c, is a good route up the wall left of Slap 'n Spittle from Neil Travers, and Paul Smith just beat John Allen to the long-awaited direct finish to Dawes' *Saltation*, *Exhalation* at E5 6c.

Now for limestone, where the enormous development can only be briefly summarised without boring everybody to death. Big news of 1990 was Ben Moon's ascent at Raven Tor of what he described as 'The hardest thing I have ever done'. Billed as the hardest limestone route in the world, Hubble was felt worthy of an 8c+ (E9+ 7b) grade and effectively free-climbs the start of The Whore of Babylon, but then trends left to finish up Revelations. Ben also made the first repeat of Chimes Of Freedom since a 'crucial' block under the roof came away. The route now rates around 8a+. Also here Malc Taylor climbed the wall right of another Moon desperate, Pump up the Power, to leave *Spittal and Rump*.

Most activity has concentrated further down the valley and in particular in Chee Dale where the blank walls have been steadily relenting to the drill. As one wag commented in the Stoney book, 'Even Dresden didn't get this much hammer!' Most of the worthwhile routes are in the 7a+ to 7b+ category and are the work of a small but enthusiasatic team of locals including Keith (undercuts) Sharples, Malc (never worth three stars) Taylor, Chris (monster falls) Wright and Chris (red tracksuit bottoms) Hardy.

Area Notes

Fewer but harder routes have also come from the likes of Ben Moon, Mark Pretty, Chris Plant, Sean Myles and John Hart.

Having armed his drill and drilled his arms, Sharples climbed a number of lines between High Society and Monopedagogue. *Fatal Attraction* E4 6a, straightens out Chain of Command, whose finish is now reached via the steep *Jungle Rock* 7b. The undercuts (what else?) and groove left again provided Sharples with probably his finest route, *Brothers in Arms* 7b+. The groove just left of High Society was climbed by Hardy to leave one of the most popular routes on the wall, *Kiss Me Hardy* 7a+. Further right, another worthwhile addition was made by Chris Wright whose *Atlantic Realm* makes the most of the gap left of Gob On The Mountain at 7b.

Two Tier Buttress had few notable new routes, although one sad event was the almost inevitable chipping of one of the best remaining lines. The culprit is unknown, but the line, the groove left of Countdown, received an ascent from Chris Gore, to leave *Entree* 8a+. More pleasant news was Lucien Cottle's eventual success on the roof right of System's Malfunction. *Titter Ye Not* receives the grade of...oooh...no Mrs!...listen...oooh...aagh...8a.

Across the river The Nook saw plenty of action. Chris Plant climbed the superb *Michael Foot Jam* 7c+, and the short but extremely steep wall right of t'old roof routes was breached by three more climbs; *A Bit of Nooky* by Mark Pretty, and *The Lockless Monster* and *Theoria*, both by John Hart, and all around 8a.

The other area to see intense development was The Cornice where one of the most stunning lines in the Peak was eventually led free by Sean Myles. *Monumental Armbuster* 8b, is enough to make anybody want to spend a year in the gym. Left of this two smaller, but extremely difficult routes, (both 8a), were added, *Masculine Power Trip* and *Mescaline Power Trip* by Ben Moon and Mark Pretty respectively. Further right, Malc Taylor's *Feminine Ego Trip* 7c+, and *Taylor Made* 7c, are also worth seeking out. Other aid routes to go free were Contortion, which saw Keith Sharples move up a gear to leave the superb *The Jug Jockey* at 7c+, and *Cry of Despair* climbed by Chris Hardy to produce an excellent 7c route.

Further right, Sean Myles added another desperate to the wall just left of Powerplant; *Four Door Dostoyevsky* has reputedly brilliant climbing at 8a+. Right of Powerplant, and just left of Unleashing... John Hart finally succeeded on a project to leave the typically powerful *R'n P* 8a+. Finally from this part of the Wye Valley, Nigel Slater, added a very good direct finish to *Cosmopolitan*, *Cordless Madness* at a much more reasonable 7b+, although his bolt hangers, reputedly costing about 25p each in Spain make a baked beans can look meaty!

The other Cornice, over in Water-cum-Jolly has seen nearly as much frantic activity. Malc Taylor went left of Brachiation Dance with his *Dole 1989* 7b, whilst Ben Masterson found a gap in between to produce the controversially named *Yorkshire 8b* — grade 8a! Right of Brachiation Dance, Andy Pollitt, added the superb line of *The Rumble in the Jungle* 8a+ which contains some outrageous all-out horizontal jumps! Just left of Empire Burlesque, Mark Pretty cemented up seven holds on his *Disillusioned Glue Machine* which rates as 8a, and received an on sight flash by Ben Moon. The wall right of Empire...was finally breached by *Sirius* which has a nasty sting in the tail at 7c and was added by Chris Wright.

Other routes in W-c-J worth a mention, include Chris Plant's *The Sissy* 7c+, up the wall left of Zeke...and Simon Nadin's *The Inch Test*, a free version of Battle of the Bulge at 8a+.

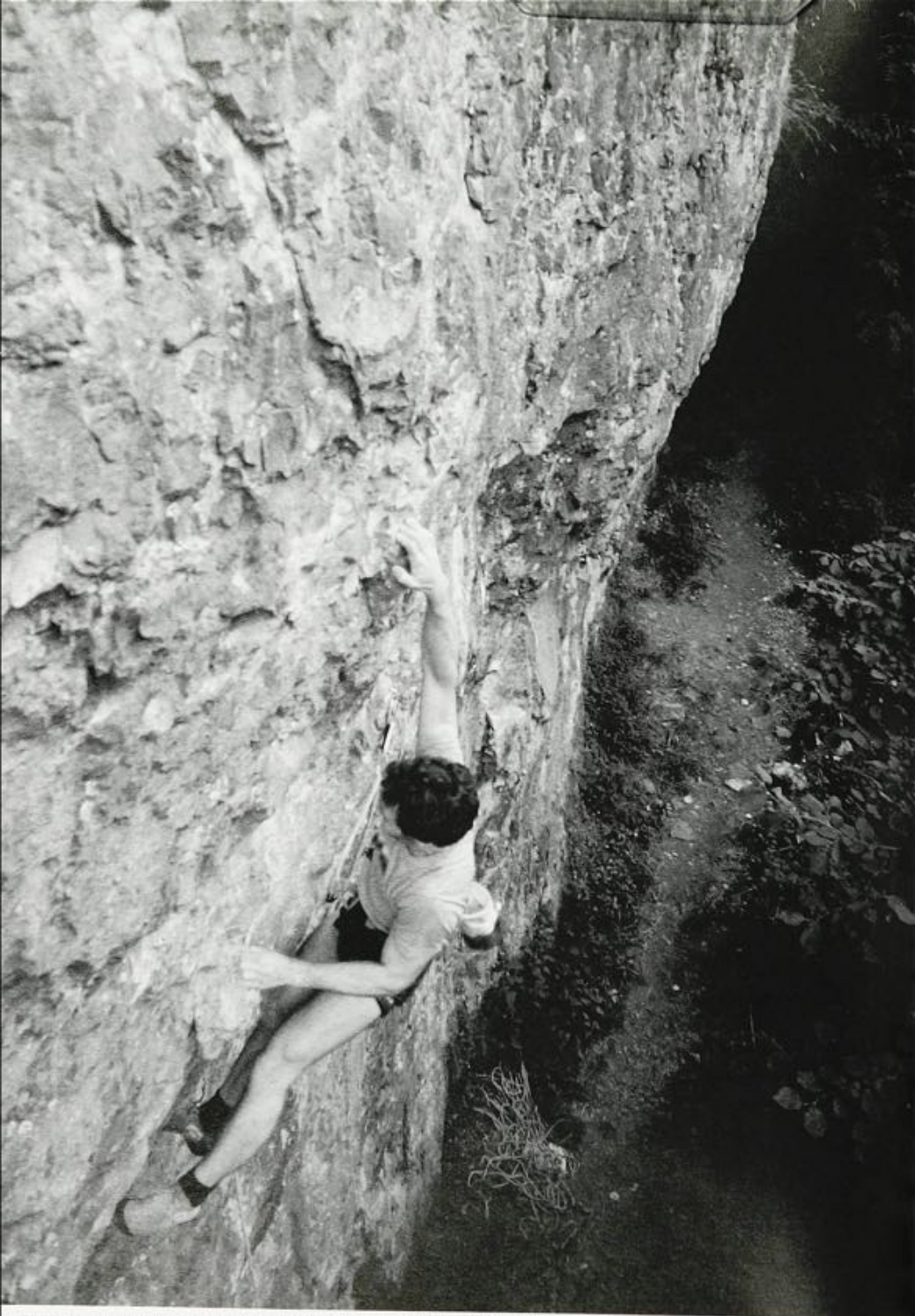
Slightly farther upstream, at the southern end of Tideswell Dale, another very hard route appeared from Ben Moon. *Culloden* 8b, which climbs the wall right of The Meanie.

Next year is likely to bring even more hard routes as projects began this year reach fruition, but the standard of the routes can only progress if the 'blank' walls are not attacked with hammers. Its sobering to think how many of today's routes could have been the hard routes of the future.

Graham Hoey



Malc Taylor on 'Monumental Armblaster', Chee Dale. Photo: Keith Sharples



Keith Sharples on the first ascent of 'Flowers in the Dirt'. Photo: Sharples collection



John Hart on his own new route 'R 'n P', Chee Dale. Photo: Ian Smith



Chris Hardy on the first ascent of 'Cry of Despair', Chee Dale. Photo: Ian Smith



Keith Sharples on his own new route 'The Jug Jockey', Chee Dale. Photo: Ian Smith

Climbing on the Island this year pushed Lundy to the forefront of the current maintenance of adventure climbing. A major bolt revolt took place. Who else might we expect to initiate these developments but none other than Pat Littlejohn who returned to not let sleeping bolts lie. In a visit in the early part of the season, carefully timed to throw down a challenge, Littlejohn re-climbed a number of significant routes without their bolts, previously claimed 'impossible' without. On his departure Littlejohn commented 'unless we turn the tide on bolting, the sort of bold, daring, adventurous approach which makes British climbing so special (and is epitomized in the South West) will die forever on Lundy'.

What followed, clearly had the desired effect on the rest of the season. Bolts were chopped and routes were re-climbed on over half the bolted routes on Lundy. The Diamond was consequently made entirely bolt-free. Aid points were eliminated from other routes, and 'adventure' new routeing continued with renewed enthusiasm particularly from Dave Thomas and Nick White. The response to Littlejohn's visit was such that climbers like Gary Gibson were re-climbing their own previously bolted routes. A guilty Steve Boydon eliminated the only bolt he'd ever placed on Lundy, thus giving himself a clear conscience, and not to be left out, Steve Findley even went so far as claiming a chalk free ascent of Widespread Ocean of Fear; such was the fever which gripped the island.

Littlejohn, partnered by Nick White, began the year's climbing with controversy by de-bolting The Cullinan and Charles Mattress (E6 6a). The former route was re-climbed by taking the true arete and a new name of *Flying the Colours*, and grade E6 6b is proposed.

Littlejohn then turned his attention to The Diamond and quickly eliminated the bolt on the first pitch of Chase The Ace. Hungry for more, Pat went for the kill and managed a bolt-less ascent of Watching the Ocean using RP protection. A new grade of E7 6b was given. Controversy raged on this route too because Pat had undertaken his lead with the bolts still in place. Littlejohn's short but sharp visit ended with an impressive 'on sight' lead of the line left of Vincent Price, described as Lundy's answer to Zukator, *The Price of Admission* E6 6b, 6a.

Next to arrive was Steve Boydon who with Annette Bunning, eliminated the bolt on his own route, Technicolour Cruise E5 6a (new grade). Moving round to the headwall above The Devil's Slide, Steve found a hard crackline *Ticket to Ride* E6 6b. More routes followed. In the mist of the heat wave Steve and Annette escaped to find *The Shade Seekers* E3 5c, *Every Ready* E3 5c, and *Power Plus* E3 6a, down in the Battery Area. Finally the pair added *The Wacky Races* E4 5c to First Buttress South in Landing Craft Bay.

By the time Gary Gibson arrived in early August the scene was set. Gary headed straight to The Diamond and, in a single day wiped out the crag with some impressive performances. The first bolts to fall were on Smear No Fear, and Smear or Disappear both E5 (new grades). Chase the Ace was rid of its last remaining bolt on the second pitch, the grade remaining the same at E6. Buzzing, Gary went on to claim 'the first time ascent' of Watching the Ocean by first removing the bolts then re-climbing the route. In characteristic competitiveness Gary not only down-graded the E grade from Littlejohn's E7 but also gave it a technical grade less than his original ascent in 1985. It is true that Littlejohn left the bolts in place and had psychological and retreat advantage on his ascent. Having said this, Littlejohn's ascent was significantly and ethically better than the original by a long shot, and Gibson's final ascent better still. Whatever the case the route is now clean, as to the grade, repeats will only tell.

Meanwhile, in a more traditional vein, Dave Thomas was undertaking fantasy adventures with Indiana Jones on Two Legged Buttress. He began his journey, along with Simon Berry and Tim Gallaher, across the 'voyage' wall, with the *Grail Trail* (E5 6a, 5a). Then, with Nick White, he found *The Last Crusade* (E5 6b) up a groove leaving Bleed for Speed. *The Quest* (E6 6b) was his other addition taking a hanging groove above the 'voyage' belay.

A crusade of a different kind continued on nearby Black Crag with Gibson at work with his spanner rather than drill. He removed offending ironmongery then re-climbed; *My Life in my Hands*, *Emergency Ward Ten*, *Intensive Scare*, and *Mayan Skies*, creating four instant classic 'death trips'. It is probably only a matter of time now for Black Crag to become bolt-free too.

The Punchbowl Cliff saw renewed attention. Gibson chopped the bolt on Atlantic Mocean E7 6b (new grade) and added a new direct start. He also did *Oliver Smile* E5 6b which starts up Golden Handshake. Matt Ward also found another route here, as yet unnamed at E4 6a, with Roy Thomas.

Gardening sessions began in earnest down on the Pathfinder Slabs for the Gibson, Thomas, and Ward team. Working from left to right they unearthed *Little Bath* E5 6a, *Bathfinder* E6 6b, a big pitch right of Roy of the Rovers, and *Douglas Bather* E1 5b left of Immaculate Slab. This rounded up their activities

before running out of time.

Several routes saw a few aid points eliminated. Nick Steen with Nick Brickley returned to free his own route Tutenkhamen at E2 6a. Simon Cardy and Mark Bartley freed Rusty Silk at E3 6a in Heron Zawn, and also Road Runner in Landing Craft Bay at E3 6b. Matt Carr and Bruce Molyneux ventured into the depths of Deep Zawn to free Antiworlds of its one point of aid at E4 6a, a prize well worth capturing. Seven routes however still have aid to be eliminated. The Great Divide, Golden Gate, and Wild Country down on Focal Face all use aid to overcome the smooth bold and blank start to the routes and will hold out for years (dare it be said). The Bow in Hidden Zawn is only HVS with 1 point of aid but so far has eluded all attempts to find the line of the route. The Vice on Beef Buttress again uses aid to start the route, but the few holds that exist are usually occupied by limpets. Of the two other routes with aid, Mexican Connection on the Devil's Anniversary cliff is buried beneath a carpet of lichen and Space Bandit near the Devil's Slide faces east, is always wet, and never sees the sun long enough to dry out. With so few aid points remaining hopefully we can look forward to the day in the not so distant future when the island is totally free, along with all its bolts.

Deep Zawn also saw another worthy addition to the back wall with *A Friction Romance* E4 5c/6a up the corner right of Play Genetics courtesy of Pete Cobb and Bruce Molyneux. In the little known Ten Foot Zawn Howard Darwin and Tom Valentine found *Free Rain* E4 5c.

Paul Harrison's team launched their annual pilgrimage from the north end, making the most of staying up in Tibbetts which means sacrificing evening trips to the pub, unless you like walking lots. Working from north to south and starting with The Constable they found *The Chief Constable* E5 6a, Harrison, Mike Snell, Cardy and Bartley, and *Serious Climb Squad* E2 5c Cardy and Snell. In the North Light area Harrison and Snell told a *White Lie* VS, the arete left of the left hand dyke.

Moving a little further south on Rock Pool Buttress Mike Snell and Simon Cardy were like *Fish Out Of Water* E3 5c, a tough roof crack on the second buttress, just below plateau level. Cardy and Snell were also responsible for the discovery of Cormorant Zawn just below Rock Pool Buttress. The two routes here were *The Buoy Prophet* E3 5b taking the left-hand crack and *Harpoon* E2 5b taking the right-hand crack.

On the strangely named Cyclops Zawn *Beach and Surf Check* E3 6a, takes the slab right of Chopper Squad, Cardy, Harrison, and Snell. On Grapefruit Buttress, which overlooks Cyclops Zawn, Paul climbed *Serious Lobster Juggling* E4 6a, the excellent arete left of Pomplmouse, and the wall right of Pomplmouse, *Mussel Up* E3 5c.

Arch Zawn was next on the list and a return visit finally saw the completion of *The Pathetic Sharks* E4 6b after several attempts over the last two years by Harrison who was usually defeated by dampness. This takes a gently overhanging crack in the buttress left of Arch Fiend. Just round the corner Harrison and Cardy found a pleasant eliminate between Arch Fiend and The Flue, *Mutiny on the Belay* E1 5b.

In the St. James Stone area, Mark Bartley and Harrison went *Crack Climbing for Beginners* E1 5b said to 'have everything' from thin fingers to offwidth. The pair also climbed *Moondance* E1 5b, the arete left of Mars Bar. On Black Bottom Buttress the same team with Cardy put up a direct start to *Pancake Shuffle, The Bottom Inspectors* E4 6a.

Moving their accommodation back down south the Harrison party set about less accessible objectives. On the Devil's Chimney Cliff Cardy and Harrison climbed *Cat O'Nine Tails* E1 5b, the crack and groove right of Overboard, and on Beef Buttress who else could the Wolverhampton team think of but, *Steve Bull* E2 5c, the crack left of The Vice on excellent rock.

During the same two weeks all this was going on Dave Thomas and Nick White held each other's ropes on a number of interesting adventures. To begin with, however, Nick went walkabout on Gannet's Buttress and soloed *Stormbound* E3 6a, and *Gale Force* E2 5c, a superb jamming crack.

Nick White went on to Seal Slab and found an E5 6a, *Shardik*, amongst the V. Diffs. Nick then turned his attention to the Parthenos to complete part II of his 'Devon Trilogy' *The Groove* E6 6b, partnered by Dave Thomas. Nick was called to The Battery to clock up some flying time on the stunning arete and headwall on the north side of the arch. This became the *Flying Dutchman* E7 6c, split into two pitches. Nick said that the climb only dries out in the most violent of storms due to climatic conditions. A repeat in one pitch is still awaiting a likely candidate. This is possibly Lundy's hardest route in conventional style.

Dave Thomas also paid a visit to The Parthenos and came up with an impressive E6 6a taking a line of flakes, then a roof, from the first pitch of Too Precious. The route is as yet unnamed. Dave also came up with another as yet unnamed route at E3 6a in the same vicinity.

Area Notes

Thomas then made his statement on The Diamond, finding an independent line between Wild Heart and Watching the Ocean, assumed by many to have been worked out. Again the climb is without a name but can be climbed at E6 6a.

A few more routes continued to trickle through. On Alpine Buttress, Julian Chapman and Pete Cobb found *Digby* E4 5c and *Pretty in Yellow* E2 5c, the latter possibly the same line as that taken by Fusion. Howard Darwin and Tom Valentine added a direct finish to Shadeseekers at E3 5c whilst Cobb and Chapman took *Take the Biscuit* E2 5c in Hob Nob Zawn.

Nearby on Goat Island D Corben and B Chambers found *Black Beard* VS 4c. Further up the Island Ian Braziel and Tim Dennell discovered *Waves and Caves* V Diff in the St. James Stone area just to prove you can still find routes of all grades on Lundy. Stu Thompson, Wayne Gladwin and Nigel Callahan told another story in Short Storey Zawn which they called *Moonfleet* at Mild VS.

The year ended with some big surprises during October when the Island saw the return of Matt Carr and Pete Cobb. Matt was on the island in August but had to give in early with a dislocated shoulder. Not missing out the pair went to make some excellent routes. On Focal Face Carr forced a technical face route to the right of Olympica, *Atlas* E5 6b, which takes in the crux section of Wimps Wall, which it will probably supercede. On The Pyramid they climbed a *Wild Trip on Jugs* E4 5c, this is reported to be everything you might expect a route to be with a name like that.

Deep Zawn also grabbed their attention with *If I Should Fall From Grace with God* E4 6a, 5c which starts as for Play Genetics, then follows a crackline near the Stone Tape. In a quest to pull out a route on every major crag The Diamond failed to escape. *Motion in the Ocean* E5 6a girdles the face from right to left crossing all the other famous routes. Carr and Cobb also dropped into the Phantom Zawn area to climb *The Tempest* E6 6a which takes a powerful line up the overhanging wall round the corner from Friction Impossible, rounding off a remarkable year of island climbing.

Simon Cardy

