

The
Climbers' Club
Journal

1992

**The
Climbers' Club Journal**

Edited by
Smiler Cuthbertson

1993
The Climbers' Club

This is the one hundred and eleventh 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 and
printed by Hi-Tec Print, Dinnington, South Yorkshire.
©The Climbers' Club, 1993.

Climbers' ^{The} Club Journal

Vol XXI No. 2 (New Series) No. 111

1992

Contents

	Page
Editorial.....	5
To Alison.....Terry Gifford	6
Some Classic Alpine Climbs.....George Band	7
Riding the Red Line.....Bevis Bowden	12
A Patagonia Portrait.....Neil Boyd	14
Icefall Climbing in the Gran Paradiso.....John Sumner	19
Cautionary Tale for Members	
Paying Half-subscribers.....Ken Stringer	21
A Tribute to Chris Briggs.....Peter Harding	22
Hillbilly Deluxe.....Simon Cardy	25
A Nine Star Day.....Steve Foxley	29
The Last Pitch.....Lindsay Griffin	32
Or was it a Ptarmigan?.....Robin A. Hodgkin	34
Happy Bananas.....Stuart Miller	36
A Close Shave?.....John Harwood	45
Caucus-Race.....Stephen Reid	47
The Kitchen.....Dave Gregory	52
Permanent Good Weather.....Dave Wilkinson	56
Nanga Parbat via the Mazeno Ridge and	
Mount Vinson, Antarctica.....Doug Scott	58
Buzzing and other Phenomena in	
Thunderous Conditions.....Hal Jacob	62
Farewell to Filo.....Peter Harding	64
In the Footsteps of a King.....Chris Craggs	69
The Gentle Art of Mountain	
Marathon Running.....Mike Browell	72
Ronnie's Last Long Climb.....Terry Gifford	78
Obituary.....	82
Officers and Officials of the Club.....	96
Reviews.....	97
Area Notes.....	108



Above: The new living room, Ynys Ettws. Below: The whole show.
 Photos: Rod Hewing Collection.



EDITORIAL

My autumn and early winter of 1993 was a frantic period, spending endless hours on the computer (learning how to work it most of the time!), reaching decisions, accepting advice from more experienced mentors. The strengths and versatilityes of the Club are reflected in the Journal. Events occurring in 1992 are reported the following year. A publication delay causes complications. There are many problems in putting together a Journal, and as 1993 was a busy year for me, I found time slipped away. In an effort to publish in the year, all available hours were spent asking members to provide interesting and useful articles. This is often left to a small band of regular contributors (to whom I'm very grateful) but I would like to see an input from a broader section of members.

One of my duties as Editor, is to report on the unfortunate passing away of our members. If that person was well-known, currently in the 'stream' of modern climbing, the problem of finding an obituary writer is not so great. It's worth noting that there was a great influx of people to climbing in the late '20s and early '30s. Many of these new climbers recognised the importance of membership to our senior club, the advantages, social contacts etc. The Club grew in numbers. That was over 60 years ago. 1992 has come and gone. So, unfortunately, have a number of CC members: Chris Briggs, Giles Barker, Bill Younger, Jo Kretschmer, Francis Keenlyside, Mick Hardwick, Henry Fairfield, John Richard Walters, J.H. Palmer and Clifford (C.D.) Bingham. The sad but inevitable result of growing old needs no explanation. Tragic accidents are even more hurtful. I searched and searched for obituary writers, succeeding in all cases except Mr Palmer, who lived in Southsea, Hampshire, and Clifford (C.D.) Bingham, who lived in Droitwich. Maybe noting these here and now, members will recognise them as long lost climbing partners, and write about them for the next journal.

A tragic event early in 1993 was the death of Dave Cook. As this journal was very late into the printers, I felt I could and should include the obituary of one of our most loved and respected members.

Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, many of our more senior members will inevitably be reaching the end of the road. More tragic accidents will take place (hopefully not, but with membership standing at around 1,000 the Climbers' Club has a fair share of the country's active and leading climbers).

So, a few requests:

- Look after yourselves and be careful out there.
- Keep flooding the articles in to me — if not used in the current year's journal, it helps the next one!

Even a slight knowledge of a member, noted in the obituary section of the circular, would greatly assist the 'Sherlock Holmes' requirement — (he didn't solve all his cases on his own!)

- Club huts. We now have six. Without question they are some of the finest climbers' establishments in the country. A lot of time and money has been spent improving the standards, and more members should visit and stay in our huts. They are for our use, not just an avenue of finance from outside club block bookings. So please, if you've not done so for a year or two, go and visit a hut. You'll be pleasantly surprised, and planning your next visit soon after.

Smiler

To Alison

In memoriam - Dave Cook

I'm at 39,000 feet and it's desperate.
I don't know how to start this poem,
home is rushing up fast and I rarely
remember dreams long enough to tell,
even this brief Grand Canyon dream.
Should I begin with the evening before it
camping a mile below the earth's rim,
the sun setting down the river's length,
orange ancient walls, surging brown water,
the lightest breeze lifting white leaves?

Or with Dave's smile suddenly popping up
over the rim of Curbar Edge that day
he'd left his jacket on the train
with the Club hut key in it, his gentle joke
against my new mountain bike, the woman
below still struggling with his well-placed
protective gear and a weekend away with Dave?

I've avoided starting with the shuddering
moment of disbelief that Dave, lover of rock
and roll, gritstone, politics and all of us
is dead. Now, how can I broach this dream
I'm carrying back from the canyon bottom
that rock-hard night of tired naked rest
when Dave drifted over through the pub crowd,
a welcomed mocking smile keen to talk?
You see, that's all it is, was, this dream
I was so pleased to see him, that he
was still around in there somewhere,
that I immediately woke up wanting
to tell you, to register this small joy.

Terry Gifford

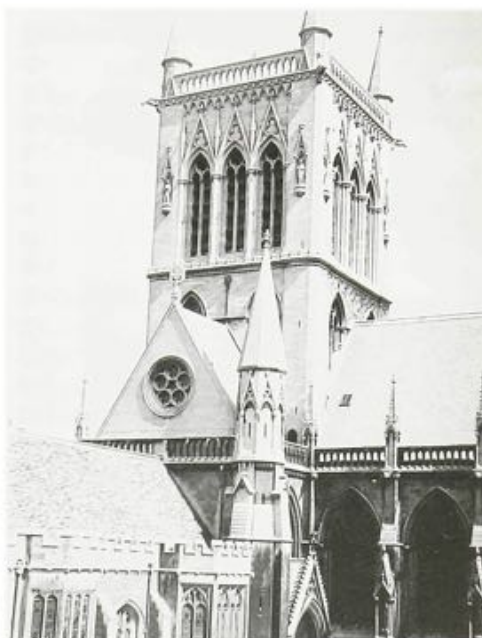
Some Classic Alpine Climbs

George Band

The Exhibition on 'Wordsworth and the Alps' held in Dove Cottage, Grasmere, marked the 200th anniversary of his formidable tour of the Alps in 1790. As a mere mountaineer and no artist or scholar of literature or poetry, I was most surprised to be invited to contribute to this study weekend commemorating the great poets, painters and travellers who were inspired by the Alps around that time. To this end I gave the following talk:

In Wordsworth's day, when very few of the great Alpine peaks had been climbed, it was more the fashion for a Cambridge undergraduate like him to spend the long summer vacation on a walking tour, striding along the mountain paths covering up to 30 or 40 miles a day. Forty years later, as Dorothy Wordsworth described in her letters, Wordsworth's companion Robert Jones, 'fat and roundabout and rosy, and puffing and panting' up very moderate hills, 'looked back at that journey as the golden and sunny spot in his life'. So too, my own undergraduate adventures in the early '50s were equally treasured; but instead of marathon walks, the contemporary fashion for an aspiring mountaineer was to tackle some of the classic Alpine climbs. Let me describe a few.

But first, one had to be reasonably fit. Whereas Wordsworth exercised around the 'groves of Cambridge', the climber needs more rigorous training. What better than the vertiginous tower of St John's College Chapel, Wordsworth's own College? It had defeated the earlier generation of night climbers, being first overcome, I believe, in the '30s by a brilliant rock climber and pole vault blue who later distinguished himself on Everest. Very early on the morning before I took my degree, John Streetly and I slunk along the backs, swung over the railings and soon found ourselves roping up at the base of the chapel. Some drainpipes and a steep sloping corner gave access to the ridge on top of the northern chancel where John belayed. From there a short drainpipe allowed me to mantelshelf onto the bowl at its top from which I could gain access to the base of the central vertical window. The glass was suffi-



*St John's Chapel, Cambridge.
Photo: George Band*

ciently set back so that I could wedge across the window frame using the traditional 'back and foot' technique employed in chimney climbing. A horizontal iron bar set into the stone just below the apex of the window enabled me to fix a running belay to protect a possible fall during the next crucial move in a very exposed position. One had to move out boldly right onto the face, stepping on a tiny horizontal coping around the stone column which separated the windows and fortuitously continued up the face above. The column ended in a carved knob just proud of the face and about two feet below the horizontal ribbing which formed the base of the topmost balustrade. It was possible to move up by pressing my palms against either side of the column and by edging each foot on the steeply sloping ribbing surrounding the apex of each window. From a sort of squatting position on the knob, I could just reach up and grasp the base of the balustrade. With adrenalin pumping, I swung over the top in a surge of excitement, belayed, and brought up John. Nobody had seen us. Before any other early risers might detect us on this glorious June morning we abseiled down the face, coiled up the rope, and clambered back into our own college.

The young British climber, who has cut his teeth on college chapels, or more conventionally on the crags of North Wales or the Lake District, gravitates naturally to the granite aiguilles of Chamonix below Mont Blanc. One of the finest of these is the Grépon (3,482m). It was first climbed by A.F. Mummery with the guides Alexander Burgener and Benedikt Venetz in 1881. It is wedge shaped with a highly serrated crest giving a series of problems: the smooth and strenuous *Mummery Crack*; the *Trou du Canon* through which one emerges onto the face overlooking the Mer de Glace; the *Râteau de Chèvre* along which one wriggles with a leg straddled either side. At one point just below the summit an extraordinarily

square cut horizontal ledge, the *Vire aux Bicyclettes*, provides a grand balcony overlooking the glacier, thousands of feet below. The very steep wall beside it provides the climax of the direct route up the East Face first climbed by Jones, Todhunter and Young with Knubel and Brocherel in 1911. Geoffrey Winthrop Young's breathtaking account of Joseph Knubel's ascent of the final crack which now bears his name is one of the great passages of mountain writing. Knubel, a short man, jammed his ice-axe horizontally behind two blocks, pulled up and stood on it in order to reach the final holds. Unusually, our French guidebook contained a detailed hold by hold description of the more orthodox way in which it is now climbed by lesser mortals. On the summit a small firmly cemented statue of the Virgin Mary, with numerous rope slings draped round her feet, is the anchor point from which one can rope down 20m to begin the descent.



Rue des Bicyclettes. Aiguille de Grépon. Photo: George Band

After successful ascents on the firm granite of the aiguilles, one can proceed with increased confidence to the 4,000m peaks of the Valais in Switzerland for mixed routes on metamorphosed gneiss and crumbling schist laced with snow and ice. One of the more striking of these is the Dent Blanche (4,357m), the 'monstrueuse coquette' of Maupassant. Its four ridges form a cross; the long South Ridge being the easiest for ascent and descent; the East and West, steeper and more difficult; hardest of all is the North Ridge, which in its central section plunges vertically down towards the Col de la Dent Blanche. Although the mountain was first climbed in 1862 it was not until 1928, 66 years later that the North Ridge was overcome, and then, delightfully, by an English couple on their honeymoon: the professor of English Literature, Ivor Roberts, with Dorothy Pilley, expertly guided by Joseph Georges and his brother Antoine. Another 15 years elapsed before the second ascent by a crack Swiss team which included a mature Cambridge microbiologist and personal friend, Alfred Tissières.

The ridge still had very few ascents and maintained an awesome reputation. No British guideless party had attempted it. But Alfred encouraged John Streetly and me to have a go.

We started from the col at the first glimmer of daylight. The ridge rose like a pyramid for 700ft, and ended abruptly, abutting a vast sheet of slabs which were cloaked with ice and snow. The slabs leant like a penthouse roof against an impending vertical wall. A rising traverse to the right across this roof led to a narrow brèche and, above it, the only breach in this vertical wall. We took too high a line on the traverse. The climbing became delicate. Suddenly, the block John was holding in both hands broke off. Down he went for 20ft in a cloud of dust and debris. Fortunately I was well belayed and able to hold him or we might both have taken Browning too literally to heart: 'A man's reach must exceed his grasp else what's a heaven for?' In three rope lengths we reached the brèche. The wall above overhung and the holds were smooth and rounded but a short length of rope left flapping in the breeze gave an extra hold. John swarmed up and I followed on a tight rope. With increasing fatigue we climbed the lengthy upper section. At last, the three great ridges converged and we cut steps along a little snow ridge to the summit at 3.45pm. In the hot sun, unpleasant memories of the lower traverse faded into oblivion.

Beyond the Dent Blanche across the Zmutt glacier lies the incomparable Matterhorn and beyond that, after the Theodul Pass is the long undulating ridge of the Breithorn (4,165m). On its north side it falls sheer, but from the eastern summit a complex ridge descends, part ice, part snow, part rock - the *Klein Triftji Ridge*. It is more commonly known as the *Younggrat*, for in 1906 it was the scene of yet another brilliant first ascent by Geoffrey Winthrop Young, with Robertson and Mayor, again guided by Joseph Knubel with Moritz Ruppen. We felt it was a fitting climb to mark the centenary celebrations of the Alpine Club. In 1958, the hoteliers of Zermatt offered generous hospitality so a large number of members were in town and several parties agreed to join up for the climb. Chris Brasher and I found ourselves in the lead with some very distinguished climbers, including John Hunt, following behind. The lower section is a delightful snow ridge, then come rocky pinnacles climbed rather precariously in crampons. Then the angle steepens and the ridge merges into an icy couloir. Here, in 1928, four young Frenchmen attempted the second ascent. One slipped, pulled off the others and



Dent Blanche, North Ridge from the Grande Cornier. Photo: George Band

striking, particularly when seen from the north-east, is the monolithic tower of Mont Aiguille (2,086m). Resting on a sloping plinth of shale, its walls stand proud on all sides, 1,000ft high, its summit seemingly remote and inaccessible. And yet, it was the scene of the first genuine mountaineering challenge, accepted and achieved. When Charles VIII of France passed by in 1492 he was so struck that he ordered his Chamberlain, the Lord of Dompjulian and Beaupre, to make its ascent. After several weeks of trying with the aid of 'subtle means and engines' they succeeded. A commemorative plaque records that Anton de Ville, the local military prefect, and his seven companions reached the top. The ascent was not repeated until 1834, nearly 350 years later. Even now, approaching the quincenary, the easiest route is still considered a respectable climb, made easier by a few fixed cables.

We chose a route on the West Face, *Des Gemeaux*, just within our ageing ability; we totalled 182 years between us. Mike Westmacott led, I followed and the veteran Mike Banks, at 63, brought up the rear. The first 20ft, graded IV+ / V, were the hardest technically we were told; if we managed that we could do the rest. A series of short walls and cracks followed; all very steep. Then Mike led the second crux; a short impending wall where one felt rather exposed and thrown off balance. I had a few scruples about pulling up on several pitons which had been left in place. After six pitches, the angle eased and we joined the normal route. Another 300ft and we reached the top. But this was no knife edged crest; instead we frolicked like lambs over 30 acres of lush ungrazed meadow and alpine flowers; a total contrast to the snowbound Dauphiné we had left behind. It was

all fell to their deaths. We resolved to climb these final pitches very safely and joined up in one long roped party. As I clambered over the final cornice onto the summit ridge at 2pm, Chris Brasher remembered that he had to be producing an article for *The Observer* in his London office at 10am the next morning. Accepting the challenge, we raced down the mountain without waiting for the others, retrieved his green Triumph TR2 and drove overnight across France crunching benzidrine tablets and taking turns at the wheel.

Some years a heavy summer snowfall puts the high Alps totally out of condition for a week and one searches out rock climbs of character on the lower hills. This happened to us in the Dauphiné Alps in 1987. So we withdrew and drove south towards Nice and the sunshine. To the west, a few miles off the road are the limestone cliffs of the Vercors. By far the most

a marvellous finish to our holiday.

As we drove north that evening, rejoicing in the afterglow of our climb, I wondered what it is that still brings mature men back time and again to the mountains. I am very happy to let that great pioneer of climbs in the Alps and Caucasus, A.F.Mummery provide my epilogue:

'It has led me into regions of such fairy beauty that the fabled wonders of Zanadu seem commonplace beside them; it has brought me friends who may be relied on in fair weather and foul; and it has stored my mind with memories that are treasures, corruptible neither by moth nor rust, sickness nor old age'.

He recalls, 'The great brown slabs bending over into immeasurable space, the lines and curves of the wind-moulded cornice, the delicate undulations of the fissured snow, are old and trusted friends, ever luring us to health and fun and laughter, and enabling us to bid a sturdy defiance to all the ills that time and life oppose'.

Riding the Red Line

Bevis Bowden

Riding the red line is one day of a venture through Zanscar during an attempt on the unclimbed North Face of Hagshu. The mountains of Zanscar, the Kargil subdivision of Ladakh, are the outriders to the mightiest assemblage of mountains in the world, the Karakoram range. This remote land may have given rise to the setting of Shangri-La in the popular novel **Lost Horizon**.

I had almost seen too much to absorb since leaving the banks of the Indus. Below, the river, released from the Hagshu Glacier, braids its way down a gravel flood plain. The water is thick with rocks, their tumbling makes the whole river growl. We had been running the fast lane on a stormbound mountain, living in a place where reality is. Riding the red line.

Tiring friends with praise of you. They'll see that my words are true when I return. There were no smiles waiting, replies with just a nod. The drifting patches of light drift and fall, then sunlight cuts them white and cold. From the face there was no way of seeing what was coming. When the shine has no value dusk's curfew begins. That black night would have felt warmer with a spark. We stacked our ledge like deadmen in self-addressed crates to hold us until the dawn when fear and snow would lose its grip. In the vague worlds of the moonlight, time trickled by like a slow train. At times it was as bright as a reading lamp. I dream of the red line. It would be late at night and I would be tearing across some Southern state and the tachometer would glow softly in the warm darkness. I would inch the revs up and ride the red line. I wanted to cross it, see the cylinders surrender, rods rocketing into the evening stillness.

At dawn the curfew is broken. Dawn was long in coming. The nightmare had flashed and now it was over. The storm had come on a wild horse and had now ridden over us.

Lifting our eyes from our carved eyrie to the sky, a dark cold field of jewels. The parting clouds illuminate the mountains still dancing with ripples from the storm. Trailing plumes of clouds like mighty steamships, the mountains now ride the horizon. The smiles that broke gently belied troubled heads. Eyes with pale indifference in danger and in slumber, but a glance that knows the death knell. We descend the brushwork of steps and as the tide must ebb and flow we descend against the wind.

No longer in the realm of the vertical, rocks rattle and leap out of my way as I kick dust across the plain of the valley. In the distance I can see the filtered sunshine and dust dance like the trail of a twister as the horsemen and their loads make their way home. There's talk of bears amongst our Zanscari horsemen. In the canyons of moraine I wonder whether I shall step around a rock and find a grizzly slowing down to stop and stare at me. I dearly hope, moving on at the same unhurried pace as before.

The blush of the lowering sun lends an unearthly radiance to the valley as light and landscape play. Casting long shadows in the late afternoon across the Blue Bonnet and Scarlet Indian Paintbrush softening the craggy contours. I sat on a

rock and looked up. Remember the Buchaille Mor, the ancient conversation, a fiddle playing fond lamentations of old refrains, taking us back home to where the cormorant swoops and dives, to where the cry from the heart of the Highland lives on.

On reaching the road one wet satin back after another without saddle or saddle sore were revealed as the horsemen return our loads. Below the ancient trade route to Russia and Kargil. Kargil, the town where the river changes direction, sure looms large on the map. Bare poplar trees cluster on the land that stands on end. The brittle dryness of sediments and rain-poor climate qualifies Zanscar as desert with only occasional snatches of colour as bright plumes border the tumbling rivers, then sweeping up the hillsides.

The night comes softly and the cold slams down from the mountains. The mountains now slide slowly and endlessly by for a while. Soon they will become a brown smudge against the horizon. The moon floods the sky and drives the stars away. It finally sinks and the constellations emerge and dance across mile high skies.

Author's Note: Blue Bonnet and Scarlet Indian Paintbrush are flowers. The Blue Bonnet is the official state flower of Texas.



Bevis Bowden riding the Red Line. Photo: Smiler Cuthbertson

A Patagonia Portrait

"All hope, abandon ye who enter here"

Neil Boyd

It was mid-December on the Southern Patagonian Icecap. Our tents drummed and moaned, the wind blew 60, 70, 80 miles per hour. There was a kiss and smack of dry snow bullets and a dull roar of avalanches. The snow lay high, piled heavily against our sides. We began to wonder how long it took to get bedsores. And then there was the stove.

"Pricker"

"Pricker" I replied.

"Lighter"

I handed Martin the blackening Bic.

"Billy"

I put the sooty billy between our nemesis and our tightening tent fabric.

"Right, here we go." With a delicate flick of his thumb and with a sound of hissing, the stove burst into billowing yellow flames. We watched, shifted hip position and elbow, and when the smoky fumes threatened to overcome us, doused the damn thing.

"Oh dear, I think it's broken."

New Year's Day on the Central Tower of Paine. There was no wind. No wind. The rope was moving through my hands, my knuckle cut in granite fashion. The rock was rich, deep orange and perfect. Everywhere there was space. To the sun-filled east, the pampas stretched to one ocean. Behind us, the North Tower soared, and to the west, to the west lay the icecap, perfectly white, glaciers flowing from unclimbed nunataks. And behind them lay the Pacific.

Above the icecap there came a noise, I am sure a noise, like that of a 100,000 bombers, slowly, slowly came high cirrus.

"Cirrus" I said.

"Yes, cirrus."

We had a deal, born out of fear, that if cirrus broke our blue heaven we would... though I do not hope to turn again... flee.

Although failure is bitter and sore, we remember it more. Our successes seem trifling, easy and obvious. We had come as a team of four, to this outpost of wind and cloud and tried two things. To cross the Southern Patagonian Icecap and to climb the Tower, the big one, Big Ned.

Our base was Puerto Natales. The roofs of the town are all different colours and above there is often a rainbow. In the streets of this tin plate town, tumbleweed blows; in the distance are snow-scarred hills. The west is filled with mountains and fjords and is full of hope, promise and hard work.

We used, as a base, Elsa's place. It is a rusty yellow shack and to make most of the short summer season, Elsa and her daughter sleep in a cupboard behind a curtain. It's a travellers home, full of chatter, of Irish climbers calling Chilenoes 'Yer man', of salmon burning in the oven, tent and fleeces on the line, a flashing

Christmas tree by the TV, and it's not quite dark at 11pm.

To book a boat we went to the waterfront. An hour-long storm had sunk a dinghy up to its gunwales so it wallowed at its moorings. To follow in Tilmans' footsteps from Peel Inlet and to make an icecap crossing from west to east would cost us \$2,000 to hire the boat. But each day, a white cutter took tourists to view Cerro Balmaceda. For a few dollars more our sunglassed skipper would leave us in the wilderness. A one-way trip for twice the price.

So our plan was this. To reach the southern end of the icecap, get on it, walk along it and get off it at the Torres del Paine. We took 14 days' food, biscuits, pasta, soup and porridge. All good belly timber. Guy went and got the kerosene.

When we walked from our starting point at the edge of the fjord to the glacier, our corridor to the icecap, the easiest path was through knee deep bracken, but it was only bracken if we kept high on the ridges. Crossing our path were vicious tree lined gullies. At first we threw ourselves into these with boyish enthusiasm. The downhill part was reasonable. Jump over the edge and let gravity, aided by an 80lb 'sack, do the rest. The trees never stood a chance, but the hidden stream always caught us out.

"It's getting flat here, it's getting better, I can see south..." It was always the same, up to your waist in cold water. Then, of course, we had to get out. Like bears in a pit, goaded by branches, we balanced, slipped and hauled our way up the vertical slope ahead. It was sometimes possible to rest, held only by the trees, legs free, panting hard... at least it was at sea level.

Our glacier was kindly, flat and gave only a few hours of zigzagging crevasses. After 48 hours we were ensconced on a windy piece of wet ice, busy keeping down and water apart. We spent three wonderful days up there, never quite reaching the plateau. Often not seeing more than a few yards, waiting for the fall down a hole and always the driving, blowing wind, never ceasing. After two days at the head of the glacier our tents were buried and avalanches were pouring down the valley sides. A metre of snow had fallen and our fuel was bad. We admitted defeat when a hand from the tent containing the engineer and accountant passed the stove to the tent containing a lawyer and a teacher. The first tent had taken the stove to pieces, cleaned it and put it back together again, ten times. The second tent argued about it.

We spent four days trying to extract ourselves from our predicament.

"We can't go on over the icecap, cold porridge isn't bad but we have no water", said one.

"We could come off the glacier on the northern side, crash through more bush, get onto the Tyndall, cross that and reach the Torres" said another.

"Or we could skirt the lake at the end of the glacier, follow the river down to the Rio Serrano, cross it and reach the park that way. Weather's always better to the east", said a third.

"But we're definitely not going back to the fjord to signal our boat, it's too embarrassing". And we all agreed loudly.

On Christmas Eve we were back at the fjord with ripped clothes waiting for the boat. All of us thinking, 'Ah, lovely, this is the wilderness', and longing for the boat.

We had tried the third option but on reaching the Rio Serrano we faltered. It was as wide as the Ganges and glacially quick. The motion was put forward to

float it on our rucksacks. There was much contemplation of our navels and shuffling of feet.

"The cold, how long would we last?" "Look, I never really liked water". "We don't know what the bush is like on the other side". Feeble, feeble. But at last a faltering trump. "The cameras, the cameras, we can't — they'd get wet, it's too risky". We breathed a collective sigh of relief and turned again.

Sancho Panza was an old Chileno who lived in a lean-to covered in smoked plastic, with two wolves and three ragged horses. He showed us a path on his horse for an hour or two. He had lived there for 14 years and apart from rafters on the Serrano had met no-one. Having no beads or glittering baubles we gave him our chocolate. Only knee-deep bogs and eye-catching trees remained.

Back at jam buttied, scruff rugged Elsa's the travellers come and go talking of Torres del Paine.

We set off intending to climb as a three with a non-climbing fourth as mule and mental support. I was nominated to sort the paperwork out and stayed on the bus past the Towers to Park Headquarters. With the wind rattling the windows I received permit number 100 and the chief talked of climbing fees for next year. The wind moaned and sent up little scurries of dust. Walking and hitching back down the road, the Cuernos ahead, the lakes threshing like wild beasts, an English missionary picked me up. He had lived in Punta Arenas for three years.

"It's changed though, you can't leave your car door unlocked now".

Walking up past the estancia on a glorious evening with the sun golden behind the Towers and the dust kicking up from my heels, I stopped at a shack near some tethered horses. Steve was a North American hobo, reading great works and working with the horses. On his days off he was climbing a route up the East Face. He pointed to the distant towering granite wall.

"It's up on the right-hand side, up that big dihedral to the big roof. That's as far as we've got."

I questioned him on his lifestyle.

"I got my horses, some books, some climbing stuff. I don't need much else. I guess you gotta come to some sort of decision sometime in your life. You either do the thing you love or you just keep on planning to do it."

I shouldered my rucksack wisely and staggered on. We stayed at the Japanese camp, below the sighing pines and next to the river. From here it was a six hour walk to Col Bich, the tempestuous notch between the Central and North Towers.

Sobered by our surroundings we thought we should try the North Tower first. An evening was spent ferrying some weight below the slope to the col. Around us rose the Shield, Fortress and Trident. Their immensity, their smoothness, the lonesome glacier and the wind blowing, chilled us. But warmed by our walk, two of us were keen to have a bash.

"It's six o'clock now, we have five hours of light, and we could sit out the short summer dark." The third shuddered, unprepared and bitterly argued against it.

"There's no point, what, now? It's stupid, crazy and mere bravado." Disgruntled, the two caved in and we set off early next morning instead. The ice slope to the col is long. It took nearly three hours. But all morning the weather improved, clouds dissipated, the wind stopped howling and only fluttered about the slopes. At the col, roped up now, we turned left and with mitts and big boots still on, I climbed half of the first pitch looking for a foot ledge to change my boots.

With some retrospective shame, I didn't free it, I clung desperately to every karabiner piton. But the memory does not remember the cold, the wind and sudden exposure. We had soon all replaced our plastics with rubbers. Martin was gamely freeing the pitch of V with the comfort of a top-rope. It was still bitter. As he surmounted the overhang, there was a flash of white and an appalling shriek.

"I don't believe it, I don't believe it. No, not my boot, oh my boot, oh... no... my... boot."

He cursed the wind, the stars, his mother and the day he was born. The ice slope loomed larger and longer than ever for him. Down, way down on the East Face of the Central Tower, two Argentines, surprised at the boot, hollered and waved feverishly. They may have wondered if there was a foot in it. Martin had a new duvet, and he lay in it. The weather turned perfect as the col became quiet and the North and Central Towers framed the long slow sunset behind the Fortress and over the icecap.

Dave and I climbed the two more difficult pitches and wandered up the red ridge to the summit block. Here a seemingly impregnable wall gave delicate 4b climbing and we perched happily on the top.

The sun was still up and there was a peace over the earth. The low clouds lapped over the icecap and unnamed, unclimbed peaks lay to the west, unapproachable. On the pampas, the coloured jewels of the lakes glittered their last for the day and the gauchos put out their fires and settled their horses.

"Bloody good route". "Well done". "What a place". "Time we were leaving". To the south, Big Ned glowered over all.

In the dark a few hours later, we found Martin anxious to be going. We spent the night abseiling and lowering him, hopping in his one boot down the slope.

"Come on, come on", he'd say "next one." He'd thrash a big bucket seat out of the ice, I would sit in it, and lower him 300 feet more. We got down for sunrise and a perfect day was spent in the woods, sleeping. Even the next day was perfect and still we rested. Stupid, stupid; we were wasting the weather.

At one in the morning on New Year's Day, when better folk are jumping across fires clutching bottles of Haig outside the Clachaig, Dave and I set out for the *Bonington/Whillans* route on the Central Tower. Martin too, rose at midnight to make us porridge. That day he went to the eastern side of the Torres and by mid-afternoon found his boot on a pile of avalanche debris. We forsook the melting ice slope and climbed the boulders beneath the North Tower. Near the top, a pile of scattered, bleached wooden stakes and black canvas puzzled us. We realised then that it was the first Whillans box. Thirty years on, it had outlasted its master.

At the col two climbers were catching us up.

"Hello," one hollered "Are you Irish?"

Dave and I exchanged odd glances.

"No..o, but my grandad came from Cork."

It seemed they confused us with 'yer man' back at Elsa's who had been routing around here some days previously. The other two had been climbing the Shield and now raced up the North Tower. We were envious of their speed and wisdom.

I settled under the first pitch of the Central Tower. It's a thin crack that should be freed one day. Dave aided it. He looked grand, standing in etriers, his salopettes billowing, the sun already warm and the orange glow of smooth granite all around. We both felt relaxed and given time, sure of the summit, even

Patagonia

from as low as here. The next three pitches were straightforward. Little bays and ledges appeared gratefully out of the vertical granite. The two British climbers were on the North Tower opposite and it was so still we could call out to them. They were pointing at the cirrus as they abseiled down.

"Seen that, lads?"

"Aye."

But we were so relaxed, in control, loving the rock, in tune with each other, moving quickly, each pitch a daring challenge skilfully overcome. We set up the first abseil from the slabs where Whillans had pulled on a frayed rope, which parted and he stayed alive.

We got down quickly and easily. Too easily. We would have preferred a struggle through a snowstorm and a howling wind, instead it got only half bad which left us looking back at Big Ned shaking our heads and wondering.

There was not much else to it, climbing wise. I packed up after a few days in our wooden hut at base camp eating chapaties and jam, chapaties and fried onions. The weather never improved, we had had our monthly allowance. I left on my own, Dave and Martin stayed to try and fix the bottom pitch with some old rope bought from an Italian expedition. Everybody seemed to fix it they said.

A week later, I took a rest from hitching the gravel road from Puerto Natales to Punta Arenas. I lay under the big blue skies, hiding behind blades of grass from the black skirts of another blustery rain shower. Above, fleets of clouds raced eastwards across the pampas to the Atlantic, to Good Hope and beyond. Higher still there was cirrus stretching in a long curve around the earth to Antarctica.

What had we achieved? Only the North Tower? There was more. We had wandered carefree around places which few had seen and to which none had been. We had built driftwood fires along the edge of lakes, filled with wind-blown icebergs, and scattered their ashes. We had lived contentedly for a short time like men from a previous, more idyllic age, and had forgiven our losses.

I hugged the pampas and hid behind dandelion and clover. The wind whistled three inches above my head but the grass offers no shelter from these Pacific drops however low you crouch.

An account of the New Zealand Andean Expedition to Patagonia. The team consisted of Martin Wright, Dave Crofts, Guy Cory-Wright and CC member, Neil Boyd. The Expeditions' aims were to make a crossing of the Southern Patagonian Icecap and to climb the Central Tower of Paine. They did neither.

Icefall Climbing in the Gran Paradiso

John Sumner

Brian Hall's article on the International Meet on Icefall Climbing in Cogne, enticed us to have a look for ourselves at this wonderland of ice. We were not disappointed.

Chris and I arrived at Cogne, Saturday night on the 20th January. Everything was under about two feet of snow and the forecast was for a dry, cold spell.

Cogne and Lillaz were very quiet places, almost deserted. About three bars open in Cogne and one, if you were lucky, in Lillaz. By comparison, the pizza cafes and bars in Aosta were well worth the drive down the valley.

Accommodation was expensive. Only hotels existed in the area i.e. no self catering. However, a little British ingenuity soon discovered the odd derelict barn.

Our first icefall was the *Cascade Di Lillaz*, a stone's throw from our doss. Although, by the time we got there it was crawling with Italians. The first pitch was a beautiful 100 feet of steep blue ice with a crevasse finish. More pitches followed, interspersed with walks up the stream bed, the climbing mainly in the sunshine. The descent was a path through deep powder snow on the left, winding its way down through fir woods to Lillaz. Obviously a popular route for Italian climbers at week-ends, some of them having travelled from Genoa that morning.

Cascata del Lauson was next on the list. Down a deep side valley to the village of Valnontey. The cascade reared up on our right and was in full sun. A slightly longer walk of about half a mile brought us to the base. The first pitch gave superb climbing. About 130 feet of Grade 4 and every placement bomb-proof.

A bask in the sunshine at the belay, then one more good pitch brought us to an open easy gully with a track on our right, from the hamlet of La Pascieu, as our descent.



Cascata del Lauson, John Sumner on the first pitch.
Photo: John Sumner Collection

Icefall

We also climbed the *Cascata di Thoule*, again in the Valnontey Valley, its first pitch being in the shade, the upper one in the sun. An abseil descent from fir trees was the order of the day here.

We visited other side valleys during the rest of the week, mainly doing named routes from the guidebook. All were very good.

The weather was perfect — that winter alpine sparkling crystal clear stuff that gives you a tan in 10 minutes.

The Gran Paradiso National Park must also be one of those safe havens for chamois. The place was literally jumping with them. In all my wanderings through the Alps, I've never seen such a concentration. A bit like being in Scotland when the whole valley seems to be on the move with deer.

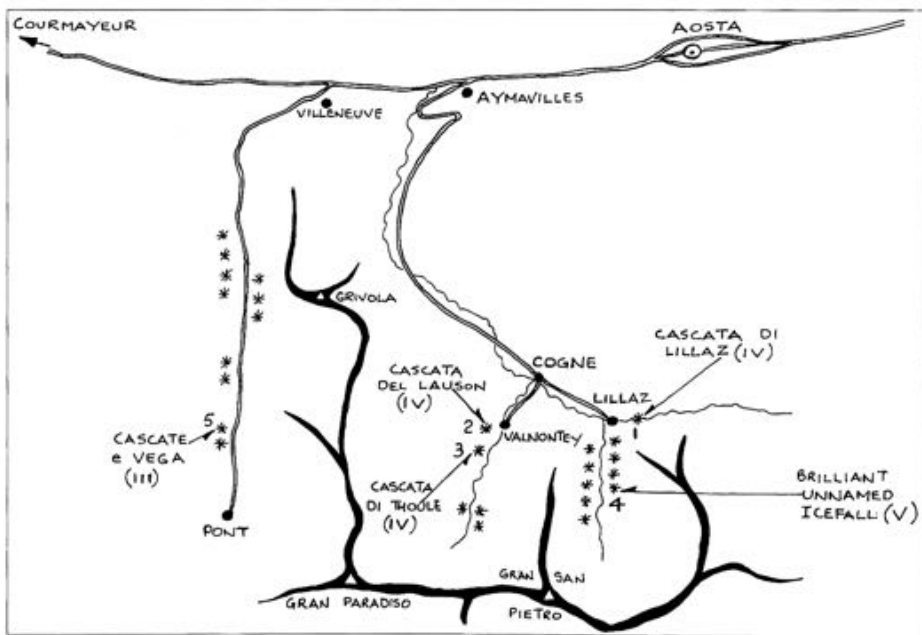
Of all the valleys we visited, one stands out above the rest. This was the Vallone Valley from Lillaz, going towards the Gran San Pietro. The icefalls here were incredible. Treble *Appendixes* round every corner, and frightening just to look at. A 300 foot rope was probably needed to climb some of the free standing columns and get to a place off vertical to belay.

We did what appeared to be the easiest route here. The first pitch turned out to be 165 feet of brilliant, near vertical, ice. Probably one of the most demanding ice pitches I've done.

Summary: An account of ice climbing for a week in the Gran Paradiso, Italy.

Climbers: John Sumner and Chris Rees

Guidebook: *Cascade Di Ghiaccio in Valle D'Aosta* by A. Cambiolo and P. Satore



Map showing icefalls near Cogné. Map: John Sumner

Cautionary Tale for Members Paying Half-subs

Ken Stringer

Battered and bewildered I was, lying flat on my back. Battered because I had obviously hit my head on the rock at my side. Bewildered because I had no idea why I was there in the first place.

I was about to start a climb and had stepped up about nine inches to a convenient block and looked up to assess the route — and then I was flat on my back with a bang on my head! Nothing had happened in between — I had not slipped or lost my grip nor had I felt faint.

My doctor told me afterwards that it is quite common for elderly people to suddenly blackout when they look upwards.

Apparently, with wear and tear in the neck bones, bending the head back can nip the main artery supplying the brain. The result is an instantaneous blackout. There are no warning signals.

Prior to the accident I had only done two short routes on Stanage, before having a light lunch, and had not drunk anything stronger than apple juice. Just looking up is the sole cause of the problem. In future I shall only climb down!



Gogarth circa 1967. Those were the days. Photo: Ken Wilson

A Tribute to Chris Briggs

Peter Harding

Pen-y-Gwryd, in the mid '40s, was a lonely place. Visits by climbers were rare indeed and seemingly enjoyed only by cognizable members of the Establishment. My own admittance through its usually kept-closed door was entirely due to being in the company of J.E.Q. Barford, Hon. Secretary of the CC and of the newly formed BMC. (In those days one could hardly be better established than that!)

The only climbing hut then in Wales was Helyg and few folk visited that new-born climbing ground in the Pass of Llanberis, or even those ancient and modern cliffs on the Snowdon side. Ogwen was still where most Welsh climbing was at, for John Barford's **Three Cliffs...** guide, (a re-print of his article in the 1944 CCJ), published in 1945, had yet to entice more than a few climbers into curious corners of the Cromlech, to wander across the Wastad's wooded ways or even try some of the Grochan's grisly grooves. But within a couple of years, winds of change had swept across Arfon and those new crags in the Pass quickly came of age. The older cliffs too were attracting attention, so a new guide was needed. By 1948 things had started to happen; new CC guidebook work got under way; the Rucksack Club converted that old abode of Beudy Mawr into their new hut and the CC followed suit with Cwm Glas Cottage, prior to bespoke building of yet another at nearby Ynys Ettws.

Almost coincident with such activity, over the Pass at Pen-y-Gwryd there was also change; Chris Briggs became the new tenant. With his wife Jo, Chris soon re-styled and shaped the running of PYG to make it once again the head hostelry, (one might also say headquarters), of Welsh rock climbing. Strong associations with the Climbers' Club and the Rucksack Club developed and Chris eventually became a member of both.

In his re-vitalized hotel, C.B. encouraged 'the lads' as well as the Lords and this was to become an important factor in the development of Welsh climbing at the time. I can think of no other hotel in Wales at the middle of the century, (and none in England save the Old Dungeon Ghyll under Sid Cross), where such a broad spectrum of British mountaineers might be found in the public bar on a Saturday evening. And the opening of a bunkhouse at PYG in 1950 was an innovation.

With management of a mountain hotel at a time when young people were taking to the hills in ever-increasing numbers it was inevitable that C.B. would be involved in mountain rescues. He was later to become well-known for his efforts and ultimately rewarded with a BEM. However, for me, Chris' work in mountain rescue and his dedicated approach to it are epitomized by a single event. (It occurred on February 10th 1951 and was dramatized, some years later, for a BBC radio broadcast.)

On returning to PYG after a good winter's day on Glyder Fach, I found Chris busily organizing a rescue; an accident had been reported on Snowdon. Two youngsters had been seen to slide and fall, down steep snow, from Crib-y-Ddysgl towards Glaslyn. Despite being assured that experienced on-the-spot help was well on its way, (a doctor and his companion had already started descending from

the ridge to give assistance whilst four climbers on Snowdon were also proceeding to the scene), Chris arranged for a stretcher party, with an ambulance to stand-by at Pen-y-Pass. But he was still very concerned that there would be no proper medical equipment available to the doctor on the spot, so when I suggested taking a first-aid rucksack and driving as far as possible up the rough, miners' track from Pen-y-Pass, Chris insisted on coming too, regardless of the fact, (which I discovered later), that he was suffering from a bad back. His argument had been irrefutable — two heads would be better than one on a mountain rescue, and in the dark, so would two torches!

In the Dellow trials car, with its high ground clearance, we made good time along the boulder strewn track and across Llyn Llydaw's causeway to reach a ruined cottage at about 1,400ft. Leaving the car there, we set off towards Glaslyn. Freezing mist and its fall-out made visibility none too good but settled snow conditions helped us pick our way up the icy Snowdon path. Chris carried the first-aid 'sack, quite heavy with blankets as well as medical equipment, for he had successfully argued that if it became necessary for me to use my ice-axe on the hard snow slopes ahead, I would cut bigger and better steps for him to stand in if I could swing it without the encumbrance of a big 'sack on my shoulders!

It was some time before we made vocal contact with those at the accident site and when we arrived there the situation was far worse than we could ever have imagined. Of the pair who had been seen to fall, while the boy was not badly hurt, the girl was very seriously injured. The doctor, Tony Woodroffe — a member of the CC, was dead. He had fallen several hundred feet when endeavouring to reach the injured pair more speedily by a series of glissades. His companion, who had been roped to him, had miraculously survived the fall with relatively minor injuries to one hand. Though badly bruised and shaken he was not in such a shocked state as the boy. Of the four climbers who had reached the scene in fading light via the Snowdon zigzags, two were in bad shape, one with a twisted ankle.

Chris quickly tended the half-conscious girl, assessing the injuries and using a blanket to make her as comfortable as possible; severe head wounds precluded the use of morphia. Then he spoke quietly to the boy, consoling and wrapping a blanket round him before chatting cheerfully to the others — assuring them that further help was on the way. He listened intently as they described how their attempt to give assistance was overtaken by a second tragedy and finally by darkness. Chris decided he would stay with the girl, who was now unconscious, together with the boy and one of the four climbers, while I took charge of the rest and got them off the mountain; the doctor's friend needed to be taken to Pen-y-Pass and the ambulance as soon as was reasonably possible.

We met the stretcher party, on its way up, just as they arrived at the ruined cottage and directed them to the accident site. This meant I could transport my injured charge to Pen-y-Pass in the Dellow and then make a quick trip to PYG to report on the situation. In Chris' absence Jo Briggs had been co-ordinating the arrangements he had made and answering questions from the police and the press.

Returning to Pen-y-Pass, I left the car and then walked along the track, meeting the returning stretcher party just before Llyn Llydaw. Chris had doubtless done his share in helping to haul and manhandle the Thomas stretcher bearing the injured girl and was obviously troubled by his bad back. It was well past midnight

when we all arrived at Pen-y-Pass. Sadly, the girl had died during a short halt just a few minutes before.

So it was quite understandable that feelings of frustration and depression should easily turn into intense anger when flash bulbs started flashing and pushy press people crowded round the cortege. But Chris Briggs calmly took control of the situation, firmly countering the morbid meddling of men from the media and skilfully soothing the frayed tempers of tired rescuers.

The following day, Sunday, another stretcher party was needed; the body of Tony Woodroffe still had to be recovered from the mountain. 'Phoning around, Chris found the RAF mountain rescue men at Valley, on Anglesey, were unable to help. (I have no doubt they did have better reasons than the caustic suggestions I overheard later!) However, with the help of Ralph Jones and his army people encamped at Ynys Ettws, as well as John Disley and other CC friends who were in the area, plus dozens of instant mountain rescuers appearing from nowhere, there was no difficulty in getting a team together. Chris was philosophical about not being able to join it, his bad back was now much too painful. So, with a cheering smile, he watched us depart.

That is exactly how I shall remember C.B., just as he was in those days; rarely without a pleasant smile and always cheerfully good humoured as the Gwryd's 'mine host', or as its resident rescuer; tough, gentle, resolute but compassionate, a man for all seasons. And also for the significant contribution which his days, (and nights) at PYG made to the development of Welsh rock climbing, as well as British mountaineering, in the late '40s and throughout the '50s.

Hillbilly Deluxe

Simon Cardy

Sphinx Park, Colorado

I sat on the bar stool in the Bucksnot Saloon and took a sip from my first cool beer. An absolute giant of a man whom I took to be some kind of ex-linebacker from the Bronco's defence was serving behind the bar. He must have been six foot ten with a generous bullneck and arms and legs like Redwoods. Although the whole of the saloon couldn't have had more than about a dozen customers this man charged around the place like a caged bear, waving his arms and shouting short-orders to the cook in the back.

Dwight Yoakam introduced Country MTV on the television screen hung amongst the Jack Daniels optics. It had been raining as we had arrived at about four in the afternoon. A damp wet mist hung over the Bucksnot slabs at the entrance to the creek. We saw the *Sphinx Crack* to the right through the cloud keeping it at a safe distance, as we continued to do for the next few days. We eased up the creek, as the dirt track got steeper and steeper, passing the odd truck that had disappeared off the road down into the ravine. The whole place was kind of eerie that day, particularly with the poor weather. I half expected a reception committee of mean-looking men in extra large dungarees and shot-guns, stood across the road. At the last settlement, a place called Pine Junction, the only store was closed with a sign in the window which read: 'I'll give up my gun when you pry it from my dead fingers'. Closed was the feeling I had that afternoon. The Park was closed, the roads were closed, the crags were closed, it was raining.

The Bucksnot Saloon was, however, open. A broken-down large log cabin of an establishment met us at the end of the track. It was surrounded by about 15 oversize pick-up trucks with more fog lights than Mile High Stadium and tyres the size of earth movers. These 4 x 4 vehicles were built for serious country, ready to negotiate any landslide or flash flood they might encounter on their way home with or without their owners.

Inside the Bucksnot it was 'happy hour'; two drinks for the price of one. Work was over for the day. I sank into my second beer pulled for me by the linebacker. All around the bar, on the walls, on the ceilings, were customers' graffiti, messages, and 'I was here's. Below the bar, and level with my knees, in large letters, was the name 'Theo Barychewsky', a climbing friend of mine from Boulder I'd not seen in two years. It came as a real surprise and from that point on I felt at home. By the time I'd started my third refreshment and plucked up enough courage to ask the linebacker for the New Routes Book, I was a local.

I opened the large ledger. This was no Stoney Routes Book or Pete's Eats scrawls. The inside hard cover read 'This book is the personal property of Bret Bristol. Not to be removed from the Bucksnot Saloon' and a long notice on the jealously guarded ethics of 'ground up' bolting in the South Platte. More about this in a moment.

Wunsch's Dihedral and the Cynical Pinnacle

The Cynical Pinnacle. The Cynical Pinnacle. The Cynical Pinnacle. That name rebounded inside my head over and over again from the very first time I'd ever heard it. Now on the day John and I were going to do it it was all the more intense.

There are many fine routes on the Pinnacle but *Wunsch's* is the all-time four pitch deluxe classic. For a start the climb represents the epitome of perfect Colorado crack climbing that accept hands better than a worn leather glove. Second, it involves a complex history including the names in Colorado climbing such as Tom Fender, who made the first ascent, Steve Wunsch who made the first free ascent and the legendary Dave Breashears, the 'Kloeberdanz Kid', who added the *Direct Start*. Third, it's on the Cynical Pinnacle deep in the South Platte, Colorado.

John was hungry for this rich recipe of history and granite crack and shot off like a gazelle up the steep scree from the parking lot. The approach up to the Pinnacle was loose and laborious all the way from the road. All I recall is two steps up and one back for over an hour and that name spinning inside my head again.

John was tied on and placing his first piece of gear by the time I arrived and dumped my 'sack. Soon I had the rope and he started work on the finger locks. The pain, and the difficulty of the direct start.

Two long hand-cracks followed, broken by the most hideous hanging belay this side of the Rockies. After 20 minutes in slings I had pins and needles that turned into nails and fish hooks. Not long after that I lost all feeling in my legs and when I tried to stretch them to touch the other side of the chimney which formed the belay, my legs appeared to collapse and utterly detached themselves from the rest of my body altogether. When I think of *Wunsch's Dihedral* now I think of that belay more than the body-pumping crack climbing.

The third pitch followed, then the final 12c pure face climbing set to test your all-round ability as well as your patience. We rapped down the Pinnacle to the 'sacks in the gathering darkness, to do battle with the scree again, the Bucksnot, the Banjos and the Bluegrass.

Topographic Oceans and Dome Rock

The South Platte is a traditional home of the 'Ground Upper'. If you are wondering exactly what such a species is you won't find it in the dictionary and it's not a type of wild boar either. I'll explain as best I can.

The drilling and placing of bolts is permissible provided they are placed on lead. Like the Needles area in South Dakota the ethic is meant to provide an all-encompassing adventure on the first ascent. Climbs cannot have pre-placed gear and retro-bolting is a definite no no, and all ascents must be first made from the ground up. Don't ask me why but hanging on a sky hook is allowed whilst the plucky little leader drills a hole for the bolt. This rule is fiercely protected. Any prospector found engaged in tactics to the contrary is likely to find themselves being picked-off by a tobacco-chewing Bret Bristol sitting in a Crazy Creek chair on top of Bishop Rock with a high velocity Smith and Wesson.

All the routes on Dome Rock were climbed using the hair-raising ground-up technique. All the routes that is except for the last crux pitch of *Topographic Oceans* which is an oasis in a sea of nightmare runs-outs, being well supplied. *Topographic Oceans* is a four pitch slab/face route which crosses the Dome from left to right.

The climbing is absorbing as you head off into the expanse of blankness and confidence saps just as you find the next bolt but are unable to make the move in order to clip the damn thing.

As I clipped the 31st and last bolt, the sky went dark and a black cloud the size of Montana blotted out the sun. Big droplets of rain smattered on my bare back as I reached the belay and the storm had reached its zenith by the time John reached me. As we retreated, clad in only shorts and shivering, gallons of water plummeted down the slabs. I wondered where the lifeboat had got to.

Childhood End and Big Rock Candy Mountain

As a general rule of thumb, the biggest and best routes in the South Platte area have the longest approaches. Sitting in the heart of this so-called 'de-centralised' region, is the biggest crag, with the largest name and the longest approach.

Big Rock Candy Mountain lies a few miles upstream from Lake Cheeseman close to the South Platte river itself. Over 1,000ft in height, the Big Rock contains several deep, dark, tree filled gullies, slender buttresses, and wave upon wave of glorious granite friction climbing.

Back in Boulder, local climbers like Neil Beidleman had talked about the Big Rock and its route *Childhood End* in whispered tones. The more John and I heard about it, the more we knew we had to do it. When another climber stuck his neck out and said it was better than *Naked Edge* — the sacred route above all routes in Colorado — we realised that we had possibly stumbled on something a bit special to front range climbers. A little known, well-kept secret to only those in the know. Ah! but we knew about it now, and off we went.

The first attempt to find it ended in complete and utter failure. We spent a frustrating day thrashing about fire ravaged slopes, fierce thorny bushes, waist deep rivers, and were hopelessly lost. Down at the river level I became overcome with a feeling I was stuck in the middle of the film *Deliverance*. At any minute the gentle noise of the river and the sound of the wind blowing through the trees, would be broken by the thwack! of a cross-bow on a tree and the sight of two armed tobacco-chewing men grinning profusely, out for a day's man-hunting. That film had disturbed me at the time and it had come back to haunt me now. My imagination was getting the better of me and the silence of the river valley returned, the two grinning men vanished. We combed the foot of the mountain to find the start of the route and this seemed to have disappeared as well. As we had approached the Big Rock, the sun had risen directly behind it, casting the face we were due to climb in a massive hazy shadow, thereby obliterating the features, and blurring the buttresses. This effect made it near impossible to distinguish the line of the route we had come to climb. John and I made a half-hearted attempt to try a line for a couple of pitches and retreated when it became more than obvious this was wrong.

At dawn the following day we hurtled along the washboard dirt roads for a second attempt. We now had the knowledge of the face from the benefit of an overnight re-think, and having studied the Big Rock on our trudge back, when the sun had moved round a bit, allowing its cathedral-like structure to be more easily displayed.

When the engine of our car was switched off, having halted at the ridge, the feeling of anticipation set in, heightened by the remote setting that is all too

familiar. We literally ran to the foot of the route, now knowing exactly where we were going, and having found a shallower part of the river to ford. The climb and the climbing were everything we had been told and had expected, plus a little bit more. I can safely say it was perhaps the best route we did on this particular trip, and without doubt, the best route in the South Platte.

A big wide crack kicked off the first couple of pitches, which turned into several tubes and steep slabs for the pitches that followed. These were like climbing inside land drainage pipes, that ended in total blankness. Yet there was always an exit, with a line of sufficient holds or crystals leading to and connecting to the next tube, solutions to route finding were marked with a 'classic' stamp. We were both impressed with the bolt protection, that had obviously been placed on lead, at the 'hands down' resting positions. These were few and far between, but being a classic climb, appeared at incredibly convenient moments.

The crux pitches came at around half-way up the route. Here the rock reared up in the form of roofs and very big overlaps... and yet there was a way on, the only weakness in the buttress at this point, that sneaked its way onto the slabs above and the summit. The crux was positioned overlooking a dark and dismal looking abyss, one of the gullies that penetrated deep into the mountainside. This lead out onto 'the Fields'; which consisted of more runnels, tubes and wild frictionless padding with, what felt like rope-lengths between the little protection on offer.

Fortunately the angle began to ease, until we could no longer see the foot of the route, and eventually, even the river disappeared beneath this strange furrowed dome-like summit. An afternoon storm threatened but never came as we topped out and walked over the flat summit area. The sun shone in the heat of the mid-afternoon, the wind blew a gentle hot breeze and we savoured the fact that we had climbed the de luxe route on Big Rock Candy Mountain in the middle of hillbilly nowhere.

A Nine Star Day

Steve Foxley

The trip started in Widnes on Friday night. Mark arrived and put his gear in my van, then it was off to Wasdale as soon as possible. It had been quite a good year already. But at last we had the long days with us. The high crags would at last be dry. Scafell here we come. Mark had some ideas of his own, but didn't really mind what he did as long as it was a good mountain day.

The next day his dad was off to Scotland for a week, so we had to do something really special. We arrived at Brackenclough (the FRCC hut) to find Roger and Val Salisbury, Derek Price and some American friends staying there.

We had a brew and yet another look through the guidebook, but I had read it so many times I knew what had to be done.

The alarm was set for six o'clock. At last, morning arrived. We were up first, a quick breakfast, for me anyway as my rope boy can't eat too early.

Seven o'clock we set off. It was a brilliant morning, a bit cool but that's just what you want when slogging up Brown Tongue.

It was amazing there was nobody else out, on what was going to be one of the best days of the summer. As we approached Hollow Stones there were several tents pitched. Outside one of them were a couple of Americans having breakfast. We stopped and chatted and they told us of their plan. They had come up the previous night just to be first on *Central Buttress*. This set me thinking, 'Why don't we do it if no one else is on it?' We said our farewells and headed on up.

As we approached the bottom of the route there were a couple of people bivied there. We sneaked past without waking them and geared up. This was too good to be true, a route I have wanted to do for 20 years.

The rock was cold but it was only 8.30am. It felt strange climbing this early in the day. The first two pitches went without incident, both 4b. OK for this time of day. This brings you to the Oval, a large ledge on which to survey the Great Flake. Much has been written about this pitch. Although only 5b, it is not to be taken lightly. I tried to persuade my rope boy into leading this pitch but he was having none of it. I set off easily at first, then it steepens up. Halfway up you can arrange a runner then keep on laybacking until you reach the collection of tat just below the crux. It looks awkward and is very polished. My mind flashes back to the pictures I have seen of this great pitch. OK, let's go. It's very bold, but after a couple of moves you are on top of the Great Flake. What an incredible situation. Herford and Sansom back in 1914 must have been amazing men to come up here with their basic equipment. Bold men indeed. You shuffle along the top of the flake traversing left to another large ledge (Jeffcoats Ledge). Arrange the belay and fetch up the boy. I should mention at this point how useful a boy is. He can make endless brews, carry enormous amounts of gear and do lots of washing up. So it is important to take him up three star routes safely. I had obviously picked the right boy for the job, he strolled up the Great Flake with ease and came across the top of the flake to the belay. Parties were now coming past Hollow Stones in large numbers, we had made a good choice by setting off early.

Up left a little and then back right quite delicately at about 4c, then a steep little crack and up onto a ledge with a poor belay. Time was getting on and another party was coming up behind us. Mark arrived without any problems and we wondered how far his dad had got, on his way to Scotland. If only he knew we were on the most famous British rock climb, and first on it today. Pity the poor Americans who carried their tent up last night just to be first on. They were now third.

I set off left to a thin gangway which was really good and in a fine exposed position. Then back rightwards into a steep corner and up to the top, a long 5a pitch. Belay on and Mark came up. What a fantastic route, 400 feet of the best HVS climbing on England's biggest mountain. Early start essential.

Back to the bottom of the crag to retrieve our 'sacks and have some refreshment, we were amazed to see how many people were now climbing. Every route seemed to have folks on it. We had considered doing *Saxon* E2 but the queue was too big. A voice came down from the bottom of *Saxon* in broad Cumbrian, it was Bill Young, a local guru who has put up a lot of routes in this valley. He was climbing with Bill Hannah, another CC man. We exchanged insults and then went looking for a route that was free. Up on the East Buttress the place was heaving. I have never seen the place so busy. Who said adventure climbing was dead? We passed Martin Boysen and Rab Carrington doing *Zeya*, a difficult E5. Eventually we found a route, and a three star route at that. *Hell's Groove* HVS. First climbed in 1952 by Pete Greenwood and Arthur Dolphin, the guidebook describes it as a breakthrough.

We geared up and I commenced to do battle. Wall trained climbers beware. This is serious overhanging JAMMING! It's OK for us old timers who have done a bit of this, nevertheless it's still strenuous. Eventually you gain a small stance and nut belay.

Now it's Mark's go. He isn't looking forward to it one bit. After logging some flying time he arrives breathless. It was 5b after all. We exchange runners and I set off again. The groove is still very steep and the climbing feels a lot harder than HVS. Not overly protected and very exposed. Finally a few moves right bring you to an awkward little stance. The boy arrives well impressed. The route then follows *Pegasus* for 20 feet and then into a large amphitheatre. The next pitch goes up a nasty green overhanging crack, which we missed out and went up an easier way. Another fine route and back on top of England's highest mountain. The views were magnificent and some photos were taken to record the event.

Back to the 'sacks at Mickledore, it was now 5 o'clock. The boy was getting a bit tired, so he went to sleep for a bit. I spotted the dynamic team of Price and Salisbury high on *Botterill's Slab* and we exchanged banter. I have to wake the boy so we can sort the gear again. Still plenty of daylight left, what next? *Mickledore Grooves* VS is free, let's do that. Mark decides it's time he did some leading, so he set off up the first pitch, Only 4c but after what we had done today and his relative inexperience it was a very good lead. I followed up, and set off on the notoriously long second pitch. After the traverse right I came across a guy doing *Midnight Express* E3 5b. His first runners were on my route, so I had to wait until he was safe before I could continue. But then our ropes would get tangled, so his mate came up first. After this delay I set off and was again amazed what a serious pitch it was for the grade. Up the slab, then into the corner, traverse right and then up,

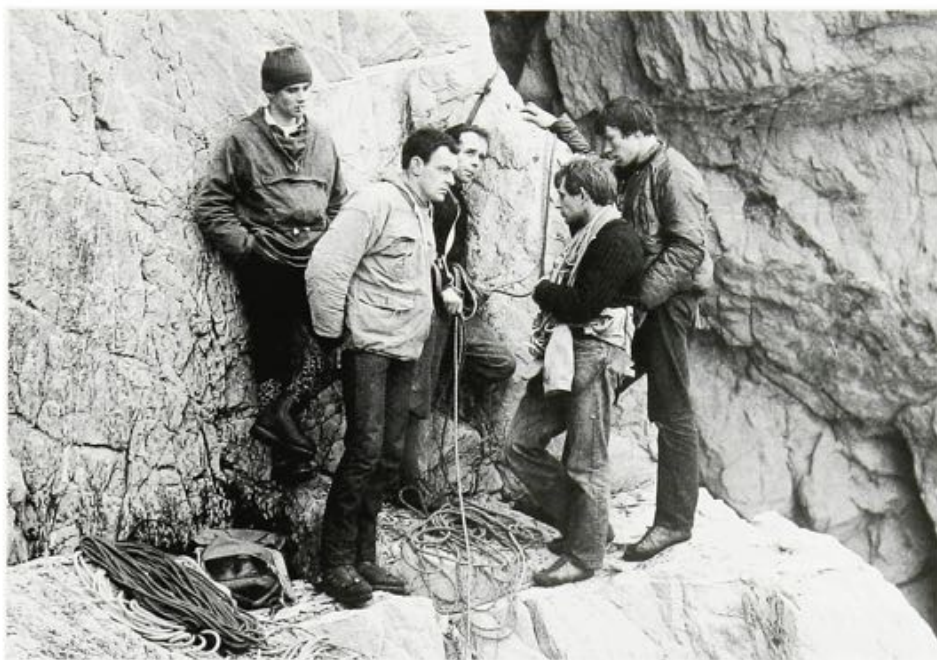
at last to the top. By the time Mark came up it was getting quite late. We came down Broad Stand for the last time and back to the 'sacks.

After eating the last of our supplies we headed down. We had a few words with our American friends and headed back to the valley. I had difficulty keeping up with the boy, who, being 28 years younger than me obviously had a lot more stamina. Back at the hut the boy made my tea and in exchange I gave him a bottle of my French beer. It was one of the best mountain days I have ever had. We climbed for 11 hours and did some real quality climbing. It was Mark's best day on the rock and he slept most of the way home. Jeffo, his dad, was very envious of us that day.

Two weeks later I was back at Wasdale, climbing with Rod Valentine, this time on Buckbarrow Crag. A low (?) level girdle of similar quality to its larger neighbours. We did three routes while other Fell and Rock members seemed to fill the remaining gaps. My daughter Louise sun-bathed all day.

Roll on those summer days, let's get back to Wasdale!

S.F. ably assisted by Mark Jeffreys — June 1992.



The boys hit Gogarth. Photo: Ken Wilson

The Last Pitch

Lindsay Griffin

I gingerly managed half a rest on our single ice screw belay and gazed down on a mass of foaming cloud, cascading over the col that separated us from the icy ramparts of Nordenskjöld.

Above, Julian Freeman-Attwood had climbed the remaining 65° ice, placed our only other screw and was now half-way up the final wall below the summit mushroom. I averted my eyes and looked again at the vast expanse of the Brogger Glacier, following it eastwards down to the coast. Somewhere on that inhospitable stretch of shoreline, the explorer Duncan Carse had spent nearly seven months in total isolation. Carse, perhaps better known as a broadcaster and star of the racy radio series **Dick Barton - Special Agent**, had attempted a voyage of self discovery that would last 18 months, had not his self-built wooden shelter been completely destroyed by a freak tidal wave. Spending four months inside an inadequate tent, Carse weathered the remorseless battering of many ferocious gales, typical of this part of the world, before being rescued. Today, however, all was calm and I returned to viewing the progress of my trusty leader. Julian, a forester by profession and one of life's eccentrics, had come into climbing somewhat later than most. However, many years of using a heavy chain-saw had produced a vice-like grip and an ability to do a staggering number of pinch grip pull-ups on the beams of his Shropshire cottage. He had two qualifications that almost guaranteed success as a modern-day explorer — an aristocratic pedigree, which gave him contacts in all sorts of places, and a double-barrelled surname! On his first major excursion, crossing the Empty Quarter of Mauritania with Quentin Crewe's expedition, he had narrowly escaped fragmentation by guerilla land mines.

During the last three weeks, our brief and very infrequent forays from the snow cave onto the nearby peaks had been interspersed with an interminable number of days spent blizzard-bound in a sleeping bag. There, we passed the time munching our way through goose quenelles and the odd spot of caviar, courtesy of our eccentric explorer and Mr Fortnum and Mason ('..went to school with his son, you know'). Long periods of inactivity have always seemed to wreck me more than others, and earlier I had found myself struggling to keep up with an impatient Julian who, justifiably nervous of the limited timespan of this clear spell and hardly believing our luck after so long, had set a cracking pace.

Eight hours later and we were almost there. After repeated hammering and muttering about razor-sharp edges, the rope went tight. Above the second screw the rope snaked a runnerless 20m up a wall of steep and shattered shale.

Characteristically the rock was covered in a heavy build-up of rime. The first eight metres or so were the worst — a sort of shallow groove that involved some precarious bridging, some delicate hooking, and — on more than one occasion — placements directly into the shale. Above the groove, the angle eased slightly and a series of outward sloping ledges led up to the ridge. However, care was still needed with crumbling rock; a fall from the last few moves would have sent Julian

crashing into the iceslope far below. I arrived on the crest, finding it so narrow that, like Julian, I was forced to sit astride. Our belay consisted of an aluminium snowstake that had somehow been cold-welded into the rock. After contemplating the exposure I gave it another 10 blows, clipped in and only then turned to face the final mushroom. It wasn't a pretty sight. An eight metre mound of fluffy snow flakes had been dolloped on the ridge. After thrashing around for a minute in an attempt at upward progress, I succeeded only in burying myself deeper into the unstable mass. It was all far too dangerous; in no time at all we had convinced each other that, as this elusive piece of architecture was not a permanent part of the real mountain, there was absolutely no need to climb it — after all, there had been a number of well-known precedents.

However, before leaving our 'summit' we had to attend to one more example of the Freeman-Attwood eccentricity — the flag!

Unfurling his prize banner, Julian posed for numerous photos against a backcloth of sea, sky and virgin peaks. I have to come clean and say that this wasn't the Union Jack, but a silk square which bore a more poignant logo encouraging future recipients of these photographs to 'Save Antarctica as a World Park'. Looping our single 9mm around the stake, we rappelled towards the cloud cascade and began our descent to more goose quenelles and asparagus tips.



Sub-Antarctic peaks. Photo: Lindsay Griffin

...or was it a Ptarmigan?

Robin A. Hodgkin

Smells, tunes and sometimes the cry of a bird, such as a curlew, have strange evocative powers, no words, but feelings and perhaps the glimpse of a face or a place come fleetingly back to mind; even after 50 years. We had set up a little camp by the Junom Glacier, in the Jailik group, above the Baksan Valley in the Northern Caucasus. It was July 1937. Politics were raging back in Europe. Stalin had recently promulgated his new democratic constitution and we were only mildly cynical about it. We had been busy getting fit; preparatory to crossing the main range for our principal objective — Ushba (4,710m); and then getting unfit again by supplementing our diet with nice, too fresh, veg. from the village market. Two of the party had succumbed. Two hadn't, John Jenkins and I. We were asleep; well before dawn. But it was time to be starting a brew. Then came this strange, haunting cry which we'd heard before, from behind a nearby granite ridge. Someone had suggested it was a rock partridge. The book says, 'a staccato 'tchersti-ritt chi'. Perhaps. That long-drawn 'chi-i-i' might describe it. It still rings faintly in my head and brings back the moment when we wriggled out of the flimsy Marco Pallis tent to start for the North-East Ridge of Adyrsu-Bashi (4,370m).

John had spotted the ridge as a promising new route for us to try. He had sketched it, in pencil, in his diary. A steep pair of towers to the south of the Orubashi Pass at the head of our glacier, leading up to a series of smaller towers separated by snow sickles and then the final pyramid. The peak had been first ascended by that redoubtable trio, Cockin, Woolley and Holder in 1896, from the valley next to ours. I had thought it looked a very long route: "We'll have to bivouac, surely".

"No" said John, we could do it in a longish day and then descend quickly by the Cockin Route to the Adyrsu valley where, so we were told, we would find a large encampment of Russian youth. John was usually right when spotting and estimating routes.

We cramponed up the steepening glacier to the pass - cold and creaking. To the north, the South Face of Jailik (4,533m) was beginning to catch the light. We had done a good climb on that the week before, a couloir and acres of red granite, never harder than what, in the quaint language of the period, we called V.Diff. But now, ahead of us, the route looked a good deal more teasing; first climbing on loose stuff, then steepening dark rock streaked with ice. Even the higher towers, now touched by the sun, looked sombre and far away.

The largest tower was split by an ice couloir and when we reached it, one could look across to the whole North Face and, far beyond, on the western horizon, was the great marquee of Elbrus (5,642m). It was only about 12 metres across the main couloir and John set to work strenuously, cutting steps. Darkish blue ice and it took him half an hour. Looking at the photograph, however, I am puzzled, why such large steps and why is John, apparently, carrying his crampons on the 'sack? On mixed routes it can be a bother, constantly putting crampons on and off but,

surely, here... 'why waste a quarter of an hour? I now think that we were influenced by a feeling that there was a special virtue in cutting fine steps — all that powerful teaching by Geoffrey Young and Finch about the Great Craft, had we really done a long enough apprenticeship? Did we swing our axes the way the great men had?

Apart from that, however, we did get a move on and by one o'clock we were on the summit; 20 or 30 miles to the south-east we could see the great Bezingi peaks. John had his eye on the North Face of Tetnuld (4,974m) and nearer to us were the two sharp fingers of Ushba, jabbing provocatively at the sky. (No Brits had been up the main South Peak, nor have they since — not quite.) We would be heading over the watershed and answering that call in a day or two. Meanwhile there was the problem of finding the way down. After some dithering, it was solved for us when we saw a party of Russian climbers making their way slowly up. They were wearing World War I flying helmets, leather jackets and there were five of them on a short rope. They were only the second proper climbing party that we had met and I'm afraid we developed a rather patronising attitude to Russian Alpinisti. Most of the keen young toilers stayed in the valleys and a few slogged up Elbrus in a crocodile. But, looking back, one can only salute and admire those, such as the group we met, who were breaking the prescribed patterns and exploring the lonelier joys and risks of real climbing. We swapped a bit of chocolate for a drink. Barter had already become a way of life as we had no proper Roubles; 1 Shetland Pullover = 1 days food x 4... ad infinitum. Then, down the glacier and down seemingly unending moraines and drumlins: no paths, just a few patches of grass among the boulders. At last we reached the youth camp. Food; lots of stuff like semolina and a noisy evening of singing, eating and non-verbal Kameraderie.

Next morning we were awakened by the Russian equivalent of 'Wakey Wakey'. We had heard that mass P.E. was on the programme. So we rolled over in our blankets and slept a little longer. The cheerful cries, the call for action, didn't quite have the urgency, the power to move us, that yesterday's rock partridge had, and, in memory, it still has a strange emotive power.

If it was a rock partridge?



Adyrsu-Bashi, NE Ridge first ascent, 1937. John Jenkins looking across North Face towards Elbrus. Photo: Robin Hodgkin

Happy Bananas

Stuart Miller

Clear, warm, emerald seas stretch to the horizon, covering a rich world of blossoming coral reefs and thousands of psychedelic fish. A narrow strip of fine golden sand separates the sea from the superb limestone cliff overhead. Reaching up to 100m in height, the rock varies from smooth pocketed overhanging walls to steep faces decorated with sharp flutings and delicate lattice-work formations. At either end the beach is enclosed by dense tropical jungle only penetrable by the monkeys on the tree tops.

This is Hin tääk, a deserted desert island beach. It is possible to walk here at low tide from the small bustling port of Tonsai on Phii-phii Doon island, southern Thailand. However, Thailand is hot and walking in Thailand is very hot, therefore a far less energetic approach by boat is more in keeping with the holiday atmosphere, avoids problems with tides and allows greater quantities of water, food and fresh fruit to be carried as well as the essential towel, sun cream, book, mask, snorkel and climbing gear. Boats and boatmen are easy to come by on this island where the sea is the best means to get around so it is no problem to get dropped off and arrange to be picked up later, although don't part with any money until the return trip.

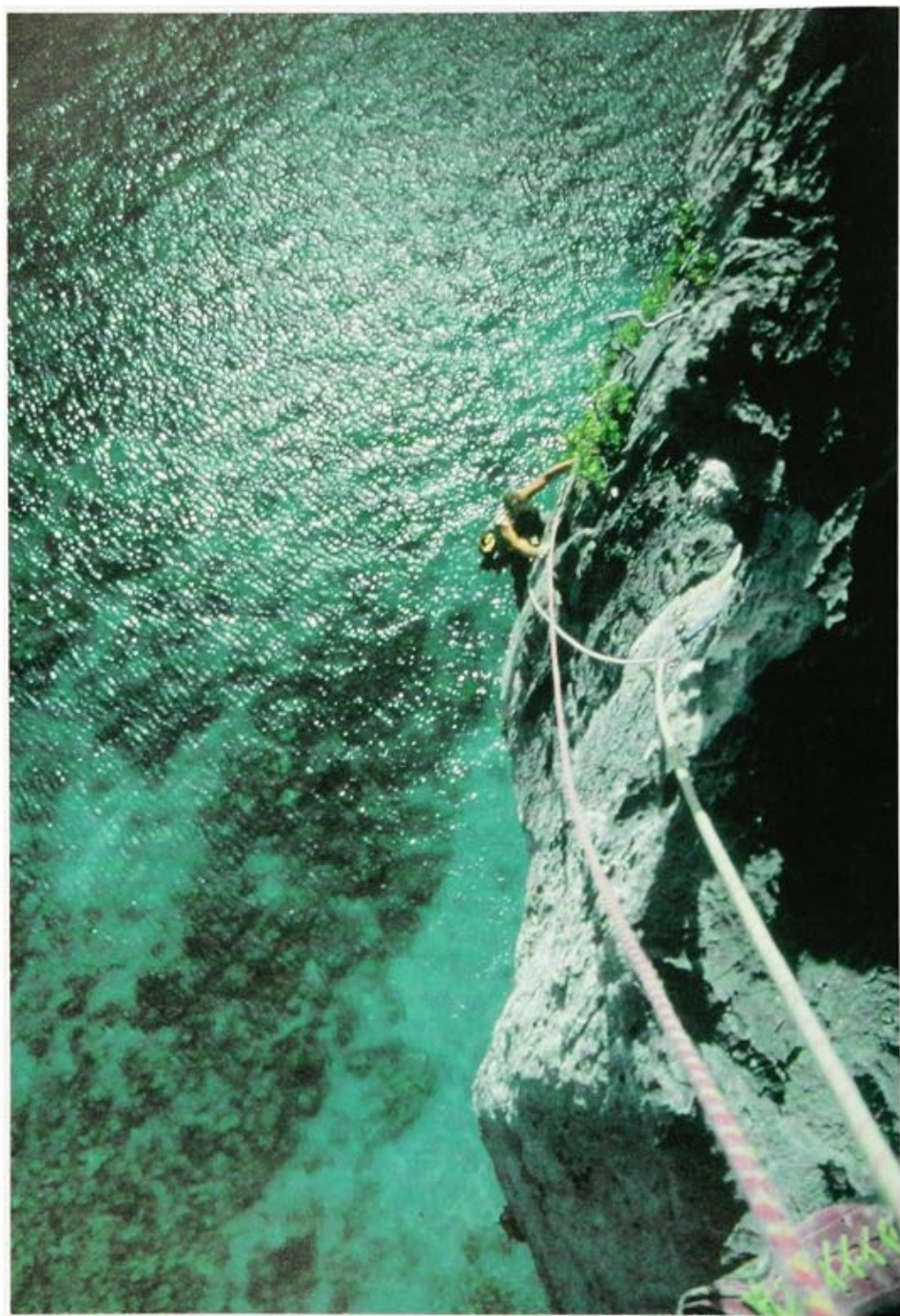
As the cliff faces east it doesn't get the shade until about midday so a swim, then a morning snooze will get things off to a good start. Donning mask and snorkel the spectacular cliffs and jungle disappear to be replaced by an absorbing world of underwater magic. Sinking down, wallowing in the tepid water at the edge of the beach the first fish dart up to meet you. These pale, almost translucent fish have faint prismatic colourings reflected off their scales by the sun. Although only a few inches long, they have a threatening territorial display, swimming up close and attempting to peck at you before shooting off again. Sometimes they face you a few inches from your mask and at others, creep up behind for a surprise attack, but they never make contact. Further out the coral formations start. A myriad of miniature trees, cliffs and caves mimicking the jungle above in many different colours. Here, sea urchins and anemonies lurk amongst the outcrops while hordes of brightly coloured fish cruise, drift and dart around the surreal formations. Angel fish, yellow stripey fish, orange fish, blue, red and green fish all come and go, some alone and some in huge groups. Fortunately these are all friendly and, hardly giving you a passing blink of the eye, go about their business with colours flashing vividly in the penetrating rays of sunlight. At times it feels almost impossible to avoid touching them, swimming through the middle of a shoal, but they are always that little bit quicker and keep just out of reach. After viewing this fascinating underwater panorama, one could be forgiven for forgetting about climbing and signing up for a sub-aqua course.

Back to the beach, a snooze, a read and a pineapple bought fresh from the market on the way to meet the boat. It is a very messy operation to cut off the hard skin but is rewarded by the tastiest and juiciest pineapple you've ever eaten. This all leads to another quick swim to wash off the sweat and juice. Eventually the lure of the cliff, hanging over the beach, is overpowering and the urge to climb cannot

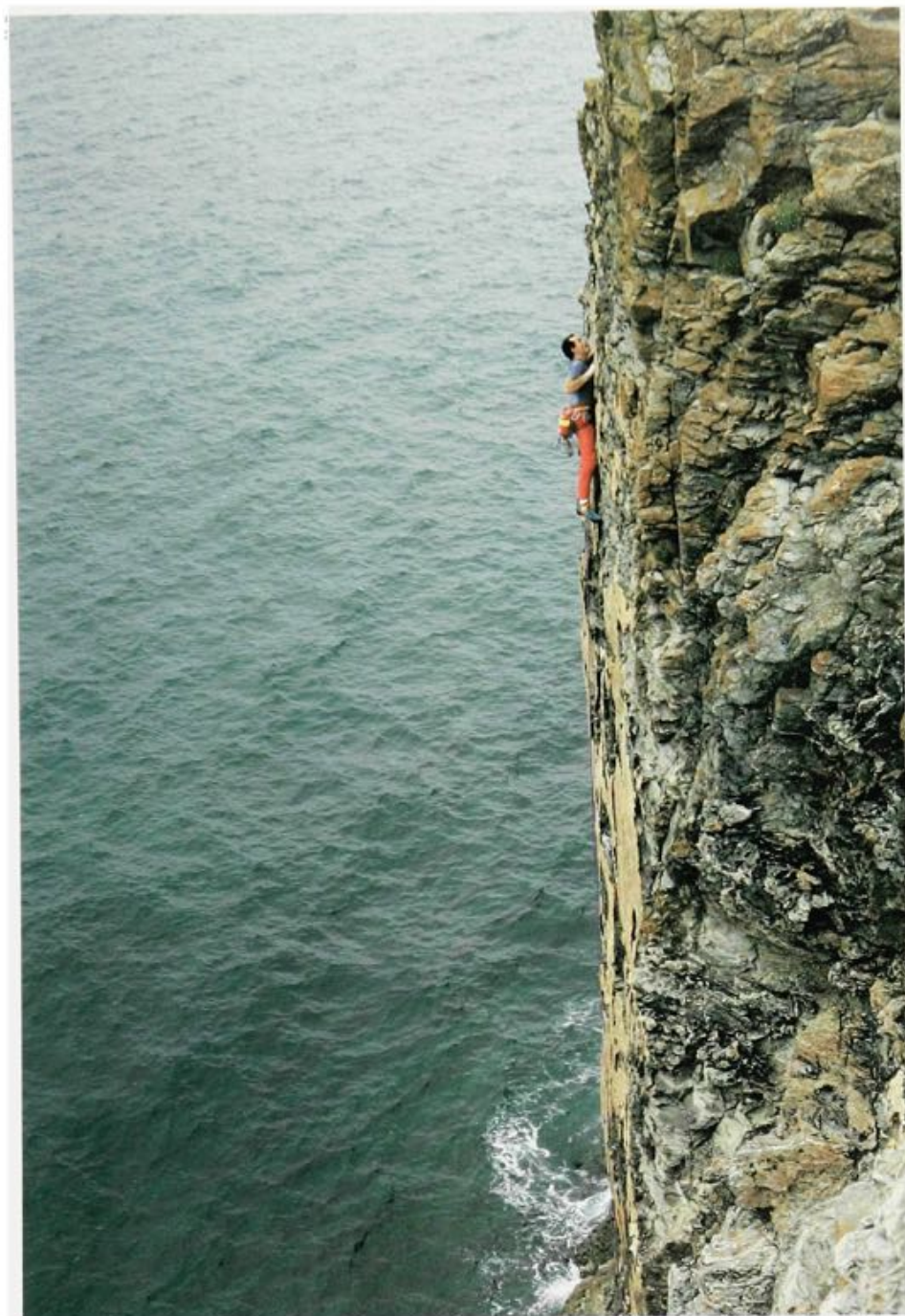
be held off any longer. Two fin shaped pillars stand free from the main cliff, both characteristically undercut by the sea, giving large overhangs a couple of metres off the sand before easing back into steep walls covered with sharp edged pockets and flutings. On the right a large 100m wall has lush vegetation sprouting out of its upper half, but the bottom 50m is a smooth, clean wall, slightly overhanging, giving fine single pitch pumpy climbs on good pockets and sculptured hollows. Here you can belay without moving from the beach towel. The central section rises in a series of vertical walls and overhangs for the full 100m, capped by a cornice of jungle. Two and three pitch routes seem to gain height quickly here giving fine exposed climbing with beautiful views of the surrounding bay. Most of the routes are well-protected by bolts and threaded pockets although a few nuts and Friends are useful. These aren't the boring clip-ups where routes follow lines of bolts up blank walls. They have striking lines and character where a few well-placed bolts complement the natural protection and make possible fine climbing in outrageous positions.

Given French grades, the easiest routes are around 6a. These are usually on the less steep grey rock where sharp flakes and flutings abound. At first it is quite frightening climbing on these razor sharp knives and daggers, so it is best not to be at your limit as the consequences of even a short fall to both skin and rope are too horrible to contemplate. However, with familiarity, a certain fascination is gained for this fragile rock which sings and tinkles like fine china as feet and equipment brush over it, giving interesting and exotic climbing. The overhanging zones and yellow rock give more normal climbing mainly in the 6b to 7b grades. Although strenuous, the climbing is usually on good edges and pockets giving friendly, positive holds and good friction for the feet. With no-one else around to worry you about that red-point ascent, this is exhilarating, fun, holiday climbing. Climb till you drop, or until the sweat streaming out of your forehead cascades over your eyes and blinds you. Getting pumped here has a new meaning. As well as muscles, the sweat glands pump, your skin leaks and showers of water pour out all over your body. But don't worry, the sea is always close by to cool off between routes and before you've noticed time slip by, the smiling boatman has returned to whisk you back to the more gentle beach, fringed with coconut palms in front of your bamboo bungalow. Here it is pleasant to sit and watch the sun sink, turning the sea and sky from blue to pink to red and then fiery orange as it dips behind the cliffs silhouetted across the bay. The noise of the long, tall taxi boats fade away as dark encroaches. Peace and calm are regained as the heat relents to a pleasant balmy evening and it is time to eat.

Each bungalow village has its own excellent restaurant, but a short stroll to the main village gives an amazing array to choose from. It is a gourmet's dream wandering amongst the stalls outside each restaurant, overflowing with displays of fresh seafood, crabs, prawns, lobsters, barracuda, marlin and shark. Washed down with tall glasses of fruit juice and finished off with banana pancakes or fruit salad, the munchies are well catered for. It is a happy, contented climber that staggers back to bed. Tomorrow the choice is between another lazy day down on the beach, or maybe take a boat to explore and find adventure on the more remote wild walls and towers straight out of the sea which surround the island. So much rock, so much unclimbed rock that the existing routes hardly touch the potential in this paradisaic wonderland of rock, sea and sand.



Paul Andrews on 'Monkey Head', Phii-phii Doon Island. Photo: Stuart Miller

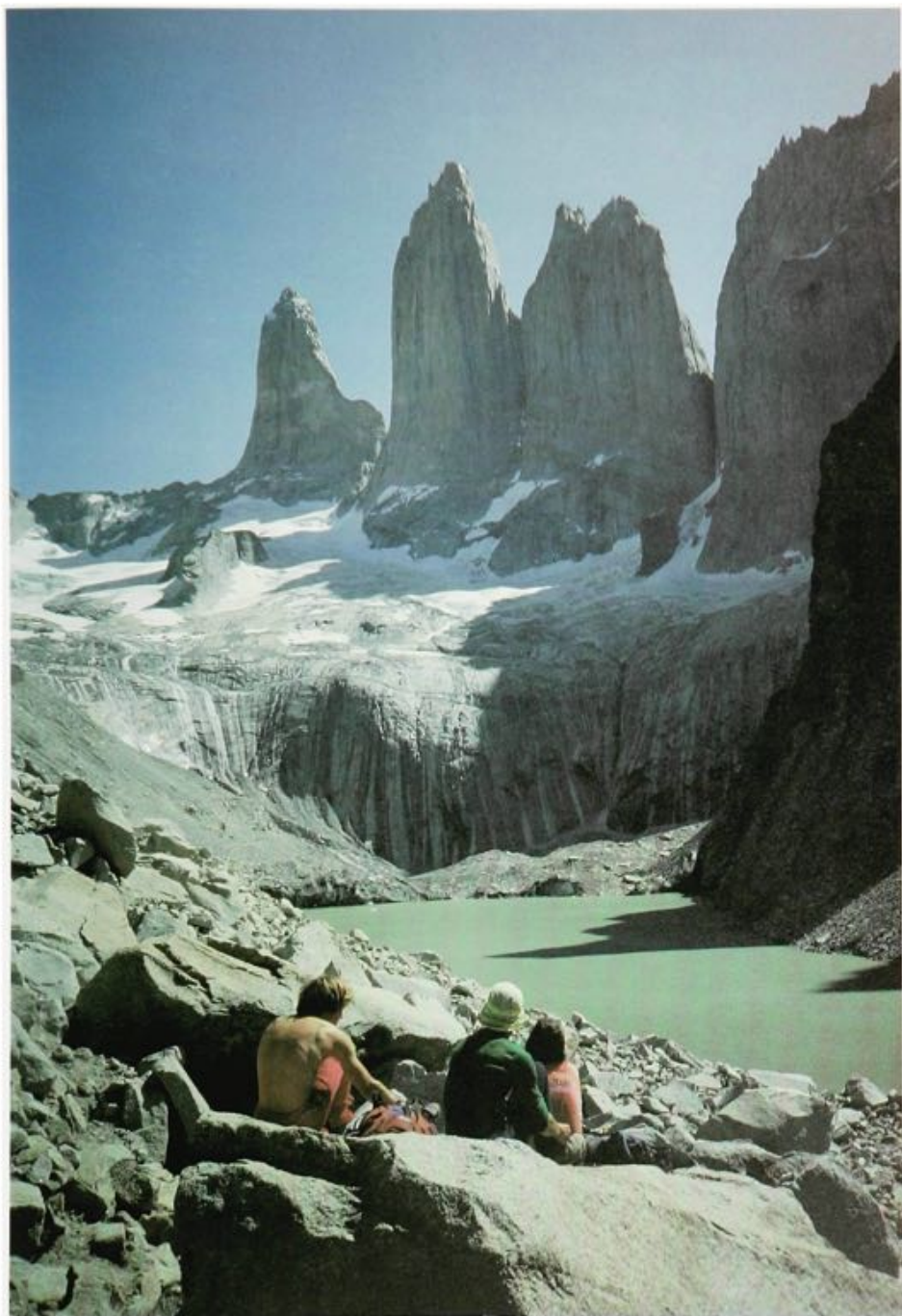


First ascent of 'Four For Texas' E2 5a/b Carn Gowla, Tony Penning. Photo: David Hope



Above: Cloud Cascade. Photo: Lindsay Griffin. Below Left: The Gentle (?) Art of MMR. Photo: Mike Browell. Below Right: Les Droites North Face. Photo: John Sumner





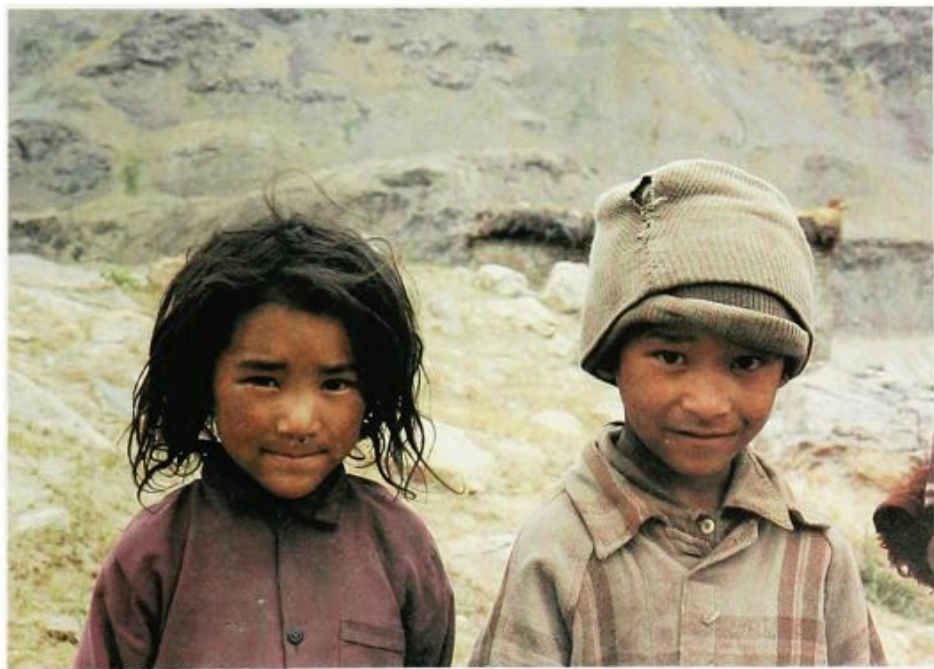
Big Ned. Photo: Neil Boyd

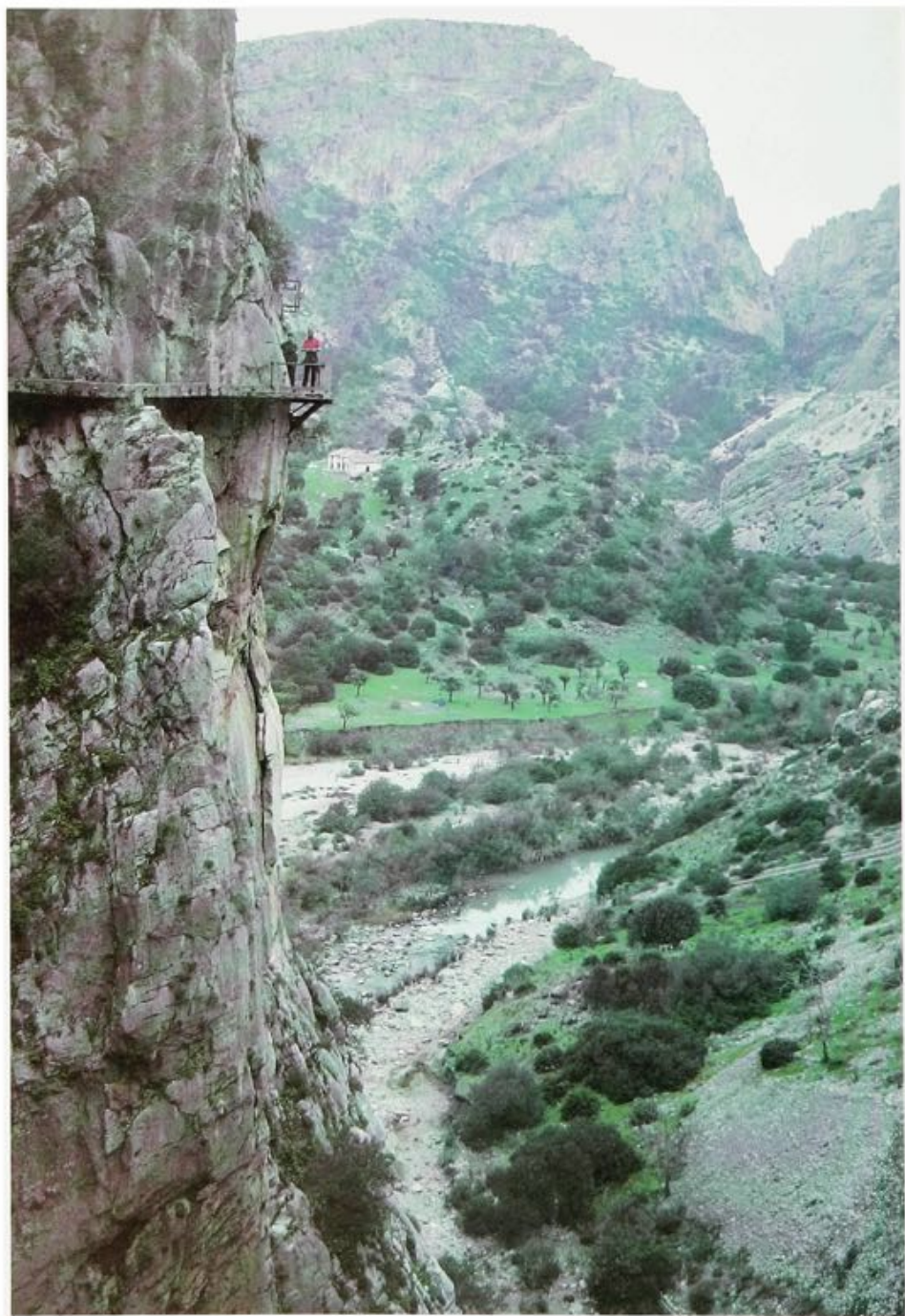


Mike Mortimer on 'Stroll On' E3 6a, Llanberis Pass. Photo: Steve Foxley



Above: Crossing the Patagonia Ice Cap. Photo: Neil Boyd
Below: Zanscari children. Photo: Bevis Bowden





El Chorro — The King's Way. Photo: Chris Craggs

A Close Shave?

John Harwood

The rain was beating down, the wind was howling and it was cold. In fact, it was a typical summer's day in Cardiff! The 'phone rang and there was the irrepressible Martin Crocker trying to persuade me go to some area of Spain I'd never heard of, where the sunshine was everlasting, the rock towers were hundreds of feet high and names such as *Fiesta de los Biceps* typified the routes. The place was Riglos and, naturally, I didn't take much persuading to agree to a trip there!

So it was that mid-September found us collecting our hire car at Barcelona airport and wending our way northwards for the hills. *En route* we stopped at Montserrat (a dreadful place in my opinion) and Los Pelladets which gave delightful slab climbs or steep walls mainly on excellent, if searing rock. But the Riglos were the main event for the trip so we didn't linger long on the aperitifs!

The guidebook has this to say about Riglos. 'The climbing at Riglos is special for a number of reasons. The steepness and exposure, the improbability of lines up apparently blank walls, the spectacular descents and most of all, the peculiar nature of the rock... No description of Riglos would be complete without mention of the vultures which inhabit the area, circling the towers or resting in their eyries. To look up or even down on these huge birds from a hanging stance and to wonder whether or not one is trespassing can be a thought-provoking experience'. The guide also singled out one climb for special mention — the *Rabada/Navarro* route on Mallo Fire — as one of the greatest routes in Spain. When it was first climbed over five days in October 1961 it was an incredible achievement. In fact 'it is sometimes said that until one has climbed the *Rabada al Fire* one hasn't climbed in Spain'.

So it was natural that, without any warm up or getting used to the unique conglomerate rock of the Riglos, Martin was intent on the *Rabada/Navarro* climb as an 'introduction'. What an introduction! Protection was barely sufficient and route-finding was complex. By nine o'clock we were in the full sun and feeling the heat. In fact our effort ground to a halt when Martin started to suffer from sunstroke and we had to beat a quick retreat, fortunately aided by some conveniently placed abseil bolts. The next day, armed with a water bottle, we completed the climb without incident but marvelling at the skill and courage of the two relatively unsung Spaniards who had pulled off such a *tour de force* over 30 years before.

As the week passed we climbed more and more of the fantastic walls — *The Murciana*, *Fiesta de los Biceps* (itself), *El Puro*, *La Carnavalada* — and visited the Escaletes (a region nearby). We revelled in the rock, the incredible positions and the superb weather. For our last day, though, we needed something special. All week long we had gazed at the fantastic soaring arête of the tower of Mallo Chuchillo. From the local topo guide in the local bar it appeared that the arête was the line of an old aid route, *Filomatic* (a razor blade). Recently it had been re-equipped and it seemed to offer a lot of sustained climbing at British 6a or 6b. In fact, there seemed to be some doubt as to whether it had all been climbed free. Just

the job for us — or, at least, for Martin.

Next day we were up early and climbing by seven. Since the tower faced south, I elected to climb in a tee-shirt — a bad mistake since the sun never appeared and the wind rapidly got up. By the time we were a few hundred feet up, a regular gale was blowing and, on the arête, we were fully exposed. Up to then, all was fine, the climbing was hard but not desperate, the rock excellent and the bolts frequent and good. Suddenly the whole ambience of the undertaking changed.

Martin was on the crux pitch, which we had split since we didn't have 60 metre ropes. The bolts started to become spaced, the rock deteriorated, retreat was getting more and more problematic because of the steepness and the wind was a real handicap. The ropes blew round the corner, horizontally, and snagged on the only bush for miles - a tough old yew which wouldn't break. Holding our breath, we undid one end of the rope to try and pull it through. At first it ran OK and then, of course, it jammed again. A desperate pull by both of us managed to free it and averted even more of a crisis. Martin continued. The climbing was desperate. It was about 6b, on poor rock and with bad protection. It needed all his concentration as he had to fight for every foot won. I could barely follow, even with aid from what bolts were good enough to pull on! All the time the wind and the difficulties were merciless. I was glad to be with someone like Martin with all his experience of serious routes in the South-West and it was fortunate that we were near the end of our holiday and pretty fit. *Filomatic* took everything we had. Time and again, Martin would shout "give me a break" as yet another difficulty was encountered.

At last, in the fading light, we crawled onto the summit and hastened to find the way off. Our last abseil was in almost total darkness but our ropes pulled through. We stumbled down the road, utterly spent.

But isn't it funny how quickly some people recover and forget? As we sat in a local bar eating our evening meal, I couldn't believe my ears as Martin proposed driving all through the night so we could do some routes at Montserrat before catching our plane. For me, *Filomatic* had been too memorable an experience — too literally a close shave!

Caucus-Race

Stephen Reid

'... "What I was going to say!," said the Dodo in an offended tone, "was that, the best thing to get us dry would be a Caucus-race."

"What is a Caucus-race?" said Alice; not that she much wanted to know, but the Dodo had paused as if it thought that somebody else ought to speak, and no-one else seemed inclined to say anything.

"Why," said the Dodo, "the best way to explain it is to do it."

(And as you might like to try the thing yourself some winter day, I will tell you how the Dodo managed it.)...'

Even on faraway Pillar, unclimbed grooves are a rarity these days but one possibility had long haunted me; a deep, V-cut, heavily capped affair sandwiched between the second pitches of *Puppet* and *Megaton*. Try as I might, I could not find a mention of it in the old grey guide and yet it appeared by far the most prominent line on the entire North Face.

It would be hard. Smooth as burnished glass and unrelentingly impending for 40ft to a huge roof and above that a merely vertical wall. Its pancake-flat sides green with fine lichen and a thin line of moss down their meeting point offering little hope of either good holds or runners. The conclusion was obvious: Cram, Young, Eilbeck, Roper et al had surely dismissed it as impossible and I had not the ghost of a chance. However when the new guide finally appeared and there was still no sign of it in print I felt that it couldn't do any harm just to have a look.

As usual we had had an arduous day. John Campbell's bike had broken down on the way in and so I doubled back to take his 'sack and missed him completely as he had taken another path...

And a new E1, *Gorre*, up the arête left of *Goth* had proved a strenuous affair. But we had climbed *Megaton* just to get to the summit of Low Man and that had given us a good view of the rock both above and below the groove, much of which seemed unclimbed. So, a week later I was back doing *Puppet* just to check more rock and then spending the rest of the day in a sustained cleaning session whilst John climbed with Adrian Moore.

Everything takes a long time on big mountain crags, especially if you lose the descent path, and by the time that they had returned to the base it was too late for another route — particularly one of unknown grade with a leader of suspect ability. A frightening 400ft abseil on a single 9mm retrieved my abandoned gear and laden down with three ropes and far too much other gear I hurtled homeward on my mountain bike, lost control on a bend, and broke my left arm in the resulting pile-up. It was only June — all I could do was cry and thank God that the groove itself remained uncleaned though the rest of the face would be suspiciously pristine to any passing Ron Kenyon.

All through the winter I thought long and hard about training. I imagined myself improving in fitness daily and, with my arm fully mended, bursting forth upon an astounded local climbing scene with a series of remarkable ascents. As a sign of this new commitment I even went to Cockermouth Climbing Wall a few

Caucus-Race

times — where I would do a few moves and then stand about chatting with all the other loafers. So it should have come as no surprise that my leading ability come April hovered fairly near the bottom end of the Mild Severe mark — after all, it was the same every Spring. The route would have to wait, but would the competition?

But gradually, and despite my worst prognosis, my standard crept up. A failure on *Arcturus* and a struggle up *Cascade, North Crag Eliminate* after an hour long dithering session. *Raindrop* went more quickly and I began to dream that groove. But the dreams were never as bad as the reality I thought to myself as, braced against its slithery sides, I attempted impossible urges.

We had ridden up that day, Caroline Fanshawe, John and I. The chain had broken on my bike and I had hitched a lift with a passing digger unbeknownst to John who very kindly returned to collect my 'sack — there's poetic justice for you. They had climbed together while I finally cleaned the groove and then it rained and then it dried and then it was time.



Stephen Reid on 'Caucus-Race', first ascent. Photo: Reid Collection

'... First the Dodo marked out a race-course, in a sort of circle ("the exact shape doesn't matter," it said), and then all the party were placed along the course here and there. There was no "one, two, three, and away," but they began running when they liked, and left off when they liked, so that it was not easy to know when the race was over. However, when they had been running half an hour or so, and were quite dry again, the Dodo suddenly called out "The race is over!" and they all crowded round it, panting, and asking, "But who has won?" ...'

There was a scrambly pitch, common to *Megaton*, to start, and then a beautiful slab section. Left along a shelf and a fine little groove of roughest rock with a distinctly awkward pull onto the upper slab and a little wall to the belay — a good grass ledge below the groove. The others followed, climbing together, and then it was truly time. I clambered into the base of the groove and placed the first of several good runners in the excellent placements revealed by the removal of the moss. Progress was only possible by back and footing, a tenuous process in a smooth V-groove, and the going was tough to say the least. I placed another piece of gear and came down for a rest and to remove lichen specks from my eyes. Caroline and John were in deep gossip about some mutual acquaintance who boasted an unusually prolific love-life so disgraceful in its conduct as to warrant immediate and utter discussion down to its smallest and most intimate detail, and were thus, quite naturally, paying me no heed — this wouldn't do at all! I called them grudgingly to attention and made a determined effort on the groove which gained me another foot or so and with a long reach a further bit of gear. Now I was at an impasse. There were no handholds and no footholds. Moreover, a small overlap on the right wall had to be overcome with the feet. I edged and edged and then edged a bit more. Little seemed to happen except one foot or the other kept slipping off. Eventually I thought 'Blow it, the gear's good', and just rose somehow on tippy toes until I found a small handhold and pulled my feet up too quick to fall off and so proceeded without further conscious thought until I reached the roof, a good jam and an excellent thread. Here I could bridge and semi-rest and fix an encouraging wire out left.

The next section called for eyes in the back of the head. At furthest stretch behind me I had a good flat hold for my left hand but nothing else. I prudently decided to rest a bit more. When resting became too strenuous to do any longer, and fondly imagining I would still be able to bridge, I swung out left and found both feet and my right hand dangling free.

"Tight!" I yelled in panic, before my right hand crossed over and lunged up to a jug just as my left hand slipped off.

"Slack!" I yelled in panic, before Caroline had had time to respond to my first command and I lurched madly for a good resting place on the arête where I could subside into as much of a gibbering heap as is possible whilst still hanging from both arms.

For a long time I studiously examined the few square metres of rock in front of my face (I had read somewhere once that this was a good way of calming the nerves), and eventually, for want of anything better to do, fixed a runner. As it didn't seem very good I put in another. However I was not altogether happy about this one and placed a third... a fourth and fifth soon followed and before long the slight crack in front of me bristled with half a dozen or so devices, none

of which, I was quite certain, would have held a falling gnat. However, there was no room left for anything else and so reluctantly, and only after a further lengthy period of trepidation, I finally made the first move — and then laughed because it all seemed so easy. A further move brought me to a hand traverse break and I followed it to a superb hanging arête and V. Diff territory to the belay. I almost yelled out loud in exaltation but thankfully remembered that I was British before it was too late.

'... The question of prizes the Dodo couldn't answer without a great deal of thought, and it stood for a long time with one finger pressed upon its forehead (the position in which you usually see Shakespeare, in the pictures of him), while the rest waited in silence. At last the Dodo said "Everyone has won, and all must have prizes." ...'

Both Caroline and John flattered me somewhat by professing to have found the climbing quite hard up what Caroline termed 'the worst groove in the known Universe' but I was fairly sure that I detected a conspiratorial wink or two pass between them and, when Caroline followed this up by claiming that I obviously only came into my own on 'vertical wet moss', I set off up the next pitch in an understandable huff, determined to show that I could cope with just about anything rocky, quantity and quality of plant-life notwithstanding. Not that there was much of it really; a fairly easy groove to a puzzling bulge and then an even easier groove to the frighteningly inadequate belay on *Puppet* which I chose to ignore. The top pitch started with a serious bridging move to get a jug and some decent gear and then settled down to a fascinating meander of about HVS standard which led by way of odd little mantelshelves, short slim grooves, grass ledges and dubious blocks to the very summit of Low Man. Caroline and John followed it in the blustery dusk and we made it back to the 'sacks just as it started to drizzle and the sun finally chucked the towel in.

I had to push my bike much of the way out so it was comforting to learn that John's newly aquired machine had a puncture and Caroline had forgotten her torch...

'... Alice thought the whole thing very absurd, but they all looked so grave that she did not dare laugh...'

Pillar Rock - North Face of Low Man
Caucus-Race 124m E2

A strenuous test in chimneying technique up the prominent capped V-groove to the right of *Puppet*. Start on Green Ledge as for *Megaton* about 10m left of the Bounding Buttress under a steep grassy area (NB - the guidebook diagram for *Megaton* is misleading).

1. 18m (4b). As for *Megaton*, climb a 3m wall to heather and then a rock rib to a rightward slanting grass ledge under slabs. Thread chockstone belay on right about halfway along the ledge.
2. 28m (5a). From the belay, follow a left slanting crack under the nose of the slabs to a wide shelf. Traverse this to a thin groove which is climbed with a difficult pull onto the upper slab. Follow this to a grass ledge. Climb directly up the wall at the

back of the ledge exiting rightwards and then back left to belay as for *Megaton* directly under the menacing V-groove.

3. 22m (5c). Levitate uncannily up the groove to the overhang (good thread runner) and make a wild hand traverse left to a welcome resting place on the arête. On recovering, climb directly up the wall above to a horizontal break and hand traverse this rightwards to the arête. Easily up this to a good spike belay. (It is possible to climb the wall direct but this is dirty and not as good).

4. 18m (5a). Above on the left is a sharply defined V-groove with an arête on its left (*Nor' Nor' West Climb*) and on the right a shallower V-groove (*Taylor's Chimney*). Between the two is a very vague groove blocked at half height by a smooth bulge. Climb this groove overcoming the bulge with difficulty and continue more easily to a small stance and poor belay on the left at a large detached spike (if this belay is not liked it is just possible with 50m ropes and careful ropework to combine the last two pitches).

5. 38m (5b). A complex pitch. From the spike move horizontally right for 2m to a small quartz ledge with grass on it. Make a bold move directly up the wall into a short shallow groove. Continue up the groove until it peters out and mantelshelf awkwardly into a slim groove on the right. From the top of this traverse diagonally rightwards on slabs before moving back left to a grass ledge. Climb the corner formed by dubious blocks until just below its top it is possible to foot traverse right and swing into a short groove. Exit rightwards from this and then follow an easy ramp-line back left to the summit of Low Man, taking care with loose rock.

Stephen Reid, Caroline Fanshawe, John Campell.

Note: Two protection points left over from cleaning were *in situ* on the first ascent — to no great advantage. They have now been removed.

The Kitchen

Dave Gregory

The glorious weather had lasted for weeks. Even in Wales and northern Britain the flow of streams was lessening. The treacherous black patches on the gritstone moors which would usually clutch hungrily at the boot of anyone unwary or inexperienced enough to use their flat innocence as an easy option to hopping the surrounding tufts of moor-grass sod, had dried and cracked and did indeed offer an easy if dusty option to the ankle-wrecking tussocks of what were once, but no longer, called nigger heads. The llyns and tarns pulled in their margins as the inflow slackened, the water body grew gradually warmer and evaporation increased. The high moorland gritstone streams took on their brackish summer acidity leaving ochre streams behind on the white water-washed slabs of their beds. Lowland streams grew brackish and rank. The run-off from farms which had been poisoning streams and ponds engendered streamers of green slime on their surface and hid the turbidity of their lower level waters. Tarns in Lakeland suffered hurriedly written signs stuck by their approach paths warning of 'dangerous blue-green algae'. 'This', people said of the heat, ignoring the ruin of their water playgrounds, 'is what summers used to be like'.

The steep and overhanging walls hidden in the limestone dales ceased their weeping and the lycra lads moved out from the climbing walls onto their summer roosts, displacing the martins and replacing the coating of grey-green lichen with blotches of chalk. Small parties of the determined struggled, early in the day, to avoid the sun, up the steep slopes to the mountain crags and climbed all day in the cool shade of their north faces, free of midges, sunburn, and the rolling sweat of the valley crags.

They had to some extent miscalculated. Having booked into the cottage some time before, sheer inertia had stopped their switching to another hut and they found themselves in the unusual situation of cursing the heat. Fortunately in the first part of the week low tide had been early in the day and they had been able to snatch a couple of routes before the cool morning haze had dissipated and the full heat of the sun reflected off the sea and the rock faces producing an oven. They had tried the Leap but in the middle of the day the sun was almost directly overhead and even there it was necessary to wait until the late afternoon so that the shadow of the Muscles Wall covered the floor of the Leap and the lower portion of the more easily angled east wall. There were suggestions of *Subterranean Rabbit Launcher* or *The Hole* but no one treated these very seriously. *Deep Space*, now that was different. It would be cool in there and at least they would still be able to see.

There was no need to be up too early since they would be sheltered from the sun and, judging by the tide tables, the tide was on the turn by the time they had dumped their gear at the top of *Brazen Buttress*. The sea itself, millpond-smooth with scarcely a ripple, gave no indication. The regular sough of the slight rise and fall against the roughness of the rock face was almost inaudible and the rare sudden surge of the slightly larger wave swishing round the flutings of the sea-

level ridges came as a surprise. Although the sun was already beating heavily on them there was a haze further out to sea and somewhere a fog horn was booming. Above the haze the sky was a uniform blue, unbroken by any cloud and below it the sea was gunmetal grey, broken about half a mile out by a swirling patch of a lighter colour. He had always thought that these differences in the colour of the sea were caused by the reflections of clouds or an alteration in the nature of the bottom. Clouds there were none and surely they would not be able to detect the colour at the bottom that far out. A current of water flowing against the main direction they decided, and forgot it. Nearer in they could see clear to the bottom, the sea was so still. As they stepped carefully near to the edge to set up the belay for the abseil a seal surfaced about 100ft out and seemed, as its fellows always did, very interested in their activities, sitting in its underwater armchair, watching them wave and cocking its head to listen to their shouted greetings.

It paid no attention to the miniature plane beating backwards and forwards a little further out to sea. The Soft And was at its little games again. It was towing no target today. Just testing? How many thousands of pounds would go up in smoke today? Their interest in it distracted their attention from the seal and it tired of the show and flipped lazily over to disappear from view. The little delta wing swooped and swept until it coughed, spluttered, and started one last dive into the sea. Some sweating brain-gifted squaddy, or perhaps an unintelligent air-cool micro chip, pressed a switch and the stricken plane billowed a scarlet canopy which let it drift slowly down to the leaden sea. Further out there must be a breeze for the scarlet patch drifted east. A fine time someone would have finding that needle in that haystack.

They turned their attention to the ropes. There was sufficient of the platform still above sea level for the extra rope to fall onto but they knotted it partway along at the top so that only a couple of feet would lie on the ledge to be washed off by the sea if it came in while they were on the route. Just off from the ledge were some orange patches lazily swinging to and fro in the slight movement of the sea. The same bold colour as the lichens on the roofs of the houses just inland. Not lichens in the sea surely, algae? At least it looked healthier than the blue-green muck in the inland streams. There were other patches of it around the foot of the buttress and into the bay below *Mother Night* and *Tiger, Tiger*. Occasionally, as a swirl of sea came back off one of the sea-level flutings, one patch would flow back and forth until some chance split it again into smaller patches. A lot of bright colours about today. They could no longer see the plane with its scarlet counterpane but a white dingy, its outboard thrashing, was quartering the area where the plane had ditched.

They laid out their ropes on the tortured rocks inside the huge cleft and The Star tied onto the sharp ends and carefully racked the karabiners of Rocks. One to three, three times. Four to six, three times. Seven to nine, twice. Friends, nought to two. Twelve quick draws. The description spoke of belaying on threads in a sort of cave. The folklore was fairly insistent that it would be better to continue over the overhang and belay on a ledge above it on the other side of the cleft. Did the second man mind if they did it like that? No, he did not, because his information was that the overhang above the threads was nothing like the 5a the book said and changing belays and swopping the ropes to feed through properly, on the thread belays in the cave below the overhang would be a positive pain in the pancreas.

He busied himself taking off his new and too-tight boots and finding a safe ledge from which they could not fall and an area of the fluting tops sufficiently smooth to stand on in relative comfort.

"You'll still need these though" he said offering his neck slings and a krab full of tie-off loops before unknotting his shirt from where it was wrapped around his waist and throwing it over his shoulders to protect his back from the razor sharp spines behind him as he leaned back against the cool damp rock to watch progress.

Somewhere outside the cleft the monotonous drone had re-started and came and went like an angry bee. It would be another radio-controlled plane. Damned determined the Soft And. Strange, there had been no notices of firing. Still they were safe in here, providing the rest of it didn't join the lump which had fallen off *Wraith*. The Star was finding the first part of the wall hard. It was steep and despite the incredible weather it was wet. Well, not wet, but decidedly damp. Could the rock be so cold that water condensed on it out of the warm air as it did on the spectacles of a person coming into a warm room out of the cold? Or had the high sea washes covered the rock in salt which was absorbing water vapour out of the air? Who knows? He was finding it hard and had moved to and fro across the wall as he worked his way upward, looking for dry rock and good handholds. He reached drier rock and the second man's tension relaxed and he began to look about him. The sea was creeping up a bit but he was safe for ages yet.

Over to his right the rising sea had swept the patches of orange algae together near the water's edge. They lay ranged along the shore fringe like lumps of coral on a necklace. While he watched, a fluke of the current drew an extension out of one of the patches and as the patch slid down a gentle wave the extension touched its neighbour and the two patches merged like oil blobs on water. The Star was well up the wall and a trail of threads and wires charted his path. A breeze which had moved the floating plane was getting up, felt even here in the cleft and the second man moved slightly out of the shelter to get the better benefit of it. From his new stance he could see that the beads of algae round the shore line were being driven together by the breeze and a huge orange raft had formed in a scallop of the small rock face to the right of *Tiger, Tiger*, where the grassy slope came almost to the sea. As he watched it the raft rolled lazily sideways along the rock of the shore like an ill-formed gearwheel meshing with some ill-treated cog.

The Star had reached the cave and the threads below the overhang and was having an almost hands-off rest with his arms thrust into the hole behind the threads.

"Sweaty work," he was saying, "even in here. Can you" he shouted down "see all that orange stuff? It's all collected together in one lump. Look, it's coming for you."

And it was in fact making laborious progress towards the buttress, bumping along the rough corrugations of the flutings in the bottom of the rock face, pieces of it breaking off and following the mother lump under the influence of the breeze and the gentle surge and suck of the waves. The Star was rested and on his way again, scuttling sideways with his hands above the overhang and then back again to get established above it.

"You'll enjoy that" he shouted down. "Good pumpy stuff." Sarcastic sod.

Above the overhang the cleft was narrower and the second man could see him

bridged across the two walls as he made his way more easily up to the belay ledge.

"Safe" came echoing down and he unscrewed the krab and jerked the ropes out of the plate. Under this gentle impetus a couple of coils from the pile at his feet slid down the flutings into the V where two of them met, taking the rest of the pile with them in a slither of meshing colour. He looked for his two ends placed carefully in clear view at a higher level and keeping these ends well clear he started to feed the ropes back into a neater pile on the higher, rock only to find that the ropes had crossed over in the V and jammed. A gentle twitch did nothing so, leaning down to take in all the slack in the rope above the jamming and braced for the pull, he jerked the last section upwards. The cross-over came suddenly clear of the constriction and the back of his clenched fist ran painfully across the spiked surface of the rock taking a strip of skin off and leaving an area of raw tissue which began to weep blood.

There were some small fragments of dirt — rock dust? — in the wound and he stepped carefully down to stand with his feet just above the water so that he could lean down and shake his hand in the sea water. God, how it stung. The great mass of orange swirled nearer and extended a lazy arm into the miniature inlet where he had shaken off most of the dirt. It all seemed to have washed off but to be sure he leaned forward, supporting himself by his left arm on a small dome of rock just above the sea while he dipped his hand into the sea again, shaking it back and forth to make sure the water got at the wound. The lazy arm had the scent of blood and thickened, extending fingers towards the angled wrist. The first of them covered the raw patch and keyed into the spaces between his own fingers. From this purchase it spread and followed, coating his hand and lower arm. He was about to snatch his hand away when the slimy coating hardened and the great mass of orange surged away from the rock pulling him over the pivot of his left hand head first into the sea. He was hidden in seconds and the pretty patch of algae moved gently out from the cliff against the wash.

The Star went through all the usual procedures. Relaying his intentions, taking in, shouting down his surprise when so much slack came in. One of the Rocks fell into the sea when the rope's end whipped past it. It was half an hour before he had roped back down the pitch into the cleft. The shirt had dropped and was half on the rock and half dragged in the sea being lapped back and forth. The new boots were still safe, well above the water level, carefully cached on an incut ledge. They would make up for the lost Rock but they weren't his size.

Permanent Good Weather

(A story of five winter days on Mont Blanc)

Dave Wilkinson

After our summer in the Pamirs, Parky (Tony Park) suggested a couple of weeks in Chamonix over Christmas and New Year. He had not climbed in the Alps in winter before, and had all the enthusiasm and naïvety of youth, which I have lost through many winters of frustration and hardship. But eventually I agreed to go. After all, if the weather was bad again, we could always go skiing.

We drove to Chamonix. The weather seemed good to middling, so we went to the Argentière Hut for a day route on the Argentière Glacier headwall. We were back in town for Christmas, and went to consult the weather forecast, an essential ritual before any major commitment. The high pressure was due to become even stronger, and the Chamonix météo man, for the first time I have ever known, gave a forecast of at least five days of perfect weather, with no ifs or buts. He clearly relished being, for a change, the purveyor of such good news, and came out with some choice phrases: 'aucune chute de neige n'est pas en vue' (not a snowfall in sight), and 'le ciel restera dégage en permanence' (the sky will remain permanently clear).

Brendan Murphy and Dave Wills had already left for the East Face of the Grand Pilier d'Angle (Eckpfeiler) by a major rock route, *Divine Providence*, not a route I would choose in the finger-numbing cold of Alpine winter. It would clearly be demanding, so they had gone prepared to use plenty of aid. We had more modest plans (as befits an Alpinist of my advanced age) and went for the classic route on the North Face of the same pillar, the *Cecchinel-Nominé* route.

The Grand Pilier d'Angle is situated just left of the Brenva Face. All its routes are hard, and at each top, you emerge on the *Peuterey Ridge*, which has to be completed to the top of Mont Blanc before you descend. So these routes are abnormally serious, especially in winter. Good weather is essential if you wish to survive.

We took the téléphérique to the top of the Aiguille du Midi, descended the upper part of the Vallée Blanche on snow shoes, to the disbelief of the many skiers flashing past; then left the ski-tracks and continued on our own to the hut on the Col du Trident, on the *Frontier Ridge*. Next morning we left at three o'clock, descended to the Brenva Glacier, and crossed Col Moore at the foot of the *Brenva Spur*. A light shone high on the East Face of the pillar. Brendan and Dave seemed to be well on with their route. A strong wind had blown all night, and showed no sign of relenting. As we descended from Col Moore to the second branch of the Brenva Glacier, we were blasted with wind-blown powder snow. Our proposed route has several rock pitches of grade 5. The prospect of rock-climbing at VS grade with snow blowing over our hands at minus 20°C did not appeal. Call me a coward. We decided on a change of plan. There are two routes further right on the same face, the *Dufour-Frêhel* route, and the *Bonatti-Zappelli*. They are of similar grade to our previous plan, but with little or no technical rock, the climbing being mostly on ice and mixed ground. However, the approach to these routes is rather

exposed to serac falls from the Brenva Face. We walked up over masses of debris from previous falls, a grim reminder of the danger we were in; but that same debris enabled us to move quickly out of harm's way, as it had filled in the crevasses, and partially covered an ice-cliff obstacle. We crossed the bergschrund shortly after dawn, and felt committed to continue.

The first part of the route was straightforward, 55° ice with a patchy cover of snow of variable consistency. The wind dropped, and our change of plan seemed foolish and cowardly.

There are two types of route in the Alps in winter; those you can get up in a day, so you travel light and go like hell, and those you can't. This route was definitely one of the latter. It always amazes me how slowly I climb with a winter 'sack on my back. Short winter days further limit the progress. We seemed to have had only just started climbing, but it was time to look for a bivouac site.

Route-finding was harder than it should have been — we had no guidebook. We did have a photo-copy of the relevant page, but that was only relevant for the route we had decided not to do. I thought I knew where these other lines went (they shared the first part), but now I found out how wrong I was. A left-slanting icefield (the *Dufour-Frèhel* line?) did not hold promise of a good ledge to sleep on, so we took to some steeper, rockier ground ahead, and found a reasonable ledge for the night. We supposed we must be on the *Bonatti-Zappelli*. Next day, half a dozen pitches of mixed ground brought us to easier terrain, and the prominent ice-cliff, which required a traverse to rejoin the correct *Bonatti-Zappelli* route — a new (?) variation, climbed by accident rather than design.

We were again being overtaken by darkness. But the wind had got up again, and Parky didn't fancy another bivouac (and nor did I). With the difficulties behind us, we decided to continue by headtorch and try to get to the Vallôt Hut. But once more, the best laid plans....

Easy snow led to the *Peuterey Ridge*; a traverse on rocks covered in deep snow, then a moderate-angled ridge leading relentlessly up. The 'Purgatory Ridge' as Parky called it.

Batteries were failing. Finally, with a few icy pitches to go, and only one live headtorch between two, we admitted defeat, and suffered an uncomfortable night (or what was left of it) on a small ledge, retribution for our rashness in passing several good ledges lower down, in our stubborn aim for the Vallôt Hut.

Next morning, our stiff bodies were slow in starting; we had a short day, and spent that night in the Vallôt Hut. The fifth day was filled with the long plod down the Bosses Glacier to Plan de l'Aiguille, and back to Chamonix just in time for the New Year celebrations.

Perhaps the most enduring memory from these five days was the ten minutes spent on top. The distant view, including Monte Rosa and the Dauphiné, had a clarity and sharpness never seen through the haze which inevitably comes with fine weather in summer. To the north-west we looked down on a sea of low cloud, a foggy day in Eastern France. And we had the place to ourselves. In winter, the Alps can still provide solitude. Winter Alpinism remains a minority activity. Parky had been finding out why.

Nanga Parbat via the Mazeno Ridge

Doug Scott

The West Ridge of Nanga Parbat is about eight miles long from the Mazeno Pass. It is the longest ridge on any of the 8,000m peaks, and remains unclimbed. Although Nanga Parbat is a very popular mountain, there has been surprisingly little activity on this major feature.

A half-hearted attempt was made by the French in 1979. It seems that they climbed directly up from the Mazeno Pass to a minor summit, north of the actual *Mazeno (West) Ridge*. They fixed a considerable amount of rope but gave up, due to bad weather. The only other activity in the vicinity was a very brave attempt by three Basque climbers to reach the highest of the seven Mazeno peaks, from the north in 1986. They climbed for nine days, alpine style, up very steep rock, ice and snow, but had to retreat just a few rope lengths from the Mazeno summit. They made 36 long abseils in their descent.

In the summer of 1992, our expedition arrived in Islamabad from the UK, Russia and Nepal during 20th-22nd July. We planned to climb the *Mazeno Ridge* in three stages.

After arriving at Base Camp (3,500m) on 26th July, we climbed a minor summit opposite Nanga Parbat on 28th July. Serge Effimov, Valeri Perchine and myself traversed across to place a food and fuel cache on the West Ridge, about 400m above the Mazeno Gap, at 7,300m. Alan Hinkes, Ang Phurba and Nga Temba placed a dump at 7,000m, all on the stormy 16th August. Sean Smith was plagued with headaches, so we descended the same afternoon to Camp 3. Alan and the Sherpas had already descended all the way down to Camp 1. On 17th August, whilst descending the steep, loose rock between Camp 2 and Camp 1 on the *Schell* route, a massive rock avalanche roared down. Serge Effimov and myself found shelter with the rocks skimming over our helmets and 'sacks. Sean was turned upside-down on the belay by the abseil 50m higher. Valeri Perchine, who was about to make the abseil, was swept down when a rock hit him in the chest. Sean sustained bruised ribs, a crushed toe and a smashed helmet, but was otherwise OK. He climbed down with what was left of the abseil rope. Valeri stopped 100m down in a shallow depression on the steep face; he was lucky not to go another 1,500m. As it was, he suffered broken ribs, a cracked pelvis and lacerations to the hands and face. It took two days to get him down to Base Camp.

Alan and the Sherpas had survived another huge rock fall the day before — they were quite shaken. In fact, Alan decided to go home, a decision influenced as much by the death of two close friends earlier in the year as from his own near-miss. Sean went off to Gilgit for a medical check and Valeri remained at Base Camp to recover there over the next few weeks. The remaining four members of the expedition went around towards the Mazeno Pass. After two days walking from Base Camp, we arrived to camp at 4,800m, amongst the moraine of the Mazeno Glacier, some 3km south-south east of the Mazeno Gap. Early the next morning Ang Phurba, Nga Temba, Serge Effimov and myself set off to climb the ridge which goes north to Pt.6880, the first of the seven Mazeno summits, as

marked on the 1936 German map of the area. We were carrying, on average, 25kg rucksacks, with enough food and gear to sustain us over an estimated eight days up and down, up the *Mazeno Ridge* to the summit of Nanga Parbat, and a descent down the *Schell* route. We moved together over the glacier and climbed roped up 45-50° ice slopes — strenuous stuff with heavy 'sacks. After 12 hours climbing, we arrived at a suitable camp site on the crest of the north-south ridge, at about 5,850m. We spent 26th August climbing around and over the pinnacles of the ridge, with some difficulty (TD), to camp at about 6,400m. On 27th August we climbed up on ice and snow to Pt.6650, and then on over the first of the Mazeno summits, Pt.6880. We continued east along the ridge, over Pt.6825, to camp on a wind-swept saddle, to the east. On 28th August we climbed up to Pt.6970, which was as far as we got.

The night before had been extremely windy; we were up in the night building walls around the tent. The Sherpas hadn't slept too well: Ang Phurba was definitely worried about the descent. Previously, he had been in the big rock fall with Alan and actually caught a rock on his chin; he was still somewhat demoralised from that and counselled for a retreat. He definitely didn't want to go any further. There was no way we could split the party and so we went into retreat, retracing our steps to Pt.6880 and continuing west and down towards the Mazeno Pass. Before the descent proper to the Pass we saw traces of fixed rope, presumably left by the French in 1979 and just south at Pt.6365 which is the peak they probably climbed that year.

We descended the steep, broken ground directly above the col until we ran out of daylight and bivouacked at about 5,358m. On 29th August we descended the last of the loose and dangerous rocks to the Mazeno Pass at 5,358m, and eventually Base Camp, just before dark, after a 20km walk.

It had been a good seven-day outing, climbing over new ground, including three of the seven Mazeno peaks, and seeing first-hand that this *Mazeno Ridge*, the West Ridge of Nanga Parbat, could be the most elegant and safest way to the summit. However, the most difficult of these summits have yet to be crossed.

After collecting, burning and burying 45 sacks of rubbish from around Base Camp, with the help of local children, we packed up. On 1st September we walked out with our 18 loads on the backs of donkeys to the road-head where Ibrahim, our excellent Liason Officer, had the jeeps ready to take us to Gilgit the same night.

Expedition Organiser - Doug Scott

Members of the Expedition Nazir Sabir Expeditions (Agents);

Mohammed Khan (Cook); Gulam Ali (H.A.Porter/Sirdar);

Ibrahim (Liason Officer);

Climbing Members - Serge Effimov (Russia), Alan Hinkes (UK),

Valeri Perchine (Russia), Ang Phurba (Nepal), Doug Scott (UK), Sean Smith (UK),

Nga Temba (Nepal.)

Our well-travelled member was also active at the other end of the globe:

Mount Vinson, Antarctica 1992

Doug Scott

We left Britain at the end of November, and flew across to Santiago in Chile. After flying along the Chilean Andes, and looking down on Fitzroy and the Paine Group in gorgeous clear weather, we arrived at Punta Arenas. On 27th November we flew on south, using the services of Adventure Network International. We arrived at their Patriot Hills Camp and that same day transferred to a Twin Otter and flew on to the base of Mount Vinson (4,897m).

After four days ferrying gear and food up the Branscomb Glacier and ice fall, we climbed through the ice fall to pitch our second camp on the Vinson-Shinn Col. Although the height of these mountains is little more than the Alps, it is necessary to take acclimatisation at these latitudes seriously. Just as on Mount McKinley in Alaska, climbing at 4,300m, has the effect on the body of climbing at approximately 600m higher, so it is said, and so it is felt. We were glad to take a day off before leaving on 7th December for Mount Vinson. After an eight hour day, and in stormy weather, we arrived on the summit at five o'clock in the evening.

The summiteers were our clients, who had paid for the expedition, Chris Brown, Andre Hedger, Frank Musgrave, Mike Parsons, Sundeep Dhillon and Ian Newell. Also on the summit were Sharu Prahbu and myself, who had organised the expedition, and Roger Mear, who had greatly assisted us in guiding the team up the mountain. Andre Hedger and Sundeep Dhillon stayed behind for another week, during which time they also climbed Mount Shinn.

Although we did not climb all that we planned, and both mountains climbed by our group were by standard routes, we were pleased to have got all members to the summit of Vinson. Although the climbing was technically quite easy, never more than Scottish Grade 2, the temperatures were in the region of minus 40°C, and there was a considerable wind-chill factor brought on by the 40-50 mile per hour winds blowing. Our main disappointment was having nil visibility from the summit but that was more than compensated for by us having been there.

We were impressed by Adventure Network International's organisation. The main problem for anyone going to Mount Vinson is, of course, paying for it, and in US dollars. The cost of this expedition to each of the six clients was £15,000 from the UK. It would have cost considerably less had the British interest rates not plummeted. Whilst all the clients had to struggle to raise the money, they expressed that, in their opinion, the trip was well worth every penny. Rare praise, but then it was a good group of people who regularly walked and climbed in the mountains.

We could see why it is that so many scientists, adventurers and climbers, once having visited the Antarctic, have become hooked on the place, only to return year after year. Certainly, the memory of the cold and the winds are fading fast, and those shiny, unclimbed peaks, ridges and faces remain, tempting us into making further plans.



Nanga Parbat, The Mazeno Ridge. Photo: Doug Scott

Buzzing and other Phenomena in Thunderous Conditions

Hal Jacob

During walking and climbing visits, I stayed at the Robertson Lamb Hut in Langdale in August or September of each of the years 1935, '36, '37 and '38. Unfortunately, although I remember the event clearly, I did not record the date on which, as sole occupant of the hut, I was awoken by an intense thunderstorm. The occasion was impressed on my memory because, at first, I was alarmed by the buzzing of the galvanised iron piping that supported the canvas bunks. My memory is not clear enough to be sure that I could feel anything when I touched the side of my bunk, but I think there was some vibration.

Until I read Brian H.Kemball-Cook's article in the 1991 Journal, I thought that whilst this was not likely to be a frequent experience in this country, it could be readily related to the phenomenon of buzzing ice axes familiar in Alpine literature and which Winthrop Young describes in *Mountain Craft*, Chapter VI p224 of the revised seventh edition (1949).

My second experience was in Scotland in September 1962 when my son John and I had a fairly eventful day on Bidean nam Bian. We started our walk near the Meeting of Three Waters and traversed Beinn Fhada in mist. Hereabouts we were startled by an even more surprised golden eagle that took off and flew towards us from a few yards away. The mist cleared as we approached the summit of Bidean from which point we witnessed a spectacular thunderstorm which seemed to be approaching from the far west. It was doing so rapidly and caught up with us as we neared the col between Bidean and Stob Coire nan Lochan. When the centre of the storm seemed to be near, we left the crest of the ridge to make ourselves less prominent and to seek shelter from the rain and hail which had become very heavy. Almost immediately the ridge was struck by lightning a few yards away. I remember only a lot of noise, but John describes a 'cacophony of noise including crackling and a sulphurous smell after the ridge was hit'. I cannot remember the smell, but I suspect that it was buzzing or crackling that warned us to leave the crest of the ridge. When the centre of the storm passed, we made for the summit of Stob Coire nan Lochan and found a scree gully descending to the small tarns to the north-east and easily to our starting point. The gully was quite exhilarating; there was so much storm water in it that the scree ran as soon as we set foot on it and we enjoyed the rapid water-aided descent.

Later events were of a different nature. They led to the only occasion on which either of us has been sought and found by the police. We were camping at the head of Glen Etive, not far from the Kingshouse Hotel and I had promised to 'phone my wife in Oban to tell her our whereabouts and at about what time we would be rejoining her on the following day. However, there was no 'phone working at the Kingshouse or in Glencoe Village and it seemed clear that the storm had cut communications. We returned to camp and packed up the following morning before trying a little fishing. In the meantime, my wife had endured a worrying

night and in the morning went to the police who in their wisdom told her that 'no camper could have survived in Glencoe last night'.

At midday they found us happily fishing.



John Jones on 'Grey Arête' pitch 2. Photo: Ken Wilson

Farewell to Filo

Peter Harding

Those Tre Cima di Lavaredo had had a right thrashing from the Brits; for almost 20 years anything and everything was fair game. It started in the early '50s when Richard Meyer and Vin Ridgeway did those Comici classics, then, at the end of the decade, Bonners and Gunn Clark romped up that *Brandler-Hasse* on the Cima Grande. Before you could say fifi-hook, folk were swinging about or bashing away all over the place; there was precious little left to hold sacred. Repeats of such seemingly impossible routes which were deemed to require superhuman strength, ultimate fortitude and maybe a PhD in engineering, (or at least a City and Guilds in plumbing), suddenly became the norm. It made one feel one's years. I resolved to have a modest fling of my own someday, before going past the sell-by date.

During our little expedition everyone kept saying that Filo San could be taken anywhere, relied upon in any situation, but I never thought we would end up on a hill together. It was even more surprising that I went out on the hill since my outdoor equipment only consisted of an ancient rucksack and a pair of old boots. Oh yes, and a quilted car coat, for we were essentially on a motoring trip, working; doing research into vehicle braking during descents of alpine passes. But today was a day off from all that jazz so I had decided to drive up the Auronzo and enjoy a pleasant ramble around the Tre Cima. Once there, those tantalizing towers cast their spell and I searched the car boot for any odd bit of gear which might enable a renascent Rambler to transform into a casual climber. My old 'sack contributed a length of nylon tape and a couple of rusty karabiners whilst the car gave up its tow-rope — a length of thin steel wire cable barely four metres long and coated in bright green plastic. Still, better than nothing I thought.

I tied the tape around my waist, clipped on the krabs, then stuffed the coiled cable and car coat, together with some sustenance, into my 'sack. That was when I discovered I was not alone; Filo put in a surprise appearance, I had to smile.

My research crew, back in Cortina, must have thought it was a good idea! Without so much of a spoken word I shouldered the 'sack and we set off up the scree. Reaching the twin couloirs which separate the Cimas Ovest and Grande, I scrambled on, up the first, to where they converge at the Forcella di Grande; perhaps the dirty little chimney in Cima Grande's west flank would provide access to its great terrace, despite having repulsed me on a previous occasion. I grinned. This time though, I was fortified by the presence of Filo! A hundred feet up, after surmounting an awkward chockstone, the sound of voices caused me to look up at the east face of Cima Ovest. Three climbers there were giving a real 'flies on a wall' display — one leaning out from his belay, two others in gripping positions higher up, near the right hand edge. It started that old black magic tingling up my spine to set eyes a-wandering, mapping possibilities on the face, finally tracing a tempting way of reaching two lines of weakness running up its centre.

"Well Filo," I said, "it's down to the Forcella again for a quiet shufti at an

ordinary man's route up the East Face of Ovest."

After a short ascent from the Forcella I was soon teetering across a big subsidiary buttress with Filo close behind; easy enough at first but quickly becoming very exposed as the northern couloir dropped away below. This is a bit heady for an ageing tiger I thought, then out loud: "Jumping jellyfish! Why didn't I bring some proper gear on this test trip?" Silence behind; like talking to a blank wall! Fortunately, the wall I was on was not at all blank. It had a profusion of holds but most of 'em were suspect. Keep moving, it gives less time for the holds to fall off. Loose rock is only a matter of confidence. Rotten rock is never as bad as it looks. Such arguably unsound notions ran through my mind but kept me going, slowly, along that rickety rising traverse; leaving only the thought of an awesome drop below to beggar my balance, gnaw at nerve strings and emasculate the muscles. Everything touched or trodden on seemed so dreadfully loose I only hoped my bowels wouldn't follow suit. Then out loud again: "Daft old duffer! You used to revel in rotten rock, enjoying those sensory skills needed to move on it safely." Filo, following quite comfortably, might just as well not have been with me. Thoroughly reliable? Taken anywhere? Huh!

We soon crossed a large chasm beyond which the rock improved to give a less trying, more horizontal, line of traverse and I began to adjust to that unique Dolomite exposure.

"There you are Filo," I murmured over my shoulder; "climbing in the Dollies is mostly a matter of confidence; plenty of holds, a bit loose at times, but if they get really tricky one usually finds a piton." Mind then challenged mouth; a lot of good that will be on an uncharted way up the mountain with the bloody gear we've got! However, the traverse now began to show the occasional signs of previous travellers — we had joined a definite route, maybe the *Langl-Loschner*. At a modest grade IV it ought to be on, even for a dotard! Soon a blackened corner chimney arrived but this was damp and horrid. No way! Further on, a narrow crack in drier rock offered an apparently difficult but preferable option.

"Yes, and higher up there's a peg, an old rusty piton!"

A shout of satisfaction. Yet was it really the sign of a recognised route or one of those all too frequent Dolomite pointers to a dead-end; the abandoned error of some incompetents who couldn't find their way up a rock face even with a good guidebook? Right then I wished I had one!

Anyhow, the crack went without much bother, its difficulty quickly diminishing to reach more slabby rock and reasonably easy, open work up a natural line of weakness adjacent to the dark corner. Eventually; under threat of overhangs above, this line was forsaken.

"Dont worry Filo, we'll try going further to the right, across the face." Spoken loudly but thinking not too far or I will be onto harder stuff, like those spidersmen seen earlier.

After progressing by another blackened groove and circumnavigating a rotten-looking stretch of reddish rock, the next real problem was a steep ramp up a bulging wall. Well committed on the ramp I began to get the screaming hab-dabs — big face jitters. Out loud again: "By God, this is a bit thin!" Filo followed silently, no trouble at all. Alright for some I thought; the poor old leader might appear to be bombing along quite well but what he really needs is a bottle transplant! However, no point in hanging about, press on. Where the wall started to bulge

there was a well-placed piton.

"Great! Another peg." Delighted cry of relief as I moved up to reach it and quickly clip in one of my krabs. From this artificial handhold I could lean out to weigh up the next moves. Higher was another peg, a healthy looking ring piton, but the intervening rock seemed inhospitable. If this was the *Langl-Loschner* route, I thought, no wonder it was one of the hardest climbs in the Dolomites, the *Via della Desperazione*; now it's getting to be a bit desperate again. For a moment I just hung there, indulged in negative thinking. Crazy! Too old for this sort of caper. Bloody fool's game! Then I got round to something more positive. Use your loaf you oaf! Wriggle your 'sack around and take out that sodding tow-rope; it might be long enough to reach between the two pegs. Without further thought, and after some feverish fiddling, I fished out the cable. But uncoiling the damn thing became an epic. If you've ever tried juggling with a 12 foot coil of springy wire, using one hand, 1,000ft up on a Dolomite wall, you will appreciate my predicament. Eventually I could see it wasn't going to be quite long enough.

"Shit!" Out loud. Then I had several sequential thoughts. What the heck would I do if it was long enough? What a prat! What about giving Filo a try? No! Forget it. What you must do is to start climbing properly instead of bugging about. Remember, you are a respected member of the CC, not a prospective candidate for the T.W.A.T.S. (Towing Wire Aerial Tricks Society).

I decided to leave my krab clipped to the peg so as to aid the first move up the wall; hopefully its abandonment would prove to be justified. Thus having started, I fingertipped and toed timorously upwards with that ridiculous tow-cable dangling from my waist like a huge coil spring. (I must have looked like an escaping Jack-in-the-Box!) When the peg's ample ring came to hand I gave a cry of relief: "A-a-a-h!" It felt secure but I hoped it wasn't the point from which previous aspirant ascensionists had abseiled; such a thought was terrifying. I glanced down.

"Holy Mackerel! What a drop." If I fell from here there would be all of ten fear-filled seconds before a messy meeting with the scree. Amazed at what naked truth and vivid imagination can do in a potentially bad situation, I took control of rising panic and hitched the free end of my tow-cable to the peg ring. Being mechanically connected to the mountain made me feel much better and I began to think about retrieval of that abandoned krab.

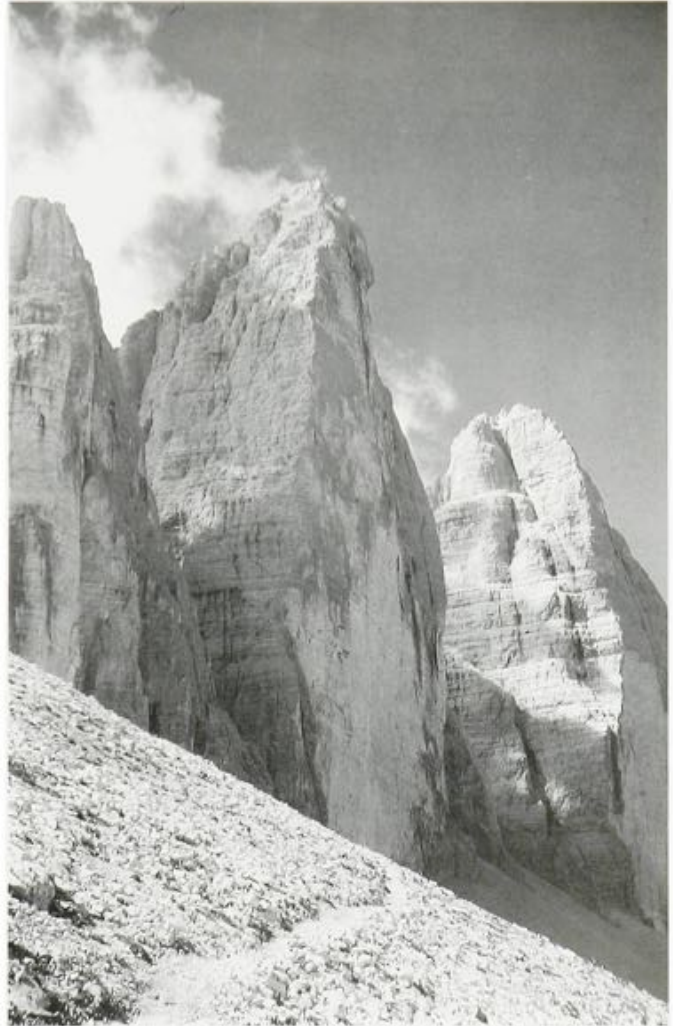
After parking my 'sack on the peg ring I gingerly reversed the moves I had just done; finally, at the extent of the cable, unclipping its karabiner from my waist tape to hang on it, almost horizontal and arms at full stretch, reaching down to rescue my other krab. To anyone watching through binoculars this would have looked more like a precarious circus act than serious alpine rock climbing; a bald headed old clown with a red (sunburnt) nose and chalky white (fear-blached) face, balancing on one hand whilst holding up a long, thin, green coloured rod with a big brown bag at its tip. Allez Oop! What a pity I wasn't dressed for the part — in tinsel titivated tights and poncey, polychromatic pumps, with hands chalked white as well. (This sort of thing was to come though, later!)

Climbing up once more I marvelled how easy the wall really was but this time I was wired to that ring peg above. However, something was nagging my mind so, resting on the first comfortable stance, I took the opportunity to think and do some mental arithmetic. Lack of elasticity in that steel wire cable could result in

a very high shock load if I happened to fall — dropping a mere six inches would probably exceed its breaking strength as well as that of those karabiners and even the peg belay. And should all my attachments to the rock survive, by some miracle, then my consequent internal injuries would ensure a most painful inability to continue climbing. The definitive sobering thought! Had I done such a sum back at the car then I would surely have gone on that ramble, with or without Filo. But what a pity, I thought, to have missed such a wildly wonderful, thoroughly terrifying, at times exhilarating, but completely hare-brained alpine adventure. I coaxed the coiled cable back into my 'sack and began to appreciate my situation: the air was fresh, the sky blue, and its clouds all fluffy and white; I shouldn't really have a care in the world, if I was careful. Not on this climb — at grade IV — and with Filo right there behind me!

The rest of our ascent was a much more favourable mix of joy and panic, very shortly arriving near the end of a scree-strewn terrace which hosted a patch of old snow in one shaded corner. It offered possibilities of easy escape but I kept on upwards now, sensing that immense unseen drop of the north face below.

Somewhere, lower down, we must have come too far over and joined the North East Ridge. However, its upper arête was wonderful and I snatched a break beside a large pinnacle, more to enjoy the view than rest tired nerves and muscles, for the panorama of Sexten spires was truly magnificent. Climbing on I



Tre Cima di Lavaredo. Photo: Smiler Cuthbertson

soon recognised vaguely familiar summit rocks, the crest of Ovest, but didn't linger there. Those fluffy white clouds were now tending to drape their chilling mist about the peak, making it clammy cold. Descending by the tourist route, occasional sounds came from below; distant voices. Another party coming up, or going down? Under the cloud wisps I spotted three tiny figures; maybe those human flies seen earlier, now descending. Noting their progress aided my own memory of the old *Innerkofler* route, winding down towards the Forcella d'Ovest before turning back to reach the Forcella di Grande. Eventually my unwitting guides disappeared from view, clattering noisily down one of its scree filled gullies. All went smoothly on our descent until we came to one particularly petrifying corner where a ring bolt invited another brief outing for that cable. Aiding myself down with it, to reach sound footholds, I said aloud: "Daft old pillock! You're getting the jitters again." I was, and cold too. Filo, of course, had no such problems.

By that World War One-time blockhouse in the Forcella, after donning my car coat, I wolfed into a crusty bread roll and some schinken, almost forgetting old Filo. It was only after finishing the chocolate and supping a tin of lager that I took the little bottle from my 'sack and, turning it slowly, watched the tiny tablets jiggle over one another. Then, going to the narrow col from where we had commenced our east face mystery tour, I hurled the bottle far out, down the snow-filled northern couloir. Although I had never taken any of those tonic tablets, their presence undoubtedly fortified my well-over-40 escapade on Cima Ovest and I mused about what might have been had I swallowed one, or even two. The North Face *Cassin-Ratti*? No! That *Couzy* Route of Desmaison's had never been soloed — probably never would be, at least not by some silly old devil with two rusty krabs and a wire tow-rope. And that magical companion, Filo San*, was gone. Shouldering my 'sack, I set off down the south eastern couloir.

Post-Script: Halfway down I heard the stones. They came off the Cima Grande, whirring and whanging, ricocheting in all directions. Moving quickly to the shelter of the gully wall I was not quite quick enough; a fair-sized rock sliced through my car coat sleeve, laying bare its white fibre padding but fortunately only grazing my forearm.

Back in Cortina my research team looked askance at the torn, flapping sleeve. I grinned, "nothing worse than a broken arm." I joked, then truthfully, "but poor Filo, sent by one of you to follow me, now lies still, scattered on the screes below the great northern walls of those Tre Cima di Lavaredo."

* Apologies to the makers and takers of 'Phyllosan', those remarkable tablets which fortify the over-40s. (Some modern and fairly modern readers of the CCJ may never have heard of them.)

In the Footsteps of a King

Chris Craggs

El Chorro has got to be the original 'One Horse Town': a station, two bars, a small collection of white houses and the ubiquitous scabby dogs. If Clint was to ride down the dusty road astride a burro, with a cheroot clenched between his teeth and eyes narrowed to thin slits against the Spanish winter sun, no one would bat an eyelid.

The excellent rock climbing available at El Chorro is gradually becoming known to a wider audience, offering easily accessible routes of high quality in a great setting. Being only 30 miles inland from Malaga and another 80 miles from North Africa the winter weather is remarkably mild. It does rain in winter as befits a classical Mediterranean climate, but the showers are usually short-lived affairs. Under conditions of heavy rain, El Chorro is often cut-off from the outside world, as dirt roads collapse and slurry-flows block the main routes. The locals are not too worried about this, having two resident JCBs in the village to dig the place out as soon as the sun shows itself again.

If it was not for the railway, the area would probably never have been developed as a rock climbing centre, but fortunately the station is on the main line from Malaga to Cordoba and Seville. The locals can catch an early morning train, spend a day on the rock and then, after a few beers in the station bar, ride the iron horse back to the lowlands.

The climbing is found in and around a major gorge where the Guadalhorce river has sliced its way uncompromisingly through the upthrust limestone massif that separates the coastal plains of the Costa del Sol from the high plateau of Andalucia. There are routes of all grades, including a remarkable number of very hard ones, and of all sizes from 20ft to 12 pitches. Many of these are reached from an amazing walkway, that runs through the gorge attached to the walls a long way above the river, El Camino del Rey, or the King's Way.

I was at El Chorro at Christmas with a team looking for some winter rock off the beaten track. The day after Boxing Day we had to drive down to the coast to meet John Addy and his son Oliver who were coming out for a week's holiday. We drove down a day early and spent a hot day cragging at the pleasant little town of Mijas, overlooking the blue Mediterranean. When the sun set we motored down to the Costa del Concreto at Fuengirola and booked an apartment for the night (£11 for a double room). After cleaning up we walked along the beach until we found a cheap looking restaurant where we ate our fill of superb seafood. On the way back to the apartment we rang the UK to confirm the arrangements; the third gale of the week was raging in Britain, and here, the moon rose over a silvery sea. Life has its moments!

John and Olley were on time. They had flown out of Leeds early in the morning with the airport thermometer showing -2°C, its counterpart at Malaga showed a rather more equitable +17°. We drove up into the hills and dumped gear off at the cottage we were renting and discussed plans. As they were both a bit tired from the journey I suggested an exploratory trip through the gorge, to give them an

idea of the geography of the area and to have a good look around. They agreed willingly, though the wry smile on my face should have told them they were in for a treat.

Sherri drove us round to the top end of the gorge, about 10 miles distant, where two huge lakes supply water for the cities on the coast and for the irrigation of the interior. We bumped down a dirt road to a long abandoned building standing by a heavily silted lake. A short horizontal path led to the start of the King's Way, at a decaying gateway and the mouth of the upper gorge. A plaque on the wall gives little insight to the reason behind the construction of the footpath or even its date, though it does commemorate a visit by King Alfonso XIII, whom the path is now named after. **The Rough Guide to Spain** indicates that the path was built as part of an ill-fated hydro-electric scheme constructed through the gorge in 1921. It suggests that the path was built purely to allow the king to walk the gorge, although I suspect it was intimately involved with the actual construction of the hydro-electric scheme. The walkway follows the line of a tunnel that carried the water from the silted-up lake through the gorge, keeping a gentle gradient so as to build up a head of water to drive turbines situated below the lower gorge. As you follow the path you develop a massive respect for the men who built this catwalk by hand — impressive stuff indeed. When the present king, Juan Carlos visited the place in 1988 he declined to walk the path, doubtless exercising the royal prerogative and showing a touch of common sense.

Once through the gateway the situation was instantly bizarre. Imagine Huntsman's Leap, five times as deep and half as narrow, then stick a concrete footpath part-way up its side. We hung over the rail ogling at the rock architecture and lines of bolts offering superb looking routes. Way below us wire cables were suspended across the gap in places, to allow access to routes on the opposite wall — what a wild place to climb. On this occasion a cold wind was blowing through the narrows so we pressed on, it was like caving with the roof taken off. Gradually the gorge opened out and the cliffs grew ever higher as we emerged into the sunlight.

In this upper section of the gorge, the walkway is the only means of access and so it is kept in a good state of repair, with only the occasional small hole in the floor to get excited over. Through the rest of the gorge the railway offers an alternative route and so the walkway has been allowed to fall into disrepair. John and Olley were unaware of this, so when I offered the choice of the railway or the walkway they both plumped for the latter. The central section of the gorge is very open, with the river meandering in the bottom and cliffs set high on the rim. It must have been a difficult place to get at before the walkway was built, but despite this there is the ruin of a substantial farmhouse, complete with its own orange groves, set in the middle of this tranquil paradise.

We ambled on, taking in the atmosphere of the place. Griffon vultures circled overhead whilst in the fir trees along the side of the path, we caught sight of crested tits and serins as they twittered away to themselves. On the other side of the valley we could pick out climbers on the superb slabs of the Cotos, whilst dead ahead the impressive lower gorge beckoned us on. The walkway here starts off amenably enough. There was no handrail, but the bank below was not very steep and the feeling of exposure was akin to being on a steep grassy slope. A couple of sections of the concrete path have been removed by rock falls but wire cables

have been placed as hand lines and with steady footwork they presented no problems.

Then suddenly things turned rather more exciting. The path headed off around the edge of a 500ft wall, 200ft up from its base and sported no handrail. The wind was rushing through the narrows here and we suddenly became acutely aware of every footstep, this was no place to stumble. In one section the rock bulged, pushing you towards the horrifying drop, the stuff that nightmares are made of. We even considered tackling this section on all fours but decided that was just too 'uncool'. Once around the headland, the wind dropped and the exposure became a little less extreme. We ambled along, drinking in the magnificence of the setting. At one point the spindly concrete bridge spanned a 15ft gap, it was obviously sound but we moved carefully across anyway.

The lower gorge is crossed by 'the pipe bridge', which is exactly what the name suggests, a large diameter pipe spanning the gap. As we strolled across this, the spirits of the other pair were rising, then just around the corner we met 'the naughty bit'. A 10ft section of the concrete path was missing completely, and some public spirited soul had laid a piece of railway line across the gap. There was another wire cable to hang onto (or clip on if you had the good sense to be wearing a harness) but the exposure was mind boggling. A simple sideways shuffle is all that was required but watching your feet without focusing on the sickening drop below them, required a steady head. I had not warned my two charges of this obstacle, not wanting to spoil the trip with too much apprehension and they came across like a couple of stalwarts.

The remainder of the walkway was sunny and solid, and then it was a stroll through the woods to the station and its eponymous bar. Cold beers were ordered and we raised our glasses to Alfonso XIII and to a footpath fit for a king.

The Gentle Art of Mountain Marathon Running

Mike Browell

This lightweight review probes the delights, dangers and devious tactics which are such an essential part of preparation for this popular sport. For lightweight and popular it certainly is.

Elusive Summits

Like the London Marathon, the first hurdle is getting an application accepted. Applications to suffer the deprivations of a recent Karrimor were well in excess of the 1,000 places on offer, and rejection slips were the cause of much depression. For some regular teams the shock of rejection caused deep trauma and it was subsequently revealed that it was not missing the event; it was the lack of continuity in car stickers which caused serious grief.

For the two long-established mountain marathons, Saunders and Karrimor, places are highly prized and entry lists are restricted to 500 and 1,000 teams respectively. First come first served has (until the 1991 KIMM) prompted the super-keen to get their applications back by return post. This had the beneficial effect of natural selection; only the fast need apply; to procrastinate is too slow.

Such haste causes problems. Selection of a suitable team has been the downfall of many entrants, yet telephone lines are frantically buzzing the moment forms are out and some unhappy liaisons will be made.

Experienced participants are wise enough to aim for the least popular categories. Certain that the easier categories will fill up quickest, a canny applicant will enter the A or Elite (KIMM), Scafell or Bowfell (Saunders) and then be prepared to suffer the consequences.

Savage Arena

Less popular and therefore easier to enter is the erratic Rock & Run MM. In its short and incident-packed life, this juvenile delinquent is sometimes on and sometimes off. Its debut on a wild March weekend in 1988 saw 90% of entrants retiring before they reached the first control. Such a pedigree ensured popularity in 1989 and 1990, but in 1991, 100% of entrants were forcibly retired when the organisers were compelled to cancel the Skye event at the eleventh hour. The need for rigorous planning and a contingency plan are clear.

Also-rans include 'abroad' events such as the Mourne Mountain Marathon and the Swiss KIMM. Some regard the Capricorn as a mountain marathon but it takes a bit of license to include a non-kit carrying event which returns to base overnight!

Yes, to Dance

Having gained an accepted entry in one of these elusive mountain marathons, just what is expected? Anything from 30 to 80 kilometres of mountain running over

two days, with up to 5,000 metres of ascent. And in case it sounds a soft touch, most will be off-path. There will be much traversing and mashing of feet, several grinding flogs up trackless slopes and a few precipitous descents where a slip might prove fatal. On one notorious descent in the Howgills the fatality would have been shared several ways by wiping out dozens below with a single slip.

Course times can be as short as four hours each day in the easier classes. Elite and A can expect seven to nine hours on the first day, usually a little less on the second.

The Hard Years

Sometimes the best laid plans of the course planners go awfully wrong and the predicted finishing times are overshot by hours. This can cause great concern for marshalls and runners alike, when virtually the whole field is disqualified for lateness.

It is no surprise to find that only a fraction of the Elite and A classes have made it to the overnight camp. Such little hiccups are shrugged off, except by the miserable non-finishers. Classic boops included the second day of the 1989 Saunders Marathon when the majority were timed out and several fleeing marshalls were chased downhill from the final controls as they shut up shop!

One of the special pleasures to look forward to is to run past all the crags you used to think were too far from the road to justify the walk-in. You also get to visit less popular but scenic mountain areas that might otherwise be outside your normal horizons.

Part of the fun is in the anticipation and disinformation. In the weeks before an event, there is much sport to be had in spreading rumours about the venue. There are well-researched lists of possible locations; a finite number of possibilities in the UK meet the parameters of remoteness, ruggedness and accessibility. There is also the criteria of a future saleable map! It would certainly upset predictions if Karrimor selected the eminently sailable Norfolk Broads!

Practising in the event area is, naturally enough, banned. But before the event location is officially announced, anything goes. One sure-fire clue as to the venue are queues of cars bearing Karrimor stickers heading off to remote corners for scenic weekends. It's surprising how many close encounters with innocent old familiar faces can take place in remote surroundings.

Things are much simpler with the Saunders. There aren't many permutations that make up enough distance in the Lake District. Shock last minute changes can, however, disrupt carefully researched training plans, as happened in 1989 when the Wasdale base suddenly flipped to Buttermere, leaving catering interests gnashing and wailing with much unsold beer and butties.

At the Sharp End

For the Rock and Run Mountain Marathon, be prepared for big surprises. When Andy Hyslop initiated the concept it was intended to be an event where climbers had an advantage, a mixture of scrambling and rugged running terrain. It's come reasonably close to this ideal, but not quite. Skye in 1991 might have been the perfect, if unlikely, location. It all seemed highly improbable, getting agreement to use such a high profile area, thick with nature conservation and parochial interests. More like pie in the sky. And so it was not to be. Local rescue leaders

deemed the choice of course 'ill-conceived and over-ambitious' and, of course, they ought to know. Perhaps a bit of homework on the calibre of mountain marathon participants would have been in order? For there are few mountain users who carry full survival gear and know how to use it!

Coming Through

Having secured an entry does not seem to be a guarantee of turning up on the day. Drop out rates of up to 40% do occur. It comes as quite a shock to find that from a list of 220 teams, only 140 get as far as registration, as happened on the 1991 KIMM A Class. So what happens to the others? Training fatigue, weather forecast blues and last minute nerves account for a lot. For the 1990 Saunders, which will be remembered for its total lack of joy, the accurate prediction of pouring rain and thick mist was enough for many stay-at-homers. Many who started took an early bath.

Training can seriously damage your health and the training schedule necessary for a mountain marathon is a little different to a road marathon with perhaps two vital and damaging aspects. Firstly, the mileage has to be off-road, on rough terrain. Secondly, it has to include a lot of climbing. This means between 20 and 40 miles of off-road running for a 12 week build-up. For most mountain marathoners this doesn't require any change to their normal routine; they are also seen at the longer fell races and road marathons and spend their idle moments nipping round the Bob Graham Round. For those who don't take the training seriously there's a strong likelihood of long walkies — and failure to achieve the cut-out times. Few bother to train with full kit; running with a 'sack, however light, is hell and no amount of conditioning seems to help. Except that you don't get shoulder blisters if you train with the 'sack.

Navigation is the most overlooked aspect of training and that is where many come unstuck. There seems to be a streak of excessive confidence in map reading ability among mountaineering types and it really sorts them out when the mist descends. The difference between navigating along a path in thick mist and navigating off-path between subtly defined controls is chalk and cheese. Anyone can find a summit even in thick clag, but to locate a boulder on a vast mountainside requires technique. Orienteering has a lot to teach mountain marathoners and it is no surprise that winning teams come from this sport. A few days out orienteering is time well spent.

One Step in the Clouds

One of the slightly devious arts is that of trimming the gear down to the absolute minimum and still more or less complying with the organisers' requirements. A realistic target is between five and six kilograms for a summer event, and just over six kilograms for spring and autumn. Starting off with the 'sack, it is horrifying to find that your superlight climbing 'sack with no frills, is double the weight of the minimalist lightweight running 'sacks. Buy one, because everyone does, but remember not to use it for carrying gear to the crag because it will wear out after a few trips. One memorable 'sack exploded dramatically after three miles in the 1990 KIMM and, despite assurances that repairs were bomb-proof, disintegrated at the start line of the 1991 event. Similarly the sleeping bag. This is an occasion to leave the serious bag at home. It will weigh three times the 500 grams of the

microbags. As an economy try taking most of the down out of the bag to save weight. A silk lining weighs less than 100 grams and is a great comfort when you're far from home. Stuff 'sacks are an unnecessary encumbrance; a polybag will double as one.

Touching the Void

Cooking on a mountain marathon is not going to win any culinary prizes. Boiling water is sophisticated enough, so a wafer thin pan and sheet of tinfoil should be enough. Some manage to get by without the pan! The teeniest gas canister is plenty for two meals but don't try and squeeze a second event out of it. For stoves the formula seems to be 'light = unstable', but by digging a hole you can stabilise the top-heavy gas canister.

Cutlery means a sawn-off plastic teaspoon with lightening holes drilled in the stub. Mugs are definitely non-essential if you take a single Pot Noodle container.

Everyone has their own favourites, but for speed and simplicity food can be freeze-dried and rehydrated with boiling water without needing to be cooked. Boiling water makes instant soup, instant pasta and instant Pot Noodles, followed by instant custard with dried bananas. Sounds glorious? Well, there are a few touches of gourmet finesse for a few grams more.

Thin Air

Running wear is usually thermal vest and tights, reducing to shorts on those exceptional summer days. Studded fell running shoes are sensible footwear, but banned in the walking class of the Saunders. Weatherproof suits need a full scale field trial and all their little imperfections found out. An overheating, sweaty body needs more than a breathable fibre to discharge water. Sleeves fill up and need releasing at the cuffs. Weight differences also count, a suit with a wicking lining may weigh a couple of hundred grams more and may, on the face of it, seem a better bet, but beware of the water retaining volume which can double the weight.

Thermal or silk balaclava and gloves are excellent thermostats and are easily adjusted. For wild weather, a second pair of lined ski gloves add a touch of luxury for minimal weight.

Spare clothing for changing into at the overnight camp can be serious or a bit of a gamble. Arriving at dusk in howling wind and rain, after tussling with a tent in a bog with fatigued senses, hypothermia can set in with terrifying rapidity. The only remedy is to rip the soaking clothes off and shiver into the sleeping bag with every bit of spare clothing. On occasions like this you would regret only packing a pair of tights and a throw away tee-shirt. But on a sweltering summer event where you rip your clothes off and lie in the stream, polar jackets seem superfluous. Consider packing a Buffalo shirt for a seriously cold event.

Keeping the cold ground at bay is vital and trial by ordeal has proven that the grey or green ultra-thin Karrimat is inadequate for the normal overnight camp. The sites are carefully selected for a minimum of flat tent-sized spaces and a maximum of boggy and rocky ground. A lightweight Thermarest is almost justifiable but a bit heavy, especially when seriously competitive participants have lightening holes drilled in their half length Karrimats.

The tent is, of course, mandatory and various attempts have been made to

reduce this to a minimum. Some manufacturers have even had the audacity to market their insubstantial fabrications! The minimum is currently 1.25 kg and for that you get 'not a lot' and the opportunity to invade your partner's personal space. One of the manufacturers has had his little joke and made all his tents out of the same ubiquitous environmentally friendly green, and that makes campsites a fun place to be on a dark and wild night, when you have to leave the tent and trudge a few hundred metres through a sea of little green tents to fetch water. At the Howgills overnight camp in 1989, there were some frightened hypothermic vagrants desperately seeking shelter. Fetching water can be a nightmare excursion and it's surprising how much is consumed in one overnight camp — at least three litres. Wine box liners are brilliant and weigh very little.

Other vital equipment can be rapidly glossed over. In one neat little unopened package can go all the things you hope not to need. This includes the space blanket/survival bag, scalpel blade pretending to be a knife, silk scarf pretending to be a sling, 10mm sawn off pencil, elastoplast, torch bulb, battery and wire, and a dried up antique morsel of Kendal Mint Cake.

I Chose to Climb

Tactically there are two schools of thought for techniques on the day. There is the 'shortest route' philosophy which takes a bee-line between controls. This is favoured by those who can't read maps but can use a compass. It involves running steeply downhill which can be very effective and then using a high degree of fitness to survive the climbs. The leading teams in each class often select virtually straight line routes which would crucify lesser people. Alternatively there is the 'optimum runnable' course which takes contouring routes and minimises ascent. Course planners are sometimes unkind and give precious little choice of route, forcing the formation of the notorious 'crocodile'. Crocodiles and contouring can be bad for the health and destructive to morale. Feet are not well designed for traversing steep slopes and when this continues for 30 or 40 kilometres, nasty blisters can form on the soft sides. So nasty that otherwise perfectly fit teams are forced to retire in agony. Unfortunately, contouring route choices have become the norm in recent years, probably as a backlash to the outcry over the 1988 Saunders Class A route. This brutal affair consisted of taking runners up onto a ridge and then dropping them back down and back out of steep valley heads, one after another, until most packed in and went home.

Team composition is vitally important and yet easily overlooked in the euphoria of entering, and can continue unscrutinised until part-way through the first day. Rarely are two runners perfectly co-ordinated; one may be initially quick but tires; another may come on strong at the finish. Minor differences can be made to work but massive differences can destroy morale and friendships. Team selection is one of the greatest skills and there are more examples of failure than success. A good team will know each others' strengths and weaknesses and will select routes and speed with these in mind, and will keep watching out for each other. Feeding and drinking on the move are a good tactic; a stop can waste time and lose momentum. Rapid food like marzipan, crunch bars and raisins can be nibbled on ascents, starting early and continuing right through the day. It is rare to hear of someone blowing up from over-snacking but very common to hear of fatigue bonking. Drinks are best grabbed by scooping a mugful from streams

or using pre-packed polythene bags with a mixture of Staminade.

Control technique is often appallingly bad; gaggles of runners seem to congregate in indecision. The route out should be already set before clipping and smooth transition achieved. Remember that there is plenty of scope here to psyche out competitors, especially if misty. Try leaving confidently and rapidly on the wrong course; others will follow and you should be able to lose them quickly before reverting to the correct line.

Downward Bound

Finally, an encouraging thought to help in those dark hours when you feel like packing in, especially on the morning of the second day, when it's raining horizontally and you're thinking about slinking off down the road to the nearest pub. Just hang on in there and remember why you're doing it...

If you come to any firm conclusion, please let me know!



Coming for a run? Photo: Mike Browell

Ronnie's Last Long Climb

Terry Gifford

' "Stay off the pop, lad!" Those were Don Whillans's last words to me as we saw him off at the airport: "Stay off the pop, lad", he said. Of course he'd done nothing of the sort while he'd been here in Majorca. That's the great danger in Deià — for a small village there are an amazing number of bars. Within two months Don was dead'.

Ronnie Wathen, CC, poet, and piper, smiled his quizzical smile. Behind his specs there was that characteristic mixture of mystery and mischief. He and I were waiting on a stance whilst Norman searched for the line, little thinking this would be Ronnie's own last climb. He did climb again at Harrison's of course, and in Dalkey Quarry as late as June, before his death from a brain tumour on September 5th 1993. But that was something else.

He'd taken us with typical enthusiasm and poor memory to what must be the best VS in Majorca — 800 feet of varied, sustained climbing spiced by the need for good old-fashioned route finding, if you get up early enough to beat the queue. The soaring ridge of *Sa Gubia* can be seen from Palma airport. It's the left-hand skyline of a vertical scoop out of the nearest hills. Ronnie told me that *Sa Gubia* means, in Majorquin, (which he had learned fluently) 'the woodworker's gouge'. It is a route of continuing interest whose secrets are not given away by lines of bolts, or by my hinting that descents over the back of the mountain are usually made in the dark and finally involve passing The Three -Headed Dog to reach the road.

It was our third Alpine start for this route, from Ronnie's mountain village of Deià, where he had built a house for his family in 1968. It was Robert Graves who provided the focus for those poets and artists who, like Ronnie himself, have homed in on Deià. Where else would you find that there are two poetry readings in one week? And one of them was Ronnie's reading that night, so we'd better not hang about on *Sa Gubia*. Easier said than done.

We reached the foot of *Sa Gubia* in the cool of a New Year's Eve morning under a cloudless sky. My son Tom and Simon from Jersey opted for the bolted right-hand start up a leaning crackline, whilst Norman led off from the red-painted foot of the ridge. It's a scrambly, slightly loose first pitch to a belay in bushes where Ronnie, with his flair for the unpredictable, found behind a bush, a gift of a bottle of water. We accepted it. The second pitch passes two pegs and begins to get into 4b gear. Each belay has double pegs or bolts and is painted with a number. From R2 we should have traversed right beneath a scoop to gain the crest of the ridge, but Norman's instincts led left and back right to a double peg belay on the right of a cave where a large ledge would detain Ronnie and me plus the next team for an increasingly intense impasse.

Norman looked round to the right and returned. Not likely. He looked left and returned. A long way left a line of bolts above and below indicated what he took to be *Super Nova*. Norman tried the cave roof. Ronnie tried teaching me my cue for coming in with a poem of my own in the middle of his reading of his long poem

in which he shows Lord Byron around Deià and its inhabitants. It's written in ottava rima, the form perfected by Byron, and it's written by Ron who was quoting:

" 'the Isles of Greece! The Isles of Greece! are calling

And he hopes that, on a wing and a prayer

He'll leave this Deià which he finds appalling...' "

Cue Gifford:

" 'In the mountains they have a dance...' " but Ronnie was stopped abruptly by Norman shouting down rather unpoetically: "For pete's sake shut up! I'm trying to get us out of here and you're reciting poetry!"

He returned to our ledge which was getting crowded. Friendly, but crowded. Another leader had belayed beside us and his second, perhaps motivated by Ron's Byron, looked round to the right and returned. Not likely.

"Well, I've run out of ideas!" Norman declared.

So, having given up hope on this route the only alternative was any route. Norman crossed the cave to the left again and this time the rope kept moving. A steep bolted wall that Norman was ascending out of our sight proved to be the delightful 4c crux of our version of this route. At the top a delicate traverse right brought a painted belay and a helpful red arrow pointing up right as if by now you might be feeling a little lost. This was Ronnie's fourth ascent and he found it got mysteriously harder each time he did it.

"It's amazing," he said. "You don't need to work at raising your grade. You just do the same route every five years!"

Norman attacked the crack, indicated by the arrow, that slanted up a steep wall. He popped in hexes and Friends, swung out off the crack's edge and disappeared again. Ronnie took off his slippers, which he called his 'chinese torture socks', and aired his horrible toes. His Majorquin shepherd's shoes were clipped in to his faded Whillans harness. From deep in his 'sack he offered me olives. I declined. He offered me garlic. I declined. So he popped the clove into his mouth and chewed on it: "Just like Don used to say, 'Don't put any of them olives or garlic in the cooking!'"

He offered me a satsuma.

"Thanks."

"That's alright," he said, "They grow on trees round here!"

I tried to peel it whilst belaying. He popped an unpeeled orange into his mouth and chewed on it.

At the top of this pitch Norman hailed Tom, asking him to wait so that we could speed up the route-finding. At R5 Tom's route joined ours. From here the route looked broken by the odd bush above and slightly easier. It's deceptive. Norman raked after Tom.

Ronnie arrived at my stance, then the next two lads, then an English girl who was leading and had to wait at the top holds of her pitch.

"Are you happy?" One of the lads asked.

"I'm ecstatically happy!" she replied, relaxing on her small holds. Fair enough. We all believed her. For the rest of the route Ronnie kept reminding us that people in the queue behind us were 'ecstatically happy'.

Above the next belay, R6, a steep wall demanded strenuous pull ups, then a stretch left where a manky peg offered a dubious quick clip before jugs tempted

sweaty grasps in a groove. To say it's 4b is to convey nothing of the way it reminds you that there's going to be no let up high on this pillar above the plain. The following easier slabs might tease you, but at R7, where there's an *in situ* tape round a natural thread, another wall asks the old question, 'which way?'

Norman took an airy ramp to the left, then came back right, warning about loose blocks. A rightwards slanting groove led up to a tree in a recess at R8. When Ronnie joined us here, his tale this time was about the amazing etiquette on the stances of this climb. A German had arrived on a stance and asked Ronnie: "Do you mind if I smoke?"

"Here we are, 700 feet up in the air, and he asked my permission to smoke! What did he expect me to say? 'I'm sorry, this is a non-smoking stance?'"

"So what did you say, Ronnie?"

"I said, 'It's alright, if you give me one'."

The final pitch of this magnificent climb sustains its interest and quality right up to the unnecessary 'Fin' on the rock at R9. A step right from the alcove reveals sharp fluted rock that tears at the fingertips. Above, pinnacles finally bring into sight the 400ft ridge-walk to gain the summit. The sun may be about to set, but the day is not over yet!

We relaxed as we walked down the long winding roadway off the summit through the olive groves. The sky paled from orange to yellow to green as the moon came up. Talk turned to Cerberus, the three-headed dog that guards the farm before the road. Dave Gregory had warned us about this dog. "It rushes at you suddenly at full pelt, but its chain is just long enough for it to be pulled up with enough room for you to squeeze past with your back to the wall. That's when its neck is jerked back and its back legs swing round to kick you."

Ronnie also vividly remembered this dog and he had plenty of time to give us the gruesome details as the moon rose higher. One by one, as we got closer to the farm, we each picked up an olive branch. It wasn't for peace. We were approaching some outbuildings. A vicious barking started up. Norman shouted back and amazingly the barking stopped. But that was the puppy.

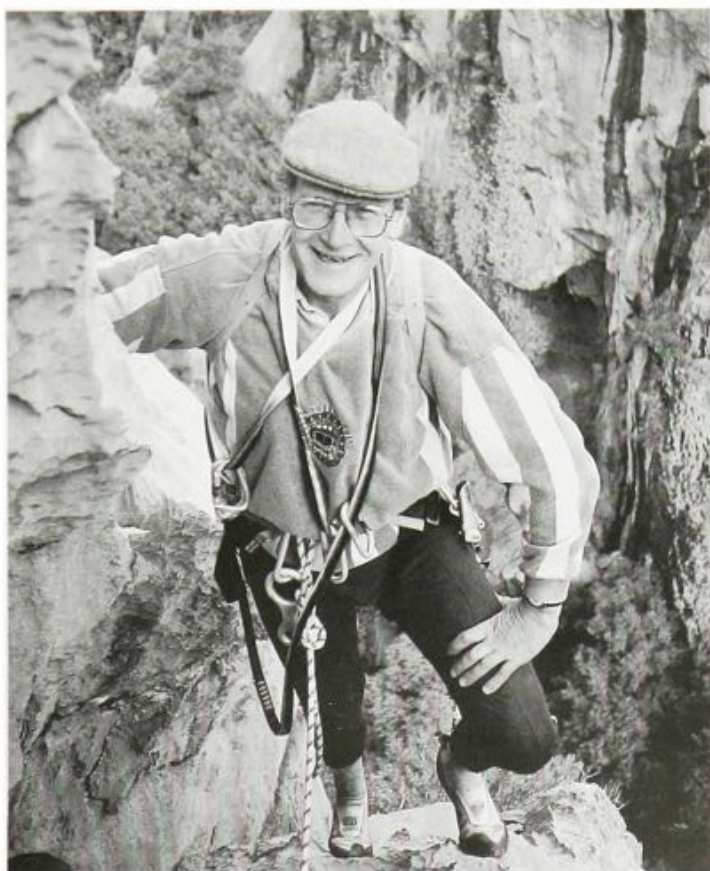
Cerberus was round the corner. And here was the owner, standing by a gate across the track through his farm. Ronnie greeted him in Majorquin and asked if we might pass through. Somehow none of us appeared to be gripping sticks anymore. The owner was charming and kindly told us to keep to the wall. We didn't need telling as the huge black dog came racing out of the darkness snarling at us and doing the business.

Later that night, Ronnie gave an hilarious reading which poked fun at several members of the audience as Lord Byron was introduced to Ronnie's version of the recent history of Deia. To illustrate his poem he continued what he'd begun on the climb, producing props out of a suitcase and flinging them aside. Here he was doing what he loved best, giving his friends fun out of his magical capacity for the unexpected. That it was kindly and intelligent fun, often at his own expense, is what made him so widely loved by all sorts of people, from dons to Don Whillans. It was New Year's Eve. Ronnie took his Irish pipes to the bar and told me that once Mo Antoine had heard him playing in the Royal Vic, and had said to him: "Is it dead yet? I should get it by the throat!"

It seemed impossible that Ronnie would be struck down by the same fatal illness as Mo and that I would never see him again after that precious week in

Ronnie's company. I would like to remember him playing his pipes that night when, after the grapes had been eaten on each stroke of midnight, after the firework display over the mountain, the dog's three heads became six in the re-telling and Don's advice was toasted again and again: "Stay off the pop, lad."

'Ronnie Wathen was a shaman
Only he knew what it was he blew
From the mountains of his life
Through his poems and his pipes'.



Ronnie Wathen, New Year in Majorca. Photo: Norman Elliott

Obituary

Dave Cook

1966 - 1993

Dave and I turned up at the Count House sometime in the mid '70s finding it packed with five student groups. Observing the possibilities for dissension and squalor Dave suddenly leapt up and addressed the throng with a compelling speech, the gist of which was: "Ken and I are the only CC members present so we will direct all matters domestic in the interests of simplicity, fairness, cleanliness, and efficiency." He then proceeded to parcel off domestic chores by rote to each dumbfounded group. The result was a graphic example of many hands making light work — never has the hut been cleaner and its inhabitants happier — all directed by Dave with the breezy populist confidence that was his hallmark. Everyone in the Club who knew him has a fund of similar anecdotes — a whole crop of recent ones cherished by those who took part in the Pembroke 'climb in' on Range West.

Dave Cook was born in Warrington in 1941, the eldest son of a civil engineer. In his formative years his family moved regularly, leaving him both adaptable and cosmopolitan at an early age. They finally settled in Solihull where I first met him when, as a cheerful, opinionated 16 year old, he entered our local school and immediately set to work organising (with marked success) our cynical band of football rebels into league and cup systems. Hitherto we had existed like the Tupermaros on the fringes of the elitist rugby hegemony that was the norm in the Grammar and minor Public School ethos. But under Dave's direction the whole school was soon buzzing with talk about the cup fixture between the likes of 4a and lower 5b — an underground culture marshalled and organised under the noses of the authorities. Later, in a mock election, he stood as a communist candidate polling seven votes, a result received with great concern by our headmaster who had been involved in something 'hush-hush' and important during the War.

At that stage he was already interested in mountain walking having roamed the Campsie Fells as a teenager. I introduced him to roped climbing and we made our first tentative advances towards the harder grades together, working our way through the Idwal guidebook during the arid summer of 1959. On *Holly Tree Original* we closely avoided disaster as I attempted to lead my first Severe (or as Menlove Edwards said in his sandbagging guidebook 'not severe at all in perfect conditions'). Luckily Dave had just bought a nylon rope (from holiday earnings on a council refuse lorry) to replace my tired hemp. Having failed on the chimney I addressed the wall variation with Dave belaying me from the withered Holly Tree. But, miscalculating, I took a horrendous fall complete with blood-curdling scream as I parted company with the cliff. Dave, wearing only a tee shirt, held a 30 footer with a waist belay with no runners — the dreaded scenario that few ever faced. We both survived. I was lowered to the terrace, Dave abseiled to join me and we hobbled off, licking our wounds, to fight another day. The next person to fall from that place tore out the tree and ended up 100ft down the slabs in a very battered condition. Luckily the

second on this occasion was belayed on the terrace.

After this eventful summer Dave went to Cambridge as an Exhibitioner to read History at St Catherine's College. At that time the CUMC was at its most active and he was soon leading Severes and there were soon excited telephone calls telling me that *Wrinkle* and *Crackstone Rib* were easy, unlike the Idwal horrors. His alpine progress also accelerated. I joined him in Chamonix in 1961 (for our second season) where his hardest lead was the *Ménégaux Route* on the l'M, and the following year he did the Badile North Face — a day before the Bonington/Whillans ascent — and he later did a respectable quota of notable Dolomite climbs. At home (where he had inside advice from Dave Potts) he led *Cenotaph Corner*, pipping the talented and ambitious trio of Nick Estcourt, Mike Kosterlitz and Rupert Roshnik who also had their sights set on that very important prize. Potts was the first from Cambridge to achieve the feat when, a year later he too led *Vector* — in those days a climb with a very high prestige rating. Dave enlisted me on his early Cloggy campaign at a time when the great Brown routes had still only been done by a handful of superbeings. Cookie had it all worked out as we did *Vember* and *White Slab* which he announced were both 'ninth ascents' and the 'kiss of death' for any remaining reputation the climbs still enjoyed.

On another occasion in the late '60s we were holed up for a week in the CIC Hut waiting to climb *Centurion* when the rain stopped. Two taciturn, dripping and steaming Scotsmen entered, one of whom I knew to be Rab Carrington (who is really a Londoner). An elliptical discussion took place in which the identity of the other Scotsman was never revealed. This went on for two days. While they were out (searching for ice pegs below the great gullies) Dave and I laid bets on who it was — I thought it was Jimmy Marshall, he thought McLean, Stenhouse or some other legendary Edinburgh Squirrel or Creag Dubh figure. When they returned we plied them with tea, cake and clipped conversation in an effort to reveal the identity. In the end Cookie could stand the tension no longer asking "and who are you?" to the mystery man.

"Jimmy" he replied.

"Jimmy who?" said Cookie.

"Marshall" came the reply to my shouts of triumph. I leapt on Cookie demanding payment to their total consternation at this sudden explosion of mirth at their expense. We then proceeded to belabour the unfortunate Marshall, the guidebook writer, with the iniquities of the all embracing Scottish VS grade (which even Cookie found outrageous), criticism that he effortlessly dismissed with an imperious Edinburgh logic that brooked no argument. He later became a much valued correspondent for **Mountain**.

Cookie was also a regular contributor to my early journalistic ventures — we once combined on an article entitled 'The Decline of Tremadoc' which proved spectacularly wrong but later his article on Yorkshire and his celebrated panegyric to gritstone jamming 'True Grit' were well received.

By that time Dave had moved to Leeds to become a teacher and during the '60s and '70s he bathed in glories of Yorkshire climbing and was often to be found impaled, wobbling on some fiendish Yorkshire VS which he would insist was correctly graded. Throughout his life he defended the infallibility of guidebook writers, in the face of the most damning evidence to the contrary, and this doctrinal inflexibility formed another area (along with the politics) where we

indulged in continual energetic debate. Indeed his attitudes to 'traditional' grades may provide some clue to his equally unmoveable political certainties. His explanation for wobbling on some crassly undergraded gritstone horror being that he was not climbing well.

I took great delight in upgrading *Holly Tree Original* to VS in the 1974 guide but I do believe that, despite our close escape, he would still defend Edwards's 'not severe at all in good conditions' grade today.

In the mid '70s he moved to London and I was able to introduce him to sandstone, Swanage and Avon Gorge — which he savoured just as readily as the northern fare. During all this time the regular visits to Wales, Lakes and Scotland, steadily picking off the great classics — he finally did *Shibboleth* (with Pat Devine) two years ago.

Many people will have been both mystified and bemused by Dave's staunch Communist beliefs. Already a committed Marxist, he joined the Party at University, and was a loyal and highly active member for the rest of his life. I believe he greatly enjoyed the arcane intellectual debate that obsesses the left. He patiently indulged my frequent and intense arguments with him on every contemporary political issue but later all his climbing friends grew used to his general political position and rarely took him to task, indeed he actually got a number to join the Party. His profound beliefs had an intensity that bordered on quasi-religious zealotry, though they were always well-argued and thoughtful, and he gave himself to Party work body and soul, abandoning all thoughts of affluence and a normal married life which others enjoy — by this time he was married with three children. He had broken off a promising career as a teacher and made the London move to take up the full-time post as National Student Organiser, and in this capacity began to play a leading role in CP affairs. He was much influenced by the writings of Gramsci, and Enrico Berlinguer's attempts to fashion the new 'Eurocommunism' as a more suitable model for the developed Democracies. Following on from the Party's revised programme 'The British Road to Socialism', he wrote (with Pat Devine and others) a minority paper seeking to sharpen this policy by breaking from Soviet-style centrist habits and opening the Party to democracy and pluralism. But after debate the traditional position was reaffirmed and Dave, as a full time official, was left isolated, and increasingly devoted his energies to special issue politics dealing with racism and feminism — notably in his ginger group 'Campaign against Racist Laws'. Indeed the left's constant defence of the ramparts against racism, anti-semitism and other manifestations of intolerance is something for which we should all be grateful — in this sphere Cookie played a full and active role throughout his life.

He took little part in climbing politics apart from progressing one of the annual motions (in the '60s) to remove the men-only clause in the CC's rules. In the mid '80s however he found an issue that attracted him when he skilfully led the successful campaign to gain climbing access to the sea cliffs of the NATO Range West training area of South Pembroke — a saga about which others will doubtless write at length.

While climbing and politics were very important to him, they may not have been his central pre-occupation. From early days he had espoused the sexual-liberation ideas of Henry Millar and wrestled with the conundrums thrown up by such a position, through marriage, separation, and a series of subsequent

challenging relationships. In a curious way forms of blues and rockabilly music and an equal fascination with 'teddy boys' mores all fused into the broader lifestyle of a sort of South-London boulevardier (he always knew two or three good pubs where blues or rockabilly might be heard). He was also an avid traveller, skilled, as we all were, in the art of hitch-hiking, and more recently much taken up with the adventure of long-distance international cycling. On his penultimate trip he was at last able to visit America (during the Cold War US visas were unavailable to Communists) and sample some of the life-style he idolised. Indeed it is a supreme paradox that one so critical of American political and militaristic positions, could be such a slavish adherent to the life-styles and music that one associates with Memphis, Nashville and New Orleans. His four personal compilation tapes of 'country and rockabilly' reveal a reverence that transcended even his worship of gritstone jamming. His eclectic taste for songs like 'Back in the USA' (Chuck Berry), 'The Night Hank Williams Came to Town' (Johnny Cash) and 'Cry me a River' (Julie London) together with countless tunes by the likes of Bill Doggett, Rattlesnake Annie, Sleepy la Beef and Charlie Feathers was legendary. I remember the almost orgasmic delight with which he played 'One Dozen Berries' to me in 1959 — an LP spirited in from the United States to the few British fans and artists in the know. Chuck Berry inspired the Beatles and the Stones and on his first British tour a group of us travelled round the country as demented fans to drink in every precious note at several concerts. Most of us remain bog-standard rock-and-rollers but Dave, like some musical David Livingstone, delved into ever more obscure areas of US music. In his spartan political garret in Brixton the most notable presence were piles of much-played LPs, scarred by years of use on a decrepid record player. At his funeral the choice of Jerry Lee Lewis's 'You Are My Sunshine' hit a poignant note that left few eyes dry but also raised many a wistful smile. His links with Shakin' Stevens were no doubt based on a mutual reverence for rockabilly that would match his excited discussions about little-known gritstone gems with kindred devotees like Jim Perrin and Martin Boysen.

His great contribution to the climbing world was as an engaging raconteur, conversation stimulator and controversialist. A day on the crags with him usually developed into alternating epics on horrendous cracks, and hysterical bouts of laughter about some ludicrously childish pun or spoonerism. He was somebody you could be silly with. On another Cornwall meet a Sheffield group he brought were all rapidly named Manic Steve, Gorilla Man, Witwatersrand, and Daft Dave (the latter for his propensity to do ridiculous physical feats). At the top of Chair Ladder one evening I ventured the suggestion that I could see the Scilly Isles 'you mean the Daft Dave Isles' said Cookie, as the riposte of a day of energetic quipping, and we collapsed into the heather enfeebled with laughter. Though I tried hard I could never keep pace with his wit and became something of a Wise to his Morecambe, but I once observed him play a mesmerising 15 minute bout of verbal squash of puns and clever quips with Tim Lewis and Graham Gilbert while all others watched in amazement.

We shared a passion for new crags, and when I moved to Hale he eagerly joined me for three days sampling of all the nooks and crannies in the Lancashire guide. He once spent his summer holidays checking out the Bleaklow crags and we both doggedly followed Ted Pyatt's footsteps in an odyssey to every hidden sandstone

excrecence in Kent and East Sussex. He amassed a collection of worthy routes many with PC names reflecting his pre-occupations — *Oxbow Incident* (fine movies), *Hank Williams Will Live Forever in People's Hearts* (country music), and *Soledad Brother* and *The Republican* (political causes). In this sense he was not averse to a bit of political posturing so it was with wicked delight that we sent him the supreme climbing / political poseur, Ed Drummond, as a sort of Climbagram replacement for Pat Devine, for three days of Italian cragging during a cycle trip. Several very hard routes were done but no banners were erected though no doubt 'Enrico Berlinguer's Greatest Hits', or 'Caravaggios's Ghost' would have been titles ready in the frame for any combined new route they might have done.

Here then was a richly diverse character that energised the lives of all that knew him. His cheery grin and his ability to enliven a day on the crag, or an evening in the pub, to get us all thinking, talking and laughing — these were his precious gifts that will sadly be missed.

Dave died from pneumonia that developed while he was under intensive care after a cycling accident in Turkey. He was 51. Our condolences go out to his family and close friends. For myself I grieve the loss, but celebrate the memory, of my oldest friend. We salute you Dave — I can just see you topping out from some utopian gritstone edge to reach your nirvana in that Grand Ole Opry in the Sky.
Ken Wilson

Chris Briggs

1951 - 1992

Chris Briggs died in October. Although he was a member of the club for 41 years and served a term in office as Vice-President, we shall remember him primarily in his role as landlord of the Pen-y-Gwryd Hotel, which has always occupied an important place in the life of the Club and from which the Club sprang in 1898.

After the Second World War (during which PyG had housed a school), our member Arthur Lockwood, who had owned and run the Pen-y-Gwryd since 1921, retired to Hafod y Gwynt nearby, which he had rebuilt and enlarged, and sold the hotel to Redditt, also our member. In the course of successive visits at this time, at one such visit in 1947 we found that Redditt had in turn sold the hotel to Leslie Mather (who I think was a member of the Rucksack Club), who installed one C.B.Briggs as manager. This was a turning point in the progress of the hotel, which in recent years had become rather run down; Chris Briggs and his wife Jo put all their energy into restoring the past glory of the hotel, in which they aquired a part-ownership, ultimately becoming sole owners.

In the late '40s and early '50s PyG increasingly became the place where the climbing community congregated, to meet friends and to drink. My particular recollection of those years is of late nights in the smoke room at weekends with other CC and Rucksack Club members, with Liar Dice sessions going on far into the night. The Club's Committee held most of its meetings there, as in due course, did the BMC North Wales Committee (which was formed there) and later, its Committee for Wales. The successful 1953 Everest expedition met there on its return, and thereafter annually, and still does. The members of the expedition signed their names on the ceiling of the new public room which had been created

by the front door; this henceforth became the Everest Room. Each expedition member was given his own tankard, kept hanging over the bar in the Smoke Room, for use when drinking in the hotel. People making first ascents of new Welsh climbs were given the privilege of using these tankards when the owners were not there — after putting details of the route they had done in the old 'locked book', the use of which was revived.

There had been a mountain rescue kit at the hotel since 1936. Chris took it upon himself to lead a mountain rescue team based on the use of this kit. In the early days mountain rescue was not the almost professional activity which it has now become, and Chris assembled his team for any particular rescue from any competent hotel guests who happened to be available, plus any climbers in the vicinity of whom he could get hold.

At Easter 1951 we were staying at PyG when the conditions were extremely wintery, with very heavy snow cover and the main mountain slopes were turning to continuous sheets of ice. My party were aiming for the Trinity Gullies on Snowdon when we came across a dead body at the foot of the gullies (this turned out to be that of Peter Koch, who had fallen from the Central Gully). We were setting off to raise the alarm when we were hailed by another member of Koch's party, who told us that the PyG rescue team had already been sent for. When the team arrived we joined in the carry down, and for the rest of that Easter weekend ('Death Easter', when many accidents occurred) spent all our time with the team taking part in rescues or carrying down bodies. Chris later wrote an article for the journal on the activities of his rescue team at this period; it was at this time that he was elected to membership of the Club. He continued to run the rescue team for over 20 years, and in 1956 was awarded the BEM for his services to mountain rescue.

Chris was never a great climber, in latter years doing more skiing than climbing. He always took a great interest, however, in the affairs of the Club, and served as Vice-President from 1976 to 1979. He put much effort into support of actions to conserve the beauty and amenities of the district, gave Esme Kirby backing in the work of the Snowdonia National Park Society, and was a member of the North Wales (Hydroelectric) Protection Committee.

Other than climbing and the mountains, Chris's leisure interests lay with rugby football and fishing. He was appointed High Sheriff of Caernarfonshire in 1975, and later Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the County.

Chris was always a great friend to climbers. His daughter Jane and her husband Brian Pullee now run the hotel and maintain the same atmosphere — but we shall always miss Chris's friendly welcome. Our sympathies go to Jane and Brian, and to Chris's wife, Jo.

John Neill

Giles Barker

1979 - 1992

Giles was killed in a caving fall in summer 1992. He was carrying equipment on a photographic trip when he fell down a 20m shaft to his death. He was only 36, a short but very intensely lived life and one that brought him close to the hearts of his many friends.

At Sheffield University, where he was elected President of the Mountaineering Club, he studied Prehistory and developed a passion for climbing history. His enthusiasm for dinosaurs pre-dates the contemporary dinosaur-mania which would have amused him. He joined the CC while still in Sheffield where he was heavily involved with Peak District guidebook production. The old blue Northern Limestone guide contains much of his work and hidden in the crag diagrams for the lost world of Chee Dale are one or two of his monsters.

As a new route pioneer he found his niche in the great Staden Quarry clean-up and appears several times in the 1977 and 1978 first ascents list.

His interest in climbing history led to extensive research on the Peak District and in 1978 he began to draft his major opus, **Peak Performance**. This successor to **High Peak** remains in draft and contains original interview material from several leading climbers of the '50s, '60s and '70s including Don Whillans. It is hoped that his efforts will eventually be published.

He also began to collect climbing memorabilia and his museum soon became the repository for climbing hardware of historic value; mainly items which had exceeded their 'sell-by' date such as the infamous bolt from *Darius* and Joe Brown's peg from *Great Wall*.

From a solid climbing base and extensive experience throughout Britain, Giles moved on to caving and soon, cave exploration. Shortly before his death he had achieved national recognition for his high quality cave photography.

An environmentalist in the '70s, Giles was well in front of the national conscience. He had his own style and philosophy, an historically correct ethnic stance which ran from wall to wall, from food, clothing and music to climbing ethics and prehistoric appreciation. Memorable excursions to Cornwall involved manic visits to 'prehistorically correct' sites where



rough uncultured climbers were exposed to the wonders of ancient burial sites.

Confidently unsophisticated, he was at ease in any company and it is no surprise that he was able to inspire young people through his work with Operation Raleigh.

It is for his dry sense of humour that people remember Giles best. He always found a way of expressing himself in a unique manner and his exclamations became catch phrases amongst his friends.

His climbing acquaintances will remember him for long days on the crags, an unsuppressible sparkle in his eyes, his sustained enthusiasm and measured use of the word 'appalling'.

Mike Browell

Sir William McEwan Younger Bt.

DSO DL

1926 - 1992

Bill Younger, who died on 15 April 1992, was active in the Club in the late '20s and early '30s. He was elected to membership in December 1926, while up at Balliol. He was President of the OUMC in 1927-28, and was elected to the Alpine Club in 1927.

Although he was certainly actively climbing from Helyg I can find little information about his activities in this country, his interests largely lying in Alpine climbing; his one contribution to the CC Journal (and one to the CC Bulletin) dealt with climbs in the Alps.

His membership of the Climbers' Club seems to have lapsed at the time or just before the Second World War, but that of the Alpine Club continued throughout his life, and he served on the AC Committee for the years 1947-50. No doubt a fuller account of his climbing in the Alps will appear in the AJ.

His home was at Melrose, where he was born in 1905. After going down from Oxford he succeeded his father in the family brewing firm of William McEwan, founded by his great uncle. After a distinguished War-time career as an artillery commander in North Africa and in the Italian campaign he returned to the headship of McEwan's to lead them in the merger with William Younger and later with Newcastle Breweries to form Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, of which he was Chairman and Managing Director for most of the '60s.

John Neill

John Martin Kretschmer

1952 - 1992

Jo Kretschmer, as everyone knew him, had the good fortune to be born into the mountaineering and climbing world and to have the right sort of relatives and friends to develop his talents in this world. He climbed first in the Alps with his father and his slightly younger brother, known as Nully, who was killed on Mont Blanc in 1947, and later with Wilf Noyce, David Cox and a wide range of other climbers.

He served as a major in the Royal Engineers during the War, but managed to indulge in various expeditions in West Africa and North Burma and finally serving as an instructor in the Winter Warfare School, becoming an expert ski-mountaineering instructor. Travelling the world continued after the War as part of his professional life as a distinguished civil engineer but he managed to combine this with mountaineering everywhere he went, most frequently with Alan Pullinger, a fellow engineer and life long friend. Later he was a regular visitor to Lundy with John Hunt, another close friend.

My own acquaintance with him began soon after I joined the CC, when we started travelling together to meets in Wales. Soon he persuaded me to take over from him the job of Hut Booking Secretary, to free him for the job of Treasurer, a post which he filled with distinction not only for the CC, but also for the Alpine Club and for the Mount Everest Foundation.

He led me in our first ascent of Toubkal in the Atlas Mountains and the consequent scar I bear on my chin was the fault of the loose nature of the rocks, not his leadership! The range of his interests and of his friendships was demonstrated in a packed memorial service in February 1993 when moving tributes were made to him.

Harry Sales

F.H.Keenlyside

1944 - 1992

Francis Keenlyside was a member of the Club up to his death, its secretary from 1948 to 1949 and editor of the Journal from 1950 to 1954.

He had climbed extensively in Wales, an early passage of *The Bluebell Traverse* is described in the CCJ 1944, and in Switzerland, where I met him for the first time on the Club's 1954 Alpine meet. The meet was based in Blatten in Lötschental and endured almost continuous rain and bad weather whilst members attempted ascents and traverses of local peaks and passes. Francis joined us for the latter half of the meet and although the only outing when we were in the same party was a traverse of the Beich Pass in foul weather, with Luis Sancha, we arranged to meet in Switzerland the following year.

Again the weather was not good and the holiday was short. Our pipe-opener and our first summit together was a weary and very misty traverse of the Brunneghorn, up the NW Ridge and down the SW Ridge, after travelling

overnight from London. Curiously, I learned of his death almost at the same time as the summit of that mountain collapsed into the Visp valley. We were active on the Leiterspitzen traverse and the SE Ridge of the Unter Gabelhorn and recovered a considerable amount of gear left by a party retreating in bad weather when we traversed the Trifhorn on our way from the Rothorn Hut to the Mountet Hut. Francis also satisfied a long held ambition to climb the Hornli Ridge of the Matterhorn. There were, in addition, delightful social encounters with L.S. Amery, Alfred Zurcher, Marcel Kurz and Emil Perren. Sir Arnold and Lady Lunn gave us afternoon tea in the Whymper room of the Monte Rosa Hotel whilst we gave advice on the hanging of Sir Arnold's gift to the hotel of portraits of Alpine pioneers (notably all British except for Michel Croz).

We arranged to meet in Chamonix the following year but there was a failure in communications and we missed each other. Our last encounter was after the memorial service for Tom Bourdillon and Dick Viney when together with John Clegg we spent a happy time trying to climb from the garden through the windows and into Kevin Fitzgerald's Oxfordshire house. Francis had something of a reputation in this branch of the sport. The Earl Jellicoe recently recounted his experience of a traverse of the ballroom of a re-furbished Union-Castle liner in which Francis had a lead role.

Shortly after, he left England and we were not able to meet again. I remember him as a quiet, sometimes aloof, but many faceted man, with a strong love of rock climbing and mountaineering and a keen interest in mountain scholarship. His book, **Peaks and Pioneers**, was published in 1975. It seems a pity that he should have lived away from the British scene for so long.

Frank Fitzgerald

Michael Hardwick

1986 - 1992

In September 1992, Mick Hardwick, his wife Sue and 165 other passengers were all tragically killed when their plane crashed into a mountainside on its approach to Kathmandu.

A week after the crash, I visited Mick's parents in Wirksworth. In a family photo album they showed me a black and white picture of a 15 year old, leading an unprotected *Great Slab* at Froggat. Mick started climbing at school, soon surpassing his 'tutor' on many of the gritstone classics. He was so keen on climbing that his idea of revising for 'A' levels was to hitch around the Derbyshire Peak District, often soloing routes to his limit. He always made it home in time for tea with his unsuspecting parents, except on one occasion when he fell, soloing a route at Wildcat, landing in a tree from 50 feet up. Fortunately, the only thing that broke was his cover when his picture subsequently appeared on the front page of the local newspaper.

Mick later trained as a craft and design teacher at Leeds, his main criteria being the strength of the climbing club, and the proximity of the crags. His first post was in Glossop, in a school which was conveniently located for training at Hobson Moor Quarry during his lunch break. However, after a number of years he

became restless and felt unfulfilled by this career, and so after much deliberation, resigned from teaching in order to train to become a UIAGM guide, turning his interest in climbing and the outdoors into his career.

Mick's move to North Wales to take up a position at the Plas y Brenin National Mountain Centre, Capel Curig, after his success in qualifying as a guide meant we could no longer climb together as often as we would have liked. Mick soon integrated into his local scene meeting a whole new group of friends and climbing partners. However, we always kept in close contact, through good times or bad.

Our last conversation on the day before he left for the Himalaya with his wife, Sue and Dave Harries, in retrospect was a strange coincidence, as we had 'phoned each other at exactly the same time, only to find our respective numbers engaged. After we finally made contact, we chatted as usual and planned future trips. On the subject of his Himalayan trip, Mick sounded apprehensive about the scale of their proposed route on Annapurna, but recognised that travelling posed greater risks than climbing. Their final destination was never reached, the catastrophe that occurred on the approach of PK268 to Kathmandu killing all 167 passengers took from me and many others a great companion, partner and friend.

During Mick's relatively short time with us, he left his mark in a number of ways. He will be remembered by his friends and climbing partners for his enthusiasm, incredible stamina and love for the bolder, more adventurous style of climbing. Also by his clients and students for the caring and professional manner in which he undertook his work. His climbing achievements included setting up new routes on Grit, Sharpnose and the Llyn Peninsula. Others will remember him for his skills and generosity in mending roofs, cars and fitting kitchens, nothing being too much trouble.

Memories of Mick will never die, they will only grow fonder with the passage of time, but our favourite routes will never seem the same.

Ian Carr

Friendships develop in unexpected ways. "I've met a young lad who could get you up *Fallen Angel*. His name's Mick", my lodger had announced, and the following weekend there I was climbing with a complete stranger on Pavey Ark. A month later Mick turned up in Chamonix looking for a partner to accompany him on the Dru, and none too pleased with the Swiss railways who had succeeded in losing his rucksack somewhere between Interlaken and Martigny.

I suspect that he sought me out, not for my climbing skill, but for my spare clothing which very conveniently fitted him, and my gear rack! The following two days transformed a casual acquaintance into one of my closest friends who greatly influenced my activities for the next 12 years. A falling rock smashed my foot six pitches up the *American Direct*. I shall not forget the painstaking care with which Mick lowered me down the face, dragged me across to the Rognon, and attempted to carry me down the Mer de Glace before finally agreeing that a helicopter might be sensible. He never gave up easily.

It was while waiting for the helicopter that I remarked he ought to become a guide, so outstanding had been his care of the 'client' that day. He took the suggestion seriously, abandoned his teaching job and within three years, having served his apprenticeship at the International School of Mountaineering in Switzerland, became a member of the British Association of Mountain Guides,

and was appointed to the full time staff at Plas y Brenin.

Yet Mick's love of amateur climbing never diminished and I was privileged, in addition to holding his ropes on many British rock routes, to be invited to join him on trips to Europe, America, and Africa. In his short life he made successful ascents of many of the world's best known routes: the *Walker Spur* on the Grandes Jorasses, the North Face of Les Droites in winter, the Troll Wall in Norway, the Lotus Flower Tower in Canada, Half Dome in Yosemite, the *Diamond Couloir* on Mount Kenya and a successful Alpine style expedition to the Himalaya. Finally, in August 1992 he completed the *American Direct* of the Dru, from the Rognon to the summit and down by the same route, all in the day. He called round to tell me, almost apologising for not having done it with his original partner of 12 years previously. Typical Mick, always a gentleman.

Two months later, I called on Mick at his cottage in Tregarth. He was about to depart for a two-man attempt on the South Face of Annapurna with Dave Harries. He joked about the airline they were using: "Can't be worse than Aeroflot." Neither he, nor his wife Sue, nor Dave ever reached Kathmandu. Thanks, Mick, for many wonderful mountain days I'll never forget.

Wil Hurford

Henry Norman Fairfield

1932 - 1992

Harry Fairfield was a member of an informal group of friends who climbed in the Lake District and North Wales in the '30s. I had the good fortune to join them during two periods of furlough from India, in 1933 and 1935; indeed, I have to thank Harry and his friends, as well as Edwin ('G') Kempson, for introducing me — an Alpine climber — to British rock in those far-off years.

The group consisted of A.W.(Bill) Osbourne, Stewart Mitchell, Donald Murray, Norman Slack, Harry Fairfield and one 'Brian', who features in my climbing diary but whom I cannot now recall. I find that (the late) Jock Harrison, who survived that terrible ordeal on Masherbrum in 1938, joined us at one stage.

The climbs themselves are of no special account today. They included *Eagle's Nest Direct*, *Jones* from Deep Ghyll, *Moss Ghyll Grooves* and sundry routes on the Napes, Pillar, Sergeant's Crag and Pike's Crag in the Lakes, as well as climbs of a comparable standard in Snowdonia. What did matter was the friendship which the climbing created within our group; we were young, enthusiastic and enjoyed one another's company enormously.

Harry (known affectionately as 'Wop' to some of his friends), also climbed in the Alps before the War, but our paths crossed only occasionally in the post-War period, at meetings of the Alpine Club. He was that club's Treasurer during the '50s and played a part, doubtless through his influence as Chief Accountant at Lloyds, in raising funds for our 1953 Everest Expedition. He was a keen member of the London section of the Fell and Rock.

Harry was a devoted family man; his wife Phyll, his daughter Anne and son John, a physiotherapist who emigrated to Australia, survive him. Harry was a kind, thoughtful and humorous man; a good companion in the hills.

John Hunt

John Richard Walters

1988 - 1992

John was born in Bristol in 1962 and first started climbing in the Avon Gorge while a pupil at the Cathedral School. In 1980 he won a scholarship to University College, Oxford where he studied Physics, graduating with a good 'second' in 1983.

John's interest in climbing developed at Oxford and he was an active member of the OUMC, serving on the committee as Meets Secretary and then as a particularly capable Treasurer in his final year. John was an enthusiastic climber and over the years climbed many classic British rock climbs, generally operating at the E3 level, which was realistically about three grades too low, in view of his prolific bouldering power! John's taste for adventure was always tempered by a degree of caution; on one of the last occasions we climbed together he romped easily up *Sacre Coeur* at Blackchurch but (sensibly, in view of the epic that followed) declined to accompany the team on a route on the main cliff.

A naturally talented athlete, John also played hockey to a high standard, regularly turning out for University teams and various local clubs.

After graduating, John returned to Bristol where he worked for a year with British Aerospace, before being enticed away by the attractions of a career as a chartered accountant with KPMG Peat Marwick in London. John effortlessly passed the qualifying exams at the first attempt while still climbing most weekends and also finding time to become a very fast, but not always stylish skier.

While in London, John met his future wife Nikki through climbing and they were married in November 1991. John and Nikki set up home together near Swindon where John had recently taken up a job with National Power.

John was killed in a road accident caused by an oncoming vehicle overtaking on the brow of a hill while driving to work in November 1992. He had no chance of avoiding the collision and although he was taken to hospital, he did not regain consciousness.

Nikki and John had only one year together before John's death. We will all miss him.

Simon Donowho

Mike Dawes



No chalk, no runners, no harness, no problems. Bill Trench on 'Main Wall', Llanberis Pass. Photo: Dennis Kemp

OFFICERS OF THE CLUB 1992

President:
J.M.ALLISON

Vice Presidents:
L.BROWN, M.G.MORTIMER
R.D.MOULTON

Hon.Treasurer:
M.WATERS

Hon.Secretary:
P.J.BROOKS

Hon.Membership Secretary:
J.CHADWICK

Hon.Meets Secretary:
S.J.FOXLEY

COMMITTEE

J.H.ADLER R.P.BENNION R.M.BIDEN S.G.CLEGG D.J.CUTHBERTSON
A.J.LANCASHIRE J.LAWRENSON J.PYCROFT

OFFICIALS

Hon.Archivist:
J.NEILL

Hon.Librarian:
R.E.OWEN

Chairman Huts Sub-Comm:
R.HEWING

Hon.Guidebook Editors:
J.WILLSON
I.J.SMITH

Chairman Publications Sub-Committee:
A.H.JONES

Hon.Hut Booking Sec:
M.BURT

Hon.Journal Editor:
D.J.CUTHBERTSON

Hon.Guidebook Business Manager:
R.D.MOULTON

SUB-COMMITTEES

Huts Sub-Committee:
R.HEWING
M.H.BURT
All Custodians

Publications Sub-Committee:
A.H.JONES M.J.BALL S.CARDY G. MILBURN
R.D.MOULTON A.D.NEWTON K.VICKERS(nv)
I.J.SMITH J.WILLSON D.J.CUTHBERTSON

HONORARY CUSTODIANS

D.W.BATEMAN (Bosigran) A.S.G.JONES (Helyg) D.PRICE (Cwm Glas Mawr)
D.J.CUTHBERTSON (R.W.Lloyd Hut) K.Sanders (R.O.Downes Hut)
R.D.NEATH/R.THOMAS (May Cottage)

Reviews

The Climbers - A History of Mountaineering
Hodder and Stoughton 1992

Chris Bonington
Price £16.95

I managed only to see the first of the televised programmes based on this condensed history and I wish I'd seen more, but at the time I hadn't discovered the 'video-plug', the gadget that makes it possible for even me to record programmes easily. Watching Chris Bonington almost falling off the Grépon (even with a top-rope) made riveting viewing and was a splendid introduction to Alfred Mummery, who comes across quite clearly as one of Chris's heroes, if not THE hero in this book.

I read it in bits and pieces; a few chapters on a plane, 20 minutes or so in bed at night, even half an hour in the bath, and found it was quite easy to pick up the thread each time. For there is a thread and it is the story of the search for the purest form of adventure. Mummery's life as a mountaineer clearly embodied it and although he never says so directly, so does Chris Bonington's own. And what marvellous exploits, ascents and escapes have resulted from their obsession and that of the other almost legendary and present day climbers who people this volume.

Reading through the chapters was like reading the condensed contents of most of the mountaineering books (and I have about 300) on my own shelves. It is clearly impossible in a few paragraphs to convey the full flavour of some of the epic tales that each fill a whole book and are re-told here, but Chris certainly tries hard and largely succeeds. I put this book down determined to find time to re-read it, not least because of the names of climbers and exploits that appear here, about whom, for all my volumes, I knew very little about; Paul Preuss, for example.

Everest, largely a 'British preserve' for many years, inevitably receives a full treatment, but other chapters cover the early story of Mont Blanc, the great 'Golden Age' of Victorian mountaineering, Alpine climbing up to the First World War, Himalayan climbing up to the same period, the extension of the then-possible by aid climbing in the inter-war years. Further chapters follow on the early attempts of the 8,000m peaks in the '30s, on the routes and methods by which they were climbed later and, towards the end of the book, on extreme climbing in the Himalaya. The final chapter, entitled 'Always a little bit futher' is particularly interesting because it has a look into the future from the standpoint of a climber whose own career has been interwoven with the history of the last 30 years or more of mountaineering. The ethical problems of bolting are still with us and unlikely to go away. Competition climbing has arrived and is fortunately being channelled away from the natural mountain environment. And that leads to Chris Bonington's key conclusion: 'If we want to go on enjoying something that is so much more than a sport, we must start taking better care of those very mountains that once we thought were so vast and immutable'.

The illustrations are excellent, collected from a wide variety of sources and very few of which I had seen before. The admirable 'Brief History' at the end of the book and compiled by Audrey Salkeld, starting with Hannibal crossing the Alps in 218 BC and ending in Tomo Cesen's incredible three day ascent of the South Face of Lhotse in 1990, squeeze Bonington's 268 pages down to a mere nine and a half pages and there is both a glossary and an index. I've no doubt that much has been missed out; inevitably any history is selective. But what is included is fascinating reading, is marvellous value for money at £16.95 and I don't think anyone can seriously fault the way Chris Bonington has organised the colossal amount of material encompassed in this book.

Bob Allen

Southern Sandstone - 1992 Supplement
Climbers' Club

Mike Vetterlein
Price £1.95

Southern Sandstone is somewhere that I now usually climb only two or three occasions a year, mainly to affirm my detestation. The green ooze, the gritty mud under the skin surface of the hands, sand in the eyebrows, the strained finger tendons and above all, as Whillans remarked, when inveigled there back in the '60s, forced to reside in the South-East for a few weeks, the 'scruffy little climbs'. He did concede

after two or three routes; on *Slimfinger*, I seem to remember; 'hard scruffy little climbs.'

So can I be fair?

On a good day, and I mean a good day, fair weather, rock conditions, head and body all, sandstone can be paradise. For each generation's close-knit group of young, strong, keen, fervent sandstone adherents it is always the paradise. Hence, I surmise, their enthusiasm for this collection of unlikely new problems so soon after the last guide, both before and in print. There is a stunning front cover photo (pity about that tacky old bolt) of one of the most impressive routes on sandstone, *The Second Generation*. Even I, as an old aider, must express regret that the 'baggers' of the line, (rather than the route — a nice distinction) had not left it, indeed, for the second generation. I was also impressed by the much coveted and sometimes, from decade to decade, attempted line that is now *Chimaera* (see illustration 12 — in *Southern Sandstone* by Dave Turner — current guide) and by another fine wall at Eridge which has been there waiting for these many years and is now *More Cake For Me*.

These three are my considered plums of a fine crop of space filling, so for at least one punter the supplement serves the humanitarian purpose of identifying those forbidden grades onto which one might otherwise unwittingly stray. You will realise I am stiff with envy. Yes, it's a useful little addition.

Yet, closer examination of its content reveals the obsessive nature of the area in its combined historical and first ascents list as well as a call for a retro first ascent list. This has for me all the unhealthy signs of the ego trip. Let's face it lads (it's got to be 'lads' — and I was one as well) history is OK, but parochial anecdote, forget it, everyone else will. Who wants to read about *Ted's Elbow*, *My Frozen Shoulder*, *Claire's Knee*? And if you are mentioning second and third ascents, visiting stars etc, you'll have to update this stuff every year, and who except you will care? We all know that here, routes are re-ascended not in a blast of vision, skill and daring but by a slow process of attrition until one of the team of stars, and there are many stars, gets that final slap. On a progressively slackening top-rope of course!

The guide also points out the ephemeral nature of the climbs; it is a fragile environment and most of these routes will change and who can say in what way, more so in this heavily over-used area than any other in the country.

Before I make a final confession, I must go back to an earlier remark about aiders. They didn't do all bad, for, as in many other odd corners of the country, some of today's climbs are largely possible because the peggers opened up the cracks and pockets. So there you have it. What? Oh yes, the confession.

One of the reasons that I'm against an historical first ascents list... mind you, I'm proud to have been on a series of epic mass attempts over the years, trying to top-rope *Blue Murder*, *Hangover*, *Flakes*, *Sossblitz*, *The Lobster*, *Krait Arête* inter alia...and that is, it was I who did the first ascent of *Crisis* at Harrison's. (Now *What Crisis?* 6b not soloed). I pegged it on lead, which was my wont to do at the age of 17 and with a skinful of Guinness and cider, the drugs of my youth. It would embarrass me considerably to be reminded of that in print. They would surely omit the fact that the second and all subsequent ascensionists reverted to the top-rope, moreover, that to make the said second ascent, the first and crucial aid point was drilled out from a tied-off blade placement. However, this is the only reason that it is *What Crisis?* today.

Finally, a disclaimer. This is not a book review.

Alan Baker

**Hard Rock
Diadem 1992**

**Compiled by Ken Wilson
Price £19.99**

Not an easy book to review, this one. It's a bit like being asked to review The Bible, well at least the Book of Common Prayer, so well is it etched into the hearts and minds of so many.

This is now the third edition. After the last revamp in 1981 which saw the addition of colour photos amongst other improvements, you may well ask what else there is to do. Well, the answer is that the introductory essay has had various historical photos included and that some chapters have been rearranged to allow new photos to be slotted in.

The 60 routes covered, ranging from VS to low Extreme remain true to the previous editions and the original idea. They represented then what were seen as some of the best and hardest of their time, certainly the 'ones to go for'. Interestingly enough, while a lot are now within the grasp of most, due to the general rise in standards attributable to better protection and footwear, not to mention training, two in particular, *The Scoop* and *Kilnsey Main Overhang* have now been climbed free and are back there as

major challenges. Although it is now more of an historical testament to past generations of achievement it still retains what I suspect has always been its main appeal. It is an inspiration to sit and read through it referring to the pictures for atmosphere. I don't think anyone could do this and not want to be there. If you've done them all and there can't be many who have, you can look on it as an illustrated personal list, whilst for those new to our game it's as valid as ever.

Pete Brooks

Encyclopaedia of Mountaineering
Hodder and Stoughton 1992

by Walt Unsworth
Price £16.95

Since the first edition in 1975 this encyclopaedia has been revised in 1977 and since then enlarged by around one third. It's also illustrated, albeit sparsely and has a greatly strengthened representation of climbers from Europe and the USA among the 400 plus entries. Well, that's what the back cover tells us anyway.

The book's author, Walt Unsworth needs no introduction as a detailed chronicler with his epic *Everest*. Producing a definitive encyclopaedia of mountaineering though is a different task. Who to include and who not is bound to be a subjective choice and one to provoke a few arguments at least.

It ranges from Abalakov, Vitali Mikhailovich (1906-86) to Zurcher, Alfred (1889-1979) via the Reverend James Jackson, known as 'Steeple Jack' after a spot of DIY on the church weathercock. It has 350 pages crammed with facts and includes various bits of technique and equipment for those who don't know already.

Reading through it is not unlike reading a map of the Alps, the same names liberally cover both. For the 'tick' minded various ranges are covered in great detail whilst the home front slightly less so.

My vote for the oddest entry goes for the Edelweiss which gets almost a full page whilst the Eiger, on the next page, gets a mite less!

However, as a reference book it is excellent and as a source of inspiration for those wet evenings even better. The only real criticism is the price which is definitely in the 'text book' range for a paperback.

Pete Brooks

Andalucian Rock Climbs
Cicerone Press 1992

by Chris Craggs
Price £6.99

In 1492 Christopher Columbus set out from Spain and discovered America. It wasn't really lost and the natives were not amused. Five hundred years later Christopher Craggs discovered Spain...

Spanish sun-rock has become a *modus operandi* for over-wintering pale British climbers and for at least a decade this has meant a pilgrimage to the crags around Calpe. Chris's previous volume became the bible and managed to deliver easily available basic information; one-stop shopping, something not available locally. British climbers were able to find the crags, climbs and even grades delivered in a similar manner to home-grown guides. Justifiably popular, it has given thousands of enjoyable days' holiday climbing.

Well, he's done it again and this time to a place fast becoming the most important climbing area in Spain. Andalucian Rock Climbs is essentially an El Chorro guide although Tenerife is lobbed in for good measure.

El Chorro would have become popular with British climbers even if route descriptions had to be traded on the back of broccoli packets. There were already 40 or so British climbers in the gorge at Christmas 1992 clutching hand-me-down topos. When the first copies of the guide came out with the New Year flights, they were whizzing backwards and forwards across the bar tables; Spanish and German climbers equally glad to see it.

So what of it? Well it is so similar to our own guides that the best way to remembering that you are in the Sierras, not Stoney is to keep looking at the Palmetto, oranges, eagles and vultures and that big yellow sun.

The essence of a climbing guidebook is to get you to the start of a route, provide enough information to find the line and its grade. This guide passes the test. It has its shortcomings but it would be churlish to comment on these without first recognising what has been achieved. It is merely an 'introductory

guide' and does not pretend to be definitive. From sketch topos, local help and the new routes book from the station bar, Chris has compiled a selection of climbs as they were in 1992. Much has been added since and much, much more is still to be done. The locals have concentrated on brilliant bolt-protected hard sports climbs and most of the classic lines at lower standards remain untouched.

In a country where OS standard maps are as rare as rocking horse droppings, the guide maps need to be good. These are barely adequate and more would be welcome. A decent map of the whole gorge is needed, detailed maps of more crags and a better map of the amazing intricacies of El Torcal, which would have saved a couple of frantic hours.

Planning what to do next is an important part of guidebook use and more hours are spent reading the guidebook in the bar than on the crag! There is some useful general information, enough to arrive and survive in El Chorro. The star system is very useful but by no means refined, so just because a route has no stars, don't walk by. The only bad rock I found was perversely on the route *Avion Roquerno*, where the excellent rock is praised.

Grading translation discrepancies abound because of the non-compatibility of French technical sports climb grades to our adjectival and technical system. This is most easily remedied by dropping British grades completely and adopting the local system.

Chris does err on the side of user-friendliness by attempting to over-grade if in doubt and so you are unlikely to come to grief. Editorial inaccuracies have crept in with French and British grades becoming transposed, sometimes in the text and sometimes in the title line. Make sure you know which are which.

Photographs are interesting and a useful way of locating routes. Some don't do justice to the situation. Despite providing two pictures of the gobsmakinkneequakinmindbendin walkway these hardly prepare the uninitiated for the terrors ahead.

With more and more people heading to Malaga this little gem will sell like hot cakes. No-one will regret their investment of £6.99!

Mike Browell

Suspended Sentences Hodder and Stoughton 1992

**by Jim Curran
Price £14.95**

'Joe had said that he wanted to see my face when I saw Everest for the first time. "You're absolutely bound to cry, and I want to take a photo of you."'

That combination of Curran's awe and emotion, with Brown's good humoured mickey-taking, catches the spirit of this book. The author of *The Slimmer's Guide to the Himalaya*, as it was well-known before Hodder's marketing person thought of the implications, is continuously undercutting himself. It's slimming by self-demolition.

'No tears came to my eyes, I was pleased to tell Joe later. Instead a curious feeling of being slightly let down. Just for once it was exactly as I imagined it. My first, and I have to say enduring impression was that it didn't look big enough'.

The link running through this book is the making of climbing films, but it's really a book about people and doing things with them. There are deft pen portraits, economical anecdotes and classic one-liners, whilst the few black and white portraits are brilliant spontaneous moments of revealed personality. Above all there is an affection underlying his quick eye for the absurd. The pacy style races through the climbing life of 30 years travelling through 28 countries with the famous and the infamous. Not many moves are lingered over.

And yet there is something missing. In his introduction Curran says that this is not an autobiography and that is important. The book is warm and witty, awestruck and absurd, passionate without being pompous, but it is a memoir without reflections. There are no stabs in the back, but there is no edge to the characterisation. It is too slimmed down. I look forward to the autobiography.

Finally a word about proof-reading errors. None. Except that the first photo is said to be 'The author in the Calanques in 1974' which it obviously isn't. But who is it? I think we should be told.

Terry Gifford

My Vertical World
Hodder and Stoughton 1992

by Jerzy Kukuczka
 Price £16.95

When, in the early '60s, Walter Bonatti wrote his first autobiography **On the Heights**, he produced a classic account of great daring and total commitment at what was then the cutting edge of Alpinism. Chapter after chapter sent shivers down the spine, because, after all, it was a book stacked with legendary epics. **My Vertical World** is the '90s equivalent. That same cutting edge has moved 4,000m higher and the margin for error has narrowed considerably. Bonatti survived due to his extraordinary ability, resilience and a large dollop of luck. Although always a complex character, he was able to come to terms with this, finally bowing out while the going was good. Kukuczka, who had a more simplistic approach to life, unfortunately did not.

Before he died on the South Face of Lhotse in 1989, Kukuczka had climbed all 14 of the 8,000m peaks and his book describes those successes. It could hardly be classed as great literature; a straight translation does nothing to improve the sometimes clumsy sentences, and the final text could have been better proofed.

But it is an incredible story, told simply and with great honesty. There is no attempt to conceal the race to be first, yet while Reinhold Messner continued to pick off the normal routes, Kukuczka would allow himself no compromise in standards: each summit must be achieved by either a first winter ascent or a new route (remember also that Polish winter ascents take place in the 'deep' winter of January /

February, and not in the relatively hospitable weeks of early December, as is normal in virtually all other foreign expeditions to Nepal). It is only his first 8,000m peak, Lhotse, that failed to meet his criteria, and this was to rankle Kukuczka throughout his career.

This is a book that gives some insight into the difficulties in organising major expeditions from Poland; the 'under the counter' tactics to gain funds, provisions and even, on occasions, summits. It is illustrated by 14 excellent and informative mountain sketches (by Alex Spark) which contrast strongly with a disappointing collection of colour prints. Now and again there are some revealing statements about his attitude to both climbing and other climbers, though some of these fill one with incredulity. For instance, he refers to the ever reliable Zyga Heinrich as one of the leading figures of Polish Himalayan and Alpine climbing, but someone with little push who has rarely set foot on a summit; this about a man who was reputed to have climbed more than 25 peaks over 7,000m, including new routes on Khungyang Khish and Cho Oyu.

However, the overriding impression of Kukuczka is that of a talented mountaineer with superhuman strength and an almost fanatical drive. This is perhaps most apparent during the winter of 1984 / 5. Kukuczka arrives in Kathmandu some weeks after the expedition has departed for Dhaulagiri. By taking a short cut and ploughing through deep snow on two high passes, he joins the team in late December, goes straight onto the mountain and climbs it in appalling weather. Descending from the summit he is forced to spend two nights out in the open, with temperatures below -40° C and without food, drink and equipment, before struggling down to base camp with frost-bitten feet. Even Mr Messner would, I'm sure have been perfectly happy to retreat to the armchair in his Alpine castle for a few months; but not Kukuczka. The next day he is off on his own; racing back along the short cut, racing to Kathmandu, racing to Cho Oyu where another Polish expedition has nearly completed a new route up the South Face. He reaches the summit on the last day of winter, spending more unplanned nights in the open and having more near-misses. He returns home for treatment to his badly frost-bitten feet, yet two months later we find him *en route* to Nanga Parbat and perhaps the most dangerous ascent of his career. And so it goes on: the single-minded approach to the mountain, an immense drive that is hardly dented by the various deaths of fellow team members, a drive that often takes him upwards into truly dangerous terrain when other powerful and experienced colleagues are sounding the retreat with words such as 'unjustifiable'. However, don't attempt to look for any underlying philosophy in the text. Kukuczka's ideals were simple. I leave you with his own words: 'There is no answer in this book to the endless question about the point of expeditions to the Himalayan giants. I never found a need to explain this. I went to the mountains and climbed them. That is all'.

Lindsay Griffin

**Ogwen and Carneddau
Climbers' Club 1992**

by Iwan Arfon Jones et al
Price £14.95

This guidebook certainly has a presence on the shops' bookshelves; a solid double volume of the ever popular Ogwen tucked under a hard cover with the less frequented Carneddau, and all behind a beautiful cover picture. A browse through the two volumes reveals high quality climbing shots, with a good mix of colour and black and white, both recent and historical, and superbly clear photo-diagrams of all crags taken from logical viewpoints. The two softbacks remove from their hard cover to be tucked independently into a bag pocket for a day's cragging, although a closer inspection reveals a certain interdependence between the two volumes, with, for example, a first ascents list covering both volumes placed at the end of the second (Carneddau) volume.

The guide is well-edited and certainly seems to have been a labour of love, with a lengthy and detailed historical section and an informed conservation section in the first (Ogwen) volume, and many routes, especially in the lower grades, having been upgraded and re-starred since the last edition of the Ogwen guide. Individual routes on the easily accessible Tryfan Fach (Little Tryfan) have been fully described and graded, instead of the easier option of compacting them into a couple of paragraphs.

Such attention to detail is sure to be appreciated by the large numbers of climbers who come to this area for the great choice of lower grade climbs. The upgrading of some of the more serious routes in Cwm Idwal is no bad thing either. As for re-naming or wrongly naming routes (*Wrinkled Retainer* vs *Desecration Crack*) — well, I'm not going to enter into a debate about that!

Obviously an excellent guide.

Gill Lovick

**Via Ferrata
Cicerone Press 1992**

Translated by Cecil Davies
Price £10.95

The sub-title 'Scrambles in the Dolomites' and the translation of Via Ferrata as climbing path are equally misleading. As the text actually makes clear, very few of these / the contents? are scrambles in the sense that we understand in the British Isles and only in places could they be described as paths. On the contrary most of them are quite substantial pieces of mountaineering and many involve a reasonably high standard of rock-climbing with considerable exposure. They are, in fact, man-made mountain routes, some of which exploit various artefacts created during the desperate struggles on the Austro-Italian frontier during the First World War and take the form of ledges, steps and tunnels cut and blasted out of the mountains, whereas others follow a succession of wires and ladders up very steep, even overhanging, rock walls. More than a few are combinations of both types but the very best follow logical and essentially natural lines. They certainly permit vast numbers of people to enjoy those Dolomitic experiences which would otherwise be limited to accomplished climbers, indeed, they can be almost as gripping (no pun intended) as the big routes themselves and ropes or a self belaying system are recommended.

My first experience of Via Ferrata was on the Civetta in 1967. My climbing partner was indisposed and so my wife was persuaded to try the ordinary *Tivan* path up the 'back side' of the mountain. By mistake we followed the newly constructed *Via Ferrata degli Alghesi*, one of the finest, longest and most adventurous in the whole of the Dolomites. As we ascended the first set of iron rungs up what I remember as a very steep wall it became rather obvious that we were not on the ordinary route. However, we decided to press on and found a series of exciting sections nearly always protected by a variety of cables, steps, pegs and ladders leading to the easy slopes below Punte Civetta. Here we met a party of four timidly making their way down a 20° snow slope; they asked if the descent continued easily below but ignored my advice to turn back and take the easy way. I've often wondered how they got on. Eventually our efforts were rewarded by the stunning situations on the summit ridge with the north west wall dropping almost vertically to the hanging Val Civetta below. 'The panorama is overpowering. Distant glaciers and all the Ampezzo mountains expose their beauty to our admiration'.

Our second misunderstanding concerned the descent to the Rifugio Vazzoler which we expected to be much easier but turned out to be the even more exposed *Via Ferrata Attillio Tissi* which, at that time, was in a poor state of repair with loose rungs and frayed wire. No sooner had we started down than a violent electric storm hit the Civetta and without any alternative we were forced to stick to our iron way.

'It is obvious that one simply does not start on a Via Ferrata on a day when one thinks a thunderstorm likely! And what if you get into a mess in spite of careful planning? The guidebook recommendation for this has long been: 'In a thunderstorm get away from iron ladders and wire ropes'.

It was with some relief that we reached the scree-covered wilderness of the Van del Sasse which leads down under the South East Ridge of the Torre Trieste and so to the idyllically situated refuge. Despite having had a tremendous mountain day this adventure left me somewhat dissatisfied. It wasn't because I hadn't done a 'proper' route but it gave me the feeling I have after a really good bolt-protected route which I think is something to do with man having interfered too much with the crag or mountain environment.

My attitude to Via Ferrata is certainly ambivalent because in 1969 Roger Baxter-Jones and I were happy to descend the Alleghesi, after doing the *Aste* on the North-West wall of Punte Civetta, which enabled us to get back to the hut the same day. A little while later we used the *Tissi* to descend to the Vazzoler after an ascent of the *Sollder*. On a big mountain after a long route one certainly isn't going to ignore a safe and sure descent.

Of course they are not completely safe without some sort of belay and the Cicerone guide gives full details of a suitable impact absorbing system of self-protection which should work if a climber falls on vertical or diagonal fixed ropes (even a short fall can generate enough force to cause a simple sling and Karabiner to fail). In addition to advice on equipment there are sensible warnings as to the seriousness of these outings and the necessity of some mountain experience. Overall the general remarks are pretty useful though I was amused by the statement 'there seems to be no sense in trying to apply free-climbing grades to Via Ferrata' because it is immediately followed by an attempt to do so!

The 89 routes described are grouped under Eastern Dolomites, Western Dolomites and the Brenta, with adequate information about starting points, times and huts. Each way is placed in one of seven classifications which range from 'For foot-sure mountain-walkers, also for children (on a short rope) and beginners; easy and without problems' to 'Perfect climbing technique on vertical rock required'. The descriptions, maps and diagrams all appear to serve their purpose well and should ensure no problems with route finding both up or down.

What I do not like is the unimaginative and unidiomatic translation from the original German; much of the time it reads as if a dictionary has been used without much thought of what the writer is really trying to say and gives the impression of having been done in a hurry. Even allowing for the florid style of the original (which is of Walter Pause quality) there is little excuse for 'even the outstanding connoisseurs of the Dolomites' or 'for the user of climbing paths, the Eastern Dolomites are the highest heaven of his expectations'. We find 'sogenannte' frequently mis-translated as 'so-called' which in English has an implied sneer; the German is free from this implication and means 'often called' or 'people like to refer to'.

However, not all of the text has been poorly translated; in fact, what makes it all the more annoying is that some of it reads very well. Fortunately, this includes some of the very interesting passages giving the background to the incredible excavations of the First World War, for instance, the building of the 1,100m tunnel from the Cengia Martini up to underneath the summits of Picolo Lagazuoi which the Austrians occupied. The Italians packed the tunnel with 33 tonnes of gelignite which they ignited all to no avail; the Austrians had heard the sounds of drilling and evacuated their position. The tunnel has been fixed with iron cable and is now very popular in descent.

Notwithstanding the reservations about the variable quality of the translation this is in many ways an inspiring guide simply because it describes such a variety of outings in the well-known parts of the Dolomites as well as its more esoteric corners. It would need a lifetime of summer holidays to exhaust its possibilities.

Mike Mortimer

John Muir - The Eight Wilderness Discovery Books
Diadem 1992

by John Muir
Price £16.99

I would challenge most people to read this tome from cover to cover in one push, although to do so would be to immerse oneself in the American wildernesses of a century ago. It is, rather, a volume to be dipped into, like a tub of ice cream, for an occasional treat and refreshment in the way we look at the countryside around us. Muir was a remarkable man; not only did he record his expeditions in a fascinating way — all that he saw, and the intriguing people he met on the way, but he also had the foresight to see what would happen to this landscape when money-making and industrial expansion sank their teeth into it. He was initially captivated by the beauty of Yosemite, but also walked right across the continent, and later visited Alaska.

Muir is regarded as the founder of the National Park movement, and Yosemite was the first park to be created for conservational purposes; he also had the ear of President Theodore Roosevelt, even persuading him to spend a night under the stars to appreciate the natural wonders of Yosemite. It is difficult to imagine our grey, amoral politicians being so open minded where money meets nature. In this collection of books, informatively introduced by Terry Gifford, Muir makes the point that areas of wilderness are not only important for the planet, but also for ourselves; places where we can refresh and renew body and spirit. Preserving these places is a challenge that has never been more acute than the present time and the John Muir Trust is hard at work purchasing and preserving tracts of land in Scotland, Britain's only region of anything approaching wilderness. At home on any thinking mountaineer's bookshelf, this volume will provide refreshment for those that still battle.

Andy Newton

K2: The 1939 Tragedy
The full story of the ill-fated Wiessner expedition
Diadem 1992

by Andrew J Kauffman &
William Putnam
Price £14.99

Most British climbers know far less about the history of attempts on K2 than they do about equivalent attempts on Everest, mainly because the latter was predominately British, so a potted history of K2 may be relevant. K2, only a few hundred feet lower than Everest, is considerably steeper and more difficult, and a much greater challenge to serious mountaineers. It has quite an early history.

The first attempt to climb it was ahead of its time, an expedition in 1902 led by the controversial Englishman, Alastair Crowley. They did some reconnaissance and climbed the lower part of the NE Ridge. Next was a big Italian expedition in 1909, led by the Duke of Abruzzi. They did a little better, getting to 6,660m on the Savioa Saddle at the start of the NW Ridge, and to 6,200m on the SE (Abruzzi) Ridge.

Then a gap followed until Charles Houston's excellent expedition in 1938. His party was the first to get high on the mountain. They climbed the most difficult part of the Abruzzi Ridge, and reached a high point at about 7,920m, only some 600m from the top. The 1939 expedition was a follow-up of the previous trip, but with a weaker party which nevertheless got to about 8,230m.

Another American attempt was made in 1953, also by Houston, and the mountain was finally climbed by a big Italian expedition in 1954 via the Abruzzi Ridge. Over subsequent years, most of the other ridges, and a few faces have been climbed, with a rush of activity in 1986, when there were more ascents, and more deaths than in all of its previous history.

The topic of the book under review is the 1939 attempt, noted for its controversial disaster involving the deaths high up of Dudley Wolfe, an allegedly rich but incompetent American climber and three Sherpas.

I myself was on K2 in 1986. After my brush with the mountain, less conclusive either way than many others that year, I do have an active interest in most K2-related writing. But I did not find this book to be compulsive reading. I think the authors intended their book to be an historical work, putting the record straight, rather than a gripping yarn. The style of writing certainly indicates this, with painstaking attention to detail, rather than an easy-flowing narrative.

They wished to throw light on the complex circumstances leading up to the disaster, an objective they pursued with meticulous care, but only limited success due to incomplete factual information. They did make good use of a number of fresh sources of original information, notably the expedition

diary of Jack Durrance, one of the expedition members. The diary was previously unpublished due to Jack's reluctance to become caught in the web of post-expedition recriminations which had ensnared others. Although the diary cannot be regarded as completely impartial, it does seem to absolve Jack from much of the blame for the tragedy, which had previously and unfairly been laid on him. On the other hand, expedition leader Fritz Wiessner was, it seems, only human after all, and must shoulder his share of the blame. Much remains unanswered.

Personally, I was interested less in such detailed fault-finding, and more in general long-term matters which the authors touched on, but did not emphasise. The main blame for the tragedy was the weakness of the team. Fritz was the only one who was really qualified for such an ambitious objective. A naturalised American of German origin, he had much experience in the Alps and Rockies, and in 1932 he had been to 7,000m on Nanga Parbat with Willi Merkl. The other five members of the team were much weaker, none had previous Himalayan experience (but who had in those days?), most had climbed in the Alps or Rockies, but unexceptionally, and some only in the company of guides. The 1938 expedition members, mostly with stronger credentials, were unable to get away again so soon. No doubt Fritz realised the limitations of his colleagues, but his optimism, ambition and Teutonic stubbornness prevented him from cancelling the expedition, or withdrawing the party from the mountain when things were going wrong, but when disaster might still have been averted.

The American Alpine Club, who officially organised this expedition and the previous one, should also take some of the blame, for sending so inexperienced a team on so major an undertaking. They should surely have been more objective in their appraisal of the party's chances than the ambitious and headstrong Wiessner. But the authors, both experienced mountaineers, fail to give this point due stress. They were both former dignitaries (one a president, the other a vice-president) of the AAC, and failed to bite the bullet of blaming their own organisation.

An extenuating factor was the late withdrawal from the expedition of three of its strongest potential members. But they were not very much stronger than those who did go, so I feel the authors overstress this point. The AAC should have made the hard decision to cancel the trip, or divert it to a more appropriate and lesser objective.

The book would best be read not for its weak narrative worth, nor for its strong attention to historical detail, but rather as an insight into what can go wrong on a big mountain with a party most of who have the wrong sort of experience. You wouldn't fill an Olympic marathon with 100 metre runners.

Dave Wilkinson

**Avon and Cheddar
Climbers' Club 1992**

**by Martin Crocker
Price £14.95**

Long awaited, there was never going to be a right time to produce a combined Avon and Cheddar guide, despite its ultimate necessity. Cheddar will always have an access problem and it can only be seen as unfortunate that the publication of this guide has coincided with a three year closure of the area's alternative premier venue and former social gathering spot, the Avon Main Wall.

I never envied Martin his task in taking on this venture. Cheddar alone conspires against any guidebook writer by throwing up never ending problems caused by multiple conflicts of interest. The rapidity of change is there to be seen by any visitor, as the cliffs, now revealed in their primal, naked glory, bear little resemblance to those shown in the crag shots of only a handful of years past.

Such events are hardly Martin's fault and in their light, his attempt has been brave. The full scope of the past 10 years of development are at last laid open to scrutiny. This guide summarises the changes of these years in the style of one who has been at their forefront and who, for better or worse, has made one of the greatest impressions on the area as a whole. I have to say, it's not what I hoped for.

With so much development (and still far more to come) the guide weighs in as a bulky affair, thankfully split into two discreetly sized and carryable components for each of the two major areas and their associated, minor outcrops. Descriptions, though of necessity terse, are adequate, but somehow lacking in character. What makes *Malbogies* '...the most famous and popular climb in the (Avon) Gorge?' Why does *Coronation Street* remain '... an all time British classic'? I know... but you will have to climb them to find out. The guide does not entice you in their direction, and neither do the photographs.

The grading as a whole seems reasonable for this day and age. Goblin Combe has at last (unfortunately!) been graded realistically, and it's nice to know that I was once capable of producing routes now graded E4 6b. (I thought everything I did was E2 5c!). But style... now there's the rub!

I've suddenly found myself in another world. One of redpoint and beta-flash, bolt dogging and quick draws. Sport verses adventure climbing. It's always the same when leading and writing from the front. Martin may well be capable of adhering to the concept of the limited bolt. The majority will aspire but only a few will in reality achieve these ideals. It was the same from that day in the mid '70s when we first dipped our hands into chalk bags. Things were bound to change out of all control.

The results are already there to be seen. Particularly in Cheddar. There is absolutely no necessity for the bolt and tat ladders that have appeared since this guide landed on the shelves (several on routes previously climbed but not recorded because they were considered too inconsequential!) I am both saddened and annoyed by what I have seen. This guide does nothing to discourage the spread of bolts and *in situ* gear. If anything, its style encourages their diffusion throughout the area.

There! I've said my piece. The routes are here, come and climb them. As to this guide, to quote Drummond (as so many have done before), 'May others come to do the work better'.

Dick Broomhead

The Alpine Journal 1992/1993 Vol.97
The Alpine Club/Hutchinson

Ed. Johanna Merz
Price £17.99

In last year's CC Journal, Geoff Milburn wondered how a woman would do editing the Alpine Journal; 'pretty good, thank you', would be the answer. This year's Journal is the usual compendium of interesting contributions, and the Editor has chosen 'the environment' as the theme; the job of any Journal Editor is a thankless one particularly with so many periodicals drawing on the supplies of potential articles, but Ms. Merz has managed to assemble an impressive list of contributors. It is, perhaps, the variety of articles that makes the Journal rather more readable than most others, stuffed full of barely literate and ultimately boring accounts of members' unremarkable days out. The expected expedition accounts rub cheeks with environmental matters, reminiscences, art and poetry, history and geography. The illustrations are good quality with many in full colour.

Martin Burrows-Smith's extreme skiing piece made my palms sweat, as did Dave Walsh's account of Nanga Parbat, and I am always interested in what Rob Collister and Bill Wright have to say.

My only reservation with the Journal is the price to non-members, but perhaps those interested will be willing to pay.

Andy Newton

The following titles were also received, time and space precluding a full review.

The Mountains of Ireland
Cicerone 1992

by Paddy Dillon
Price £9.99

A summit bagger's guide to the 2,000ft (and over) mountains here. Seventy walks covers the lot! Don't talk about it, get them ticked!

Sarn Helen -
Walking a Roman Road through Wales
Cicerone 1992

John Cantrell and
Arthur Rylance
Price £8.99

Attempts to follow this long forgotten trail from Conwy to Carmarthen. Shorter, circular walks are also included.

The Great Blue Dream -
Inside the Mind of a Mountaineer
Hutchinson 1992

Robert Leonard Reid

Price £12.99

Explores the reasons why we climb, why we risk our lives for a mountain. Deep, but interesting.

Classic Climbs in the Caucasus

Friedrich Bender

Price £14.99

and

Eastern Alps

Dieter Sibert

The Classic Routes on the Highest Peaks

Translated by Jill Neate

Both from Diadem 1992

Price £12.99

Should have been inspirational but there's a question of accuracy about the information. The text, somewhat flowery and sometimes condescending to serious mountaineers, has probably lost a lot in its translation, leaving us with a lack of user confidence.

Mountaineering in Scotland

W.H.Murray

and Undiscovered Scotland

Diadem 1992

Price £9.99

A paperback version of timeless classics, combining two superb books in one. Read it before your trip to the 'Ben' and feel the effect. Wonderful.

Area Notes

North Wales 1992

As always I am faced with the daunting task of trying to summarise a year of new routing in one article; inevitably it is necessary to just pick out the highlights and this generally means hard routes. It is a constant source of amazement to me that so many new routes are climbed in such a well-developed area and that a lot of them are of a very high quality. The most important routes of 1992 were climbed in the mountains during the good spell of weather which dominated the first half of the summer. Up on Glyder Fach George Smith climbed *Glyder Crack* which at E6 6c must be a few grades harder than other routes on this very traditional mountain cliff. As usual Cloggy proved very popular once it had dried out, with hordes of climbers making the walk up every weekend. The most notable new route was an E7 6b, *It'll be Alright on the Night* by Mike 'Twid' Turner up the daunting wall between *Margins of the Mind* and *Psychokiller*. This now makes five E7s on this area of Cloggy! At a more amenable grade Ian Lloyd-Jones added some fine routes to the Far West Buttress.

Moving down to the Pass Adam Wainwright climbed *Trumpet Blowers*, a superb E7 6c on Scimitar Ridge which, as it supports pretty good protection, might become popular. The Cromlech provided me with the two hardest routes climbed in the mountains in 1992. *Nightmayer* takes the wall left of *Lord of the Flies* and will have been admired by all those who have abseiled down the right wall. Like *Indian Face* on Cloggy it only succumbed after a top-rope inspection with the end result being a far more technical but slightly safer climb than *Indian Face*, hence the grade of E8 6c as opposed to E9 6b which *Indian Face* gets. I also climbed the painfully obvious arête above *Cenotaph Corner* to give *Overlord* an excellent but scary E7 6c. *Indian Face* is still awaiting a second ascent although a number of people have now top-roped it and it is only a matter of time before one of these goes for the big lead. Obviously the real challenge is to climb *Indian Face* on sight, a feat that many climbers are technically capable of, but who would have the nerve? Finally, in the Pass Nick Dixon added another of his typically finery and technical routes to the much neglected Bumhole area, *Melodrama* E7 6c.

On the subject of un-repeated Dawes horrors, *The Quarryman*, seven years after its conception, is crying out for a second ascent, as is *Indian Face*. On the same wall as *The Quarryman*, Adam Wainwright climbed *Blockhead*, an old Bob Drury project, at E7 6c. Down in Vivian Quarry, I polished off an old Paul Pritchard project on the Prow, provocatively called *Le Voleur* E6 6c. Also on slate Terry Taylor climbed a number of reportedly excellent bolted routes of between E2 and E4 in the esoteric Friog Blue Lake Quarry on the Dollgellau to Towyn road. A lot more new routing was done on the slate, but as always the quality of a lot of these routes in the quarries is dubious.

Moving swiftly to Gogarth and to possibly the best hard route in the area; *Heinous Flytrap* is a three pitch extravaganza by George Smith and Crispin Waddy in the depths of Wen Zawn, which went at a breathtaking E7 6c, 6c, 6c — a fine effort! Also in Wen Zawn I added a serious direct start to *Conan the Librarian* — named *The Undertaker* E7 6c, as well as freeing the original finish of its single aid point. Twid managed to find two more routes in the South Stack area. *Drunken without Trace* is an E6 up the right-hand side of Castell Helen, which takes an overhanging wall followed by a very intimidating bottomless chimney. He returned again with Ian McNeil to straighten out *The Cow*, on Yellow Wall, producing *The Owl and the Pussycat*, yet another quality E6 on this wall.

Steve Mayers

Pembroke 1992

A remarkably quiet year for Pembrokeshire generally, although this is probably more to do with some of the principal activists looking elsewhere and the continuing emergence of Range West for easy new routing.

Up in North Pembroke Steve Quinton continued his outpourings with two good routes on Carn Porth Llong, *Snakes and Ladders* E3 6a and *Slope on a Rope* E2 5c plus a clutch of more minor routes on some minor crags. Nat Allen also visited and there is life in the old dog yet. Martin Crocker, led somewhat astray by John Harwood, left his customary impact with the powerful *Moonie* E6 6b — a hard classic up the centre of the Asteroid Wall on Craig Llong.

Moving south, Range West continued to draw the attention of the main new route activists during 1992, although many new faces also got into the act. Over 300 new routes were climbed, impressive indeed when one considers the bird nesting restrictions of six months, a less than perfect summer, and a further restriction of only 30 climbers at one time.

The jamboree started in mid-August following a mass briefing by the Army of 300 interested souls. Paul Donnithorne and Emma Alsford led the way in the sprint from the camp gates and stayed there all summer contributing over 20% of the routes!

Making the long march to Linney Head proved productive for Alsford and Donnithorne with the excellent *Rainbow Warriors* E1 5b, reminiscent of *The Arrow*, without the queues and the crowds, returning later for *Cafe Society* E3 5c and many other E2s and E3s. Andy Perkins upped the ante with *Well Hung* E4 6a — a stiff-looking route above some impressive seascape.

Despite some prolonged flying time, i.e. his second fell asleep and he fell a considerable distance, Damian Carroll added one of the crack pitches of Pembroke with *Icarus* E4 5c. The benefits of writing this article save me the embarrassment of naming the dozy so and so. Gareth Lambe and Nicole Matton produced literally dozens of low grade, although not necessarily low quality routes on the rather rambling Bulliber Crag whilst further east Mick Fowler and Frank Ramsey found much more intimidating ground with *X Rated* E3 5c — a route which not unwisely traverses out from under the magnificent overhung wall of Mount Sion Central.

Ray Chappell and John Lincoln developed the small crag of Juggy Point — supposedly the spiritual home of the bucket hold. To quote the description of *Jug City* HVS 5a 'take the hold infested wall... cruise up the overhanging wall on the best collection of jugs... in Pembroke'.

Mount Sion East, a crag which I believe to be a major addition to Pembroke and destined for much popularity, saw the development of the Forty Foot Wall and a number of long overdue repeats. Donnithorne and Alsford again led the way with the *Loneliness of the Long Distance Pocket* E3 6a and *Surge Control* HVS 5a whilst *Trial by Commitment* E1 5a gave Viggers and Bob Watson that classic sea-cliff climbers' dilemma — if it doesn't go, how do we get out of here?

On Greenham Common, *Sesame Street* E5 6a saw an unfortunate lapse of the on-sight ethic with both abseil inspection and pre-placed gear. Predictably Alsford and Donnithorne found a number of routes further east towards The Green Bridge area but pride of place must go to Fowler and Ramsey with *Over 18* HVS 5b — does this mean they are growing up at last?

A highly productive year for Range West and satisfying to see the wholesale embracing of 'local ethic' and a general willingness to climb with a sense of doubt for a change.

In Range East, or Range Normal, Dave Scott-Maxwell and Paul Deardon added a couple of quaintly graded routes — *Madmans Wall* XS 5b and *Rockaway Beach* XS 5b to the Cauldron/ Greenbridge area. You could probably bet on E3 or E4 for either of these!

On the rarely visited and 'better rock than it looks' Thunder Wall, Crispin Waddy and George Smith swung leads on an, as yet unnamed and wild looking, E4 5c that traverses the lip of the sea caves.

The Mewsford area produced the well-aquainted, at least by the first ascensionists, *Underneath the Arches* E1 5a/b from guess who? Alsford and Donnithorne — an 800ft traverse, best left until a few storms have cleaned out the aviary, and *Rainbow* E5 3c.

Down in Hollow Caves Bay, an atmospheric place well worth a visit, Rob Parker and Viggers put up *The Bold and the Old* E3 6a — guess who is who? and some minor routes. Donnithorne and Alsford added *Abacus* E3 5c and *Barrage* E2 5c dragging Viggers along for the ride, who then replied with *Layback in Anger* E2 5c. The pick of the bunch is probably *Great Dane* E4 6a by Donnithorne and Alsford. These two were again active on St Govans East, adding variously *Tidal Race* E2 5b, *The Olympic Blubber Machine* E5 6a and *Seal Outing* E2 5a to the Fifty Foot Wall, whilst Dave Lyon and D Summerfield found *Lotus Europa* E2 5c, on the main crag.

Stackpole East yielded *Look Before you Leap* E3 6a to Crispin Waddy and Donnithorne and *The Whelk* HVS 5b to Tony Sawbridge and Mark Snell at Stackpole Head.

In the Lydstep area at Mother Carey's, Viggers and Donnithorne added *Karma Waters* E1 5b and *Narrow Carriage* E1 5c respectively, above the central caves, whilst Waddy and Geoff Bennett rounded off the tour with *Scud-u-Like* E4 5c at Forbidden Head.

Dave Viggers

I kept telling the Journal Editor there wasn't a lot to write home about the 1992 season. However, the man kept 'phoning me up from all over the world insisting that surely something was done. So, for the record, here it is.

Talk on the Island naturally centred away from the climbing, which produced only 16, with some exceptions, mediocre new routes, one free ascent and one significant repeat. Lundy reached the national headlines with the news of the remarkable survival of two young people adrift in a rubber dinghy. A third perished trying to swim ashore to the South Wales Coast and was found several weeks later out in the Irish Sea. As the small craft drifted south towards Lundy, one of the boys managed to swim ashore through the tidal waves of the north end. Upon reaching the rocks, incredibly, he broke into the lighthouse and telephoned his mum — bless him. His partner was picked up close to death, suffering from dehydration and exhaustion off Landing Craft Bay.

The second snippet of tavern talk was the first-ever sighting in Europe of a rose-coloured starling, normally located during summer months in India and Nepal, or so I was told. This was probably the most significant event of the Island's year and those that were lucky enough to see it, had to do nothing more than sit in the Beer Garden. Talking of which, the Islanders had finally, thank goodness, given up brewing their own 'Puffin Bitter', much to everybody's relief.

So, with my arm behind my back from the Editor, we can proceed to the routes.

Martin and Sue Wilson, two Lundy habitués, started things off at the north end with *Late in the Day* VS opposite Hidden Slab and a little further south in Phantom Zawn they found *Signed and Sealed* VS left of *Ghostbusters*.

Phantom Zawn has become the centre of attention again for the Harrison/Bartley/Cardy team. The best results of which was Mark Bartley's straightening out of *Wonderland Direct* at E4 6a/b producing an excellent wall climb, tried previously by several teams. Just round the corner Paul Harrison and Simon Cardy opened up the Marisco Walls Area with the tough, pure crack climbs: *The Islander* E2 5c, *Compulsion* E4 6a and *Marisco Striptease* HVS 5a. The latter, well I won't go into the tale, but please embarrass Paul by asking him about it when you next see him!

Pete Cobb and Bruce Molyneux found *Island Life* E3 6a between *Death and Weirdness* and *Friction Impossible*, and another route, *Apparition* E1 5b on Winston's Wall. The rock right of *Controlled Burning* on the Torrey Canyon cliff was subject to the recent collapse, taking with it *Rachel* E1 5b. This has been re-climbed by Pete Dewhurst and Dave Worrell and given an utterly tasteless name which denies printing.

Far more impressive, in every sense, was Steve Mayers's repeat of *Wolfbane* E7 6c in Squires View. Whether this climb sees future repeats remains to be seen, given the route's dependence on several non-stainless pegs. Such may also be the fate of many of the other harder routes, such as *The Flying Dutchman* E7 6c. Once the pegs rust in the salt air, suitable placements to re-site pegs may become difficult, and consequently the climbs more serious. Also in this area Simon Cardy removed several dangerous blocks from the left-hand part of the top of Squires View Zawn to open up further development in this section. There is only one new route so far, *Shark's Head Soup* HVS 5a following the sentry box line left of *Good Vibrations*.

Paul Harrison and Mark Bartley squeezed yet more lines out of the back of the Slide. Paul nipped in with *Speed of Light* E1 5c while Mark climbed *Elan* E3 6a taking the roofed area just left of *Redspeed*. A more suitable name of 'Fading Light' was turned down by the first ascensionist, although he did set up the route well after the sun had disappeared below the horizon.

There was very little other activity. A variation start was found to *The Vice*, now E1, thus avoiding the previously aided start. The Dewhurst/Worrell team did something called *Step We Gaily* HVS on the Battery Cliff, which is essentially a direct start to *Valum* and a route was *Salvaged* E2 5c down on the Montague Steps Wall.

And that's about the lot! A quiet year by any Lundy standards.

Simon Cardy

Peak District 1992

Once again, the year started off with promise; the sunny days of May kindled hopes of things to come. However, the good weather did not last and many climbers' aspirations were left unfulfilled. Indeed, several crags in the Peak failed to dry out this year and the month of October brought a premature end to many climbers' plans. Perhaps, this could explain the small number of new routes in the Peak. Could it be that the Peak is worked out, or could it be the attractions of Pen Trywn or Yorkshire? Even the new BMC *Froggatt* guide and the Peak Rockfax failed to promote the usual new route activity associated with guidebooks.

Generally, the Peak limestone crags seem to have been a lot quieter this year, the usual crowds at Chee Tor seem to be dwindling in numbers and some of the buttresses in the same dale received only marginal attention. Only a few years ago, Stoney cafe, the habitual meeting place for many venturing onto the limestone was filled to overflowing with climbers, this year it is often empty even at weekends. Unlike the limestone crags, The Foundry climbing wall in Sheffield has often been full to capacity, and even busy during the summer months when the weather was fine, a sad reflection of the current state of rock climbing. However, the gritstone crags of Stanage, Froggatt, Birchen and The Roaches still remain justifiably popular with the majority of climbers.

On a brighter note, there were a few major achievements in the Peak. Perhaps, the most significant event of the year was the long-awaited first repeat of *Hubble* F8c+ on Raven Tor, by Malcolm Smith, achieved in a relatively short number of attempts. Apparently, he trains on broccoli; I've tried eating the stuff and I can only conclude that I must have bought the wrong variety. *Hubble* is still the hardest bolted climb in Britain, and until recently the world's hardest bolted climb (it has now been superseded by the late Wolfgang Gullich's *Action Direct* F8c+ in the Frankenjura). *Mecca* F8b+ also on Raven Tor has now seen more repeats, including several by Mark Pretty. A little further down the same dale, *Culloden*, F8b also saw repeats by John Welford and Robin Barker.

Of the new routes in the Peak, few have been done which can be described to be routes of quality. Horseshoe Quarry, perhaps the Peak's most popular sport climbing venue has received a few minor additions from Jim Kelly; *The Running Man* F6b climbs direct up to the finish of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and to its left, *Hardcore! You Know the Score* F6b. Neither of these are particularly good routes, but both have proved to be very popular, probably due to the amenable grade and abundance of bolts. Also on the limestone, Chris Rudd has added several new routes to Bend Tor at Matlock. In January, Chris added the excellent *Red Shoes at the Drug Store* F7a to the left-hand side of the crag and a month later he added *Blue Valentine* F7a just to its right. Further right, and just to the right of the bold *Dancing with Mr. D*, Chris also climbed *Prospero's Buoux* F6c which is unfortunately marred by a large loose flake at the start. Right again, Chris led *Bend Aid* E4 6a and *Snails Ate My Lampshade* F6b+. Pete Creswell finished off with *I Should Coco* which seems hard for its grade of F7a. For those who have not visited this crag, Bend Tor now provides a good day's entertainment for the climber who likes clipping bolts.

Chee Dale, which in the last few years provided the lion's share of new routes has provided only a few meagre offerings this year. On the Embankment Seb Grieve left the clean groove line left of *Fishing Without a Licence* to Danny Brooks, who managed the short, powerful and fingery crux to give the excellent *Something Fishy* F7c. Over on Chee Tor, Alan James added a new finish to *Midnight Summer Dream*, called *Midnight at the Oasis* which climbs the wall and roof above the bolt at E6 6b.

Water-cum-Jolly has provided a couple of hard new routes. On Rubicon Wall *Salar* F8a+ by Malcolm Taylor, takes the wall right of *Honeymoon Blues* and on the Cornice, *Albatrossity* F8a+ by Robin Barker (the immense span required to cross one of the roofs provided the inspiration for the name) climbs the steep wall and roofs right of *Rumble in the Jungle*.

Relatively few new routes are put up on High Tor, perhaps as it is not normally seen as a sport climbing crag. However, Simon Lee climbed *Pump Out the Squealies* F7b+ which is essentially a free version of *Moonlight* using bolt protection, and *Wil E Coyote* F7c+ which takes the wall below the traverse of M1 finishing up *Freeway*.

Willersley has received a few additions. Simon Lee added a left-hand finish to *White Riot* called *Whatta Riot* F7b. Len Pearson climbed *Send No Flowers* E5 6a to the right of *Pleasure Dome* (tragically, Len died recently in an abseiling accident in Staffordshire). Not to be outdone, Malcolm Taylor climbed the wall right again to give *Hallowed Be My Name* F7c+.

In Dovedale, Andy Taylor found a couple of new routes to do on Dovedale Church. **No Turning Back**, E5 6b climbs the crack in the wall right of the arch to the right of *Crypt Route* (without resorting to the sneaky rest using the buttress behind the climber) and **Red Rock** E4 6a ascends the red scooped wall and crack left of *Crypt Route*. A few miles away, on Thor's Cave, Andy climbed rightwards from *Doctor Blake* to give **Blakes's Seven** E6 6b.

Over in Cave Dale, Malcolm Taylor, climbed **Southern Accents** F7c+ the line left of *Belial*, but more impressively he climbed **Rage** F8b on Raven Tor. Although this route has relatively little new independent climbing, it is undoubtedly, an excellent and very powerful way up the crag, starting as it does up *Revelations*, and continuing up the line of the original aided version of the *Prow* above the break of *Cream Team Special* to finish at the *Body Machine* stance.

On gritstone, even the most popular crags continue to yield new routes. Robin Barker, proved that he is not just a sport climber by soloing **Shine On** E7 6c a direct line through the roofs of *BAWS Crawl*, and by climbing **Unfamiliar** E7 6c which takes the arête of the pinnacle upon which *Walking the Whippet* lies. Meanwhile on the same crag, Andy Barker (no relation), climbed the wall left of *The Mangler* using pebbles to give **Scapa Flow** E6 6c. A new route with a difference was provided by the intrepid Ron Fawcett when he traversed the whole of Stanage in a day, walking between buttresses when forced to by lack of rock. A real test of stamina which, although slightly contrived, would provide a fun day out and aching feet.

Andy Barker was also active on Black Rocks, when in the company of Paul Mitchell and Martin Veale added **Lady Killer Peake** E3 6a five metres to the left of *Stonnis Crack*. Further south, down in the Whatstandwell quarries, Ian Parsons added an independent finish to *Upping the Ante* at E5 6b.

The intrepid Andy Cave proved that it was possible to climb on the high crags this year. On Shining Clough Andy climbed the excellent looking **Bloodrush** E6 6b up the front face of the *Rainbow Flake* and on the same crag he climbed the left arête of *Satyr* on its right-hand side to give **Rock Steady** E4 5c. Up on Kinder, on the Chinese Wall, Andy added **Changed by Books** E3 5c, **Born of Frustration** E3 6a, **Neurosis and Occasions** E2 5c. However, it was Andy Popp who climbed Kinder's hardest route; **Sons of the Desert** E7 6b which takes the true arête of *Arabia* on Crowden Clough Face. On Nether Tor, Al Stevenson climbed the arête just right of *Edale Bobby*, making **Roll with Punches** E4 6b.

Also on the high crags, this time Wimberry, Steven and Michael Delderfield squeezed in a few more routes; **The Bad Attitude Brothers** E3 6a moves left out of *Coffin Crack* around the arête and up the scoop and slab above, **Chockstone** E5 6b takes the slab right of *Squirmer's Chimney* (avoiding either arête) and **The Quiver** E3 5b which takes the arête just right of *Squirmer's Chimney*. Continuing westwards, Hobson Moor Quarry has recently seen a spate of new route activity, perhaps the best of which is **Fingertip Control** E5 6b by Nadim Siddiqui.

Down in the south, Staffordshire gritstone continues to provide hard routes. On the Lower Tier of the Roaches, Julian Lines climbed the desperate slab left of *Peace of Mind* to give **Obsession Fatale** E8 6c and on Hen Cloud Neil Travers climbed **A Flabby Crack** E6 6c which takes the crackline left of *Stone Loach*..

As the year draws to a close, we learn that Dale Quarry in Wirksworth is being slowly filled in by the quarry owners. This is a great pity, as it will cause the demise of Seb Grieve's excellent *Handy Wallhole* and the routes recently added by Geoff Hornby.

Geoff Radcliffe

