

The
Climbers' Club
Journal

1993

The Climbers' Club Journal

Edited by
Smiler Cuthbertson

1994
The Climbers' Club

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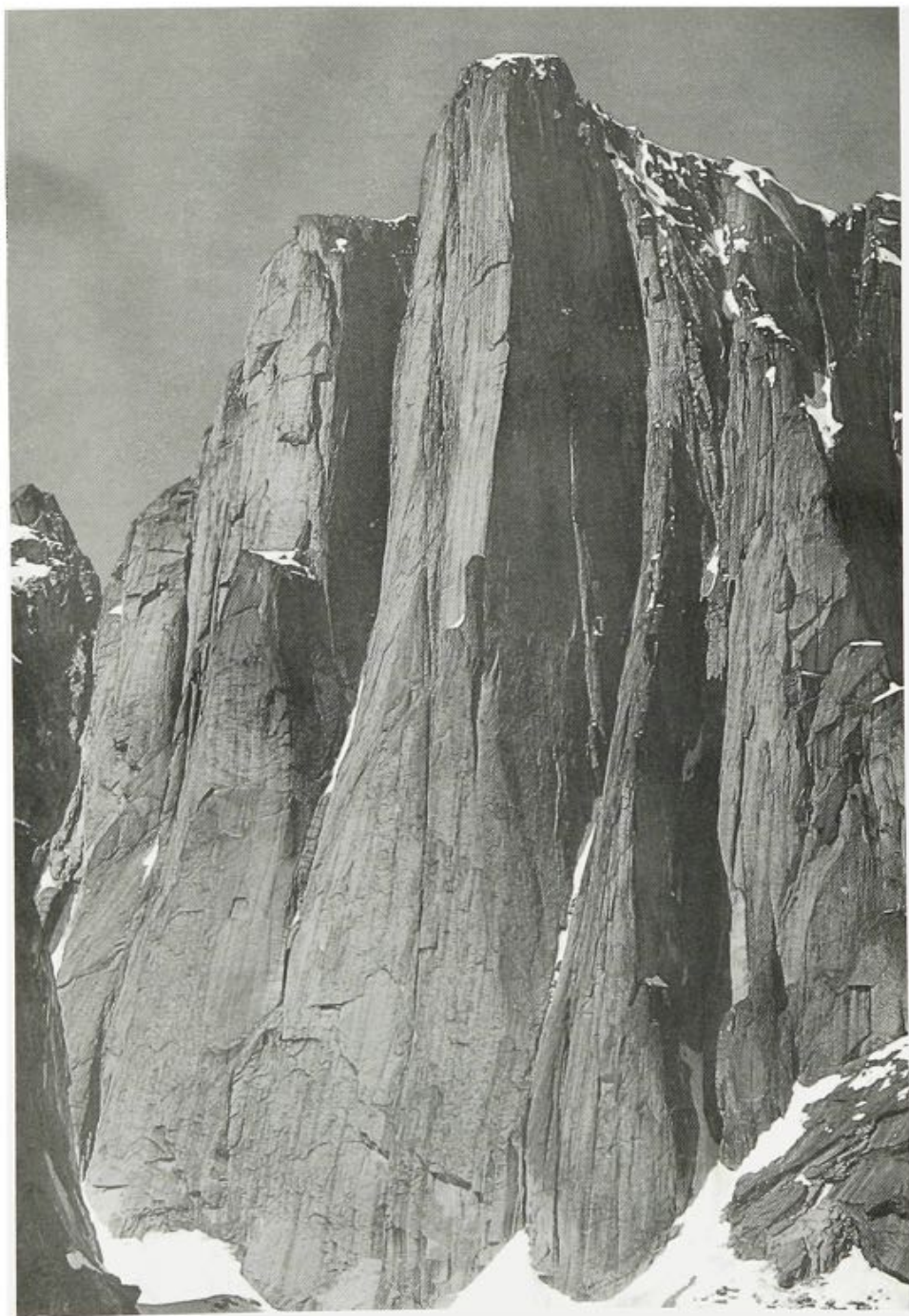
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Lotus Flower Tower. Photo: D.J. Cuthbertson

EDITORIAL

I don't need this. I now have to be brave and admit it.

Zanskar. I was once more clinging to life on a storm-bound Himalayan giant. On the unclimbed face for only one long day, but already the vibes were stinging my mind like the spindrift in my face. I wanted out. Bevis's frost-bitten finger assisted my decision. We abseiled off.

Years and years of trips, journeying to all parts of the globe. Searching for excitement, new routes, big climbs, even fame, never fortune. The macho instinct never very far away, clinging to reputations never very important to anyone else but yourself. Desperate situations quickly forgotten in the warmth of the bar, and new trips planned while the last dregs of the amber nectar, the confidence booster, slid smoothly down the throat. Yes, it all seems so easy on the night, but in the cold light of day, or worse still, in the grey light of that murky dawn, when it's all go at the bergshrund, it's suddenly clear to you, it's not quite all go. Those chilling words spin round your mind like a creeping paralysar...

I don't really need this, do I?

No-one I know, who used to climb serious routes, and nowadays is happy to tag along on the less arduous adventures, could really say they were the first to feel the pinch. Heroes have come and gone like confetti in the wind. But when it's yourself involved, you have a choice. Either delude yourself that this trip or this especially serious climb has all the potential of a disaster, bad conditions, terrible weather, the wrong partner(s), bad planning etc.etc. Or face up to the harsh fact that you no longer have the same drive.

I recently read a book which, in one part, tells of a team member who, having only reached a low height on a particularly serious mountain, has to pluck up the courage to admit to his partners he has to go down. I know how he felt.

I'm one of those climbers who cut their teeth in the mid '60s. Of those still active after all these years, the number steadily dwindles. It doesn't surprise me. Household chores, the kids, demands at work, a multitude of excuses for calling off a trip or holding back your interest in a particularly enticing expedition plan.

I recognised the symptoms a while ago. As a guide, I spend hours on the lower standard routes, and I now seem to enjoy these climbs as much as I used to enjoy being 'out there' on a big ice pitch or a snowy bivy high on the Dru. Nowadays my personal ambitions seem to sway on the side of rock climbs. Up to this moment in time, I'm still fortunately able to muster up enthusiasm for a big wall here and there. I don't, however, still have the same goals.

Maybe it's the nature of things. Maybe I'm just getting old. Fortunately, I have a good circle of similar-minded friends. They also don't really have anything to prove anymore.

So I can visualise a long period of good climbing ahead of me. I'll survive the kids, get them off to university, pay off the mortgage and there'll be a return to the commitment of real climbing, not necessarily hard stuff, but that which has kept me going for all these years. And I'll bet I'm not alone.

Smiler

Southern Comfort

Ian (Foxy) Cartledge

Family holidays can be difficult beasts! Just how does one satisfy the needs and demands of all family members without being accused of selfishness and self interest?

In one visit, the four of us had visited California and the West. Vegas, Reno and the coast balanced perfectly a fabulous fortnight's climbing at Tuolumne Meadows. The following year was to be a return visit to the States, but, new experiences being sought, once again I was landed with the problem of balancing climbing against the diverse wishes of the non-climbers.

The non-climbers wanted, among other things, country music/ Nashville/ Elvis/ Memphis/ Cajun food and music/ Louisiana/ and New Orleans - not exactly climbing areas. However, a search in Grant Jarvis's shop in Matlock, produced a guidebook - **Southern Rock**, which describes climbing areas in the south eastern States. Using that guide as a bible it is possible to plan a route which incorporated visiting a range of crags yet at the same time gradually led us to the focal points for the non-climbers. Thus we flew into Tampa, hired a 3.5 litre Oldsmobile Sierra Cutlass and headed for Yonah Mountain in Georgia.

Yonah Mountain, Georgia's foremost climbing area, is situated some 70-80 miles north-east of Allenton. As one drives up the highway GA75 north from Cleveland to Helen, the crag can be seen high up on the right. Take a good look at it. It is the last time you see it until your nose is virtually on the rock! Some 3.5 miles from Cleveland, just past the private campground, a dirt road disappears up into a forest. It is steep and tight but negotiable by most vehicles. I'm not sure, however, that Alamo would have been overjoyed to have seen where their vehicle was being taken.

The track ends in the flatish area some three miles up the mountainside. Camping is allowed here but there are no facilities - no water or toilets. It is a peaceful and beautiful location but with a cooler box full of Bud, one can survive for two or three days. One word of warning! Cleveland is 'dry'. You need to stock up in Helen. When I tried to buy beer in Cleveland I was told by the local store keeper that if I wished to discover where beer could be bought I should watch for and follow the daily convoy of preachers heading for Helen.

The crag is a four minute walk from the campsite. Sections of it have been taken over by the US army as a training ground. Ten routes have been extensively bolted and because they are maintained by the army, the bolts are first-class. The routes are about 150ft long and are graded from (US) 5.2 - 5.6. During the evening that we arrived at the crag, Seth and I soloed most of these routes, enjoying the unbelievable friction provided by the warm granite. Descent was by a steel cable bolted to the crag.

The following morning we warmed up on *Dihedral* (5.6). The initial right-facing corner was climbed easily by semi-layback; a steep crack on the second pitch was initially a little balancy but two large pockets, one housing a snake skin, saw an end to that difficulty. We felt that the meat of the route was a variation finish up a thin, protectionless rib (5.7) to the left of the belay. This rib gave a hint of what

was to come. Because of the ease with which we climbed *Dihedral*, we decided to try some of the higher grade routes to the right of the army routes. I selected *Stairway to Heaven* 150ft, one runout, 5.8, and Seth, *Limited Edition* - 150ft, 5.8. On the basis of our experiences at Tuolomne Meadows the previous year and through reading Pete Livesey's book we assumed 5.8 to be the equivalent of gritstone grade HVS, 5a, i.e. 5.6 - VS 4b; 5.7 - VS 4c; 5.8 - HVS 5a. However, this grade interpretation turned out to be slightly awry!

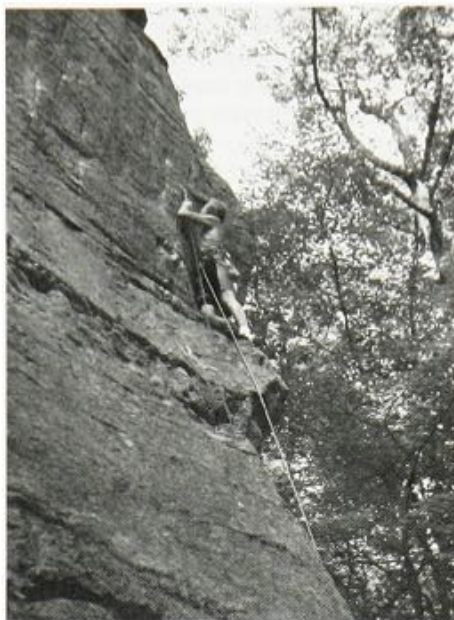
Seth began *Limited Edition* climbing steeply up a narrow right-trending ramp. It was steady HVS climbing on small holds. Protection was sparse, only one small nut in the 60ft that led to the first bolt. That was the only HVS climbing on the route. The moves to the next bolt, 30 feet higher, were thin, precarious and strenuous. It was a somewhat subdued Seth who fumbled successfully to clip a second bolt. When I climbed this section it was only the rope vibrating at top C that got me up it. That sequence of moves was certainly harder than any of the routes we recently climbed on grit - *Great Slab* of Froggatt included. We felt that the technical grade was 5c. Above the second bolt the difficulties relented somewhat - back to 5b, but the seriousness of the pitch did not. It was certainly one of the most sustained pitches that I've climbed and one of Seth's best leads.

Following *Limited Edition*, I made a variety of excuses why I shouldn't lead *Stairway to Heaven*. Too hot, sore feet, elbow playing up, too late - any excuse in the book and I produced it. Seth took the hint, tied on and set off once again. The start was, once again, deceptively easy, a bolt at 30ft being the first objective. Above the bolt the rock steepened, the holds became more sparse and the climbing demanding. The 30ft of climbing to the next bolt had no additional protection and was circa 5c. The final section of the route involved delicate slab climbing, a precarious mantle and a pull over an overlap on good holds to the security of a double bolt belay. This latter section was 5b and bold. Once again it was a long sustained pitch which we felt belied its 5.8 grading.

It was whilst climbing this route that we learned one important lesson. From the top stance Seth gave a shout:

"Below".

Glancing up I saw what at first I thought to be a rogue satellite returning to Earth, but what turned out to be a cantaloupe melon the size of a large football plummeting down the cliff. It narrowly missed two lads climbing a route parallel to ours and exploded on the track at the bottom of the cliff. The lesson? When climbing on crags which have as summit accessible to the public, wear a helmet!



'Living in a crossfire', 5.11, Bee Rock

We rounded off the day by soloing the routes on the 'friction slabs' at the left-hand end of the crag, graded 5.4–5.7. Our verdict? The crag does not offer sufficient for a long stay, but if passing, the beautiful setting, the unique camping and the quality routes make it well worth visiting.

Table Rock in North Carolina was our next target. We knew nothing about the mountain apart from the information contained in **Southern Rock**. The crag is situated near Morganton in the northern section of the Pisgah National Forest and is part of the Linville Gorge Wilderness area. Like Yonah, the approach to the crag is via a steep dirt road—13 miles of it enveloped by thick forest. All the hairpins, hundreds of them, are blind and although the road is only lightly used there is a real danger on the ascent of meeting vehicles rapidly descending the track. I am still not quite sure how we avoided head-ons during our three ascents of that road. The crag? Its position is unique. From the routes, the views over hundreds of square miles of unbroken forest are spectacular.

The routes took some sorting out, mainly because the view of the crag was partly obscured by the dense undergrowth. After slipping and sliding in decaying vegetation for the best part of an hour, we finally spotted a line of bolts trending upwards and followed them. Technically the route was straightforward and the protection good. The grade? About HS. The first pitch ascended a steep wall which led to a ledge with a tree belay. The beauty of this pitch was that it took one out of dank undergrowth and lifted one above the tree tops. The long second pitch, circa 150ft, ascended the wall above via a ramp and a steep corner to another comfortable belay ledge. The holds were good and the protection, bolts. Quick draws and a belay sling were the only gear required. Easy slabs above took us to what we assumed to be the Lunch Ledge, from where another bolted corner led to the top of the crag.

A study of a guidebook led us to believe that the route to the Lunch Ledge was *Jim Dandy* (5.5), and the corner above, *My Route* (5.6).

Table Rock overlooks the Linville Gorge which contains some of the longest and supposedly best routes in the area. The guidebook stated that a day permit is required to climb in the Gorge but we found nowhere to obtain one. With our trusty guidebook to hand we plunged into the undergrowth along the rim of the gorge to attempt to locate the amphitheatre where a classic route, *The Mummy*, is to be found. The guidebook told us to look for a tree with —> marked on it. This sign would indicate the path leading to the amphitheatre. Well, we fumed and cursed our way around the hillside seeking the dreaded arrow but we never found it. It was entirely by accident that we stumbled across the amphitheatre. The problem then was that one has to descend the amphitheatre by a steep gully to get to the bottom of the Mummy Buttress. On completing the route it would appear that, one had to undergrowth bash to get back to the rim path. Because of the lack of time we thought, 'stuff it' and instead decided to try a tempting line on the nearby amphitheatre headwall. The guidebook describes no routes on this magnificent 300ft sweep of rock, broken by a ledge at one-third height. An obvious steep crack in the centre of the face led to the ledge from where a whole range of possibilities presented themselves.

Seth climbed the crack to the ledge. Steep climbing on good holds with little vegetation and loose rock persuaded us that we certainly were not the first to climb the crack. Similarly, because of the possibilities above, we were pretty sure

that the wall had been climbed too. However, there were no signs of bolts. We attempted the line of a flake, a prominent weakness in the upper wall that could be reached from the left-hand side of the ledge. The climbing was excellent, circa HVS, on good rock; but after completing a further pitch the heavens opened and the rains came down; we abseiled off.

Table Rock and The Linville Gorge is a fascinating climbing area, somewhat remote and isolated. The main problems were firstly, relating the guidebook to the crags and secondly, as one left the Table area and descended into the Gorge, forging through the undergrowth and actually finding the buttresses. Familiarisation, however, would remove many of these frustrations.

Incidentally, the times for the dirt road? 50 minutes up and 30 minutes down!

Viewing things retrospectively, Stone Mountain, the next climbing area visited, was certainly a class above all the other crags visited on the trip. Stone Mountain State Park is located on the eastern edge of the Blue Ridge escarpment in north-west Carolina. It is 17 miles north-east of Wellesboro and nine miles from Elkin. Stone Mountain is a fabulous 600ft granite dome. The rock is sound and compact, with natural protection on a majority of routes, scarce. Bolts should be in place to provide a minimal level of protection, but the guidebook was widely inaccurate in terms of the location of bolts on routes. 150ft run-outs are common and to find a bolt-hanger missing, say, at 75ft, can be an alarming experience. American climbers confirmed that the information regarding bolts given in **Southern Rock** should be viewed with suspicion.

The slab climbing was very similar to that experienced on the Tuolomne domes the previous year. Somebody writing about the route *Eunoch* on the Stately Pleasure Dome said: 'Don't believe your eyes, trust your feet'. That statement is very appropriate for the climbing at Stone Mountain.

Before I talk about the climbing, some general advice:

1. Don't camp within the park! It's like a prison camp! It's a 'dry' area with the consumption of alcohol within the park confines almost a hanging offence! We saw one climber's vehicle being searched for beer, after he had been informed on by a member of the public. The park gates are also locked at 9pm. If you are out at that time, out you stay! No! The place to stay is a wild, primitive campsite situated behind the Stone Mountain cafe, some two miles from the park gates. See the owner of the cafe: he will fix you up with a range of non-chargeable extras! Moonshine, musicians, fuel for your fire, anything! He is a fabulous guy who will do anything to make your stay enjoyable. Mind, if you are TT, stay in the park. Incidentally, the guy also sells climbing gear. Rope, quick draws, krabs, chalk he's got it.

2. I believe one needs to purchase a climbing permit to climb at Stone Mountain. We didn't see anywhere to buy one and no-one asked us if we had one. Similarly, one has to record details of any route one is going to attempt and leave the information in a collecting box. All the climbers at Stone Mountain followed this procedure.

3. Because of the difficulty in finding the descent marks from the summit of the dome, it is a good idea to walk up the descent path and familiarise oneself with its location. We failed to do this, with the result that, in fading light and damp conditions we fouled up the descent, dropping into horrendous undergrowth and finally crawling onto the road, some three miles from the car, looking as if we'd

been pulled through a thorn hedge backwards. My tights were irreparably laddered.

Anyway, the routes! We did three, each one a classic.

The first was *The Great Arch* 5.6, a curving crack line in a right-facing corner in the centre of the south face. The first pitch to the tree ledge from which the crack takes off, is common to several routes. Technically only about HS, the bottom 30ft are frequently tricky because of dampness encouraged by the luxuriant undergrowth. The crack from the tree ledge is laybacked - 250ft of it. There is a bolt belay at 130ft. Friend placements provide good protection and as long as one keeps moving, the slab is relatively straightforward. Left foot in the crack, right on the slab, right hand in the crack, left hand on the edge of the corner - non-stop movement which became almost mesmeric.

From the top of the crack, one has 160ft of VS protectionless slab climbing to a tree belay. The climbing is straightforward and the position superb; a fitting end to a classic route.

Our second route, *No Alternative* 5.7, began from the right-hand end of the tree ledge of *The Great Arch*. The first true pitch was a mirror image of the parallel pitch of *The Great Arch*, layback, semi-layback, up the opposing leg of the arch. The friction was excellent and the holds in the corner good. The main problem was the length of the run-out - 150ft, rope drag causing more difficulties as one neared an ample ledge. It goes without saying that 50m ropes are de rigueur at Stone Mountain. Bolt belays are usually a full run-out apart. Anything less than 50m could easily land oneself in the mire. We climbed on double 50m 9mm ropes and found that combination more than satisfactory.

It is the second pitch from which the route derives its name. From the stance, the only escape is up an apparently bald convex slab. The first protection was a bolt at 60ft. It was quite intimidating to launch off up the slab aiming for the bolt, the climbing being pure friction. I cannot remember one hold on that pitch which could be called a jug, finger or otherwise, apart from the bolt and I didn't put my fingers through that - honest! The secret seemed to be careful use of the feet and continuous movement. Looking for ripples took one's mind off the exposure. We thought this pitch was HVS 4c. From the bolt belay the slab angle eased but there was still 150ft of VS climbing before one could reach the first secure anchor. It was an excellent route, the enjoyment increasing with one's confidence.

Between *The Great Arch* and *No Alternative* was 450ft of slab, the only feature on it being a shallow overlap at about 200ft. This was the line of *Yardarm* 5.8. Seth had eyed the route from both our previous excursions and stated confidently that he'd like to try it. Although from the tree ledge we couldn't see bolts on the route, the guidebook stated that there was both bolt and peg protection available.

There was a bolt at 50ft on the first pitch but after that there was nothing until one reached a bolted stance atop a small flake. Confidence was the name of the game again. Things nearly came unstuck on the second pitch. Remember I mentioned an overlap at 200ft. Well, the guidebook said that there was a peg runner under it. When, after a series of hard moves Seth reached the overlap he found the peg missing. Slightly alarmed he shouted down to ask where the next gear was. The guidebook mentioned 'nail heads' up and to his left. I hardly dared watch as he set off climbing again on apparently nothing. The outcome of a slip would have been.....I daren't think about it even now.

The drama continued. Seth could find no nail heads. He now had 100ft plus of rope out with no gear. From his anxious shouted questions I could tell the situation was getting to him. His only option was up! Reversing was out of the question. He pressed on running 140ft of rope out before he reached the belay. The only gear he had on was an optimistic micro nut tucked behind a small flake. We felt the climbing was E2 5a/b. Not so hard? Try it! I'll guarantee you a case of twittering ring!

As on the previous routes the final pitch was 150ft of VS slab padding - a pleasant end to a demanding route.

Beyond the trees at the bottom of the crag is a meadow crossed by a public footpath. The acoustics of the area are such that a whisper on the crag can be heard quite clearly in the meadow and the applause and cheers from onlookers can be heard on the crag. It all adds to the sense of theatre!

There are crags similar to Stone Mountain scattered around North Carolina. From all accounts Looking Glass Rock should not be missed. It would appear that the routes are of high quality on excellent rock.

Nashville and Memphis were viewed as 'musts' by the non-climbing members of the party. Seth and I didn't object because we realised that there were climbing areas on the Cumberland Plateau just off the freeway between Knoxville and Nashville. The Cookeville/Monterey junction is the get-off point.

The rock on the plateau is exclusively sandstone and, on the crags we climbed, of surprisingly good quality. Not the soft stuff one finds at Harrisons but more akin to gritstone. Certainly Bee Rock was very gritstone with rounded weathered holds, but Hidden Rock, a newer sandstone, showed less signs of weathering and features more square-cut cracks and incut holds.

The whole area is very much 'wilderness'. There was a campground quite close to Bee Rock but this has now been abandoned and is rapidly returning to its original forest state. Oddly, attached to a pole in a patch of dense undergrowth, was a telephone. I can tell you, making a telephone call in the middle of a forest had more than a hint of surrealism!

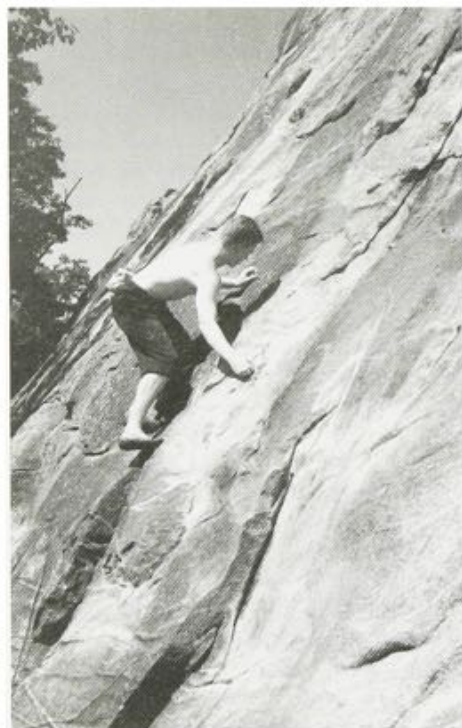
The crags appeared like islands in the sea of forest. It seemed to us that the whole area was a menagerie. Snakes of various hues sun-bathed in clear places at the foot of the crags, spiders the size of sparrows seemed to inhabit every crack and hornets and bees were forever buzzing angrily around. It was some place!

We climbed two routes at Bee Rock. Firstly a three-star classic - *Three Teeth* 5.6 - about VS 4b. It was a fabulous route following a line of 'dihedrals' and wide cracks to an overhanging finish on buckets. It fully deserved its three-star rating.

We moved onto *Living in a Crossfire*, a two-star 5.11. Encouraged by the sight of a line of bolts and its resemblance to a gritstone arête, I gave it a go. The first 50ft to a small ledge was straightforward and well protected. Above the ledge was the crux, a series of layback moves on the rounded edge of the arête. Seth says I frigged it - well, maybe a bit - but it was still an excellent route, well worth doing.

Hidden Rock lived up to its name. It took several abortive forages into the forest before we found it. And of course, as soon as we began to plough through the trees, out came the insects. If it could fly, bite and sting, it lived in that forest. Insect repellent is a must if one visits the crag in summer.

There was a hint of eeriness about Hidden Rock. Apart from the sibilation of insect and the occasional bird song, it was very quiet. At the bottom of the crag



The Friction Slab - Yonah Mountain, Georgia. Photo: Ian Cartledge Collection

one was in the half-light, the trees acting as an effective sun screen. Only when one climbed above the trees and into the sunlight could one rid oneself of the feeling of claustrophobia.

We identified and climbed two routes at Hidden Rock; *Walk On The Mild Side* 5.7 and three stars, is described in the guidebook as 'one of the finest moderate routes on the plateau'. The first pitch ascended a steep wall via flakes and left-facing corners to an ample ledge capped by a huge overhang. Surmounting the overhang in spectacular style with ample holds, was the crux.

Close by, *Ironic Roof* 5.7 and three stars, started in a right-facing corner which had to be laybacked. Seth somewhat reluctantly began the pitch, warily brushing aside the mass of cobwebs that filled the crack. I never knew, until Ironic, that Seth is arachnophobic but I do now. One tentative insertion of his fingers disturbed a spider the size of a dustbin lid and before I could blink, he was back on the ground, cursing and swearing. There was nothing else for it.

Seth might be able to out-climb me but I can still score him out when one's machoism is challenged. Tying on, I launched myself up the crack pausing only briefly to direct a globule of Bud-flavoured spit at the head of the spider. I belayed under yet another roof. Seth led up the flank of the overhang but then had to scramble up a vegetation-filled groove to reach the top. That groove brought an early end to the day's proceedings.

Arriving back at the car we found that the non-climbers had had an eventful day. Adam particularly was in the bad books. He'd failed to remove a hornet sting from his mother's backside. We heard that the actual stinging event gave rise to a highly original dance. Adam said it was the dance that prevented him from getting his teeth round the sting! Ah well.....

That was the end of the climbing. We did potter around on some crags bordering the Buffalo river in Arkansas and I believe there are some worthwhile crags in that area, but we had no guidebook and, after the Tennessee experience, no real wish to go forest bashing again. Instead we potted down the Mississippi valley, dodging the swarms of mosquitoes and wishing all the time that we'd remained on the crags in North Carolina.

North Face Bagging

Alison Hargreaves

Mid June '93, and finally a promising forecast from the meteo man in Chamonix. Leaving the sunny woods of Les Bois, I shouldered my 'sack and pounded up to the cooler air of Montenvers. Descending the ladders to the jumble on the edge of the Mer de Glace, I exchanged my trainers for mountain boots and carefully tucked my Reeboks under a boulder for the return.

By early afternoon I was happily ensconced at the Leschaux Hut, when the peace was shattered by two young French guides. They were nervously excited as they announced their intended route of the 'morrow, but their pride soon disappeared as they asked me my intentions.

Early morning and they were on their way. Assuming that, as a solo climber, I would be able to move much faster, I rolled over and curled up, back to sleep. But it wasn't long before I was tracing my way up the glacier and was soon at the bergschrund below the face. 7 o'clock in the morning, and here I am, all alone at the foot of the North Face of the Grandes Jorasses. The night is turning into day and it's time to go. And I did, all the way to near the summit ridge, when I caught up with the French guides.

Late June saw the family and me back again in the luxurious sparkling streets of Zermatt. I had already passed through almost three weeks before, but conditions on the Matterhorn were appalling and I was back on the main street less than 24 hours after starting. Now I was back at the Hornli Hut. For my third time, I had been at the hut over the weekend, but this time the weather was not to play ball, but now after a brief night in the valley with the sprogs, I felt rejuvenated and confident. 4am, and it was getting light, but tell-tale clouds were starting to appear. I knew that bad weather was eventually forecast after a brief window, but surely at least I'd have time to get this one in the bag... It was warming up already, the bergschrund was soft, I nervously clambered across on all fours. Now the best bit, the climb.

Mid morning. I reached the summit, but no splendid views today. It was warm and cloudy and I contented myself with a couple of photos, and, hearing the rumbles of thunder creeping in from the south, and seeing flashes of lightning, I decided it was better to motor on down. Drenched and statically charged, I finally arrived back at the Hornli Hut, to be greeted warmly by a team of Slovak climbers.

So, number two was in the bag, but I had hoped to climb four more north faces yet. There was no resting on my laurels yet, it was off to sunny Grindlewald.

But the Oberland was to offer no better weather than the rest of the Alps this summer. The campsites were like paddyfields and the tourists like drowned rats. A bizarre dump of low snow in July meant that slotting in between the bad weather lows and taking advantage of occasional clear and cold nights, some odd ice routes were able to be climbed. This freak weather gave rise to my idea of a new line on the North (*Lauper*) Face of the Eiger and I hoped that after all the fresh snow, if there was a night which froze, it would be possible. By moving quickly, to follow a direct line straight up all the way on snow/ice and mixed ground.

I had little chance to check my theory, as, after all the snow, the Eiger stayed shrouded in cloud for some days, as the weather started to warm up a little. Then a brief stroke of luck, the meteo promised one good day of sunshine after a cold, clear night, before storms once more rolled in... This was my chance. The same afternoon I packed my 'sack and walked up to the grassy alpine meadows above Alpighlen. The clouds were still floating around and I was not going to see the face, but as the afternoon turned into dusk, I wondered if the cold and clear night would ever materialise so that I could try my route. As the skies went pink, the temperature started to fall, and with it the clouds. As they started to thin I could briefly see just how much snow there was. As the stars appeared I dropped into a deep and relaxed sleep.

The morning dawned crystal clear, but I knew it was not to last, so, as soon as the light of day appeared, I made upward progress. Climbing directly up the Hoeniss icefield, I had hoped to climb directly through its neck, but the night had not been cold enough to freeze the huge torrent of water and so I made a precarious traverse slightly right on mixed ground, and then traversed back in above the waterfall.

Straight above me I could see a fine column of ice, but as huge chunks kept dropping off, I steered a line to the left and then straight up the gully line behind. The climbing was very precarious. Piles of fresh snow on underlying rock. It all felt very unstable, but I was making progress. Before long I could see the narrows above me, and aiming for the line of weakness directly through, I was soon onto the huge hanging ice shield. The ice was now near-perfect, but so was the position, a sweeping line dropping straight down to the valley floor, thousands of feet below. The line I was taking was a moon-shaped route and now I was traversing as well as going up. The steep gully line to exit off the icefield lay directly above. Just to the right. I just had to keep moving and I would eventually be there. The gully proved awkward. It was all very unconsolidated and very hard to get any positive placements for ice tools or for my crampons. By now I was tired. I did not have the energy to thrash wildly. I just had to calmly persevere. Eventually something would hold and I would be able to inch my way up... finally the ridge leading to the top of the Mittelegi and the summit ridge, so I finally got there. It had seemed an eternity, but it was only lunch time, and with hot sun on huge cornices there was no time to sit around. I had to head straight on down.

Returning to Chamonix, my eyes turned to the Dru, but it was still raining on and off and with the idea of miserable icy cracks, we headed to the peacefulness of southern Switzerland and Bondo. Two days later, and I was bouncing across the glacial moraine from a camp above the Sciora Hut and bound enthusiastically for the North Ridge of the Badile. Exchanging shorts for fleece tights, and boots for rockshoes, I stashed away a load of gear and, bidding farewells to some friends I had run into, headed down across the ramps leading to the north face. There were already many parties on the face, having started early after bivouacs near the route. But they were way above, and it was time for me to study the guidebook. The climbing was great and was only marred slightly by the low, damp cloud that dropped as I appeared at the summit.

One week later, and I was on the Dru. The start had been loose and unpleasant, but now the rock was good and I could start to enjoy the climbing, or could I? I

arrived at the hideous man-eating chimney below the Lambert Crack, and I knew it would be awkward with my big 'sack on. So, off it came. Leaving it carefully on the ledge, I tied it to one end of my abseil rope and then, after climbing the chimney, I pulled it up behind me. Choosing to get jammed in the 'letterbox' and then follow the line of the *Martinetti*, I was soon motoring again, and spent an entertaining descent in the company of the hordes of climbers descending off the *Bonatti Pillar* etc. All hopes of a pleasant relaxing night at the hut were shattered as I arrived to find it bursting at the seams and spent one shivery night sprawled out under the stars and a thin blanket.

Five down and one to go. We were off to the Dolomites, an area I had read and seen so much about, yet never experienced at first hand. I was bubbling. I walked around to take a look at the North Face of the Tre Cima, and wished I hadn't! But the commitment was already there, this was where the route I wanted to climb was, and I would climb it...

The Dolomites were quiet. The unsettled weather was keeping folks away. Apart from the tourists on the paths, the mountains were peaceful. As I approached the Grande however, a team of three appeared from nowhere and started to follow me across towards the face. Unhappy about folks on my tail, I deliberated whether to let them pass and then have the inconvenience of waiting for them up ahead, but as I arrived at the start, they carried on. They were bound for the Ovest and I would have my route and face to myself.

I scrambled up the first loose pillar and started to put myself into mental gear. I had intended to climb with my abseil rope alpine coiled around my back, but as I contemplated the first steep pitches, I changed my mind and coiled it onto the ledge and decided to drag it behind. This way, should I need to back rope, I would already be prepared. Mainly, I would feel less bound up. On the first few pitches I felt tense, but the climbing was going well, and before long I was able to lose the tenseness and move much more fluently. Feeling much more confident now.

As was usual, the weather turned for the worse before I had time to finish climbing. I enjoyed the delightfully spectacular traverse just as it started to rain, and arriving at the south side, I was greeted with strong wind and driving rain. A pleasure which I was able to appreciate all the way back down to the car park at the Auronzo Hut.

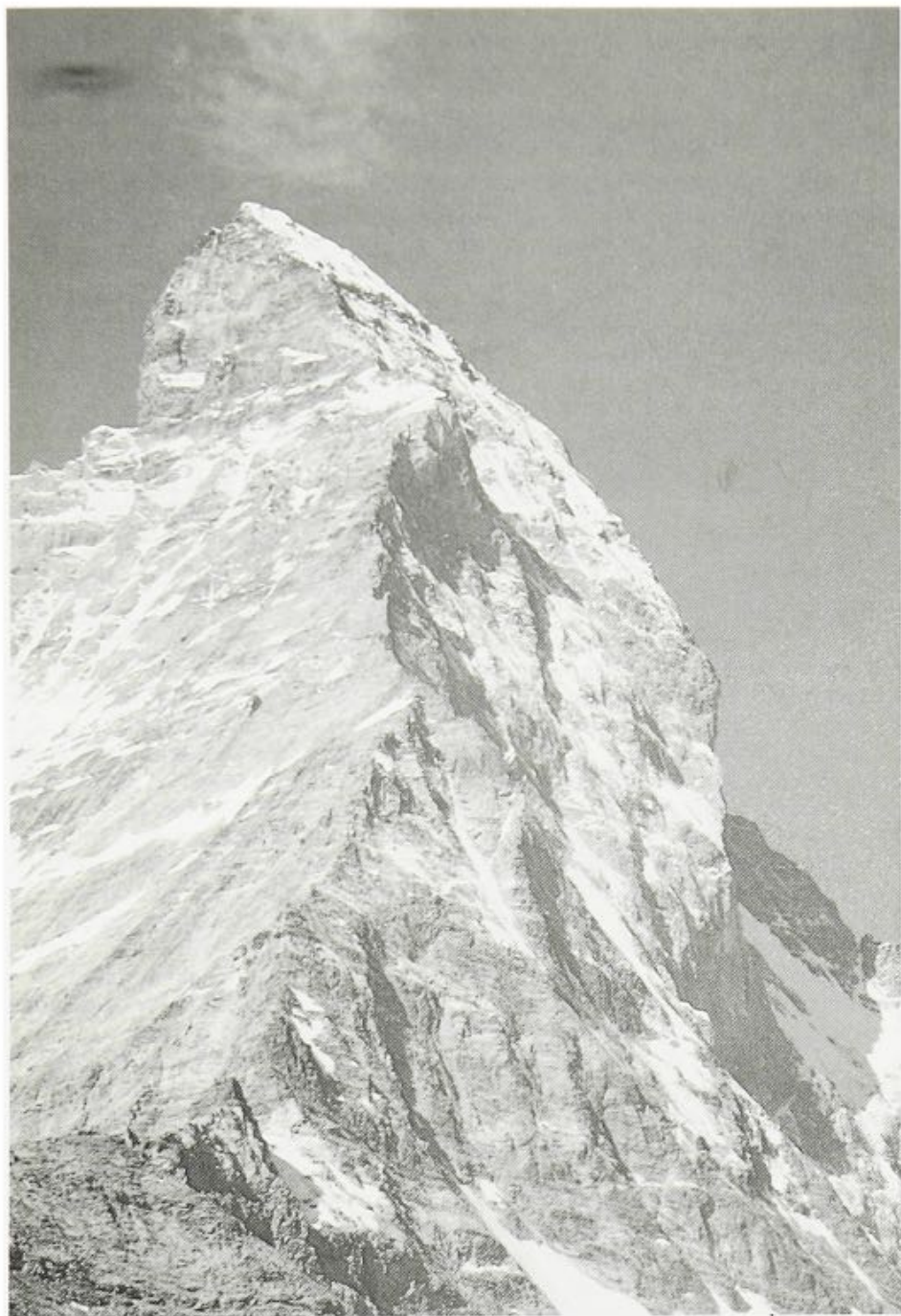
So I'd done my six, managed a climb on each of the big north faces, surely I could now relax and reminisce, or could I? It was November, I had almost finished the book *A Hard Day's Summer*, and we were still in Chamonix. The big storm after the *Comici* had turned to snow, and throughout the Alps everything was coated in an early winter snow. The skiers were all excited. I watched the meteo and wondered. A good friend had just done a new route on the Grandes Charmoz and commented on the conditions, I smiled as I also was intent upon another climb. After such a wet summer, surely by now some of the big ice routes would be coming into condition. My previous routes had all been made solo, and totally alone. With no-one to record progress and no-one to distract or confer, but this time it would be slightly different. On the 10th November, accompanied by a photographer in a helicopter, I made an ascent of the Grandes Jorasses via the *Croz spur*. I'd hoped, and then discovered that the direct line of ice runnels to the first ice-field would be complete. Via these climbed brilliant gullies leading to the second ice-field. The day had started clear, but bad weather was rapidly driving

in from the south, and, as the winds on top increased, the spindrift forced down onto me below. It became laughably unbearable and almost impossible. Some very hard climbing lead across iced up slabs to the gully line leading to the edge of the spur. Conditions then deteriorated drastically. Huge piles of fresh powder snow were dumped on the hard granite beneath. Time consuming and unnerving climbing then followed leading to the final finishing groove, which continued to unrelent. Finally I pulled over onto the heavily corniced summit ridge.

So winter had finally arrived. I don't think we had even had a good summer. But as a good friend had questioned, I'd had a good season, my best ever?

Major Solos:

17.6.93	Shroud	<i>Grandes Jorasses North Face</i>	1st female solo
29.6.93	Schmid	<i>Matterhorn North Face</i>	1st female solo
24.7.93	Lauper	<i>Eiger North Face</i>	new direct line
10.8.93	Cassin	<i>Piz Badile North Face</i>	1st female solo
17.8.93	Allain	<i>Dru North Face</i>	1st British & female solo
24.8.93	Comici	<i>Cima Grande North Face</i>	1st female solo
10.11.93	Croz Spur	<i>Grandes Jorasses North Face</i>	1st British & female solo



Matterhorn North Face. Photo: D.J. Cuthbertson

Crevasse - A long time ago

Henry Adler

Another effort from the CC pensioners' section

In clearing out old files I found this attempt to emulate the great adventure writers - alas without success and consequently this was never published and, who knows, it may still remain so. The incident, tame and, as usual for me, without much sweat, happened more than 25 years ago.

I should have really kept my mouth shut - there is no glory in falling into an icy hole and I only mention it to demonstrate that one simply must not take too many chances with snow and ice even if one knows what one is about. Well, I was not too badly prepared and got away with it, most ably assisted by my longstanding partner and friend from Belgium and ultimately by some Czech climbers - there is some justice in that since that was where I was born.

We set out one glorious morning in July from Chamonix to the summit of the Aiguille du Midi, by cable car of course, to enjoy a leisurely jaunt down the magnificent snow-covered Valée Blanche to the Requin hut and later via Montenvers back to the bottom. It was getting warm quite early in the morning and while we savoured every minute of our descent and the incomparable views that went with it, we were not unawares of the need to be careful rather than chatting away all the time, especially as we got into the heavily crevassed areas of the lower Géant glacier. I was wearing a light harness with leg straps and both of us had prusik loops already attached to our rope, and the obligatory ice axes. We had crampons in our packs but there was no evident need to wear them.

Already within easy sight of the hut, in the middle of some quite nasty crevasses and surrounded by ice pyramids, Roger, who led at the time, took a short cut over a thin rib spanning part of a wide crevasse while I had him belayed. He crossed safely, belayed me and I followed, but less successfully, ending up dangling in my harness some 20ft or more down the hole once the rope went tight. There was a feeble rib of ice some four feet below me and I asked to be lowered a little to sit astride it rather than just dangling. Our rope had cut quite deeply into the overhanging edge of the crevasse which made me think! What a comfort to fall into a harness rather than being strangled by a waist line which might have been my fate only a year or two earlier. I was completely uninjured and felt quite comfortable, especially after setting the prusiks as stirrups for my feet.

Do you know what a really large crevasse looks like from inside and what it feels like to be in one? Well, looking up, the gap seemed small and looking down there was a vast, black bottomless cavern with all sorts of peculiar noises coming from it, some like canon shots, bits falling down, cracking sounds and then again silence. What it feels like? Not too bad when you are uninjured and have all you need to get out and a competent partner outside in the sunshine, feeling hot, no doubt, while your erstwhile warmth is slowly ebbing away. I secured my 'sack to ensure that I did not drop it and got dressed in duvet and gloves, also took some pictures, such as of a worried looking Roger looking over the edge. Roger had spotted some climbers who were made to realise that their help would be welcome and I decided that being pulled out would be much easier than going up

the buried rope. With a separate loop being dropped down to me about an hour after I had made my spectacular descent and with my legs pulled up to form a sort of sledge against the overhanging wall I was pulled up against the opposite side of the buried rope and came out within seconds like a cork from a bottle. As I reached the top, realising the nationality of my helpers, I started swearing in, no doubt, old fashioned and long forgotten Czech vernacular, nearly causing another accident for the astonished rescuers who must have thought that the secret police had followed them all the way to the Alps.

We could not miss such an opportunity to celebrate and this we did copiously at Requin and later on in the valley. The Czechs, who were encamped in Italy, started back across the mountains the next morning.

You might ask whether this was a sobering experience well sobering is perhaps an unfortunate choice of words here but you know what I mean. Some lessons are always to be learned. I was glad that I had always assumed that one might go down a crevasse and that one ought to be prepared for it and alert at all time on a glacier. I also assumed that even in the most glorious weather one might need warm clothing. I did not realise how far a rope could be submerged in the softer edges and how quickly below the surface a crevasse could open out into a vast cavern. It has taken me just on 20 alpine seasons before I managed to fall down one of those holes but I hope to be spared the role of the partner outside, a role which was played with completely calm confidence (Roger is a private pilot as well as a sailor) by my friend on the sunny side of the escapade.

Happy glacier jaunts to you all!

Serving the Sentence

Peter Harding

At first it seemed to be open-ended. In any case four years is a lengthy term, even with time off for good behaviour. But it wasn't as bad as I had expected: indeed the hard labour amounted to a little less than six months. In retrospect it was probably the best thing that could have happened to an old has-been like me, and it arose quite simply from a visit to the COLA annual trade exhibition of camping and outdoor leisure at Harrogate.

"Hello Jim!" The words spilled out before I could stop them: a reflex action of tongue and lip, triggered by recognition of the well-known character walking towards me. With that **Mountain** magazine sticking out of his jacket and camera slung from his neck, I was sure it couldn't be a case of mistaken identity. The vague look on Jim's face posed its own question so my mouth convulsed again to provide an answer.

"Peter Harding", I said.

"Peter!" The half echoed response came complete with a friendly grin which rapidly disappeared behind the camera, its shutter clicking, flash flashing and auto-wind whirring. Whilst I was still framed in the viewfinder, Jim gave voice to his view:

"Amazing," he said: "I always pictured you as a really big bloke, but you're not: you have that neat compact build of a real rock climber."

I marvelled at such perception: it set me thinking: if my height were really no more than 35mm I would be able to flash up that *Great, Indian Faced*, (Head?) *Master's Wall* on the East Buttress of 'Cloggy' like a human spider, bivying in old bolt holes. Then I thought again: Lilliputian rock boots must be as scarce as rocking horse shit! More sensible thoughts swiftly dispelled such a miniature but grand illusion for, back to true size and on present form, I was lucky to make V.Diff! At that moment the worst happened: Jim's face reappeared from behind the lens and he said;

"Peter, you must do a day on the rocks with me."

All I could manage was a half-hearted nod and a mumbled, jumbled reply:

"Oh! Well-er yes; but leave it to the better weather." (After all, it was November: a month when the stickiest rubber molecules get themselves tucked deep down into the soles of one's rock boots and hibernate for the winter.)

"Good, right." Jim waved goodbye and went striding off, clearly on exigent business at the show rather than mere passive pleasure like myself. At least I had hoped it would be, but now that unexpected meeting had definitely coked my COLA for 1989. Staggering into the nearest refreshment hall, I ordered a stiff drink then gazed sightlessly through racks of inverted bottles. My mind's eye saw only a figure with longish curly hair. Was it a wig? Lips moving, he did look very severe, like a judge passing sentence. I missed some of the words: '...taken from the bar — to serve — no less than — a day on the rocks.' Bloody hell!

"A pound sir. Will that be all?" The barmaid's intrusive voice banished my mental picture.

"It's enough," I said, absent-mindedly; "By God! It's enough." She looked at me rather strangely.

The first 33 days were certainly the worst and spread over a struggling year during which I fought to become fit enough to hoist myself up harder climbs than those to which I had become accustomed. Although I envisaged that I might mosey up a modicum of moderate rock in my older age, my sights were set on doing a few longish hill walks - those big bog trots which I disliked doing in my early rock climbing years. I had planned to plod the Pennine Way piecemeal; to dawdle over the Dales Way and meander on almost every other which way, but now these ambulatory ambitions seemed to go by the board and I lived in constant dread of getting a 'phone call:

"Hello. Peter? Jim here —." In anticipation of this, the ultimate part of my sentence, the number of rock climbs done in that year totalled 218. Not too bad for an OAP.

Actually I did have other reasons than Jim for subjecting my toes to the macho-masochism of modern rock boots. A couple of years earlier my wife Rita, who had never ventured up another foot of rock since one tearful episode near the top of Tryfan's Milestone Buttress in '54 suddenly decided to take up rock climbing. So, needing to get myself in shape, it was 'Cheerio' to those strong-armed pals who would haul me up the hardest Severes at any slight hint of incapacity and 'Hello again' to the sharp end of a rope on some not so Very Difficults!

To complicate matters, The CC committee of the day had evolved a plan to persuade me into vice-presidency, as a pre-amble to the real thing. However, due to circumstances at the time, and with Rita pushing me up steeper and steeper rock on the front end of our rope, it was with much regret that I gave a negative response. If the presidential term had not been, by tradition, quite so long and, more particularly, linked to a preceding term of vice-presidency, it would indeed have been a great honour for me to have served the Club in this way. But all's well that ends well - the CC got its first lady president a few years sooner, (A most excellent result!), and I had time to attend to other pressing tasks, including that of improving the family rock climbing capability. This latter activity went rather better than expected so Rita and I were soon going nicely at Hard V.Diff, with an occasional breakthrough into the Severes. (Usually due to reckless route finding, or that inadequate brevity of the modern guidebook!) Quite a number of splendid summits were visited too. Then came that visit to COLA and its fateful meeting with Jim which I saw as a serious downturn in my fortunes.

Looking back, had I been able to accept the CC committee's invitation it could have provided me with the perfect excuse:

"Sorry James old boy, but presiding over the Climbers' Club is a big job, not a spare time hobby like running Genial Motors or Marx 'n Sparks. I won't have enough time to climb up the Helyg boulder, let alone spend a day on the rocks; even with someone having such exceptional anti-gravitational abilities as your good self." (Smarmy political patter, transparently clear as meaning; 'No way Jimbo - end of story!')

As things were, the next 37 days, spread over another 12 months, saw me still trying to raise my standard from down here to up there, in readiness for a message from Jim. Vitamins A to Z were downed in deca-doses and I became the carrier of several pieces of modern placement protection, as well as a colourful

new rope, guaranteed to withstand more UIAA* falls, and from greater heights, than I ever dared contemplate. But none of these measures produced the desired result; moreover the total number of climbs done during '91 had dropped to 179. Drastic action was clearly needed.

Over the following year, 41 days were spent on the rocks with my thighs now incarcerated in leg loops and these higher vitals kept firmly in place by a swami 'Gunfighter' belt. This natty piece of Wild Country crag wear functioned mainly as a sort of (light) weight training device – a bit like the laden rucksack of an aspiring distance runner – since it was kept fully loaded with an impressive array of dangling pro., which I seldom seemed able to use: countless karabiners and 'quick-draws', wired wedges, hefty hexes and other precipitous paraphernalia. There was practically everything except a 'Friend' or a 'Mate' or a 'Bowp'.** After all, a veteran vanquisher of Very Severe routes from the pre-Placedanutscene period does have his principles! And holding on like grim death, with both hands, leaves little scope for wagging even the weeniest wired wedge into place, never mind twiddling with a trigger to cock the cams of some hyper-active suspension device; or constantly dipping one's digits into a rear-mounted chalk bag. (If you young rockstars can do all that without falling off, it's no wonder the current standard is up to E9 – and rising!)

In earlier days it had been Rita urging me on with wifely encouragement; '*Wrinkled Wall* looks a reasonable route for wrinklies darling.' And, 'if I lead that slab start of *Promenade* dear, can you do its airy finish?' Or, 'Peter! When you finally manage to get up *Brown Crack* your trousers will be the same filthy colour!' I usually replied agreeably; 'It definitely does.' 'I certainly hope so.' or, 'They probably will.' Later it was the fear of Jim, or, more correctly, hearing from him, which drove me on to tackle the most vulnerable Very Severses, gradually reducing them to my own level of decidedly difficult, and eventually chopping a few HVS routes down to size as maybe mildly desperate. When I found it, the secret was remarkably simple. All you have to do is do the routes, do them again, and keep on doing them. Almost any route gets so fed up with having its knobs and niches pulled or poked by frantic fingers, as well as being smeared with residue from the sticky soles of one's rock boots, that it will finally give in and let you float up smoothly, in accordance with Newton's third law. Of course, the plethora of spent chalk which can usually be relied upon, these days, to be exactly where you want it, (and even where you don't!), will certainly help; as will that magical friction of moden rubber which transforms racetracks into railroads for racing drivers on the right line, or holdless slabs into fairy steps for rock athletes at their limit. My third year was a good one, with a total of 235 rock climbs.

By the fourth year I had lost all dread of getting a call from Jim. He was now so often my invisible companion on the rocks; someone who had put the bit back between my teeth. Altogether, 57 days were spent climbing; that 'Gunfighter' harness no longer decorated with dozens of dangling nuts, swinging about on every move like a Zulu warrior's tails. My back-roping technique, using a modified Stitch plate, was now perfected to the stage where I rarely needed to carry any artificial protection. At mid-year I was fully on song and a short alpine season wasn't even reckoned as proper rock climbing. (Those Swiss peaks had too much snow on them!) By the year end I had done 410 climbs – about 100 more than I had ever done in any year before.

Over the full four year term I served a total of 168 days on the rocks; that hard labour where Jim's omnipresence had played a significant part in the transmogrification of an old mothballed mountaineer into a born-again cragrat. Many venerable venues of days gone by were revisited and, in all, 1042 climbs were done - fewer actual routes though, since the best were frequently repeated. And most were on gritstone so their totalled height is probably no more than that of Everest. Only 309 of them were classified as being harder than Hard Severe but quite a few did hit HVS, at 5a or b, while one reached E3 5c. (My own *PB*, so it is said.)

Amongst the highlights was that proudly rising *Phoenix* at Shining Clough on Bleaklow's tallest buttress. This seems to have canted over compared with what it was 40 odd years ago; a sign perhaps that it may soon tumble back 'into ashes'. Also Stanage Edge's giant groove, 'fingered' for me in '47 by David Sampson and called *Goliath's* in his honour. Its starting crack, first done by the Doncaster Bros., is now so polished as to have usurped the title of crux. And Black Rocks' *Demon Rib*, the hardest, on which its most crucial move (and the *Direct Finish*), is now transformed by sticky soled boots into a problem for hands rather than feet. There too, on the Birch Tree Wall, those older but less artificial routes of Ivan Waller and Jack Longland where one needs plain pumps, not Boreal Aces, in order to savour their intrinsic technicalities to the full. All these climbs Tony Moulam and I once graded simply as Very Severe knowing that, in truth, none of them was any harder than very difficult - provided you could do it! Nowadays, when they're classed as anything from VS 4b to E3 5c, I still find them all to be of similar grade, though this has increased (with age?) - to have become extremely difficult. (Those old adjectives are so much more expressive than cold, calculated alpha-numerics!)

That I ever managed to get up such routes again is mainly thanks to Jim, and, of course, my wife. Between them they drove me up the wall; the cracks, the grooves and the corners. Sadly, Rita has given up her rock climbing now, due to arthritic wrists, but we still enjoy our hill walks. As for Jim, I never heard from him again. (Though surely my sentence has been served!) He's probably out there, on the rocks, - perhaps still hoping that I might appear and try some classic climb. Most likely though he'll be soloing intently, at E3 or 4 or more; pen poised behind one ear and notebook notched neatly in an empty chalk bag, handy for jotting down one or two sapid sentences in that truly inimitable style.

Maybe, at some future COLA, I might hear his voice;

"Hello Peter!" With my own camera ready this time, to view him through the lens, perhaps I'll grin and say;

"Many folk have you figured as just a writer of renown but you look to me,

Jim Perrin, like a great little rock athlete. And whilst I have the opportunity, thanks a lot!"

* Unexpected Instantaneous Airborne and Acrobatic!

** Bag of White Powder

Snakes and Ladders on Cerro Kishtwar

Andy Perkins

Every expedition has its ups and downs; our trip to Cerro Kishtwar in autumn of '91 was just an extreme case - periods of deep depression when forward progress, let alone success, seemed virtually impossible followed by wild elation as we took a small step nearer that elusive goal - to climb a big wall in a Himalayan setting.

It all started inauspiciously.....

The Nightmare Scenario

I know you've imagined it in your worst dreams. There's the two of you there at the foreign airport at the start of your climbing holiday. You're waiting at the baggage reclaim for your two precious, irreplaceable rucksacks full of gear and only one appears. This was Brendan and me in Delhi, months of planning for our attempt on Cerro Kishtwar suddenly jeopardised by the disappearance of Bren's 'sack somewhere between London, Muscat and Delhi. I was torn between 'Thank God it's his 'sack that's missing, not mine' and the thought that, without it, our attempt was a non-starter in spite of 80% of the kit having already been freighted in with the advance party. The missing 20% included rucksack, pit, jackets, sunglasses, headtorch - all those things which are small but vital.

Instead of a couple of relaxing days of digestive acclimatisation (aka curry eating) in Delhi before our flight to Leh, we spent four days running backwards and forwards across town in rickshaws, hopes rising and falling amidst the scream of scooter 2-stroke engines and surrounded by exhaust fumes. The airline office and our agent produced no joy but, as always in India, someone somewhere has what you're looking for - at a price, of course. We tracked down Mandip Singh of Ibex in a quiet suburb and, in his air conditioned office and Western furnished house, our hopes rose again. He could hire us the kit and his own European gear at that, he would sell us a rucksack made by his own firm and so on.

This pattern of up and down, hopes raised and dashed grew to be a feature of our travels to and efforts on the mountain. One expects excitement, difficulties and reversals in Asia but this was an extreme version, a case of 'What can possibly happen next?'

The journey to Base Camp was correspondingly erratic in pace and nature - a flight away from the humid lunacy of Delhi delivered us to the comparative heaven of Leh, with its open blue skies and brown boulder slopes studded with old monasteries. Weathered Ladakhi faces of sunburned leather were split by beaming smiles while children tugged at our clothes, not begging but just interested. I almost resented the pressure we were under to move on towards the mountain; I could have stayed in Leh for a week instead of taking a bus the next morning. That journey ended in Kargil where the only onward transport to the Zaskar valley by truck-hitch took a day to find. A 36-hour bone rattling truck ride past the glories of Nun and Kun brought us to Padum. What should have been a good night's sleep turned into a surreal hell as a psychotic American with

'an anger problem' (sic) beat up his girlfriend who then staggered round the hotel clad only in a sleeping bag insisting he be thrown out or arrested!

A jeep ride to the road-head the next day ended with a wheel falling off as we reached our destination. Mental well-being was then restored by witnessing a Buddhist fire puja by a visiting Rimpoché before the three day walk over the Himalayan divide into Kishtwar.

The vanguard of the expedition had passed this way a week before and had done a sterling job getting all the porters and a horse (!) over the 5,300m Umasi La and finding a superb Base Camp site on the banks of the Haptal glacier. We breezed in to find our tents already pitched and brews waiting under the BC tarpaulin. We swapped tales of our adventures and took a welcome rest day.

Here was the accustomed normality of expedition life: familiar kit unpacked from barrels; chappati omelettes for breakfast; even a friendly and helpful Liaison Officer (wonders will never cease)! The sun beamed from a clearing sky onto the granite spires towering everywhere: Kishtwar Shivling, Dandagoporam, Chomochior.... Partially hidden, only the top quarter of our objective, the North West face of Cerro Kishtwar, showed itself, intimidating and yet enticing.....

From an advanced BC in a glacial bowl below the face, it looked just phenomenal. Mixed terrain up from the bergschrund to a Patagonian-style sweep of granite draped with ludicrously steep tendrils of ice here and there. We gaped through binoculars and worried whether our 17 days of food would last out, whether our 300m of rope would stretch between the ledges where we'd planned our camps, whether these would be big enough for our wall tent, whether the weather.... just stop worrying and GET ON WITH IT.

The Ideal Sport Climbing Venue

We'd ferried all the gear up the mixed terrain and moved our capsule up to the base of the wall itself. Here, 1,000 feet above the bergschrund, we'd hacked a ledge out and hung the bivy tent from the wall where it reared out of the mixed terrain in the form of ice-smeared slabs. Back in Britain, we'd pondered photographs, drawn diagrams and tentatively traced a line up this first section of slabs. There were no encouraging cracks or snow streaks on the photos to indicate how we were going to get up this first 300 feet of a 3,000ft wall. We'd just applied the Longstaff dictum - 'Rub your nose before you are certain it won't go.' (I doubt, however, whether Longstaff also said 'but pack the bolt kit in case it won't go') I racked a massive range of big wall armaments 40 pins, Friends, a triple set of wires - feeling distinctly apprehensive. Here was the point where we would find out just how presumptuous we were to assume we could climb this thing. Even using all the cunning gained from seasons of Scottish scratching, I'd only made 30m of progress in four hours: the tongue of ice I'd followed now shrank to one inch thick, eight inches wide. I stood in an etrier clipped to my axe and pondered the blank six metres to the next good ice and the dubious pegs and equal distance below.

"It's no good send me up the bolt kit." All those outraged letters to the magazines about the value of adventure climbing and there I was placing 8mm self-drillers in Himalayan granite. How easy it is to trample over your own morals in the pursuit of goals! I'd never placed one before and felt very guilty at first, as if the BMC Ethics Sub-Committee would jump round the corner and catch

me at it. Half an hour later with bleeding hands and totally wasted I wished I'd brought a Bosch! Then, attempting to hook the existing rugosities, I took a fall in a scrattle of pegs, axes and hardware. Not content with placing a bolt, it seemed inevitable that I should have to dog it out! Brendan hung off the belay 30 metres below and barked in delight. From then on the gloves were off and progress was by bat-hooking, another new experience. (Do you know how deep to drill a bat hook hole?) By close of play we'd made it to the next ice smear and, abbing to the tent, reflected on the day's climbing: 'The ideal sport climbing venue: afternoon sunshine, best quality granite, bolt protection and a cafe at the base of the crag!'

Over the next few days, we pushed out our 300m of fixed line, gradually instilling ourselves with the rigid discipline of the clip-on, clip-off mentality necessary in such a merciless unforgiving environment. On the third day, I was in the middle of passing a belay point, when I suddenly found myself hanging one-handed from an ascender, an instant away from a blurring tumbling death. From then on concentration was absolute, procedures were religiously followed, we acknowledged we had hold of items passed over. Even inside the tent, theoretically safe, a routine developed to maximise safety with minimum effort. Constant concentration just accelerated the attrition we'd already started to feel.

Life at the Kishtwar Hilton

6.00am: beep-beep-beep-beep alarm off. Reach out of the pit. Keerist it's cold, lighter in top pocket, light the tower stove, hand back in pit again. 6.20am: unzip door, back outside for more snow for the pan, check the weather. John Kettley says it's another good day: let's go climbing. 6.40am: boiling water and we're ready for chocolate and another grope outside for snow and, careful, don't let any spindrift in. Sit up, trying not to tangle up in Brendan's safety leash from his chest harness to the tent tie-in points. Chocolate finished, time for muesli, then boil it again for a brew. Spin this out till the last possible moment to avoid the worst part of the day - God, it's awful - getting dressed. 7.20am: reach into the pit for inner boots and socks (it smells like something died in there overnight). Down boots and dry socks off, yesterday's socks and inner boots on, Goretex salopettes on, chest harness off, jacket on, chest harness back on again, outer boots on and we're ready for the big bad world. 7.40am: tent door open, clip onto fixed line, step out to immediate 500 metres of exposure to the glacier and temperature of -15°C. Now another extremely unpleasant part of the day - the morning dump. Hang off the chest harness, fumble with a myriad of zips and flaps, try not to drop your bog paper, zip it all back up again, round to the other end of the tent on the safety line, sit harness on, hill food in left pocket, water bottle and ropes in rucksack. 8.00am: Right I suppose we'd better go climbing, though maybe it's not quite sport climbing!

The climbing above the Kishtwar Hilton centred on the major feature of the route, 200m of corner formed where a massive buttress abutted the wall. Intermittent runnels of perfect ice gave some of the best Scottish gully climbing either of us had ever done. Where these ran out, progress by aiding was steady but, oh, so slow. On one particular day, I spent five hours shivering on a stance while Brendan was totally absorbed in a sustained corner on blades, small wires and Friends. On the following day the roles were reversed as the climbing continued at an unrelentingly difficult level. One section of the route required one

foot becrampioned while the other boot smeared on rock. Then, at an apparent impasse where the corner became a hideous powder-choked off-width, a tension traverse out onto the overhanging right wall led to a perfect Friend crack and access to the upper sections of the corner where angle and difficulty eased (comparatively). Every pitch was a microcosm of the route – total despair (this one'll never go) to vague hope (I'll just give it a try) to elated incredulity (I don't believe it! Its going!)

Reaching the top of the corner, we pulled the ropes up, had a hideous bivvy, then managed to site the tent on a perfect ledge below the Texas Flake, the next impossible-looking feature of an impossible-looking route.

Friday the Thirteenth

It was a Friday and our thirteenth day on the route but neither of us were superstitious – just very, very cold. The morning temperatures were the lowest we'd had yet and even getting geared up required underarm hand warming every five minutes. Trying to lead out a pitch directly above the tent on steep rock and ice was excruciatingly cold on the fingers. Every move I'd have to stop and warm them but at least I was moving. Brendan hung uncomplaining on the belay and shook quietly.

I'd chosen to avoid the Texas Flake itself and started up a crack system in its front face. Climbing thin ice-choked grooves and cracks presents such a dilemma. Do I leave the precious little ice there is and try to ice climb (it's quick and I can keep my hands in my mitts, a good plan at -20°C) or smash it off and torque/hook it. (Much more secure and I can get pro as well). But then I'll have to strip my mitts to handle gear and what if the crack's blind? There's never a perfect solution to this dilemma but somehow progress materialised slowly and after two hours I'd scraped and hammered my way up 20m of some of the hardest mountaineering I'd ever done.

Higher up the pitch, the ice ran out and I was hooking and torquing to make progress on every move. Now this involves taking hands out of wrist slings and it's VERY IMPORTANT to remember to put them back in when the axe is retrieved from foot level. Inevitably there came a sequence where I dropped the axe to let it dangle on the wrist loopand watched it spin away and down into the void. In those few seconds, there was sudden hope as it appeared to be heading straight for the ledge where our wall tent was pitched, then sheer horror as the axe plunged from 30m, straight through the roof of the tent. Thirteen days out, within striking distance of the summit and daily afternoon spindrift swirling around. I abseiled to Brendan, full of contrition. He typically remarked that it was 'just one of those things', and we set to assessing the damage. In the end, we just turned the tent upside-down and laid our Karrimats over the hole. It looked a bit of an odd shape and the poles didn't quite fit right but what the hell – it worked and gave us a name for the doss: The Upside-Down Hotel.

Finishing the repairs, we returned to the fray with Brendan in the lead. My morale was at a record low, having wrecked the tent and it also looked as though I'd led us into a blind alley where the crack system we were in widened into a hideously unprotectable off-width. However, Brendan was firing on all four cylinders and the next morning, after some wild pendule action, whooped in delight as a thin crack materialised to lead us to the top of the Texas Flake.

That afternoon, another desperate spindrift-lashed torquing pitch brought us to within striking distance of the Scissors, two intersecting ramp systems from where we hoped the terrain would ease. Would the mountain finally give us a break?

The End Game

It was make-or-break time (for the nth occasion of the route). Brendan had traversed to the left hand end of the Scissors and was peering round on to the north east face. I joined him and we contemplated powder-covered slabs and broken rock, a total contrast from the clean compact granite of the previous 15 days. I led a pitch leftwards towards a vague gully line floundering in the powder which filled my wrist dangling mitts and brought Brendan across. We stared up at the gully which, after 100m, disappeared from sight at a cornice which we guessed indicated the summit.

100m between us and success - all that effort, to have come all that way (that oft-used quote by Southerners going on to the Ben in evil weather and conditions). I made the final few moves across to the gully, wading in powder, screaming with the cold in my hands. Have you ever noticed how hideously cold powder can be? More than that, the inner voice screamed 'NO!' as well - what was it? We were 100m from success on a great route, state-of-the-art climbing. We would be like Boardman and Tasker on Changabang (so we'd imagined in our naivety) but something about the situation was all wrong: we'd been climbing for 15 days and the attrition had been intense and unrelenting. There was no way we could replace all the calories expended during such hard climbing and we were feeling leaner and meaner every day. We'd had no sunshine for a week and afternoon snow was gradually permeating our kit. My sleeping bag was frozen into useless clumps of down, so I wasn't getting much sleep. On one particularly memorable night (for Brendan), I'd taken two Paracetamol and two Halcion (those sleepers that have now been withdrawn from sale). Apparently, I'd had Brendan very worried with violent Cheyne-Stokes breathing, switching my headtorch on and off, moaning in apparent pain from frost-nipped fingers and mumbling unintelligibly. When asked if I was okay, Brendan tells me I muttered 'My minds gone!' Hmmm.

In addition to all this excitement, the mental concentration we needed to remain safe had started to slip. I'd fallen seven metres off a nominally safe belay through not being tied in properly. Brendan had nearly dropped a climbing rope. It was only a matter of time before one of us made a fatal error. Finally, we only had a couple of days food left, which was allocated for the descent and, while our rations were meagre anyway, the prospect of eating nothing and drinking water did not fill either of us with enthusiasm.

It was a terrible decision to make, particularly being so close to success but the chances of frostbitten fingers, the complexities of the descent and that final fatal error were getting uncomfortably high. It was with great reluctance and frustration that we finally decided to jack it in and, two days later, after a complicated descent that went like clockwork, we finally rappelled over the bergschrund as night fell.

Ten days later we were touching down at Heathrow and had to start answering that inevitable question: "Why on earth did you stop so close to the top?" from

people both inside and outside the Himalayan game. A convenient metaphor is that it was a bit like snakes and ladders and the dice didn't quite fall our way.....

Summary

An account of one of the best non-routes in the Himalaya, a 17 day capsule ascent of the North West Face of Cerro Kishtwar by Andy Perkins and Brendan Murphy. The expedition was supported by the British Mountaineering Council and the Mount Everest Foundation and is dedicated to the memories of Steve Hillen and Mirek Lasotha.



Day 7 on Cerro Kishtwar. Photo: Andy Perkins

Trekking in the Tatras

or

Pumping out in Poland

An introduction to walking and climbing in the Western Carpathians

Jeff Jenkins, David Briggs and Richard Grimes

Imagine the picture...there is no one around save for the shepherd who smiles across at you and offers you a wooden mug brimming with delicious sheep's milk. The sun is shining; you take a long walk down a lush valley, a tramp across an alpine meadow and a gentle scramble to an imposing rock face. This is quickly followed by an exciting ascent (perhaps the first British one!) and a safe return. To cap it all there is a hearty meal waiting with beer at less than the equivalent of 40p a pint. Is this just the product of an over vivid imagination or the effect of too much sun? No, it can all be found on the southern border of Poland. By air it is less than 12 hours away, door to door. Overland it might be 30 or so. Whilst the language might prove a bit tricky for the uninitiated it is about the only real obstacle you're likely to encounter - and like most places, if you make the effort to learn a little before you go and smile back, even this is not insurmountable.

The Tatra mountains straddle Polish/Slovak border and can be found in the Western Carpathians. This is serious mountain country in that many of the peaks are remote and rugged. Much is however easily accessible from the resort town of Zakopane (pop. 32,000+). Access to the hills generally is greatly aided by the cheap and widely available map of the national park (Tatrzański Park Narodowy



Winter in the Tatras - North Face of Giewont 1895m. Overlooking the Main Western Tatras Town of Zakopane. Photo: D. Briggs

1:30,000) and the clearly marked trails identified by blue, green, red, yellow or black markings. These reach out to all corners of the Tatras. Off the marked paths the going gets tougher. The height, aspect and relief of the mountains themselves can mean snow all the year round although in summer this is often in small patches. The weather can change suddenly and given the nature of the terrain an awareness of alpine conditions and how to handle them is needed to stay safe.

Walking

The Tatras offer almost the full range of outdoor activities, although it must be said that (thankfully) the level of development is relatively unsophisticated when compared with Chamonix or Boulder, Colorado. In late spring, summer and early autumn most if not all of the tops should be available to the reasonably fit walker. This would include the peak that dominates Zakopane (Giewont 1,894m), the highest point in the Polish Tatras (Rysy 2,499m) and several dramatic ridge walks (Orla Perc - the Eagles Trail; the Tatras' Black Cuillin and Czerwone Wierchy, are both around 2,000m+. The views are stunning and the truly international amongst you can criss-cross the border to your heart's content.) There are innumerable other possibilities and popular routes include the glacial lakes (especially Morskie Oko) and the verdant valleys of the western Tatras (for example Dolina Koscieliska).

Climbing

Fair weather climbers who enjoy pitching themselves against rock as opposed to ice, snow and frozen turf (of which more later) will find a seemingly inexhaustible supply of routes both close to the valley floors and on the high crags. There are some restrictions on rock climbing in the national park and details of the exact extent can be obtained from the park authorities. It should be said, that at the time of writing, these rules are seemingly not rigorously applied providing climbers are discreet in their approaches and do not flaunt their racks and ropes outside the park entrance. A small fee is payable by tourists for entry into the park (8,000zł about 25p!).

Although the mountains are relatively modest in height they are truly alpine in form. Sharp ridges, soaring pillars and huge faces (up to 900m) are characteristic of the region. The Tatras divide into two identifiable areas. The east contains the highest peaks. The rock here is mainly granite. Complex crack systems predominate and there are climbs of all grades. The west is principally limestone country and is generally less dramatic but no less impressive than the high Tatras to the east. Again climbing of all grades can be found. More information including a local topo can be obtained from Tatra Guides (Jan Muskat 34-500 Zakopane, ul. Kotelnicka 7, Poland, tel: 0-165-680-07, Fax 0-165-142-61).

Summer activities also include mountain biking (plenty of local hire shops), water sports (especially white-water rafting) and caving.

The winter scene

In late autumn the weather closes in on the Tatras with the high mountains attracting ice as early as October. Zakopane is fast becoming a major centre for ski-ing and winter climbing. Ski-mountaineering opportunities abound with good lift services to the main ridge (on Kasprowy Wierch 1,955m). The terrain provides fine ski-ing but care should be taken with distinct avalanche possibilities especially from the ridges in the eastern Tatras.

It is the winter that brings the local climbing talent out onto the hills. Polish climbers have long had the reputation for their strength and commitment and nowhere is this demonstrated more than in the Tatras. The Himalaya may see the results but the Tatras provide the schooling. Not only does this involve the ascent of the steep and exposed faces by ice, snow and mixed climbing but a new and fascinating slant exists - that of climbing on frozen grass! The experts say that this form of climbing offers greater possibilities than the more conventional styles of winter ascent and that in the solid soil and vegetation, bomb proof protection by ice screws and warthogs can be placed. Apparently (not having tried this game) the grass sticks to even the steepest of faces, especially those facing north!

Places to stay and see

The region is well served by mountain refuges (seven). The hut in the Dolina Roztoki is well worth staying at but it can be very crowded in the summer and at peak ski-ing times. The Polish mountain rescue service provides free cover in the mountains and staff from this service are based in the huts.

Zakopane is a bustling town full of character and, of course, visitors. As a tourist centre it has the predictable facilities on offer. Prices may be high when compared with the rest of Poland but by western European standards it is very inexpensive. You can eat and drink your fill for around £3. Vegetarians are not neglected even if the Polish diet is heavily dominated by meat. Vodka aficionados will be well at home with more varieties than there are climbing grades. The town has a daily market offering everything from home-made cheese to the latest in Russian infra-red technology. If it all gets a bit much, for the price of a beer (Polish prices) you can relax in the sulphurous and thermal waters of the local spa (at Antalowka).

The political changes of the past few years have left their mark. Shop windows are full of consumer durables but it is hard to imagine the local population affording those items imported from the West if the rest of the prices are anything to go by. The sight of older members of the community looking at the displays and shaking their heads is not unusual. There are plenty of people actively engaged in commerce - buying, selling, exchanging money and generally doing business. The tourist is, understandably the centre of their attention. None of it seemed oppressive just rather sad in so far as one wonders how much of the gains actually filter down to street level.

Outside of Zakopane there is plenty to do and see. The nearby town of Nowy Tag (24,000) has a colourful market on Thursdays (get there before noon) and warrants a visit. A little further afield Krakow (100,000), the old imperial capital, is worth seeing for the castle (Wawel) and the old Jewish quarter. It was here that much of Schindler's List was filmed. The tiny synagogue (Remu'h) and its cemetery is a very poignant reminder of the fate of local Jews under the Nazis. To the west and a full day's return trip from the Tatras lies Oswiecim the site of the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau. For those that visit the impression is apparently a lasting one.

Getting there and getting about

Travel has never been so easy. If you have the money (currently around £200) return flights from London to Krakow are readily available. Rumour has it that

cheaper flights can be tracked down by shopping around especially through Polish clubs in the UK. Krakow is a couple of hours north of the mountains on a bus (£1.75 single). For some odd reason the train takes twice as long! Services are every couple of hours. For those on a more limited budget and who are prepared to sit it out there is a coach service from Dunkerque to Zakopane (30 hours+) which, with accommodation in modest but perfectly acceptable hotels and half-board (breakfast and dinner), weighs in at around £100. Can't be bad! Several holiday companies offer this run. New Millennium (Tel: 021-711-2232) have perhaps the longest track record and can be personally recommended.

Once in the region local transport be it by bus, train or taxi is cheap and reliable. The trains are worth it for the atmosphere.

Final note

The Tatras offer the walker and climber an opportunity for a truly rewarding experience in a wild and largely unspoilt setting. Coupled with this is the chance see the rich and diverse culture of the Polish people.

If you go (and we hope you do) take only clean bank notes, take a cushion for the coach journey and learn to say 'prosze' and 'dziekuje bardzo'.



'Bad Jack', Giewont North Face.

Photo: D. Briggs Collection

Back in Time - Selenge North Face

Lindsay Griffin

It was in May of 1992 that a dilapidated ex-Soviet Union, propeller-driven Antonov disgorged Julian Freeman-Attwood, Ed Webster and myself onto the north-western outskirts of the Gobi Desert. Three days of overland travel across an arid wilderness led to the enigmatic Tabun Bogdo, a range of 4,000m peaks at the junction of China, Russia and Mongolia.

The range bore certain similarities to the Bernese Oberland and the current level of exploration was equivalent to that found in this delectable region of the Swiss Alps well over 100 years ago. Fine unclimbed ridges and snow/ice faces were there for the taking and although the ambience was distinctly Himalayan, the scale was no more than Alpine.

We were accompanying an inexperienced but talented group of twenty-somethings, hoping, as proved to be the case, to have some time to attempt one or two lines on our own. As it happens, events were rather overshadowed by an incident towards the end of our stay that left me living on memories for the next 18 months.

However, before that there had been many wonderful climbs. One of the most interesting occurred during a five day exploration of the upper Selenge basin in the company of our six most capable students. Selenge had been climbed from the Alexandrov glacier, but the North Face, a pure ice wall of about 1,500 feet looked



Descending the West Ridge of Selenge, Russian Border Behind. Photo: Lindsay Griffin

most attractive....well, except for the serac barrier that appeared as a continuous wall across the whole width of the lower face.

Webster turned his attention to the best bit of granite we ever saw in the whole range and next day completed the *Midas Ridge*, a 5.8/5.9 spur, with two students on their second rock climb. Julian opted for a classic ridge traverse which took in several unclimbed peaks at the back of the cirque. A peer through Ed's 200mm Nikon showed a possible weakness in the serac barrier, so the next morning Richard, Bridget and I left shortly before dawn, moving up excellent frozen névé and a short stretch of 75° ice to reach the base of the barrier at the presumed break. The prospect looked gloomy. Above, the ice wall was only 18-20 feet high, but overhung a good ten degrees past vertical and looked distinctly mushy towards the top. I moved left then back right across the slope, peering upwards and then shaking my head in a manner bound to discourage even the most confident of clients. I then scanned the horizon for some ominous build-up of cloud, but none came to my rescue: infact the weather was as perfect as one could wish!

There was nothing for it but to try directly above the belay, where at least the wall was at its lowest. I climbed a metre or so and placed a screw. Not encouraged, I returned with a snow-stake and an additional hammer kindly donated by Bridget. At full stretch the stake was driven horizontally, then with wild flailing, that might have been misconstrued as front-pointing, I graunched my right foot on top of the protruding stake and hastily embedded a hammer over the lip. Maintaining the classic five points of contact at all times, I somehow arrived - too exhausted to be a jabbering wreck - on the slope above, placed my four remaining screws and sagged onto the lot.

Richard, who was considerably heavier, made a valiant effort before coming airborne with the stake. With the main problem, extracting the runners, now solved, he felt it his duty to test the security of the belay screws and a fixed rope was arranged. Bridget was less fortunate. One of her many attributes is her weight - or lack of it; she looks somewhat less than four stones.

"How about giving me a little pull?" came the almost casual remark from below. Richard and I took hold of the rope; a second later Bridget flew past the stance like a rag doll, a blur of gyrating arms and legs. Richard grabbed one of these and with great dexterity fielded her onto the belay. As I led up into more amenable terrain I caught snatches of conversation about the finer points of wicket keeping and whether Bridget's hair had come out of place.

Towards the top of the face another fine yet decidedly easier pitch led up past a smooth rocky rib. 100 foot of hard water-ice at 65° terminated at a precarious exit over a curl of snow. By continually slanting away from my companions I just avoided destroying both their helmets and a growing friendship.

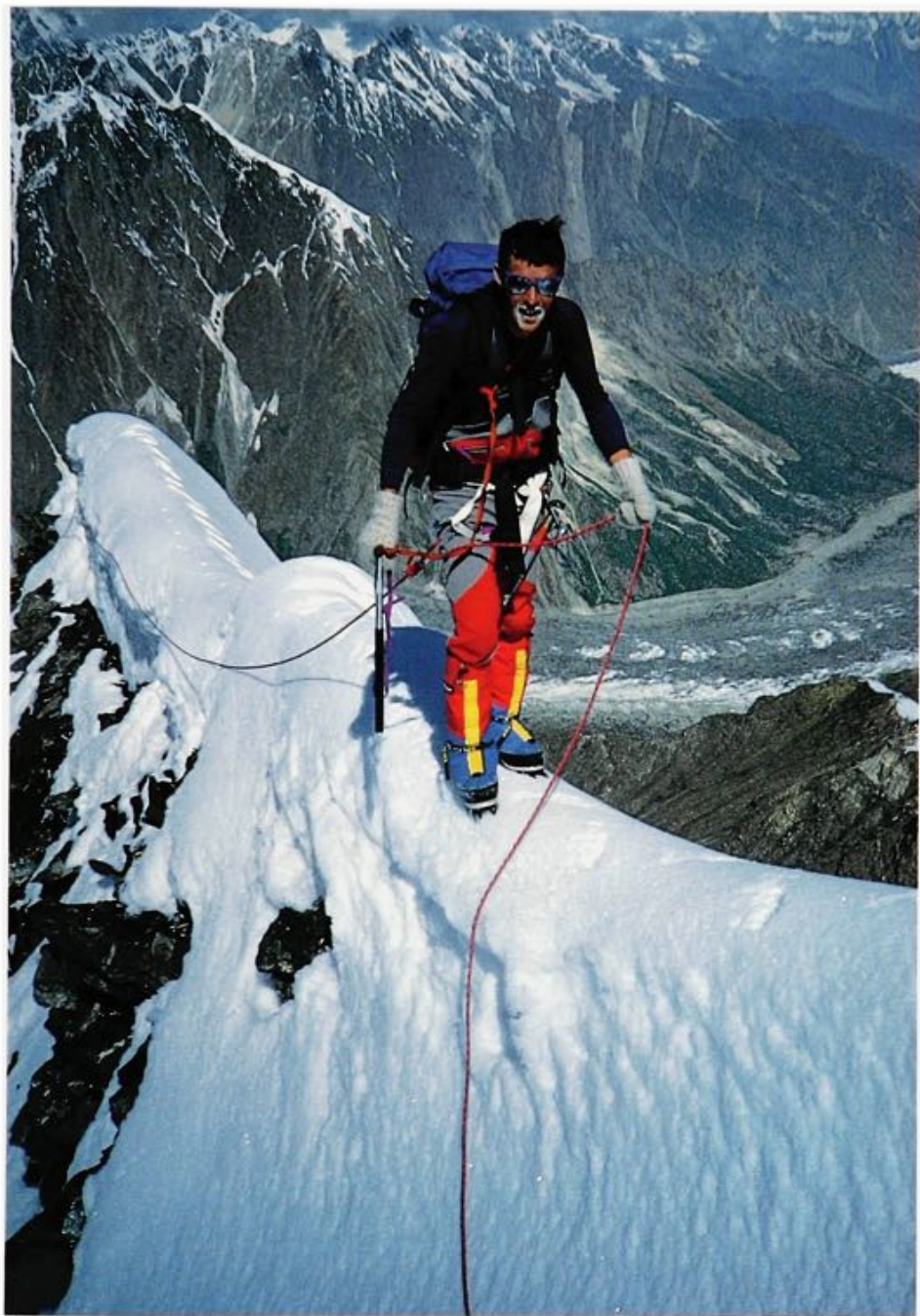
The summit attained, a fine traverse of AD standard concluded the day and we reached camp shortly before dark and some 14 hours after our departure, tired but happy with our new route.



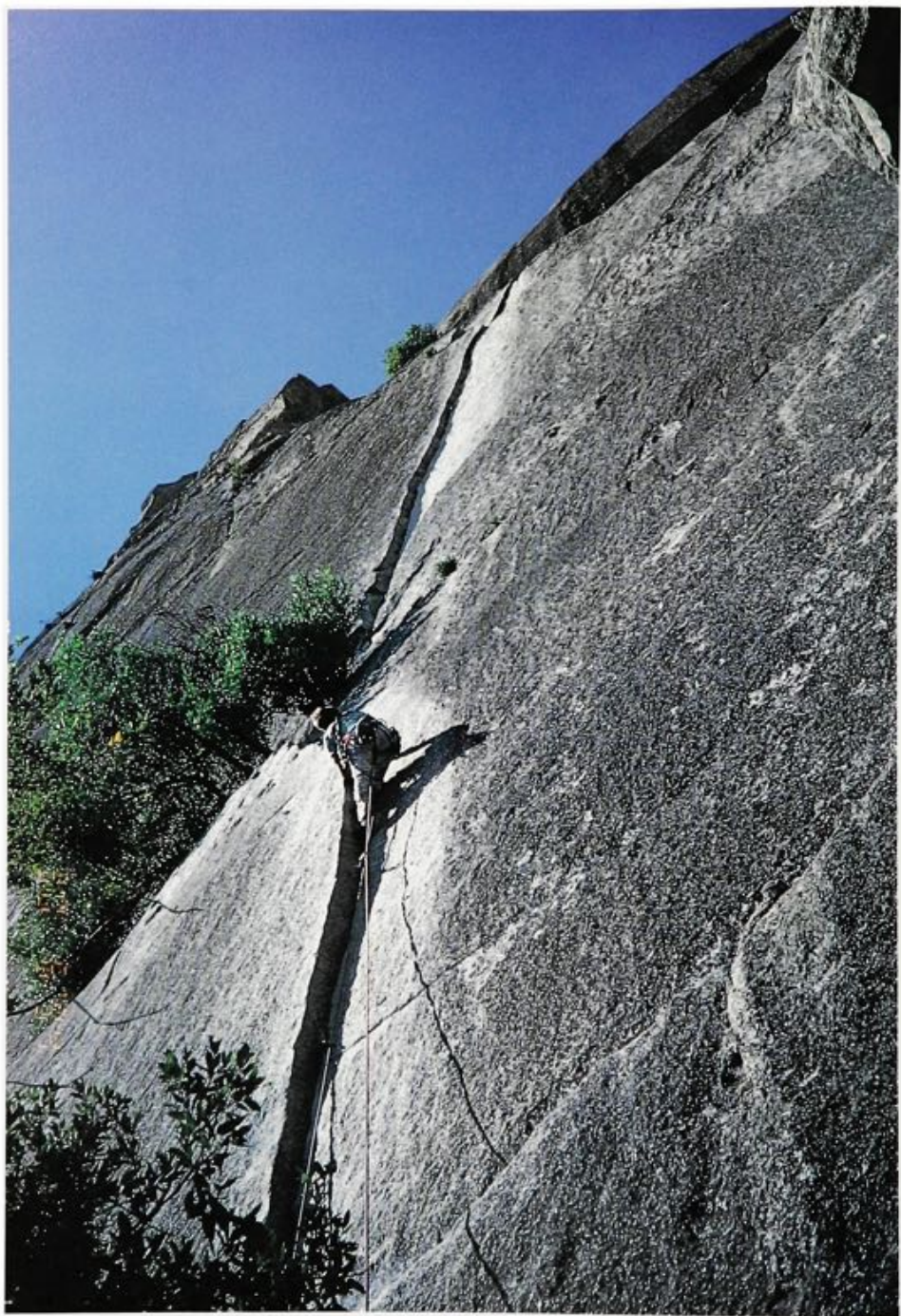
*Above: Snowchurch and Unclimbed Peaks above Prjewalski Glacier, Tabun Bogdo.
Photo: Lindsay Griffin*

Below: Tony Parkes on Pk Zorzhenevskaya, Pamirs. Photo: D. Wilkinson





*Ged Campion on Girgindal Pyramid - above Barpu Glacier, Western Karakoram.
Photo: D. Wilkinson*



'Reeds Pinnacle Direct' 5.9, Yosemite. Photo: D.J. Cuthbertson

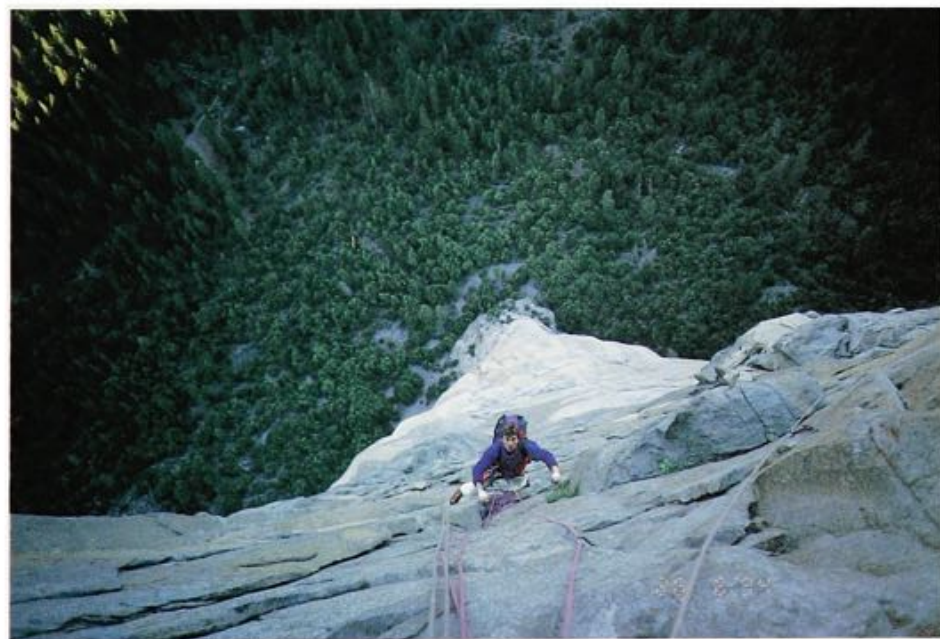


Above: Steve Long and Smiler on the Upper Wall, Lotus Flower Tower.

Photo: L.F.T. Team Collection

Below: Steve Long leaving Camp Four (a.m. Day 2) 'The Nose', El Capitan, Yosemite.

Photo: D.J. Cuthbertson

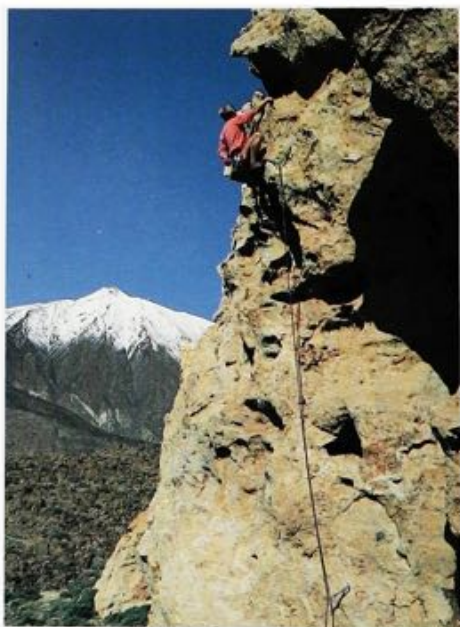
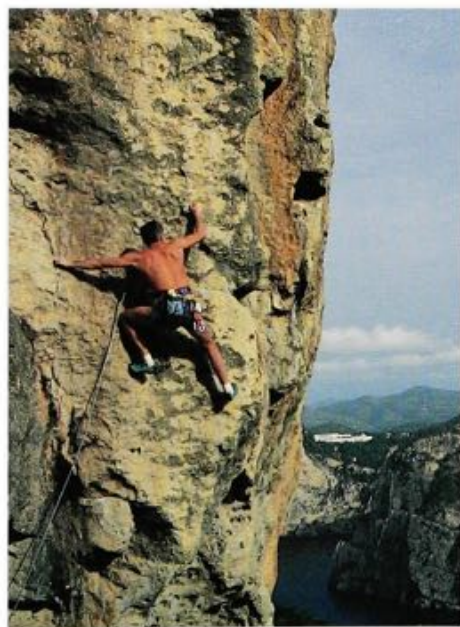


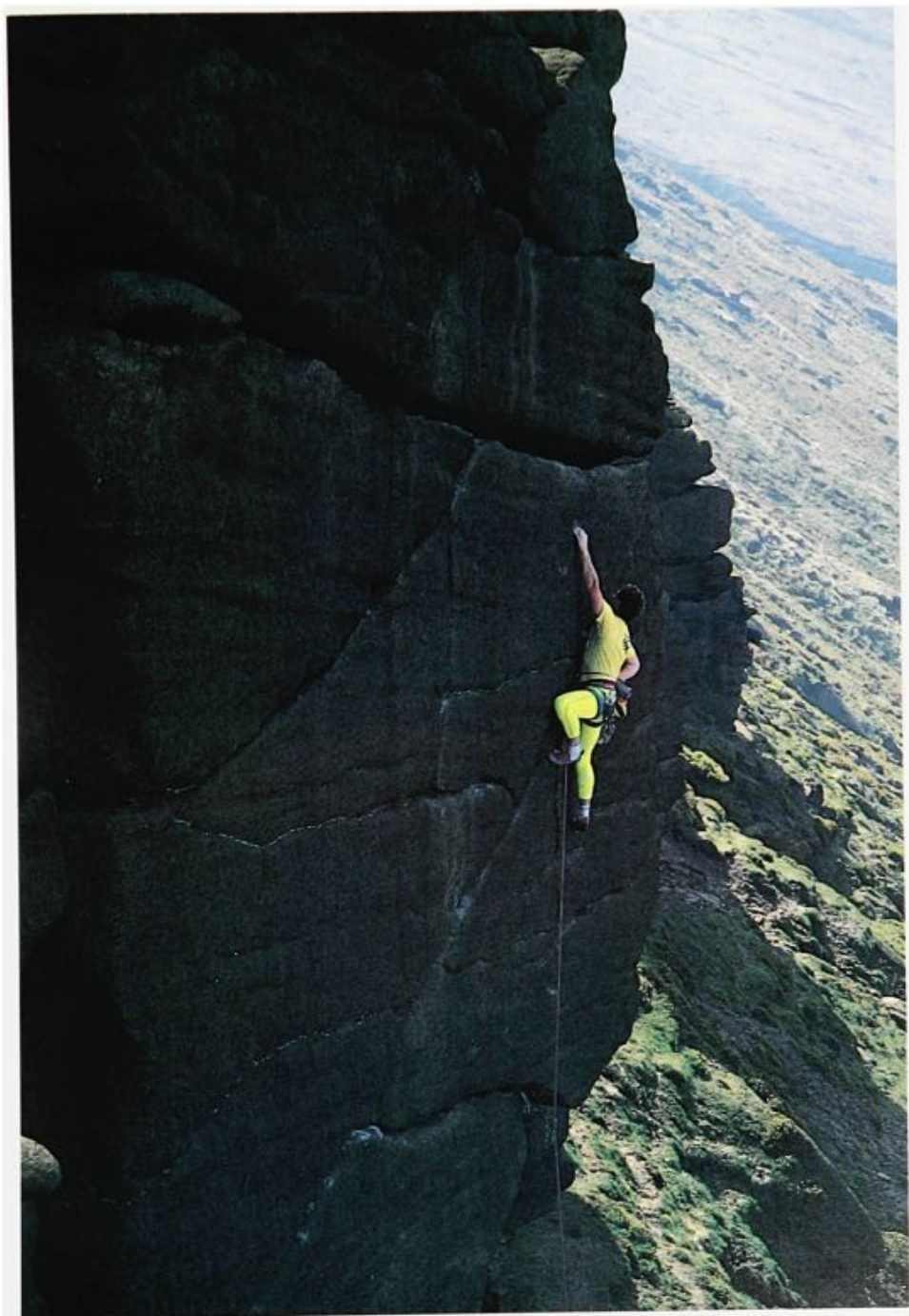


Above: Sherri Davy on 'Nightmare' Severe, Avon Gorge. Photo: Chris Craggs Collection

Below left: Mike Appleton on unnamed route 6c, Ibiza. Photo: Chris Craggs Collection

Below right: Jim Rubery climbing in the Crater, Las Canada, Tenerife, Tieda in background. Photo: Chris Craggs Collection





Chris Craggs on 'Big Brother', Kinder. Photo: Chris Craggs Collection



Above: *The Magnificent Six Return to Everest 1993. L to R: Charles Wylie, Edmund Hillary, John Hunt, George Lowe, George Band, Mike Westmacott.*
Photo: George Band Collection
Below: *Everest. Photo: George Band Collection*





Above: Chris Dunne presents Ivan Waller with the Helyg Cartoons.

Photo: Rod Hewing Collection

Below: Barbeque at Ynys Ettws. Photo: Rod Hewing Collection



Fiddler on the Roof

David Briggs

Palms sweating, moist fingers, the walk from the car had not warmed up the muscles yet the sun was beating down. Jeff Jenkins, was belaying Yan Muskat, while he led the opening moves on the first pitch of *Fiddler on the Roof* 7+ UIAA. Attempting to work the leg muscles with fundamental leg stretches and extensions, it is not achieving the desired aim. Is it the anxiety of attempting this route, considered in Polish climbing circles in 1993 as a route to be ticked? Walk back to the foot of the climb, Yan is progressing but slowly. It looks hard; a series of delicate moves on steep rock with dubious holds. The rope continues to move steadily but never quickly. Yan must be now 25 metres up this 45 metre pitch, he is long past the three bolts and one peg. An obvious but difficult crack swallows Friends and nuts, then he disappears, but the rope continues to move. It feels like a 'Miles Davis' piece of fluidity, controlled but with the unexpected always there. The music in my brain stops, it must be my turn to perform.

I reach into Jeff's chalk bag, he looks at me with a quizzical expression on his face, it's a stand off, as neither of us speak; the stillness is broken by Yan's calling for me to climb. Positive thoughts are required as one finger is placed in a pocket while pinching with the thumb, the other hand has the use of a two finger side pull as I move my feet three times ever higher. Time to move for another hold, nothing positive only very small lay-aways. My mind is saying keep moving but



*'Fiddler on the Roof' (l.h. line) in Dolina Chocholowska Valley, Western Tatras.
Photo: Jeff Jenkins Collection*

it is easier said than done; unclip my rope from the three bolts, leaving the gear for Jeff; it sounds easy but the manipulation inside the crab requires a dexterity lacking while attempting to stay on the rock. Traverse, with the key hold hidden in the slot behind the peg; pull across and breath deeply. 6a British? Jeff felt it was more like 6b. Climbing improves in that I am moving better - then stopped; try right, and then back to the original line. My brain tells me to power up the next three moves, yet my muscles appear to be rejecting this proposal. Do it; my brain was right - it was possible. The overhanging crack ahead bristles with Friends and nuts. Move on up. It goes well; pull through and Yan's smiling face is five metres ahead. What is the British grade is the enquiry; who knows when you have been at your limit. "Hard" I answer and he laughs. Jeff starts up and we're all united, my lead.

Move to the right, place a two and a half Friend. I've seen better placements. Try a nut - that's better. Traverse up and left, the move starts to pull me off the vertical while the rock mocks with its friability. Two small holes allow the feet to continue upwards but the moment is shattered by Yan shouting that I must not pull on the obvious hold in front as it is loose. What does he mean, it's all loose? But Yan's the man who put the climb up so take notice. I let go with my right, reach up over my head, swing round and clip the peg. Cool; Miles Davis drifts back into the sub-conscious, keep moving, traverse back right, no gear, then find a slot for a half Friend, that's it for the next four moves. The holes are sparse but adequate, hesitate too long and all will be lost. Move on, getting lost in my own fear, move up, clip another peg and there's the belay; only 5b but it would rate E2.

The belay feels safe and I look eastward in to the high tetra; two people in the valley, they wave, two nuns in a remote valley waving. 'I have been too far out all my life, not waving but drowning'. Not today, I am in my element.

Yan has made short work of that pitch and asks to climb the last pitch as a friend has arrived at a position where camera shots could possibly be taken. Jeff arrives and looks quizzically at me again, it's like being married; climbing with someone for a long time words become inadequate to express the moment. Yan smoothly climbs the final pitch always in control, a man sure of his movements on rock he knows well. My turn again, the first moves look tricky but not desperate. Pull on a side hold while attempting to swivel on the right toe. I am in the air then the left leg hits the rock. No great damage, it all happened so quick. I still have the hold clasped between the fingers of my left hand. Look down to Jeff and he back to me then the rock is in space as no other human being is within miles. Having regained the line the moves are committing but without further incidents. I pull over the top and grin at Yan as we shake hands. It's not everyday you climb with a person with culture, humour and a strong prevailing sense of survival. He states "you must now climb *Test Piece* 6+ UIAA with Jeff and make the first British ascent". But that's another story.

An account of the ascent of *Fiddler on the Roof* 7+ UIAA West Tatra, Poland, May 1994. By Yan Muskat, David Briggs, Jeff Jenkins. First ascent late 1993 Yan Muskat. This piece also gives respect to Miles Davis and Stevie Smith, artists in their own right.

Owens River Gorge

Dave Gregory

I read an article once, by an old timer, about a Hobbit. You may have come across it yourself, you meet this sort of thing in dentists' waiting rooms, dustbins, and the like. The Hobbit, or The Book of the Hobbit, The Hobbit Book, something like that. It promised glistening white granite: stemming up never-ending corners, jewel after jewel of jamming crack, dihedrals to the sky, Elysium.

Innocent that I was, I fell for the siren song and took the necessary steps. Passport well in date, a return ticket to San Francisco, a wallet full of dollar travellers' cheques corresponding to an ominous hole in the bank balance, a ton of tea bags and a concise edition of **Speak American in Five Weeks**. Oh, and a guru, a sage who had been before, who knew the ropes (60m long they had to be) and his way around.

Planning perfection: but did I get those acres of high mountain granite, cool in the High Sierra air, washed in temperate sunshine? I did not: I got Owens River Gorge. It sounds well. Say it to yourself. Not quite as evocative as the Big Grand Coulee Dam perhaps, nor has it got a song written about it as far as I know, but it has a resonance, a promise. You need to know the truth.

The gorge is just north of Bishop, a pleasant town in California, with pleasant people, who hope you will "Have a nice day" but who betray their inherent good sense by expressing surprise that you are climbing in the gorge "In August! Ah guess it's hot in there." They are right. You can fry eggs on your boot soles down there and there are one or two other factors to be taken into consideration.

The gorge is deep, 600 feet or so, cut into the flat, sun-roasted Californian desert. The bottom 100 feet are rock, climbable rock, not unlike that at Tremadoc, but above that is a band of fractured red basalt and above that a layer of disintegrating pumice lava. There is a walk-in from lower down the gorge but the quicker way in is down a gully passing through all these strata. Simple enough if the gully were sound. The crumbling pumice feeds a constant flow of choking white dust and sliding blocks onto the middle section where more seriously broken rock hovers waiting for a party large enough and close enough together to be worth falling on. Each person's passage raises a miniature mushroom cloud into the blue desert sky. From your athlete's foot to your oxters you are covered in grit and it is only because you are squinting against the desert sun that your eyes are not full of it too. California it may be, but this gully has the equivalent of the combined slag from South Yorkshire and South Wales's steel works and pits tipped along its sides and bottom.

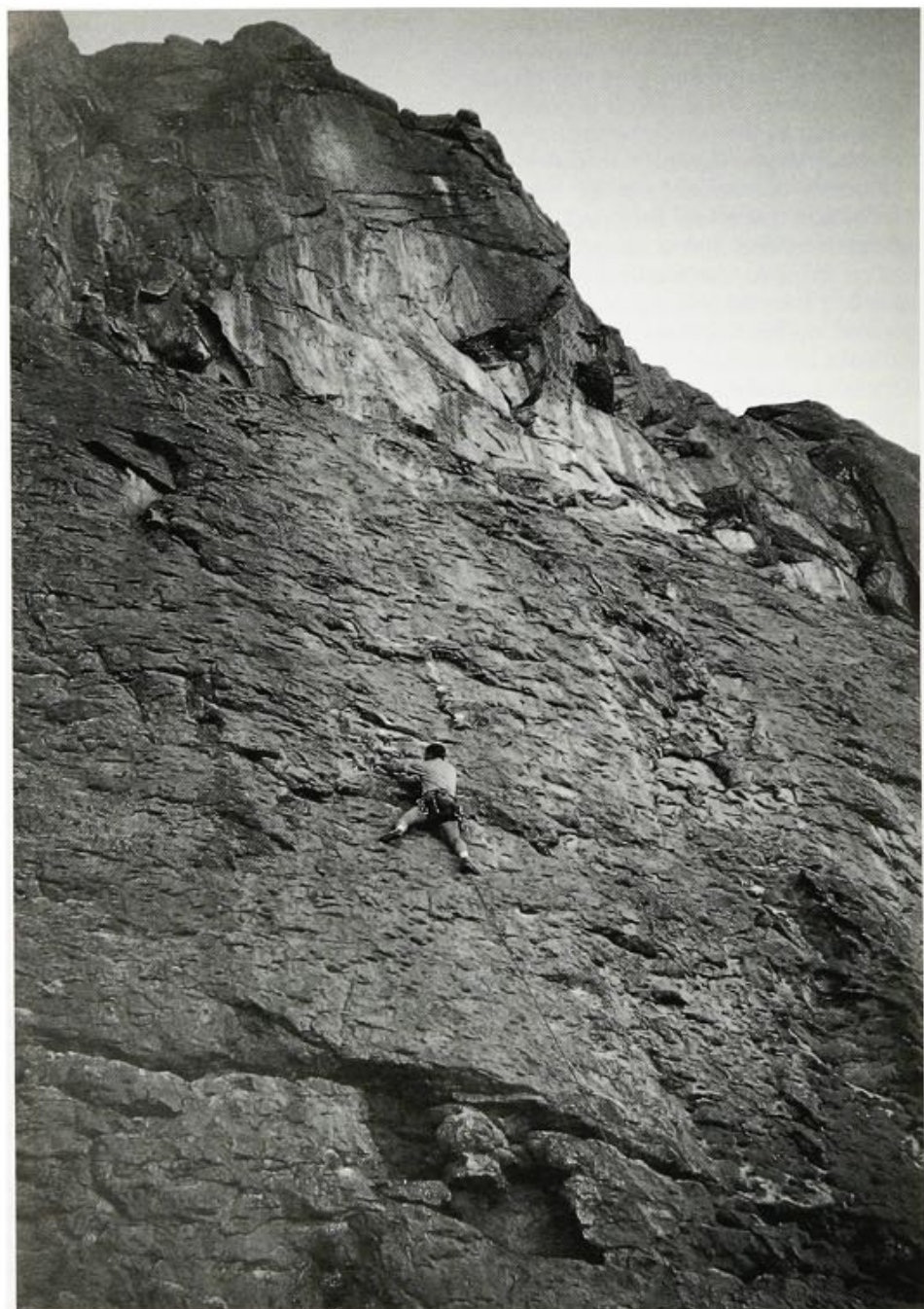
There are climbs on that bottom 100 foot and there is a guidebook to them which has a star system from five down to one. This is to disguise the fact that those without one at all need a black spot. The climbs are in the modern idiom which means that half the natural lines, chimneys and cracks, have either not been done or have no bolts up them or lower-off stations at the top of the solid section and 500 foot of ill-poised dust and aggregate teetering above them at just the angle of rest. Not a place to be caught when it rains. However the routes with stars deserve them, providing they are in the shade when you're on them. Good

rock, good bolts, good lower-offs, from middle VS to, you name it. Vulgar names some of them if you've led a sheltered life.

An early start would give you comfortable climbing for an hour or two and as the sun reaches in for you it is possible to jump buttresses and sides of the gorge to keep out of the sun but eventually whether you are in the shade or not the sun will win and you cower in shady corners and pray for a British winter.

There is one relief from all this aridity. The San Francisco Water Company which had completely dammed the stream through the gorge leaving it waterless has relented and it now releases sufficient of a stream to cool your feet in when you've stripped the melting rubber off them. It almost seems idyllic, but, and some but this, there is the return up the gully, Simple soul, I used to believe that the plod up Brown Tongue and Hollow Stones to Scafell was Sisyphean. Try the walk-out up that gully for mind-numbing, mouth-drying, one step up and two steps back, dust cloud-disturbing, scree-sliding size.

Oh, one other thing. Near the foot of the gully a drystone wall is built across it to protect those employees of the aforesaid water company, who are so unfortunate as to have been sent to work there, from stonefall. Some Philanthropist has hung a section of iron ladder down this wall to prevent people wrecking the stonework as they climb out. The ladder sways somewhat and clatters on the stonework as you use it. This irritates the rattle-snake which lives in the wall.



*Dave Gregory on 'Heart of the Sun' 5.9, Great Wall of China, Owens River Gorge.
Photo: Dave Gregory Collection*

The Cordillera Huayhuash in Peru has been unofficially closed to climbers for a number of years due to the fear of the Sendero Luminoso. The following story is an account of an expedition who in 1993 were intent on climbing Yerupaja, at 6,634m the highest mountain in the range. Although looking for peace and quiet, they found as much adventure in the villages and in the companionship of other climbers, as on the mountain itself.

No Bandits in the Huayhuash

Neil Boyd

Bandits and dysentery. Of all the problems facing travellers in South America, the former is the most overrated and the latter the least. Having been warned off by journals, associated press cuttings, word of mouth and consulate advice, we convinced ourselves that the Cordillera Huayhuash was dangerous, a place full of brigands armed to the teeth, only too eager to sacrifice a pink coloured climber on the altar of Mao.

We were stunned by the beauty of the area around the Alps of Alpamayo and having climbed Huascaran, we decided on a last two week trip to the Cordillera Huayhuash. Our group was strangely assembled but was perhaps preferable to an organised trip from home. It consisted of one half of two New Zealanders climbing around South America, Martin Wright; Wolfgang, a philosophical Bavarian teacher and, strangest of all, Mel, a rastafarian Geordie working offshore in south-east Asia.

Getting crushed between 12 milk churns and a ten pound piece of meat, laden by more food than was necessary and by the gaze of every Peruvian, our truck to Chiquan rattled down the dusty track. We foolishly felt like intrepid explorers after being in the fleshpots of Huarez.

When we arrived at our hotel our host looked like an Italian boxing coach.

"First gringos in four years" he told us.

This was greeted by much swelling of breasts and hardening of jaw lines until a cynic suggested that it was good hotel management policy to keep his tough gringo climbers happy.

Our climbing objective was Yerupaja. The highest, proudest and whitest mountain of the range and for a week or two at least, we claimed total ownership.

"No attempts in four years" "First gringos in four years" everyone said so. Even if it wasn't true it was better than the first gringo in four minutes sign on top of Alpamayo.

We had arranged mules and an arriero in Huarez at the Guides Agency. Our arriero was called Wilfredo who was 27 but looked ageless. From Chiquan, the roadhead, we trekked to Llamac and camped the night on their football field.

The climbing was still a few days away over a mountain pass. Onward and upward we strode, moving fast without our packs. We got lost twice, and a breathless Wilfredo would run after us, whistling across the valleys, until he caught our attention. We crossed Llamac Col which gave us our best view of the long white ridges that form the Huayhuash. Our route passed a village where the people were building an irrigation ditch. It looked like a 1930s Soviet movie.

Further on, a still blue lake and an old house where a lady of 86 lived with her two grandchildren. On further to our basecamp, a little giddy after beers with grandmother, amongst the stone walls of nomadic herders, below a big moraine, and a long way below Jurishanca and Rondoy. There were three tents there. Very modern and awfully rich herders?

"No gringos in four years".

"Intrepid explorers".

"Discoverers of new things".

"Who are they?" we asked Wilfredo.

"Ah Americans, new route on Rondoy".

Marvellous.

After a day of rest and reconaissance, Mel went fishing. The locals used a stick, string and hook and caught 16 trout in an afternoon. Mel, with Wilfredo, who were becoming lifelong friends and Mel the godfather of Wilfredo's children, took up the challenge and went fishing for the week. He had also seen the mountain at close quarters.

"Ski sticks bent...knee twisted...mentally unbalanced...miss Singapore," were his excuses.

The Americans passed looking tough and grim after a night on the moraine. It looked hard up there. We immediately ruffled our hair and tried to look tougher. We gave each other our climbing CVs and then retreated to our tents to lick our wounded egos.

We took enough food with us to climb Rasac as well, if time allowed. So we left basecamp staggering under large loads along old paths, above a turquoise lake and under Rondoy and the Americans' lovely line. We disturbed beds of yellow flowers and tripped on rusting gas cannisters until we reached our campsite on a gravel shelf overlooking the glacier and the mountains.

'Here was heaven' we all agreed and took many pictures to prove it.

A short distance next morning to the camp on the glacier under the West Face of Yerupaja. There was nobody. No sight, no remains. Absolute stillness. Only the sound of the sun. Rasac looked horrible, we were all suprised it was still up. Cornices rippled the top of the ridges, a sentry of rock guarded the face high on the south peak. Blue ice streamed down the west face and our route weaved through three bergschrunds and up snow runnels to the col.

We left the tent at midnight after the rime had covered the insides and our cooking had melted it again. Wolfgang spilt a whole pan of water.

We cramponed through the quiet night, under a big moon and roped up for the bergschrunds. It was still dark but silver shone everywhere as we puffed and panted our way up the slope. At dawn we reached an impasse. A labyrinth of crevasses and toppling seracs. We dreaded going up a dead end and having to lose height again. The problem was solved by using the ropes, climbing up overhanging ice and standing on snowbridges that should have collapsed. The last runnel was of deep snow. They are always described as horror conditions but I found the bottomless powder rather reassuring. It had a kind of 'back to the womb' feel about it.

It led us to the crest and into the sun, and to a view of Siula Grande. On to the first ridge pitch which was a strange overhanging crab-like crawl rightwards along a serac. Then it levelled and in the white mist we thought we had done it.

But Martin stopped. He pushed in two long snow stakes, brought Wolfgang and me across and ushered me on to the next bit.

My lead. This was the stuff of Balaclava. Give me overhanging, loose, shaley grade A8 rock climbing than a Peruvian ridge, a man who had climbed Everest had once told me. To the right 20,000 fathoms of bottomless air, to the left a bottomless pit of loose snow in the form of a cornice. As all falling cornices are described as various models of cars, the first was a mini, the second a BMW whilst the third rose into the truck category.

"I haven't got much snow left," I croaked, frightened but happy to be living. The wind changed direction and I heard them talking about some disco in Huaraz and whether dysentery was related to diet. They hadn't even seen the third cornice fall - the one the size of a bus.

"I'm coming down". Retreat would have sounded better.

Above, the mist cleared and the summit seemed a two minute stroll away.

"I'm going to try again".

Their conversation had turned to the food we had at basecamp.

I found by spreading my body evenly and draping myself over the ridge I could make progress. I daren't move to the right so I humped straight on like Mark Spitz.

The last cornice fell and I slid with it for a moment.

"That's it, phew! It's impossible. Good. Absolutely impossible, can't be done, well at least not by a rational person who likes wine, music and good food as well as climbing."

Burbling away I rejoined Wolfgang and Martin who were onto the philosophy of education and with little persusion they agreed to go down. At least we could claim the highest point for four years. We abseiled about 25 times off snowstakes. At the second bergschrund the lip collapsed, a snowstake snapped and I fell into the hole. The snow was soft and I had not broken anything.

The sun set, gold and red over Rasac and then it quickly got dark. We spent about four hours above the final bergschrund, lost and frightened. Martin decided to abseil it anyway but on his way down a knot in the rope rose up from the dark and he hung there for an hour before freeing himself. Wolfgang and I followed, frozen in the wind blowing over Jirishanca.

By sheer chance only, we finally stumbled through avalanche debris, seracs on all sides and our route a snaking path between, to our little tent alone on the glacier, said goodnight to the moon and Yerupaja, slaked our thirst and slept.

When we got down, Mel and Wilfredo had killed most of the fish in the lake. Mel was fatter and a local legend. The Americans came down off Rondoy and said their line was still futuristic whilst Wilfredo killed a sheep, made an earth oven and baked it. Both the fish and sheep were horrible. The fish full of bones, the sheep old.

The two groups, us and the Americans, walked the two days out to Chiquan together. At Llamac, Mel who had walked quicker than anyone else, reached the bar first and there followed a sad episode in which Mel nearly killed an American who had climbed Everest.

The beers weren't a problem but the Everester had spotted some local hard liquor behind the old barmaid who was knitting. It was agreed that we should all drink a large slug of the firewater and sing a song from our hometowns. I led the

way with **Help** from the Beatles which Barry Rugo took very seriously. I think the American support had Russian blood and so sang **The Volga Boat Song** but he could have been Greek, in which case it was **Zorba the Greek**. Wolfgang sang a drinking song from the Munich beerhalls, followed by a Maori song from Martin which made us cry. The local boys watching at the door were wide-eyed with wonder. Especially when Mel the gog-eyed, wild lunatic from south-east Tyneside insisted he sang both **Bladen Races** and **Fog on the Tyne**, a song by Lindisfarne, and drank two slugs of firewater. The old barmaid, still knitting, refused to give any more liquor at first but Mel gave her some more petrodollars and told her to spend it on appropriate technology. So down went both glasses, Mel staggered, we all sang and exploded into the streets of Llamac. Unfortunately we had ordered our mules on, an hour too far, to a campsite which now seemed a long, twisting, cliff strewn path away.

Drunks aren't worried about the length of the path, more the width. Mel wasn't worried about anything. Twice local people had to pull him out of their wheatfields and once they had to stop him from digging up their potatoes. We all discussed solutions loudly. Someone was for hitting him like John Wayne and carrying him back, but nobody was really sure if they could do it. Barry Rugo just legged it back to camp, puking up at least five times, whilst listening to a tape of the Soup Monsters. I was working on psycho-analysis and declared that Mel needed a firm hand. Mel's reply was to tell me to 'get lost' in no uncertain terms. Wolfgang was once a school teacher and tried the patient approach but he was very drunk and kept on falling over. Martin, whose brother was a drunk or something, knew what to do. The minimalist approach.

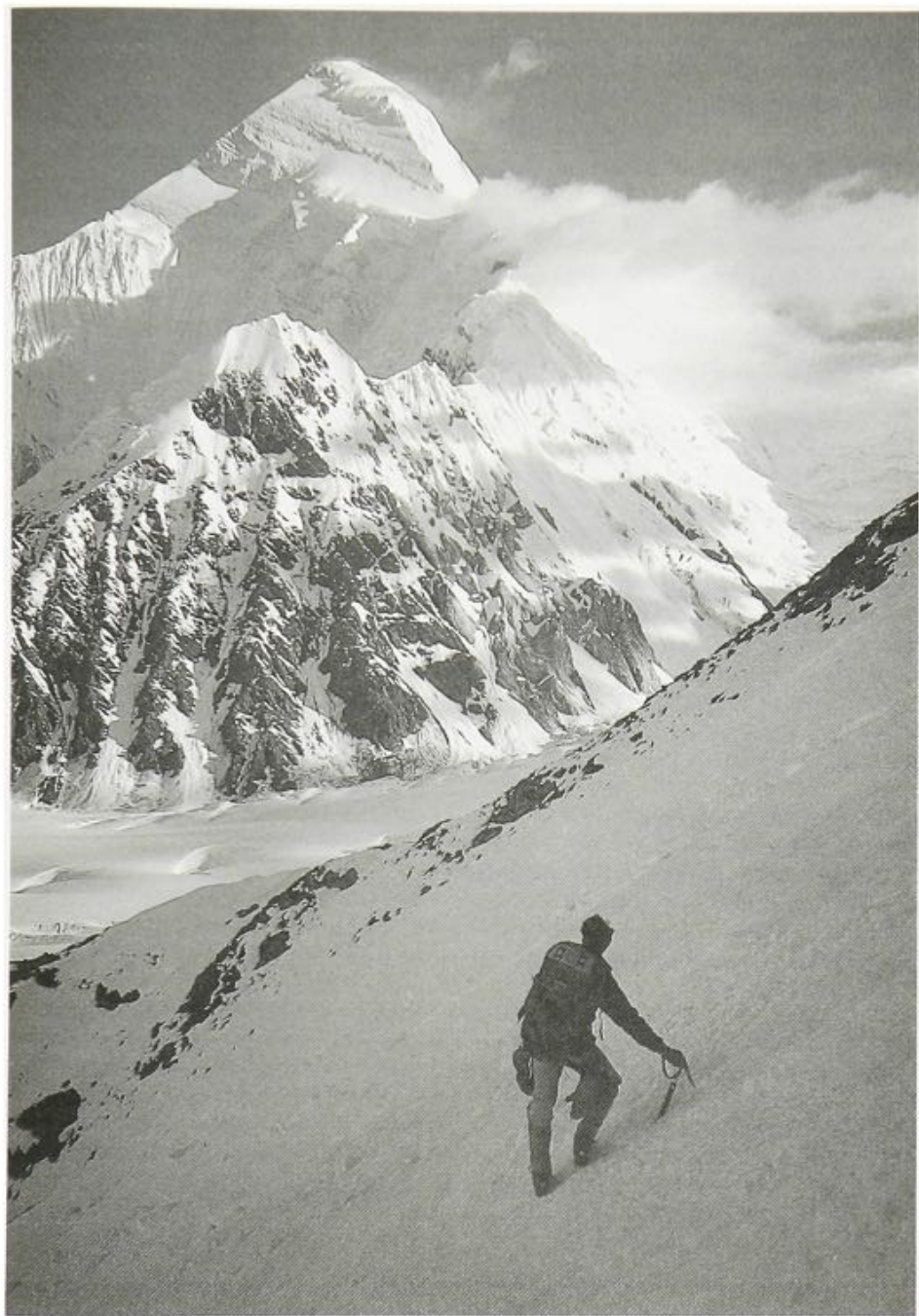
"One person only" he cried and he ushered Wolfgang and me back to camp. It was terribly exciting. This left the Everester and Mel to do it alone. Since we left the bar at 6pm, their late arrival at camp after midnight covered in cactus thorns caused quite a stir.

The story is that Mel insisted on jumping over walls. On one occasion there was no land on the other side of it. So Mel fell the 40, 50 or even 100 feet, depending on who you believe, down the bluff, through the cactus into the river. He lay face down, out of it. He was followed immediately by an extremely brave Everester who, ignoring the immense drop, swallow-dived through the cactus to land at Mel's side. He awoke Mel and breathed some air into his lungs.

The descent along the river sounded like hell. Neither had a headtorch. They stumbled along the rushing river bed in the pitch dark until they were saved by a returning American climber who claimed to be sober.

All that remained was the morning post-mortem and a walk out with hangovers. Martin carried on around South America, Mel went to Singapore and Wolfgang to the Munich Beer Festival. Or was it the other way around?

Oh, and disappointingly there are no bandits in the Huayhuash.



*Stewart Muir on Pk Okritti, Tien Shan (with Khan Tengri behind).
Photo: D. Wilkinson*

Just Good Friends

Kym Martindale

Intense as lovers our climbing made us
And as precarious,
We dovetailed our dreams
And our gear
Which we bought as carefully as couples in Habitat.

We blazed with triumphs
Savoured like suns in our own universe;
Sharp and hungry,
We crept without breathing up slabs,
Battled on cracked faces,
Swung over and round ledges and edges.

We grew round the climbing too,
Attuned to each other
As we leant burnt and tired from a route across a beer-ringed table,
Or crouched on sky ledges where gulls scavenged.
Loved each other we said at last,
Bleary with whisky the first time,
The second time stonily sober
On a grey washed-up day at the foot of cliffs
Beyond us in every way.

For just as we grew easy
With the warmth we had
Something cold and sickly crept from us
And between us and the rock.
We began to lose.
And each loss was harder to reason
Or console away.

Our moves became bloodless.
Blunted and stale with futile longing
We stood hostages to our terrors
At the foot of a tide-slapped slab,
Or a wet jug-handled wall;
Months before we would have danced them with quick care,
Fear the spice which gingered the pleasure,
Not the drowning whole.

Raw with loss
We were useless to each other.
Pain mirrored hurts twice.

Chained to the foothills
By our anguished ambition
We toiled only to tangle.
Cutting loose was a confused hacking
And when the ties fell
We blundered uncertainly, you for the plains,
I circling with a dim remembrance of the joy
Until with small steps and a sense of my fate as my own
I returned
And arrived.

But celebrations for myself
Are less for the absence of you,
Sadder for knowing that I could not arrive with you,
As you could no longer with me.

This summer you gave me your gear
And your leaving was no longer words.
Our ground has shifted,
We have found new footing,
And I still have in you
All that made me love you.

But the biggest loss
Is clipping your gear to my harness
And when I climb
It is with a resonance of you.



*Fixed Ropes on the 'Hornli Ridge', Matterhorn.
Photo: D.J. Cuthbertson*

La Haut sur la Montagne

Brian Kemball-Cook

Que cherchez-vous sur cette montagne?
Un sommet ou un col?
Ne pensez pas trop, en montant, a votre but.
La vie n'est que dans le maintenant.
Le bonheur, visiteur timide et farouche,
Arrive toujours a l'imprévu.
En montant ces pentes
Remarquex les gentianes bleues
Qui poussent entre les pierres.
Remarquex les cristaux de glace
Qui frangent ce rocher,
Plumes étincelantes.
Écoutez cette marmotte
Qui siffle de son trou.
Demain vous ne trouveries pas la même montagne.
Les cristaux seront fondus,
Les gentianes auront perdu leur éclat,
Et la marmotte sera peut-être silente.
La vie n'est que dans le maintenant.

Obsession

Terry Gifford

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us - in short, Mid-Wales, Michaelmas Term lately over and Lord Sumner sitting in Bryn Hafod Hall. Implacable January weather. Snow everywhere. Snow up the hill, where it drifts loosely across the moor to Aran Fawddwy; snow down the gully descent to Craiglyn Dyfi, where it crunches promisingly underfoot. Bits of aircraft everywhere in *Aero Gully*, where we pull up on plane parts and suppress ghoulish stories. But no ice in the Left-Hand Branch where axes sing off-key and crampons stub the turf.

A fire in the hearth, Driskell's old jokes and Kevin's elderberry wine can transform the season of darkness at Bryn Hafod hut into something approaching the hope of spring. And hidden in the dusty attic is a hollow-cheeked presence making mountaineering dreams for the spring lord of the turf, the wily old bookmaker himself, Lord Sumner of Hafod Hall. His cunning gamble of placing three stars on *Pencoe'd Pillar* had given us a run for our money, and he freely admitted that by the form book of North Wales the route lacked the distance. But, taking up our copy of his new turf guide, with the straightening of a line on the Cyfrwy course diagram and the correction of a 16 to a 14 on the list of starters below, he offered us a hot tip for the new season, straight from the horse's mouth in short, thus began our obsession with *Obsession*.

I've blown it. Layed away and stepped up, into a cul-de-sac. I eyeball slopers and slap at everything. A spike squats a mere universe away. I've been rumbled. Cranking down off one arm has it screaming objections. I fail to find the same foothold again and stem away on friction.

Cruising. I thought I was cruising and stepped up without thinking.

"That must be the 'awkward move to reach a spike'."

Some second I've got here. Norman. He sounds a lot like that spaced-out guy in Paris, Texas. Except he adds, "Get some gear in, youth!"

This is the big pitch. He wants me to lead it and he wants to lead it. Both. Above me stretches the smooth slab under the left-leaning corner. We glassed it from the tent. It soars 130ft to the top of the North Face of Cader Idris, the crux of *Obsession*. Now it's nerve-testing time! I'm leading at my limit and I'm doing it wrong. My quivering calves tell me I've got to crack this fast.

Way left is a tiny triangular incut. I reach out a toe, slowly, like a prehensile thumb. It docks first time. Carefully I lean my body over towards it, feeling every inch of the space falling free to the lake below. Neither of us is yawning. I reach left, palming back right, and lock my fingertips onto an edge. Gently I pull across, reaching up for a ledge and then swing back right onto the spike. It's a done thing! I get cruising again, jimmy in a Friend and clip on a long, long sling for the commitment to the slab. Suddenly I'm singing across it. 'Reach up and it shall be given unto you'. Edges turn at a touch into ledges and there's the sweet jamming crack to lift you to heaven. Blues. Bottleneck. Open tuning. Perfect pitch.

Later that evening, in the broken way of friendship that is the *Lebenslust* of the sport, we fell in with two companions who shared with us the joys of their day on the *Table Direct* approach to the *Cyfrwy Arête*. I do not know their names. The young woman had led the curly-haired, smiling man on one of his first routes and he was all grins and amiability, redolent of nothing so much as newly-discovered delight. Here was a young apprentice about to join our obsession. He seemed blissfully unaware of the forms it could take, the choices he might make. Would he, I wondered, find himself on the path of self-assertion and will, the negative obsession with ego and grades? Or would he discover that joyous launch into the creative challenge the rock presents to body and mind? To put it another way, would he learn to know when to stop?

At the top of our route I'd asked Norman if he fancied doing another route. There was plenty of time. But he had said, "What can follow that?". There was a profound maturity in that reply. The previous weekend we had visited, for the first time, the belicose charms of Den Lane Quarry and next weekend the resurgence of this absurd obsession would doubtless take us through the rain in search of some other obscure unvisited crag, whilst what this moment required was simply savouring. The sun was shining and below us there lay a lake. You will believe me when I say that the water beside the way is also of the way. And I make no apology for offending the miserable sham of decency that requires a costume. A swim can make the memory of a climb complete.

The conversation rattled along, as it does on these occasions, in an exchange of route names and a recollection of experiences. As the soft evening light slowly faded and a large white moon lifted over the mountain, we knew that, whatever went on in the magazines, we had shared a sport with dignity, without rancour. Before I slept I was up on that slab again, as though, waking, I had passed through the Gates of Idris, following an obsession. My head was singing and the words were already coming:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...

Guerillas in the Mist

Climbing in Columbia

Neil Boyd

As the blue flame purred, the water boiled and the night rose over our mountain-side camp, we dug our chins into our clothes and listened to the end of Jorge's story.

"...there were only two at first, like an advance party, lots of guns, big....how do you say, yes bandoliers, full of bullets and both of them looking at me. Then more came and more still, until 20 or perhaps 30 all gathered around me. It was very quiet."

"And were you frightened?"

"I was coming to that," and he paused. "No, not really frightened. I knew they were guerrilla, si, si, I knew that because you see" and he grinned, "they all have better, newer guns than the army." A bottle of Aguardiente being passed around reached Jorge. He took a long swig and wiped his lips with his sleeve.

"So what did you do?"

"See this?" and he tapped the bottle with his index finger. "I had a bottle in my rucksack so I got it out and handed it round!"

"What did you say then?"

He looked at me as though I was a little stupid.

"Why, 'Vive la revolucion' of course!"

There were smiles all around.

"So they're OK then," I said.

"OK? Sure they're OK" and then his eyes narrowed quite fiercely, "but I'm not a gringo"

Climbing in Columbia has its own set of difficulties. Although a map may show a mountain range to be a mere 100 miles from a city, the winding roads which are pot-holed and rutted can take eight hours of driving. Access is not the only problem. Information is hard to get. With no guidebooks and only a handful of journal reports, you have to rely on local opinion, and of course, opinion varies. One authority may say that the mountains' approach is impossible and that guerrillas have control of the countryside, whilst another, equally authoritative, will state that the hill is a trade route and that the guerrillas have been run out of town. With such fear and confusion, Columbia offers great scope to those who like their risks in the valley as well as on the hill.

The following two short cameos paint a picture of the idiosyncratic nature of climbing here. The first is an ascent of Nevado del Tolima, a beautiful 5,200m peak in the Central Cordillera and the second is about a day out at Suesca, Bogota's local and only crag.

The hotel McKenzie in Ibague had a room with four beds, enough for our party, but each one had fleas. We slept with our clothes on, on top of the beds. It seemed the best solution.

The lechero (milk truck) leaves Ibague for the roadhead at El Silencio at 7.30 every morning. It is a splendid ride, sitting high in the wagon with the sound of clanking milk churns being left by the red flowers at each farm gate. Then the milkboys' cry, "Arre, arre", ("Let's go, let's go"), as we lurch on up the dirty track.

Above the last small village the road rises above a limestone gorge and there is a view high up ahead of a snow-capped peak framed by a blue sky. It is Tolima, of which the local hillmen sing their praises.

Our party was four. Two Cornishmen, who had done some climbing before on Mount Kenya and a Columbian who had got most of the way up Mount Adams in the Pacific North-West. Ian, Sue, Santiago and myself.

The first part of the trail is to walk along an easy path along the gorge to El Rancho where there are some thermal springs popular with tourists from Ibague. From there the path turns sharply right and ascends the rainforest for five or six hours, depending on how fast you go. We reached La Cueva where the rainforest drops away to make way for the paramo, a misty moorland filled with curious, human looking frailejones. The first Spaniards noticed their spookiness too. Frailejones means 'greyfriars'. At La Cueva we met a small bunch of Columbians. Now Latinos have a slightly different approach to the wilds. It seems that they must have their radios, blaring out local salsa stations, they must have their bottles of Aguardiente and strong analgesics, and a good time is top of their priorities; climbing the mountain seems of secondary importance. We camped at La Cueva, although you can stay in a little hut under an overhang but because of the drips it always sounds as if it is raining.

The next day, with the jumping and jiving Columbians ahead of us we followed slowly, through the paramo to the last piece of flat ground on the south-east face. At Lapice there is enough room for two tents and the snowline is not far.

That afternoon Ian and I, on the pretence of going to fetch some water from the snowline, made an afternoon ascent. It was a mistake. The snow, of course, was up to our knees. Halfway up the face, zigzagging the crevasses and seracs and Ian doing well without crampons, we met the Columbians again. They were having a whale of a time. In jeans and trainers, radios still on their shoulders, here they were at 5,000m, like children seeing snow for the first time. It was all a hoot to them. They could not see the dizzy drops nor crevasses. They held route-finding conferences under the south-east seracs at four in the afternoon. By the time we reached the plateau top, clouds were boiling upwards all around. Ian needed a foot massage, since he had no gaiters and the snow had fallen down his boots. On our easy descent, just below the summit, we found some stinking hot sulphur springs. Ideal for imminent frostnip, Ian sat in them for a while.

We got back down to our tents in the dark, our friends still waiting for the water to boil for their tea, which when boiled would taste like Swan Vestas. Early in the morning the other two, Santiago and Sue, along with two Columbians made another ascent. They enjoyed clear views and hard snow conditions.

Nevado del Tolima is an easy climb, the most popular 5,000m peak in Columbia and well worth it too.

On the way down we took the bus back through the last high village in the valley. There had been a police station there on the way up. Green uniformed policemen had leant against the white washed walls, drinking tintos and enjoying the early morning sun. Today it was riddled with large bullet holes, a wall had

collapsed and there was not a policeman in sight. We asked a local big bellied man what had happened here, although we knew already.

"Guerillas", came the wheezy reply.

"Ah yes, guerillas."

"Isn't climbing at Suesca dangerous?" ask my non-climbing friends. I reply, "You are more likely to be killed getting there than from falling from the cliff itself."

There is more than a grain of truth in this. The black, red and white buses to Suesca, that travel north from Bogota along the autopista, race against the Andrettis and Sennas of Zipaquira, Sesquile and Sogamosa. The buses are always full, pushing the boy conductor out of the door. He holds on with one hand and one foot, the other two limbs gesture wildly, his white shirt is undone to the belly and he mouths his destination loudly to passing trade. It's the most enviable job in Bogota.

But you always arrive safely. The cliffs lie above the meandering Rio Bogota, 50km north of the city. It is quiet, tranquil even. They stretch for two kilometres steadily gaining height, they are limestone and often heavily vegetated. But there are enough bare buttresses, often bolted, to keep everybody happy. Everybody is not a lot. About 50 regular climbers, if that.

One is Pablo, a young Columbian who works as a translator. Hopping along the disused railway track between river and cliff one day, we met.

"Wanna climb somethin' man?" Pablo is always either stoned or acting stoned. He also thinks that's the way you have to speak when you are stoned.

"Yes, I would love to, what do you have in your mind, anything?"

"Ye-e-e-ah, lets go do LP. It's way down there, the far end, the wild end and h-e-e-y, you wanna know why it's called LP?"

"Why?"

"'Cause it's the longest climb at Suesca, man....gettit, gettit?" And he burst into squeals of laughter, which lapsed into chortles for at least 20 minutes.

The climb we did together was very easy, about 5.8, and also very good. Five pitches of hidden holds, grand curling limestone jugs that burst through overhangs. There were large ledges to sit on and chew the cud, and Pablo was bubbling all the way up.

"So good, So good, but why are we going so fast, man?"

There are a lot of routes here of 5.10 and 5.11 standard, some of 5.12 and the locals claim one of 5.13. The standards may not reach European and American levels but the climbers here are keen, fit and determined.

After LP I soloed a few easy climbs. As I gathered height, I was aware of a growing crowd below me. Lots of non-climbers come to Suesca to watch the climbers or to see the Chibcha paintings on the rocks or to climb the statue of the Virgin, 50ft above the ground. Hordes of school children often arrive, dancing all around the Virgin, inches from a long drop.

Up I climbed, past a slithering crack and slab, up steeply through an overhang loaded with rillenkarran which made jugs as big as you wish; then higher, reaching the tops of the creaking eucalyptus trees to an exposed slab of 100ft which swept up to the fields at the top. The excitement grew below. 30 or 40 Bogotanos now gathered. On all sides the space flew away and the slab made me

homesick for Dinas Mot. I reached the top, breathing easily and the ground burst into a round of applause, followed by whistles and shouts. On returning to the base of the crag to pick up my rucksack, the crowd spotted me and rushed over.

"Buenos tardes señor," said one small man breathlessly and slowly shaking his head. He was looking at me as if I was the Messiah. He was searching for a suitable laurel wreath to lay on my head. He found it.

"Usted escala como Pele juga futbol."

Another applause and his young children gazed in wonder. I could not leave before shaking everybody's hand.

Perhaps there are two morals here. Without television and media interest, the crowd is blissfully unaware of what constitutes a good climber and secondly, if you want adulation and adoration come and solo severes in Columbia.

There are other areas in Columbia to climb. For more rock climbing there is a great free-standing rock near Medellin called El Penol. For mountaineering there is Nevado del Huila in the Central Cordillera which has been climbed only a handful of times.

The Santa Marta range near the Caribbean coast offers technical challenges amongst mountains of 5,800m. The Sierra Nevada del Cocuy can be reached from Bogota in one long day and offers a 15 kilometre 1,000m face. Way out in the jungle, a long way out, near where the Orinoco slips quietly through the jungle, I've seen pictures of great granite inselbergs rising above the green carpet. Forget the Himalaya and Pen Trywn for a while, just getting there poses the 'last great problem'.

The Dark Peak

The Rt Hon Earl of Fulwood DG

Life is not always fair. You know how seldom I get in to The Club. The fare down to town is so exorbitant these days. I always say 'down', after all, if you look at any atlas, it is down. It annoys me that all our southern brethren call it 'up'. How can it be up? The damn place is at sea level for a start. You have to go down to it from almost everywhere, even Cornwall. I used to go down fairly often with Hartingham but even the sprigs of the nobility have to cut their coats according to their cloth and he doesn't point the Roller southwards as much as he used. Still he occasionally does and then he's kind enough to give me an invite to recline on the old leather upholstery. I think that actually he invites me to stop him from going to sleep on the journey and perhaps to persuade his wife that he can't be up to any mischief with me along. But of course he could be up to anything for all I know. He might be a star turn at Cynthia Payne's. Gynslip and black stockings or the strict matron, who's to know? He goes his way and I go mine. To The Club. This time I was just signing in and having a short word with the porter when I got a slap on the back. Good job it was a Biro and not the old nib pen they used to have. I'd have pinned the book to the desk. It had to be Clawson. It was. Today was not life's turn to be fair.

He almost forced me to go to lunch with him. I could hardly have refused without being downright rude. I did my best to get out of it. Said I wasn't having lunch, got a meal planned for the evening. Got to see my broker. Got to go to Harrods for Gladys. If I could have remembered if there were any matinees on I'd have said I was going to one of those, but I couldn't. Old Finlay, the waiter, was still there. He must be 90. I usually have a bit of a chat with Finlay but he could see that Clawson's being there had put me out a bit and contented himself with;

"Nice to see you again, Sir"

He suggested a table in the middle of the dining room and put Clawson's rucksack behind his chair.

"We've had to move the table next to it, gentlemen. Woodworm. But it will leave you plenty of room."

How much room do you need to partake of steak and kidney pie? (which was what Clawson had). I told Finlay that I would just have some soup and some cheese and biscuits to follow, with coffee, black. Finlay almost said something. He might have been going to comment on the progress of my slimming campaign but had the tact to remain silent. No one wants Clawson to know that they're trying to keep fit for climbing. Half a breath of that and you'll be fixed up for a week with him somewhere and there's no escaping.

"Been out recently?" he said, and before I could think of a way to disguise the fact that I was getting in a regular day a week and the odd evening on the local stuff, he carried on;

"Ah well, we can't all be lucky."

Which was what I was thinking. I'd done pretty well to avoid him so far this year and my luck had just run out.

"Been out quite a bit."

I managed to squeeze in that I'd had a pretty good rundown on his activities in Pembroke but he was off on another tack;

"Years ago that. Been up to the Peak since. The Dark Peak. Stayed at the Downes. You ought to go. The elements..."

"Got electric fires, has it?"

"What've electric fires got to do with anything?"

"You said the elements..."

"NO. THE elements. The weather, man. The elements up there are, are...", he was searching for a word.

"Harsher" I said.

"Elemental" he said. Well he shouted actually. He seemed pretty sure that that was the right word. Whether it was or not, it made an old gentleman in the corner, who was evidently not hard of hearing, spear himself with a pickle fork.

"The weather up there gets hold of you by the..."

"Throat" I suggested, for the way he was clenching his fingers suggested that some portion of the anatomy was entering his mind and people were beginning to stare, and there was a bishop two tables away.

"God, yes," he said, "elemental."

"Had a fantastic week. Thought it was going to be a frost at first. No one there the first morning 'cept a grey-haired codger who came to scrape moss off the roof. I thought he was going to accept my invitation to go on Froggatt for the afternoon but when he'd checked the visitors' book he said that he had to go back to work. Still there was a school party there in the afternoon. I helped their master organise them for a bit. Damn lucky you know, being able to get on the crag during school hours, with an expert on tap. Pity they couldn't have stayed longer. They had to get their minibus back for another party to use. They were coming along nicely with a bit of experienced advice."

An elderly member got his walking stick entangled in the rucksack's straps and explained to Finlay that there was a dog in the dining room. Finlay was able to disentangle the strap, guide the member, and support our tray of mock turtle without noticeable difficulty.

Clawson rubbed his hands at the soup and loaded half a cob with butter.

"Hell of a view from there you know. Right down to Chatsworth."

And he waved his arm to indicate the vastness of the panorama. The bishop at the next table seemed not to understand where the extra butter on his baked potato had come from. One would have thought that bishops were used to the miraculous apparition of sustenance. Ah me, is there no faith anywhere these days? Finlay busied himself with the silverware.

"Spent a day on Scout."

He said this a little loudly and one or two heads turned. It seemed incumbent upon me to put a stop to any suspicions which might be developing.

"On Kinder Scout you mean."

"Of course. What a day. Map and compass. Mist, wind, the hags..."

"Met some women did you?"

"NO, the PEAT hags. Deep as hell and as black as the devil's armpit."

"Unpleasant, eh?"

"I'll say. I went crutch deep into one. Just got out, left me boot behind. Had to

go down on me face and reach for it down the hole me leg left. Do you know your leg's longer than your arm?"

He had been simulating this grovelling in the abyss, sweeping his left hand along the floor, maintaining his balance by extending his right leg into the space behind him. Finlay had, a trifle ostentatiously moved the next table which was at least six feet away, but this was too subtle for Clawson. He seemed to be about to commence measuring his inside leg against his arm whilst remaining seated and consuming the last of his soup. Finlay glided into view and asked if we would like more soup. We wouldn't. Clawson would have his pie now and I would wait a little before having the cheese and biscuits.

Mercifully he had lost the drift.

"A couple came along. He had a walking stick. Straight handle. Just the job. Got it out in one. He seemed a bit worried about the handle coming loose and getting so dirty."

"They going the same way as you?"

"Well, they were going to Fairbrook but I persuaded them to go over the Downfall. Magnificent view you know. Water blowing back like a Force 10."

And the last lashings of soup followed the butter. I never saw who got the benefit of them but at least no one asked Finlay 'was it raining or did the floor leak?'

He was well into his story when the pie came.

"Left 'em there. Well, I stayed and they went. At a rate of knots. Wouldn't have thought a fellow who needed a stick could move like that. I said I was going to have a word with a couple of blokes doing a route just by the waterfall and they'd gone."

"Know the fellows by the waterfall?"

"No, but they weren't a bad pair. They were having a bit of trouble on the corner, it being wet, but I showed them how to go on. They gave me a rope up it. Gratitude I suppose. Mind you the belayer was a whiner. Kept complaining about how wet he was getting, standing in the spray. No stamina these youngsters. One of their Friends got stuck. I had a go at it but he insisted I leave it for the third man. He seemed to think I'd pushed it further in. You know how people shift the blame when there's pressure on them. I wanted to do another but they had to catch a train to Sheffield. Well, one of them said Sheffield, but when I said I was going back towards Sheffield the other said he was from Manchester and they went off to Hayfield".

"Had a fantastic day on Stanage. Midweek. Hardly anyone on it."

"Well, there wouldn't be, would there?"

"Why? How do you mean?"

"Midweek."

"Of course, of course. But I had a good day."

"Met someone?"

"Yes, one of the young stars. Teeshirt and tights type, but he could climb."

I was about to enquire, out of politeness, what they'd done but there was no need.

"Did a mass of old classics. You know the stuff. Jamming, talk about jamming. Arms into the elbow."

The vertical karate chop with which he illustrated the magnificence of the jamming was graphic enough. The piece of kidney which left his fork might have

formed an adequate chock in one of the narrower cracks. As it was it added itself as an extra embellishment to a gateau on the sweet trolley. I supposed no one would mind.

"We finished up on *Flying Buttress Overhang*. Four star, that, four star."

"High octane in the hoist, eh?"

"Well, I did have a bit of a tight rope. It's easy up the slab but then you get both hands on a little nose under the overhang."

With his fingers pinched together in front of his face to show the tension of the position he looked like a traumatised squirrel.

"You have to hold yourself on the left hand" - his facial expression portrayed the ultimate in agony - "and reach up with your right."

I felt his right foot hooking in the angle of my left knee. I felt a momentary qualm of suspicion but Clawson had no reputation in that line.

"Right out," he said, rocking back on his chair with his left hand gripping the table edge, completely unaware of the rest of the diners who, to a man, were entranced, hands frozen part way up on the mouthward journey, "and you whip your left hand up..."

He needed to say no more, and got no chance. As he leaned back his foot slipped from under my knee and hit the underside of the table. The tableware jumped upward and in that instant his left hand grip slipped off the table edge and, as the chair flew backward, he followed, taking the cloth from under the pottery as clean as a whistle. The only casualty was his pudding bowl which dropped onto his rising knee and flew backward to land on his face as his head hit the rucksack.

Not one of the viewing statues moved a muscle, gazing transfixed at the display, as rabbits at a ferret. Finlay was equal to the occasion. He bent over Clawson solicitously,

"Would you like a little more sweet, sir, or perhaps you would like to attend to your toilet first?"

And so he did.

"Shan't be a tick," he said. "Tell you about *Wuthering* when I get back."

Fortunately Finlay had other ideas.

"The Secretary's compliments, sir. Would you like to take your coffee in his private sitting room? He will not need it until two o'clock. There is a Telegraph there, sir. I could wake you at ten to two. And, perhaps a brandy with your coffee, sir? Some of the members do when they've been talking to Mr. Clawson. And the Secretary says that there will be no charge for anything you've had today, sir."

"Very kind of him, Finlay. Finlay, why does the Committee continue to allow Mr. Clawson to remain a member?"

"His grandfather was a founder member, sir. It means a great deal."

My grandfather collected a penny a week insurance. Why did he not offer policies against the likes of Clawson?

It was just after two when I left. The porter gave me a message from Finlay.

"I was to say, sir, that Mr. Clawson met a member of the Fell and Rock when he returned to the dining room. They are planning a fortnight's climbing in the Lake District."

"Very kind of him to tell me, but why should I wish to know that?"

"Well, sir, I think that he thought you might think it safe to go to Wales."

Malta: A Hot Tip

Terry Gifford

Fomm Ir-Rih

Sun, shorts, stillness, sea,
pocketed boltless limestone
less than a rope long, but sharp.

Above the sea cave two men
collect the morning's harvest
of fluttering bird cages.

Ghar Lapsi

'Commando Ratlines' recommended
in Roger's kitchen in West Cumbria,
an entertaining line leading up to
the killing fields-a dump
of cartridges, bolted trap-chains.
Stone hides face the soaring south.

Wied Babu

Broken glass, pram frames, dead
fires under the leaning block
and a single flower of yellow.

We climb on the sunny side
of the sea-sucked valley to
gun shots and a songless sky.

Wied Il Qirda

Past piles of roadside rubbish
into the little valley of rocks
above which patrols a gunman.

Didn't climb the Old Man
of Mixta either, luckily.
A lorry dumps over the cliff path.

To Gozo

Swerving round two dead cats left
midstreet, but the Inland Sea
is worth seeing and 'Virgin Soldiers'
best VS, almost a rope long.
Shooting over valley crags.
Amazed to see a seagull.

Ix-Xaqqa

The long cliff of slabs, if
a little vegetated and loose.
Idyllic island at the bottom
of a gully descent over
washing machines, burst bags
and, still fresh, two dead dogs.

Victoria Lines

Last crag before leaving, I throw
green cartridges from the holds.
Walking out over a dead dog
I disturb a deformed white
rabbit, escaped from the menu,
that hides under a twin tub.



Above: The First Whillans Box, Annapurna South Face gear trials 1970. **L to R:** Mike Thompson, Martin Boysen, Nick Estcourt, Chris Bonington, Don Whillans.

Photo: Ken Wilson **Below:** Joe Brown, Pete Crew and Chris Bonington, South Stack 1967. **Photo:** Ken Wilson



In the absence of a creation from my own pen, members may find this letter to be of some interest. The original is to be found in Malvern College Library and the letter shows the difference in life, in the Club, over 50 years ago.

Mike Burt

CLIMBERS' CLUB

E.S.Chantrell
Hon.Custodian of the Club
Cottage 'Helyg' Capel Curig.

11a Gerard Road
Wallasey
Cheshire

8/9/39

Dear Wilfred,

I wonder if you can help me. I am very much in doubt as to our future plans for Helyg. If I thought that there was any chance of its being used I would somehow try to keep it going. The difficulty is to gauge the demand. It is obvious that no-one will get there for the odd weekends. The petrol rationing will settle that. What will be the position of the University Clubs? Any chance of meets?

I expect that I will have to give up my car at the end of the year. It is not worth paying for tax, insurance etc. when one can do under 200 miles per month. Possibly Bartrum and Donkin could get me a better allowance. Also there is the cost of electricity £50 per annum. We cannot go on paying this out if there is no income. What are your ideas? Do you think that people would continue to go to Wales for holidays in the summer?

What a mad world. In my case - as in many others - I feel that everything has gone - friends, Helyg, climbing, cricket etc. When I get the question of Helyg settled I shall probably return to the RAF though I am far from being a militant. I hate the whole thing. It looks like hitting Menlove pretty hard too. There is a possibility that he may join David and me here.

What are you proposing to do? I understand that you will not join one of the fighting services. I must say that I think you are right. David is taking the same line. He has today taken on a job in the ARP Control office at Bibby's the oil-cake people.

Anyway, the best of luck to you in whatever path you tread.

Yours ever,

Stuart.

Following the '92 attempt on the Mazeno Ridge of Nanga Parbat, Doug Scott was back this year, trying to make the first ascent of this long and serious ridge.....

British Nanga Parbat Expedition 1993

Doug Scott

Our team consisted of Wojciech Kurtyka (Poland) and myself, to try the Mazeno Ridge and also Richard Cowper, who would join us on acclimatisation peaks. Our excellent Liaison Officer was Captain Ali and our two cooks, Hussein and Hakim, both from Hushe.

We left Islamabad by minibus on 20 July, arriving the next day after a 16 hour drive up the Karakoram highway at Gilgit. On 25 July we arrived at Tarshing. For three days we acclimatised to the north of Tarshing, climbing up and around Sharsing. On 28 July we walked to Latobo and camped (3,580m). The next day we continued to the Mazeno Base Camp (4,100m) and on 30 July we walked up steeply to the Mazeno High Camp (4,900m) as per map. There are a number of stone circles here, used previously by trekking groups.

On 1 August Richard Cowper and myself set out for the southern-most point on the long ridge to the west of the Mazeno Glacier. This has the appearance of a spire, as seen from Base Camp, hence we called it the Mazeno Spire. In actual fact, when seen from the ridge itself it is nothing like as steep.

After a lot of scrambling, I reached the summit, unroped, after a final 600 foot of VS climbing up the south side, and a final 20 foot hard section at 5a on the south west side. There was no sign of anyone else having been there. Richard Cowper stopped some 20 feet down from the summit.

After various walks around the area, and bad weather, Wojciech Kurtyka, Richard Cowper and myself set out to climb the highest of the peaks west of the Mazeno Glacier, which we called Mazeno West Peak. After a long 2,000 foot climb up an avalanche chute, and up a final snow basin, we came to the summit (5,700m). Again, there was no sign of it having been climbed before. From the summit we had excellent views of the west end of the Mazeno Ridge and could see the whole of our climb of 1992, which looked much steeper when seen head on. Wojciech and myself looked forward to going the same way, and to the summit of Nanga Parbat, which we could also see, some 10 miles away.

We came down, unroped, Wojciech, myself, and a long way behind Richard Cowper. Wojciech was some 100 feet lower, when a huge amount of fresh snow from the upper basin avalanched down. I scampered away from it towards rocks on the other side of the avalanche couloir but the moving snow caught me as I ran. I managed to get my axes in and held my position for a time, but the weight of snow built up and suddenly I was away, tumbling down some 1,200 feet, bouncing over rock and ice cliffs. As is usual when it is all happening, there was no fear, only curiosity registering every sensation, and my thoughts upon them; like 'this is it', 'no, no, I'm still alive', and 'how resilient the body is'. All these thoughts, and others were going through my head, as I bounced down, and finally came out at the bottom. I was partially buried, but able to pull the snow away from my face, release the belt strap of my rucksack and breathe more easily.

I wriggled out, only to find that I had severely wrenched the tendons of my right ankle, the one with pins in it from the last time I had an accident in 1977 on the Ogre, also in Pakistan.

For three days we sat around at Base Camp, but it was obvious that my leg was not going to get better, so I rode a horse out to Tarshing and eventually took a jeep to Astor hospital. After looking at the X-ray, my suspicions were confirmed, that there would be no chance of further climbing that season on Nanga Parbat, in fact, no climbing for the rest of the year. Richard Cowper came back to the UK with me. Wojciech stayed on to go trekking around the area with his wife and children, who came out to Pakistan after Richard Cowper and myself had departed.

The only tangible benefit of our visit to the climbing of the Mazeno Ridge is that we did see the west end of the ridge and we have some interesting photographs of it. Whether it is Wojciech and myself who will return to climb it in the future, I don't know, but surely a team will climb it soon, and to my mind it will make one of the finest climbs in the Himalaya, and not that dangerous. It just needs someone strong, determined, a decent break in the weather, and a bit of good luck.

Supported by:
British Mountaineering Council
Mount Everest Foundation
Malden Mills

Lundy - The Golden Age

(Confessions of a D Team Climber)*

Simon Cardy

In those days the numbers on the trips that I arranged to Lundy had a habit of dwindling rapidly at the last minute. The steamer was about to leave Ilfracombe and there was only Gray Gilbert and myself and a large pile of strange ropes. These turned out to belong to Pat Littlejohn, who appeared just as we cast off.

That afternoon we set off to climb in the recently discovered Landing Craft Bay area with Nick Dymond, the bird warden who was resident on the island at that time. Not having climbed with Pat before, I didn't want to give a bad first impression. I suggested that Gray (who was 'good at jamming') led Pat (who was still recovering from the crossing, during which his face had suddenly turned a greener shade of pale) up *Destiny*, a steep crack climb that Pat had climbed earlier that year and had undergraded at EI, and I led Nick up *The Minstrel*, a VS that Pat had put up at the same time. Two hours later both Gray and I had failed on our allotted routes! In my case, we made an ignominious escape up an undistinguished Severe on the same buttress, and in their case Pat took over the lead. The following day Pat insisted on leading us up *The Minstrel* just to prove the grading was unaffected by the block that I had tipped off and had feebly used as an excuse for my failure. A few years later the whole buttress fell down, which left me with the undistinguished achievement of being the only person ever to have climbed all the original routes on it!

Next morning we went exploring in the Devil's Chimney Area. Gray went off on his own to eye up a line that he had seen, and I followed after Pat. I found his clothes on a sea level boulder, stripped off and swam after him. I met up with him beneath an awe-inspiringly steep, high zawn, where he told me of a line that he had cleaned off on his previous visit. We then went on swimming, beneath what was to become The Egyptian Slabs and landed just before *The Pyramid* with the intention of scrambling up an easy looking spur of grass and rock. Our attempt at an underpants clad solo first ascent of this spur gradually came to an uncomfortable halt as we neared its top. Luckily Gray had been keeping an eye on our progress and had brought our clothes round to the top of the spur, where he was able to give us a top-rope.

That afternoon we returned to Landing Craft Bay, where Pat and Gray both set to work gardening their own lines. I went for a (recreational) swim and then dried off in the sun as I watched them complete their efforts. Pat climbed his line quickly and it was soon my turn to climb. I was very conscious of the need not to show myself up, but the climbing up a steep groove and crack line was reasonable. Pat had run out of names for his lesser new routes, and he eventually took the name from the back of a Corn Flakes packet, which offered as a prize 'Win a day at one of the following sports events...' *Formula One* was soon to become recognised as one of the best Hard VSs on the island, and is now one of the most popular. It was probably a good job we didn't do another climb on that buttress since we would've had to have named it 'Horse of the Year Show'.

Next morning we climbed the line Gray had cleaned on St Patrick's Buttress. It was a rather disappointing climb, partly though my failing to accept the challenge of the best line for the second pitch and partly through the aid used on the top pitch. We called it *Motorman* after a recent Army operation in Northern Ireland (Gray was into such route names). In the mid '80s I was happy to agree to Gary Gibson's proposal that the climb be superseded by his own far superior (and free) *Meninirons*.

It then rained for a couple of days, and in an exploratory foray during a break in the weather I drew Pat's attention to a large unclimbed cliff that I had seen just south of the Montague Steps. In a sustained bout of foul weather, when the rest of us were in the tent reading or in the Marisco Tavern, Pat borrowed my 300 foot 'Lundy' rope and went off to inspect the cliff further.

The day before Gray was leaving the island, the weather cleared. We started off by following Gray up *Roadrunner*, a crack line in the steep slabby face of First Buttress North. This was followed by some exposed moves, with one point of aid, on the steep wall above. The first pitch was to become a very popular VS 4c pitch in its own right; the top pitch never seems to have caught on, either in its aided or in its now free E3 6b form!

Gray then disappeared with the 300 foot rope down the island to the Devil's Chimney area. When I caught up with him later in the day and looked down from the grassy slopes above, I saw a tiny figure near the bottom of the cliff on what looked like a short free abseil down to the sea level boulders. At Gray's request I then started to garden the heavily vegetated top pitch of his chosen line. This was my first attempt at serious gardening, which resulted in a painful two hours in an uncomfortable figure-of-eight sling (this was before the days of harnesses, for me at any rate) in hot sun and with a strong updraught blowing much of the earth that I removed back into my clothes, my face, my hair, everywhere. My progress seemed pathetically slow, but I convinced myself that I had cleared the worst of the vegetation and that it would be easier below! One advantage of my slow progress was that I didn't have far to go to prussik back up to the top; this was just as well since this was the first time that I had used the Habeler prussikers that I had obtained some years previously (and whose design had already been condemned as dangerous by the BMC).

With an afternoon steamer to catch, Gray got us up early the next morning. I awoke with large lumps of earth in my eyes, and blearily followed Gray down the island. The plan was for Gray and me to abseil down to the bottom, and then for Pat to finish off gardening the top pitch (which was out of line from the start). As a result of past epics on free abseils, at Boulder Ruckle and elsewhere, I was wary at the prospect of a long abseil, but Gray assured me that only the last few feet of the abseil would be free. Thus when my turn came, I happily set off down the rope and proudly passed the scene of my efforts the previous evening (a couple of years later I was to learn from Pat that he had thought the pitch to be completely ungardened before he went down!). Then suddenly I realised that I was off the line of the top pitch and at the top of an impending 150 foot high wall, and my feet were about to lose contact with the rock. I was using a figure-of-eight descender on a single 9mm rope with no gloves: I panicked! I convinced myself that if I stopped for long the heat in the descender would melt the rope, and the rest of my descent consisted of abseiling for a few feet until my hands got too

painful and then stopping until I thought the rope was about to melt. I was spinning round uncontrollably on the rope, and when I stopped my legs involuntarily started going up and down as if trying to make contact with the increasingly distant rock. I contemplated letting go of the rope and hoping that the friction on the descender would be enough to save me crashing into the rocks below but thought that that probably wouldn't be a good idea. After what seemed like an hour but was probably only a few minutes I joined Gray on the sea-level boulders. While I inspected the state of my hands I said to Gray words to the effect of 'I say old chap, why did you decide to abseil down that line?'. He answered that he was curious as to whether there was a line straight up the wall, so that was alright. In fact, such was the foreshortening effect of my view of Gray's abseil the previous evening, even if we had taken the line that I thought we were going down there would have been 70 feet or so of free abseil - enough to have given me a Boulder-Ruckle style epic.

Gray's line started up a spur to the right of the overhanging wall that we had abseiled down. The long pitch up the spur proved to be the technical crux of the climb at 5a on greenish rock. When I joined Gray at the top of the spur, the situation was impressive, the way above was barred by overhanging cracks and grooves and everything looked loose. I took one look at his multiple belays and immediately put in another three nuts before we changed over.

Gray then started down the easy but very loose fault that separated the spur from the overhanging wall to gain an obvious line of ledges that crossed the wall. Gray then pulled onto the first of the guano covered ledges, and part of it came away in his hands and he was off! It wasn't much of a fall for me to hold since he was below and only slightly to one side of me, but there was quite a bit of slack and my gloveless hands weren't in much state to hold anything. So it was with a sense of some relief that he came onto the rope, and we exchanged the usual pleasantries. Then all hell broke loose, amidst a twanging of ropes and a whirring of stones a dark shadow appeared in the sky to my right. I was convinced that it was my multiple belays pulling out one by one, and it didn't take much to imagine the shadow as the Angel of Death! But it was Pat, coming to see what all the fuss was about. Having now cleared at least some of the loose rock off the traverse, Gray completed it uneventfully and I followed it with my heart in my mouth. Gray made short work of the long slabby top pitch, the first on the route that I actually enjoyed climbing, and as soon as I joined him rushed off to catch his boat leaving Pat and me to collect together the various ropes that now adorned the cliff. Gray had already come up with a name for the climb, *Overlord*, a name that was to become immortalized in the Lundy Log Book and later in the Lundy guide by the comment 'Thank God it's Overlord'.

Pat intended to make good use of the limited time that we had left on the island. Firstly there was the little matter of the line that he had cleaned on the large unclimbed face south of the Montague Steps. I followed Pat gingerly down the very exposed grassy approach along the top of the cliff (a descent that has now been superseded by an abseil, a fate which for some reason seems to have overtaken a number of the descents described in the early Lundy guidebooks!) to gain a wide grassy rake. This lead down to what Pat described as 'an amorphous juggy wall', which had to be climbed down at Hard Severe standard and I was happy to use the shoulder that Pat offered to me on the hard move. We then had

to jump across a small inlet to gain the foot of the largest of a series of slabby rakes that cut across the vertical face. The first pitch of our climb led easily up this rake to a belay below a groove cutting into the steep wall above the rake. Pat made light work of the main pitch, but I soon regretted my lack of attention to the way by which he climbed it. The entry to the groove was strenuous and I made little progress despite trying it on a tight rope. There was nothing for it but ask Pat to tie off the rope and to call on my recently acquired skills of prussicking! After much huffing and puffing I arrived at the first of a series of narrow slabs above the groove, and continued in more orderly fashion to the top. Pat was generous and put down my performance to the state of my hands after the morning's antics. He named the route *Wodwo* after a Ted Hughes poem, and we named the cliff Weird Wall, which aptly described this enigmatic alternation of steep walls and easy angled slabs.

Next morning we set out for the zawn that we had swum beneath on our first day. Pat had reconnoitred a steep rock and grass descent to its north (another descent to be overtaken by an abseil in modern times), and we soon found ourselves on a narrow ledge system leading halfway across the foot of the steep smooth north side of the zawn. Our objective was an impressive groove line which started some 40 feet to the right of the end of the ledge. A thin slanting crack some ten feet away from the ledge led up to the groove. I belayed on a peg as Pat prepared for a tension traverse to gain the crack. His face took on a look of alarm when he saw the stance that I had taken to give him tension but he soon put this right with some choice words of advice. He made the tension traverse and started up the thin steep crack. Learning from the previous day's experience I watched carefully: it looked difficult but he got a few runners in and I thought 'I can do this - pulling on the runners if necessary'. Then, after he had gained the foot of the main groove, his progress slowed down at a steep fin that divided the groove. This gave me plenty of time to contemplate our position: it was a grey cloudy day and rain was not out of the question, the tide was coming in below us and cutting off escape from the belay above the first pitch, and we were the only climbers on the island. But Pat was made of sterner stuff and slowly but surely climbed the difficult section of the groove (now given an E4 6a grading, and this was 1972). My turn came to climb, and I swung on the rope towards the slanting crack. I made a half-hearted attempt to grab the crack as I went past, and went on swinging to arrive at some ledges to the right of and well below the crack. What a shame, I was going to have to prussik. When I got to the crack, I took one look at it and the groove above and went on prussicking until I reached the stance.

We changed over belays and Pat commented on the way I had tied on, presumably he too was impressed by the seriousness of our position! I quoted Blackshaw to him and he quoted **Big Wall Climbing** back to me - I re-tied my belay. Pat made the next pitch look a bit more reasonable and I determined to give it a good try when my turn came. However, faced with the reality of an overhanging bridging move with a low layback hold, I soon resorted to prussicking to gain the easier groove above. For some reason, my watch had advanced itself and I pronounced that we had no time for the natural finish up a compact headwall above the lower pitches, so we made an easy escape off to the left. We were back early the next day before our boat left, to make amends. The headwall gave a delightful pitch on steep clean rock in an exposed position, and

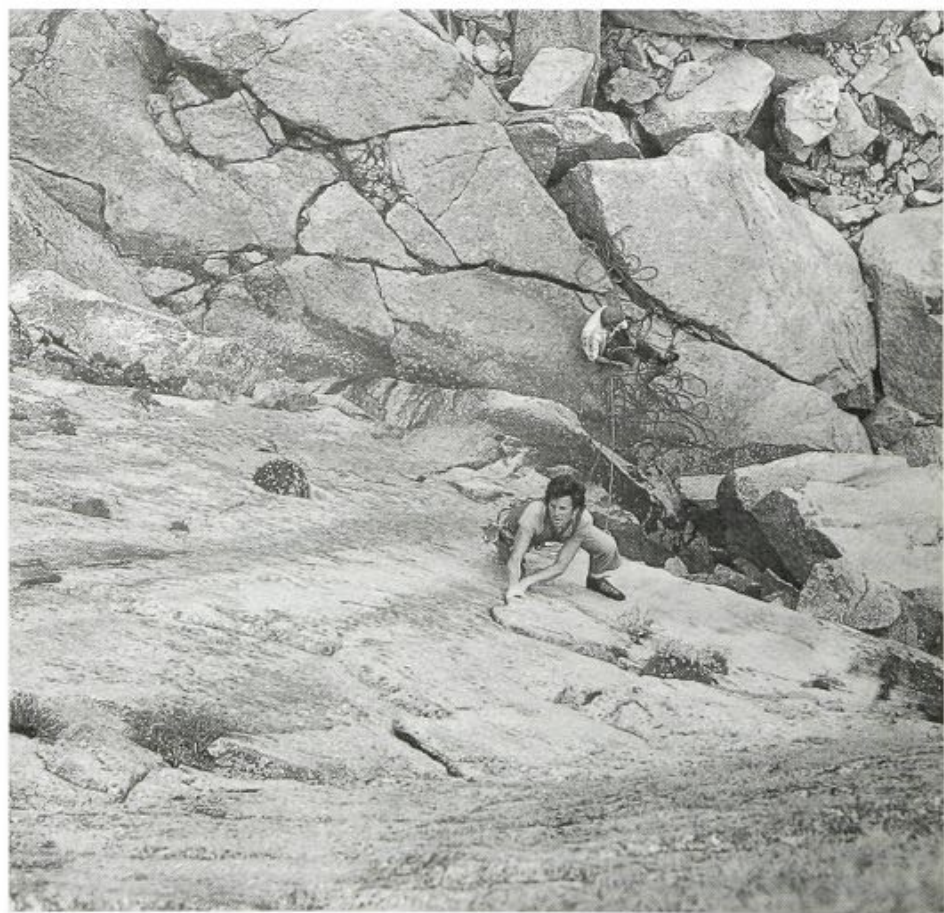
for a change the standard was reasonable - thanks mainly to the three points of aid that Pat had used. He named the climb *Antiworlds* after a poem by a Russian poet, "Not without the s, Bob, it's not some form of dated existentialist statement!"

The three of us were back the following Easter, but that's another story. For a change there were 11 in our party, 33 new routes were climbed, and I had things more under control (for a start I had learnt of the value of wrapping a rope round a thigh on free abseils) and even did a bit of leading. In many ways that was perhaps the height of 'the Golden Age of Lundy', but the earlier trip had, to quote from the description of *Overlord* in the new guide, been the real 'Adventure with a capital A'.

*In the early '70s, Ken Wilson was fond of categorizing climbers into:

A team - (the top climbers), B team - (the almost top climbers),

C team - (good climbers), and D team - (the rest of us)



Graham Parkes on 'Ice' E2 5c, Lundy. Photo: Chris Craggs Collection

Obituary

Sir John Laurence ('Jack') Longland

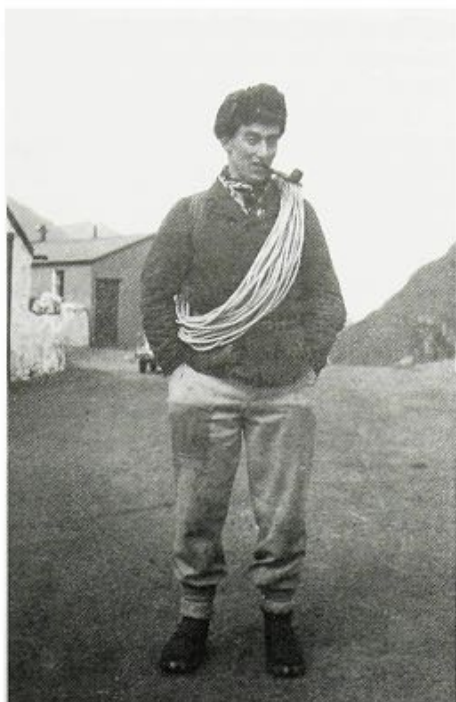
1925 - 1993

There is a photograph, taken at the old Promontoire Hut on La Meije in 1928, of three young Cambridge fellows, all of whom became distinguished men in their separate ways. One of them, Bobby Chew, slumbers; another, Lawrence Wager, eats; the third, even in repose, dominates. He lounges on an elbow but the athlete's physique is still obvious - the neatness of build, the power in chest and thigh. A book lies open on the mattress and the camera catches him as he looks up from it. The expression's that of a young raptor - intensely alert, wide-browed, quizzical. The presence and promise of the man even in this fading image from 65 years ago are startling.

Eldest son of a clergyman, Jack Longland was educated at King's School, Worcester and Jesus College, Cambridge, where he was Rustat Exhibitioner and Scholar in 1924. He took a First Class in the Historical Tripos in 1926, and a First Class with special distinction in the English Tripos the following year. From 1927 to 1929 he was Charles Kingsley Bye-Fellow at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and between 1929 and 1930 Austauschstudent at Konigsberg University, after which he was appointed lecturer in English at Durham University.

The six years Jack spent at Durham were a seminal period in his life. He married Margaret Lowrey; he met John (later Sir John) Newsom; and he moved, via lecturing for the Workers' Educational Association and the Directorship of Durham Community Service Council, into the field which occupied the rest of his professional career, that of educational administration. Though inspired to some extent by his friendships with John Newsom, Geoffrey Winthrop Young and Kurt Hahn, his own idealism was the prime motivation for this:

'I came into educational administration at the end of the squalid and hungry '30s, after some years working with unemployed Durham miners and their families. I think that those underfed children, their fathers on the scrapheap, and the mean rows of houses under the tip, all the casual



Jack Longland at PYB in the '20s.
Photo: Jim Perrin Collection

product of a selfishly irresponsible society, have coloured my thinking ever since: they were, besides, one main cause of my entering the statutory education business. I had been shunting about in social sidings for long enough, I wanted the main line express to a new world, and fair shares all round.'

In 1940 Jack was appointed Deputy to John Newsom, Education Officer for Hertfordshire at the time. In 1942 he moved to Dorset as County Education Officer. The final move of his career was in 1949, to Derbyshire, where he was Education Officer until his retirement in 1970. Throughout this progress from Durham to Derbyshire he left behind him golden opinions amongst populace and professionals alike. Amongst his innovations was the establishment (at White Hall, near Buxton) of the country's first Local Education Authority-run centre for open country pursuits, a venture which involved and brought into contact the community of climbers and ardent hill-goers with the schoolchildren of the county in a social experiment which proved an outstanding success and was the model and forerunner to hundreds of others throughout the country in later years. He shared Newsom's conviction (expressed in the latter's report of 1963, **Half our Future**) that the social factors operative upon pupils were of major importance in their educational performance, and sought to re-structure the school system within Derbyshire to ameliorate this effect. He was knighted for his services to education in 1970.

Quite apart from an academic and professional career of distinction, Jack Longland was a sportsman of exceptional prowess. Short, muscular, and of great agility in his youth, he was an Athletic Blue at Cambridge, his event being the pole-vault. The strength, commitment and explosive power this required, served him well in what was perhaps the great love of his life - mountaineering.

He had been introduced to the Alps by a Classics Master at King's School who had taken Jack and his brother to a gîte above the Rhône valley, encircled by the peaks of the Diablerets, for two years running, to read Greek. His interest was thus fired, and he searched out thenceforwards every bit of rock available to him on family holidays or within reach of his native Droitwich, to practise his new-found passion.

"I remember making my Papa sit on the rope while I was trying to climb the villainous bit of crag called the Ivy Scar Rock on the Malvern Hills, which I think was the most dunderheaded thing I've done in my life."

When he went up to Cambridge, he joined perhaps the most talented generation the University Mountaineering Club there has ever produced: Gino Watkins, Lawrence Wager, Ted Hicks, Wyn Harris, Ivan Waller, Spencer Chapman - all swarming round the avatar, Geoffrey Winthrop Young, whose presence had drawn them there. Jack, too, fell under the spell of GWY and Len Young, and moved into the charmed circle of 5 Bene't Place and Easters at Pen y Pass. He not only joined he excelled. In the years between the wars, as an all-round mountaineer he was without equal in this country.

Along with his younger contemporaries, Colin Kirkus and Menlove Edwards, he was responsible for the surge in standard of British rock climbing between 1927 and 1932, and whilst the number of his first ascents on British cliffs did not equal theirs, those he did make were of at least as great significance.

His climb on the West Buttress of Clogwyn Du'r Arddu, at Whitsuntide 1928 - the route now bears his name - was the first true breach in the defences of this

forbidding cliff. *Purgatory* on Lliwedd, climbed the following Easter, and the *Javelin Blade* climb in Cwm Idwal, which he did with two novices ("I'd lost the route and did it by chance. I had to haul them up like sacks. Fortunately I had a good belay.") at Easter 1930, equally were milestones in British climbing history - the latter remaining perhaps the most difficult lead achieved on a mountain crag until the immediate post-war period, and one of the few British climbs of its time which could bear comparison with technical developments on the Continent.

Under the influence of Geoffrey Winthrop Young, he pioneered British guideless climbing in the Alps, and achieved some formidable feats of ridge-traversing and peak-bagging in successive alpine seasons of the late '20s and early '30s. He was a natural choice for Hugh Ruttledge's Everest expedition of 1933. The expedition was plagued by atrocious conditions of snow and weather, but one episode from it has become a part of mountaineering folklore. Longland's action in bringing down eight Sherpas from Camp 6 at 27,400ft, in a sudden storm and white-out conditions which obliterated all traces of the route, by a ridge on which he had never been before, which was ill-defined, easy to lose, and adjacent to the most perilous ground, through an ordeal which lasted 36 hours in which he had continually both to safeguard his exhausted and dispirited men and force them to keep on the move, is one of the great mountaineering epics of responsible heroism. It deserved and drew the highest praise, and certainly saved his Sherpas' lives.

With the exception of a light-hearted trip to East Greenland in 1935 with Lawrence Wager and their wives, Everest '33 was his only major expedition. He was invited on others - notably Tilman's 1938 Everest expedition - but his moral commitment to professional and political work by then had taken precedence, and disallowed the many months of absence such ventures required.

Apart from his involvement with education and social welfare, in which field he served on almost every advisory committee and council of any importance operative in his working life, he also served on the Central Council for Physical Recreation, The Sports Council, The British Mountaineering Council, the Countryside Commission, and the Commission on Mining and the Environment. He was a President of The Alpine and Climbers' Clubs, Chairman of the Mountain Leadership Training Board, and of the National Mountaineering Centre Committee.

Personally, both in his professional and recreational connections, Jack was not always a wholly popular figure. He was a man of principle, intelligence, independence and devastating wit, who could stomach neither fools nor pomposity and was quite capable of savaging either when they crossed his path. Which, in climbing and education, inevitably they did, and then the idealist in him was so urgent a creature as occasionally to become choleric. For all that, there was another side to his character which was more frequently to the fore - an impishness, a sense of fun, a relish for the robust ambiguity and the subtle pun, all of which made him an ideal choice as chairman and question-master to the long-running radio programme 'My Word'. Even in his late 80s, his enjoyment of combative and good humoured conversation had not deserted him, and nor had his ability to run ragged the most sharp witted of his opponents. Yet he was also a man of proper humility, loyalty and culture, with a genius for friendship, and a concerned, calm enjoyment of his own family of two sons and two daughters.

These qualities, and his absolute integrity, ensured that he was held in the highest regard by, and received enormous affection from, the community of mountaineering, which viewed him as chief and nonpareil amongst its elder statesmen. His house in Bakewell was a kind of salon - hospitable, a focus for cultured and witty conversation and a haven of social concern. He had, by the early 1980's, despaired of the Labour Party's chances of electoral victory, and having taken a long and dispassionate look at the Social Democratic Party after its formation, he joined it, and was canvassing door-to-door for its candidates as late as his 82nd year, during the election campaign of 1987. But this was a political allegiance tempered by the knowledge of a previous social vision - in an attempt at the enactment of which he had more than played his part - betrayed. It says much for his spirit that even in the last years of his life he could begin to re-think, re-group, and re-build. The fading of that renewed vision and the knowledge that his educational legacy was being undone, brought him, however, very close to despair:

"I watch with appalled disgust what Mrs Thatcher's successive administrations have visited upon the community of Britain - in the education service, for example, the substitution of a reasonably non-pompous altruism by unashamedly vulgar self interest. I can't remember anything nastier than the Conservative Right in the Commons - and I meet their like daily in pubs - since Churchill lambasted the 'hard-faced men who'd done well out of the war' back in the 1920's."

I last went out with Jack from his Bakewell home on a cold, dreary November day. We drove up to the pub in Over Haddon for lunch. He had suffered greatly in recent months through the deaths of Peggy, his wife of 60 years, and of his eldest son John. He seemed frail and sad. But as we gained height above the valley of the Wye, we broke through the cloud and the sky above was intensely blue. He sat in the sunshine in a window, Lathkill Dale mist-filled in front and the tower of Monyash Church sturdy on the ridge beyond, and he reminisced: nostalgically, of a climb on Tryfan in the moonlight with Gino Watkins before the latter disappeared in Greenland 60 years ago; mischievously, of a particular Cambridge of the 1920's; optimistically, about the good sense or even wisdom of the present Bishop of Durham. I think he was happy again for a time. To me, he was The Good Father. I treasured his friendship, cherish the memory of that last flickering of a fine mind and an exemplary life.

Jim Perrin

John Disley adds:

Jack had two contemporaries in the education world who played major parts with him in the work of the CCPR and the Sports Council - Professors David Munroe and Peter MacIntosh, who were both in the Education Faculty at Birmingham University. These two and Jack advising in unison at CCPR and Sports Council meetings put ministers and civil servants to flight, such were their academic and pragmatic reputations. Not one of them, and especially not Jack, could abide a jot of dogma to cloud an issue.

Jack fought on for his principles even when in his 70s. His refusal to allow Ken Wilson to impose BMC politically-correct modes - the young should climb or fall without benefit of organised training - on the work of the Mountain Leadership

Board and of Plas y Brenin was steadfast. Jack as Chairman and Ken as BMC representative on many committees of this era made for very difficult meetings, but Jack stuck it out until more moderate and reasonable voices prevailed at the BMC. In my opinion, his unflinching response to attacks which were often extremely personal in nature stopped the BMC being completely rejected by the fair minded climbers of the day. I followed him as Chairman at the ML Board and PYB, and would not have taken on the jobs if Jack had not previously won the day.

As a last point on Jack's sporting career, when at Durham he coached athletics with unemployed miners. One of his proteges was a young man by the name of Henry Yelder, who specialised in Jack's favoured discipline, the pole-vault. Jack got him on to the School of Athletics course at Loughborough College, and Harry was sent to vault for Britain at the last pre-war international event held in Cologne just ten days before the German invasion of Poland. Yelder won with a height of 12 ft 6 inches - the second-best ever by a British vaulter at that date. Like many of the athletes at that meeting - which but for Jack's influence he would never have attended - Harry was to lose his life in the war that followed.

Kevin Columba Fitzgerald

1951- 1993

Kevin often said that his life changed when Brian Hilton Jones, his assistant as Head of ICI's Dublin office, persuaded him to visit North Wales. They came to



L to R: Tony Moulam, Kevin Fitzgerald and Jack Longland.

Photo: A.J. Moulam

Pen-y-Gwryd in the middle of June 1950 and his love affair with mountains began. Brian, his wife Edwina, and Kevin came up to Llyn Du'r Arddu on 10th June and watched me climb *Chimney Route* and *Sunset Crack* on a nowadays unimaginedly deserted Clogwyn Du'r Arddu. Kevin was a most generous man and, that evening (and often subsequently) plied me and many others in the smoke room with Worthington E and Passing Clouds. He even lent me his car once. He was in Wales for a week, then went home by train. He entertained me in his home in Chinnor when I delivered it back.

That first visit proved important for me too as my performance, and perhaps more importantly the fact that I mended Kevin's bedside light, convinced him that I would be a suitable recruit for ICI (of which I had not then heard!) and so in due course I graduated and joined 'the Great Concern' where I worked for 30 years.

The magnet of climbing brought Kevin to Wales again on the 24th and 25th of June, full of keenness to rock climb. We managed to do half of the *Milestone Ordinary* and half of *Amphitheatre Buttress* (on different days) as his introduction to the sport. Kevin had almost constant trouble with his back but, despite pain and unfitness, was always cheerful and never lost his enthusiasm for climbing and climbers. Various extreme measures such as being stretched on a rack in the London Clinic, and having a corset fitted which must have been very uncomfortable in hot or wet conditions, actually succeeded in restoring some fitness but unfortunately I was not able to be present on his final triumphant ascent of *Amphitheatre Buttress*. Nevertheless he was well looked after by Doug Verity and Ray Greenall after a preliminary sally onto *Geoffrey Winthrop Young's Climb*. These were probably the happiest excursions of his climbing career but he had now joined the Club and *Slab Recess Route* on the Gribin Facet soon had a place in his heart (see CCJ 1954).

We were together again a year or two later with a large party from PYG and made a state ascent of Little Tryfan. By now I had joined ICI and another occasion sticks in my mind when I visited Kevin in his fine office in Nobel House, Buckingham Palace Gate. This would be about 1955 when he had left Dublin to take up an appointment with Central Agricultural Control, and I was a fledgling representative based in Manchester. Kevin persuaded me to climb onto his mantelpiece to demonstrate climbing techniques to his boss, the Chairman of Agricultural Division! This probably ensured that my career continued in the north rather than being moved to London where such exploits were not much encouraged.

About the time Kevin ventured to Wales he had started to have one or two detective stories published. They were in the tradition of John Buchan and the first I read was called *It's Safe in England*. Soon *A Throne of Bayonets* introduced Christopher Higgs (an innocent and transparent pseudonym for another of our members, recently deceased) and it proved one of the best. I was pleased to be able to contribute to its authenticity by checking the critical (to the plot) angle of sight for a rifle shot across Lliwedd's buttresses! *It's Different in July* continued the climbing theme, and *Quiet under the Sun* brought in the Spanish mountains for its obligatory chase.

Various other light hearted articles from his pen enhanced the Journal until 1968. My favourite is *I'm a Sick Man Fitzgerald* which has a, very slight, basis of fact, being an account of Kevin's first ascent of Tryfan. This output, and his continued mountain walking with David Cox was remarkable as his sight started

to fail and various operations did little good. Perhaps his most recent memorable feat was to prepare and present a long and amusing speech at the Helyg Reunion dinner, which he naturally had to do without notes. A tribute to his memory and intellect as he must have prepared it all in his head.

His wife Janet Quigley pre-deceased him and he is survived by his daughter Prudence. Kevin will be badly missed by many, both in the climbing world and outside it as he was gregarious and got on well with people from all walks of life.

A.J.J. Moulam

Kevin was incapable of talking without being amusing. The very modulation of his voice commanded one's interest and fascination but the words were choice. They were choice not only in everything he said but in everything he wrote, from his middle period detective stories, through his classic contributions to mountain literature to his own partial autobiography **With O'Leary to The Grave**. His letters and postcards were exquisite, always to us ending with "How is Fred?", our dog, his own then love being for his cat, Thomas.

But back to his voice. His speeches at CC dinners were perfect in their contrivances. He delivered them as though he was thinking aloud but he confided to Pat, my wife, who noticed that he had eaten nothing, and alcohol was forbidden, that appearances were deceptive: he apparently wrought himself into a high state of nervous tension before delivering, in a casual sounding manner, a stream of wit. His voice was in demand - once I switched the car radio on and to my surprise heard his mellifluous tones giving childish anecdote after anecdote for ten minutes on Woman's Hour. Nobody else could have sustained the interest with that material: his voice was essential.

But what of his work and play in the wider world? So much has already been written about him in the national papers and mountain literature that I hesitate to embark on a life history. Indeed, much of this history has been covered by Tony Moulam whose appreciation of Kevin appears with this obituary.

Tony has mentioned aspects of his distinguished career with ICI: this perhaps grew naturally from his early agricultural experience on his father's 980 acre farm in Tipperary and his years at an agricultural college, but we are fortunate that this ultimately led him to London and the PYG. Is it true that he could be found in the resident's bar there reading **Kirkegaard** or was that merely something he said? His Irish-Englishness delighted characters as disparate as David Cox, a close friend, and Ken Wilson; indeed the records of his encounters with Ken and with Jim Perrin are themselves a delight and Audrey Salkeld points to more epigrammatic material in her obituary, with its wealth of quotations, of him in **Mountain Review**.

His climbing was nothing to boast about - indeed Kevin would only boast of its mediocrity. But this allows me to indulge in the airing of a theme I have maintained since John Hunt's advocacy of it during his presidency. The CC would be the poorer if the only candidates allowed in were tiger climbers - really hard men or women. Over the years the Club has benefitted in a variety of ways from the membership of men and women with a great love of the mountains and a consistent resort to them for reliable climbing at the standard they profess. Kevin was one of the best exemplars of this theme. He was a positive asset.

Harry Sales

The figure in farmer's corduroys unfolded from a corner seat in the smoking room of the Pen y Gwryd Hotel, swayed upright, from a great height and extended a hand down towards me, informing me in precise, measured, booming tones as I took it, that "You shake the hand that shook the hand of William Butler Yeats" Thereafter he dissolved into a wheezing chuckle, pulled me down to sit beside him, then teased, pricked and reminisced over an extraordinary range of conversational topics: grass husbandry, Cardinal Newman, Isaac Disraeli's **Curiosities of Literature**, Ireland during the original troubles, rugby and mountaineering as metaphors for life, Mrs Thatcher and Women's Suffrage traduced - on and on into the small hours of the morning, enchantingly.

Thus my introduction to Kevin Fitzgerald, and if in any way he sounds pompous I do him a disservice. The parody of Browning was pitched at a level of self-mockery. Kevin took nothing about himself and very little about his fellow-humanity - other than their capacity for cruelty and self-delusion - at all seriously. Behind the grave facade of Kevin Columba ("Two men whose sanctity wasn't widely accepted at the time of my christening") Fitzgerald was a mischievous Irish spirit of irreverence. He was once bearded in his club, the Athenaeum, in front of a fellow-member by some mountaineering-pundit-on-the-make who had contrived an invitation there for himself:

"I see what you are, Kevin - you're a typical member of the Establishment!"

"Good Lord, Kevin!" exclaimed the fellow-member, rising to his defence, "The Establishment's not going to like this..."

Whilst it may not have relished the idea of his typicality, it certainly enjoyed his character. He spoke as people no longer speak, or perhaps have never spoken - in grave, parenthetical perorations through which, as hyperbole mounted upon comic hyperbole, the realisation slowly grew that his natural bent was for the mock-heroic, that his whole intent was to hold up the clearest, gentlest mirror to human pretension and folly. He was drawn, therefore, to this most presumptuous and egotistical of human activities, mountaineering, about which he left a small body of essays - **Your lovely hills are very dangerous, Meet me on the Miners' Track**, and **The Assault on Slab Recess** - which inflate the dialect of the tribe in order to celebrate easy companionship, incompetence and the lack of all difficulty and motivation. Utterly subversive, they are so charmingly performed that there was never the slightest possibility of their gently mocked objects ever taking offence.

But that was the slightest part of his life's output, proud though he was of it. Somerset Maugham had introduced him to Heinemann in the '30s with the recommendation that "He's no novelist, but by God! He can tell a story." So stories he told - eight of them, all thrillers: **A Throne of Bayonets**, **Quiet Under the Sun**, **It's Safe in England** and others - by Chandler out of Buchan and Stevenson, about any one of which authors' work (but especially the latter's), with the preface of that wheezing chuckle he could enthuse at length with the clearest recall.

On our first meeting he was already approaching 80 and we had corresponded for several years. His letters were quirky and encyclopaedic, humane, always encouraging to others, modest about himself, pungent with lived-through advice. Health and sight both failing fast, he was working strenuously at memoirs which finally appeared when he was 84 under the title **With O'Leary to the Grave**. Immediately hailed as a minor comic masterpiece, serialised on Radio Four, re-issued in Oxford paperbacks, for the outrageous vivacity of its characterisation it

must have found its way onto many peoples' shelves of essential books. The portrait of Kevin's father, the self-made grocer Michael Fitzgerald, belongs with the great obsessives of literature. By his side, Philip Gosse in Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* seems almost listless, and much less benign.

It was to literature that Kevin owed his foremost allegiance. Professionally, he farmed in Tipperary and Canada, then worked as General Manager for ICI in Ireland and later as its Head of Agricultural Publicity. Recreationally, he played rugby for London Irish and was a member of the Alpine and the Climbers' Clubs. Emotionally, as his master at The Oratory School (established by Newman) wrote, 'Fitzgerald was a boy the whole of whose interests lay outside the normal curriculum.' He had a passion for good writing, worshipped Dickens, Browning, David Jones. Not to know this is to understand nothing about him, and it is a joy to me that he finally produced, in his blindness, a small masterpiece. I find it hard to accept that I'll never again hear the exquisitely turned periods of his talk; that there'll be no more letters telling of how he never found anything to beat the pleasure of ploughing with a pair of horses on a fine October day in a vanished Ireland; no more aphoristic asides such as his comment that "England has never learnt that there is only one Irish problem England"; no more of his elaborate teases: "I suppose all you extreme climbers will vote for that disastrous example of the ultimate, Mrs Thatcher?"

His health had entirely gone 12 years ago: 'What with a fresh fall of snow last night, a general feeling's developing that it can't be long now', he wrote. In reply, I sent him my first edition of *In Parenthesis* 'I shall live another ten years on the strength of this', he promised. His wife Janet, founder of Woman's Hour, died six years ago. He struggled on, still corresponding genially with many friends, in his beautiful thatched house in Chinnor, beneath the Chiltern escarpment, with a Burmese cat, Thomas Lack, for company. At the first snow of this new winter on his home hills he finally gave up the most generous, rich and anachronistic ghost I ever encountered.

Jim Perrin

Terry Leggatt

1965 - 1993

Terry Leggatt was a great friend of many of us and his enthusiastic and enlivening company is greatly missed.

He was born in 1941 and educated at Beaumont College and at Balliol College, Oxford (1960 - 1963) where he read Physics. He was also a leading figure in OUMC and won a featherweight boxing blue. He was a remarkable rock climber and very strong for his weight. He climbed extensively with Alan Heppenstall and had excellent alpine seasons which included ascents of the *Comici Route* on the Cima Grande, the *Cassin Route* on the S Face of the Cima Piccolissimo, Cima Pigolo Giablo, the Roc-Grépon Traverse, S Face Direct on the Aiguille Dibona, S Arête of the Meije, and the NE Pillar of Les Bans. Their climbs in Britain included fine leads by Terry of *Carnivore* in Glencoe and *Sassenach* on Ben Nevis.

After Oxford, Terry worked for Tube Investments for 5 years and then for IBM for 25 years. He married Anne in 1968 and they had three sons. He maintained his keen interest in climbing and mountains. With John Galloway, he climbed such routes as *Great Buttress* on Cynr Las, *The Groove* on Llech Du and *Yo-Yo* in Glencoe. In the '80s, he climbed often with Alan Wedgwood. Routes included *Centurian* on Ben Nevis, and *Big Top* on Bidean Nam Bian. They went on two trips to Nepal, the first to the Ganesh area where he made the third ascent of Paldor and several new routes; the second was to the Langtang valley from where they climbed the N Ridge of Naya Kanga. On both trips Terry demonstrated his strength, determination and high work capacity.

Terry's last two years after the diagnosis of leukaemia in 1991 were remarkable in that he seemed to live at double speed. He climbed often with his son Dominic and his OUMC friends and enjoyed climbing up to E3 at Avon, Pembroke and Verdon, 'competing' with those less than half his age. He also went to the Wind Rivers in the USA where he did a lot of climbing, culminating in the N Face of Warbonnet (IV & 5.8). Sadly, this period was ended by pneumonia following a bone marrow transplant operation.

David Baldock

Nicholas John Prescott

1992 - 1993

Anyone who has read the book **The Shishapangma Expedition** will know how much that trip owed to the energy and enterprise of Nick Prescott. Alex MacIntyre succinctly introduced Nick in the first chapter: 'The tale began in the mind of a young man from Belfast ... a tall, eager, agitated Irishman possessed of flair, aquiline features, an irrepressible buoyancy, eyes framed in gold rimmed spectacles, a brash and sometimes misplaced confidence and a method of speech that can reduce all but the most hard-nosed listener to a confused resignation.'

My first encounter with Nick was by proxy when I met his wife, Rhona, at the Boardman/Tasker reception. "I'm here to represent my husband and also Doug Scott and Alex" she said. Rhona then related the curious tale of how Nick, having handed over his permit to Doug, found himself in the middle of China with one of the strangest group of martinets ever to leave Britain for the Himalaya. The expedition, so hastily organised and funded, turned out to be one of the most successful ever to leave Britain. There were no accidents, a new route was made in scintillating style on a very high mountain together with two other first ascents, and the subsequent book won the Boardman/Tasker prize. In all of this, Nick, though totally upstaged by his highly experienced companions, played a key supporting role and also shouldered much of the organisational and fund-raising burden.

The expedition book won the prize and, as Rhona was leaving, she mentioned that she and Nick were soon to move from Welwyn to the Macclesfield area.

"Look me up when you arrive" I said, looking forward to hearing the inside story of this amazing trip and of the part played by Nick.

After the move it was not long before we made contact. Nick was at once both overpowering and a trifle vulnerable - large, hulking and clearly very bright (it later emerged that he was encrusted with academic and professional honours). He was exasperatingly confident, swamping you with a curious braggadocio of knowledge, opinion and wild plans delivered with a rich northern Irish cadence.

I was describing him to one of my mates, groping for an apt simile. "He rolls across you like one of those great earthshifting machines you see on new motorways, like 'Heavy Plant' crossing! That's him to a tee." This sobriquet was doubly apt as Nick was a Civil Engineer and was soon engrossed in building his practice so that climbing discussions became increasingly studded with digressions into the problems of bridges, motorways, tunnels and power stations.

Because of his professional duties he was invariably unfit for hard climbing yet I was convinced that with his build, confidence, and determination, not to mention his Shishapangma antecedents, like a mountaineering Clark Kent, at a critical point he would emerge as a force to be reckoned with. I saw a glint of this latent ability on a November foray (with Dick Carter) to climb *Great Gully* on Craig yr Ysfa when he led the greasy upper pitches with some panache. We extricated ourselves from the slimy Great Cave pitch with just a few minutes of daylight remaining whereupon I jokingly demanded that he break out the grog. To my amazement, as if to order, from a pocket (I swear he was wearing a Norfolk Jacket) emerged a slim flask full of an elixir of Irish spirits. We were jubilant, and suitably invigorated, descended a darkening Cwm Eigiau with a spring in our steps. From that moment 'Heavy Plant' was immortalised.

Frank (the Decorator) Connell remembers an even more dashing example of Heavy Plant at his best when they made a four hour ascent of *Orion Face*, swinging leads, and on arriving at the summit Nick produced a meal of sliced black pudding and peeled oranges that instantly rejuvenated the parts that other food would not have reached.

He had a deep yearning to test himself, a sort of public school desire to tackle stiff, character-building cross country runs and the like. Big mountaineering trips fitted the bill perfectly but were not always successful. One autumn foray to Chamonix, with Frank, they made a somewhat desultory ascent on the *Argentière* but then Nick descended into palpitations and hypochondria - little did we realise then what a harbinger this was to prove.

One foul February day he phoned - "You're in" he informed me. "I am running your way" (his house to mine being a hilly four miles).

"I trust the wind and sleet will be blowing in your face" I said, knowing his taste for character tests.

"Yes, they will be. Wonderful. See you in half an hour, get a brew on."

Somewhat later a drenched and staggering apparition, resembling an extra in a Leni Riefenstahl mountain film, emerged from a sleet squall and slumped gratefully next to the Aga, slowly seeping, chattering in delighted Irish about another test successfully completed. It was only after ten minutes of this blarney that I detected a pronounced vibration in the torso.

"You are hypothermic!" I said. "Get upstairs immediately and have a hot bath". He meekly complied, narrowly evading becoming a stretcher case.

Thus the tales of matter fighting a losing battle to deliver what his mind decreed accumulated - yet his struggles were conducted with such stoicism and keenness that they reflected a curious and engaging heroism. He received a further setback when, in 1990, he was struck down with a viral infection to the heart from which he was slow to recover.

Tut Braithwaite remembers a bizarre day on Millstone when Nick was trying to get in shape after his illness. Having followed *Great North Road* with difficulty he insisted on upping the ante on *Great West Road*. After a titanic and exhausting struggle on a tight rope, he rolled over the top and gasped, to his leader's bemusement,

"You know, Tut, I think our climbing styles are very similar".

This irrepressible self-confidence cloaked a clear frustration to produce the climbing performance he felt was his due. Alex and Doug mentioned several similar incidents in the book. Climbers soon grow impatient with physical weakness, and we little realised that his problems were far from temporary even though, after his illness, he was given a clean bill of health.

The end came abruptly. It was to be a 'modest alpine season' with Gerry Dargle. On arriving at Chamonix they took the first telepherique to the Midi. There followed a night of discomfort in the Cosmique Hut and what must have been a very trying return to the Midi and Chamonix in the morning and then a final character-test - driving himself to hospital. Two hours later he was dead. A post mortem revealed critical but undetected heart defects and other problems - it seemed that the alpine trip merely hastened an inevitable demise.

Thus Heavy Plant passed sadly but heroically into climbing history, a brief colourful appearance in our lives by a 'character' who will be sadly missed. Our thoughts go out to Rhona and the children, Robert, Johanna and Oliver prototype heavy plant in the making perhaps - only time will tell.

Ken Wilson

Ronnie Wathen

1984 - 1993

Ronnie Wathen, who died on 5th September 1993, had the most distinctive character of any man I have known. He also had a distinctive physical presence which made his figure instantly recognisable even in the far distance. We started our climbing when at school together and continued during our years as students all this in the decade of the '50s. Thereafter, to my regret, our paths seldom crossed although we remained in touch.

My earliest memory of Ronnie is a lunch with him and his father, during which I observed with interest the way father and son conversed, each speaking loud and firm and simultaneously. Here was the source of Ronnie's strong will and determined set of mind. Soon after, in the summer of '53, he and I went to climb in the Cuillin of Skye for a fortnight. His mother kindly drove us up to Mallaig, and we stayed with his two older brothers on our way north, one already a distinguished horseman and cavalry officer, the other establishing a farm in the

Borders. Ronnie was hardly like either, with his marked antipathy to discipline and organisations and the establishment in general. Our journey to Mallaig and across to Armadale took place on one of the finest days I ever remember in the Western Highlands. Typically of all too many of our times together in the hills, it proved to be the only fine day of the 14 we spent on Skye. Even so, we reached many tops in the cloud and rain, and climbed much dripping gabbro and basalt, thanks no doubt to the effective YHA policy of expulsion during the day. That December our active Marlborough College Mountaineering Club organised a winter meet in Scotland, and six of us including Ronnie and me enjoyed good winter conditions making our way from Callander to Glencoe via Ben More and Stobinian, Ben Lui, Buachaille Etive Mhor and sundry tops of Bidean nam Bian. Ronnie and I missed our train by half a minute, and spurred on by the effrontery of British Rail proceeded to walk directly from Crianlarich station to the top of Ben Lui and down to the Tyndrum Hotel more or less without stopping - very much a Wathen exercise in single-minded yomping.

By 1957 Ronnie was at Trinity College, Dublin and joined me and others in the formation of the Cambridge Andean Expedition of that year. In July 1957 we made the first ascent of Pumasillo (20,490 feet) in the Cordillera Vilcabamba of Peru: at that time The Puma's Claw was the highest unclimbed peak in America, and never before attempted. In the course of this trip Ronnie became known as 'El Superhombre', both as the hard man who carried the heaviest packs, and as the trencherman who devoured their contents at record speed. Needless to say, once the ascent was achieved and expedition discipline relaxed Ronnie disappeared on a mule into the jungle in search of Inca ruins, rejoining us barely in time for the return journey.

During the following 36 years Ronnie and I climbed together only once more (in the Alps in '58), and met on just a handful of brief occasions. His genius for idiosyncrasy and independence always distinguished him: save for one highly improbable (and predictably short) period in the service of the British Council in Karachi, he never submitted to an employer as far as I know. I last saw Ronnie in a pub somewhere in North London just a year or two before his untimely death. This was an Irish occasion of verse-reading and music, and Ronnie played his pipes. I thought, as I listened to him and his companions, how his life had become filled with elements new to me, and that they had brought him great contentment: his home and life in Deyá; his verse and his music; Ireland; and above all his wife and his family. To them we offer our deep sympathy.

Superhombre? By all means.

Simon Clark

From the moment I first knew him, I do not recall exchanging a word of agreement or a disagreeable word with Ronnie Wathen. If it's possible for perfect good humour to exist alongside truculence, abrasiveness and scathing directness of comment, then Ronnie was the proof of it. Simon Clark, in his book **The Puma's Claw** - the account of how seven undergraduates went out to the Andes in 1957 to attempt a 20,000 foot peak, Pumasillo, which was far too difficult and serious for them but which they all, nonetheless, managed to climb - wrote the following about a member of the expedition:

'One of our party has a motto. He says: 'I only argue with my friends.' Among

ourselves we were friends on such terms: we knew each other well enough to argue heartily and never to quarrel. We had the most enormous fun together...'

It didn't take much acquaintance with Ronnie to pick up on the distinctive trait and hence identify the character to whom Clark was referring. Indeed, Clark's book is permeated by the sardonic humour, eccentricities and vast energy of a man who could still - despite a fall of several hundred feet whilst descending from the first summit bid - make the ascent of this technical and dangerous mountain.

Not that you can circumscribe Ronnie Wathen's character within the narrow confines of mountaineering. His attachment to that pastime was always romantic rather than diligent. It began from the influence of two meshing images - extra-curricular study of Icelandic saga literature during his Marlborough schooldays in the early '50s, and the presence in that establishment of the '30s Everesteer Edwin Kempson, under whose tutelage Ronnie's climbing began.

Ronnie came from a wealthy background of Scots and Welsh descent, was a good scholar, and - it was thought - should have gone up from Marlborough to Oxbridge. Instead, he deliberately failed his interviews, projecting the impression, as he later told, of a twisted mind, and with a hearty 'Blow You!' directed against Establishment values, he escaped laughing to Trinity College, Dublin, and the honorary Irishness which was the pride of his whole life.

He flourished in Ireland, that country having the tolerance, intelligence, humour and overt narrowness his critical and idiosyncratic outlook on life needed. He had a book of poems, **Brick**, published by the prestigious Dolmen Press. He pioneered rock climbs of some difficulty in Wicklow and Donegal. And - an activity for which he had a peculiar genius - he made friends. When he left with a degree in English and German to take up a British Council appointment in Karachi (which he resigned after three weeks) it was to go into an exile from which he always longed to return.

Being of independent - though not lavish - means, he embarked on a phase of travelling, shedding an American wife he'd met in Dublin on the way. Whilst working on a banana plantation and living in a Kibbutz he met an Icelandic woman, Asta, followed her to Copenhagen when she went back to her studies there, and remained wedded to her from then on. But if there was constancy in his emotional life, it had no spatial reflection: Iceland, India, Nepal, Uganda, Biafra, Morocco, Turkey, Greece (where a daughter was born), Spain (a son born here). He liked Spain. The Greeks in Crete, where he'd lived amongst the White Mountains, wanted to tell him how to live, but in Spain he could do what he wanted, without interference. So this vagrant family came to Deyá in Majorca, built themselves a house near to Robert Graves, and settled into a life of Spanish winters and London visits, always with Ireland somewhere between, and always with the writing going on. He wrote a verse history in two parts of Deyá - too late for the old Shaman Graves to read but scanning over the aboriginals, bit-part-players and sycophants of the place with a sharp eye, a deft prosodic ear and an acidulous wit.

Apart from the poetry - nine collections in his lifetime, often privately printed, never critically noticed, for the Skeltonic tumble of his verse, its verbal inventiveness, its exhibitionist array of stanzaic form and incessant flicker from iamb to anapaest and back again steadfastly and utterly refused to take itself seriously there were the pipes, 'the Uilleann Pipes of Ireland' as his letterhead

proudly proclaimed. Dan O'Dowd of Malahide sold him his first set in 1969 and he laboured as never in his life to gain empathy with and expression from them. And he succeeded. This man whose circle of close friendship was diverse enough to include personalities like Graves, RD Laing, Don Whillans and Paddy Maloney was ultimately most at home sitting in on a music session beyond hours in a bar in Lettermullen or An Cheathra Rua of the farthest West.

The last month of his life he spent on Achil Island and in Iceland, writing continually, tying all the threads of a promiscuous life together as though he knew the end was imminent. At the month's close a brain tumour was diagnosed and in ten days he was dead, this shambling, funny, savage man whose 'fierce mind fully knew/Which way his spleen should expend itself', and who was at the same time committed to the profound generosity and kindness of honest dialogue. He was buried on a bright September afternoon in an out-of-the-way graveyard amongst the Wicklow mountains. On the way there from Dun Laoghaire harbour my taxi driver stopped to ask directions and buy us an ice-cream:

"They say your Ronnie was a grand fellow," he told me, coming back.

He was. I still see him, stalking round my house, pipes under his elbow, fingers fast on the chanter, blessing each room with music. I still play the tapes he sent me from his own repertoire, the last one ending brutally, cut off mid-reel.

Jim Perrin

Editor's note:

A couple of errors in last year's (1992) Journal need correcting.

Dave Cook (page 83) - A missed-out line during typing changed the universities of both Cookie and Dave Potts. After 'Potts was the first from....' it should have read....'Oxford to have led *Cenotaph* and *Vector* and Cookie was the first from Cambridge to achieve this feat when, a year later, he too led *Vector*'

Francis Keenlyside (page 90) Francis actually died in 1990, not 1992, and resigned from the Club in the '30s.

The Editor's thanks to Ken Wilson and David Yeoman for their advice.

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Reviews

The Alpine Journal 1993 Vol 98
The Alpine Club/Ernest Press

Edited by Johanna Merz
Price £18.50

The '93 edition of the AC Journal continues the recent practice of covering a generous number of Himalayan exploits. However, as the year is the 40th anniversary of the ascent of Everest, readers can well understand why almost a quarter of the edition is devoted to that event. They are all there: Hunt, Hillary et al; thirteen varied items written by nine members of that successful team. Walt Unsworth leads in with an introduction asking why none of the 'little dark men from Salford' were picked and has the answer from Westmacott's article on why he was chosen. While the photographs are a small selection of the regulars which appeared at the time the contributions are all new material—either contemporary or especially written. Selections from Hunt's letters home to his wife give intimations of the pressures that the enterprise was putting on him. As one of the first dozen ever to stand on the South Col his notes to Joy about the 24 hours tent-bound there—'it had an atmosphere of death'—is very perceptive. Hillary and Lowe also write home and what is published here is their news of the success. A longish piece from Hillary to his future father-in-law details the bare events of the final push with short personal touches at the beginning and end. Lowe's letters to his sister is much more expansive and hints at a hitherto unknown aspect of one of the summiteers. A brief piece from Pugh picks out a few delightful stories about the Sherpas, improvising sun goggles for snowblind porters, the pride of a Sherpani carrying 60 lbs, deciding whether a pint mug full of blood came from a Sherpa's lungs or stomach and acceding to a mothers request not to take her Sherpa son to the corrupting influence of Kathmandu! Ward gives a comprehensive overview on the pre and post war use of supplementary oxygen at altitude—a very readable piece in laymans terms. Wylie cameos ten of the prominent Sherpas involved and their subsequent careers: Gombu who was later to top out in '63 and '65, chain smoking Nyima carrying to Camp 9 and the 48 year old Thondup carrying to S. Col against doctors orders.

The Everest section continues with three memorial pieces on Bourdillon, Noyce and Stobart while Jan Morris admits to some parasitic activities during the trip.

All this consumes some seventy pages and yet there is more. Band notes the 500th anniversary of the first ascent of Mont Aiguille and recalls his own ascent in 1987 when he met a French climber who had completed a new route on the mountain on that historic 29th May.

Andre Roche's address to the '92 Annual Dinner is included verbatim in which he describes the 1952 Swiss attempts. The section is completed with a few reproduction of mountain sketches by Norton painted during his '22 and '24 visits. Simple as they are in texture they are some of the most attractive mountain pictures I can recall.

From among the batch of other expeditions noted in the Journal Diemburger describes a return to Broad Peak and the discovery of an alternative approach while Bonington's joint Indian British Pauch Chuli trip records eight first ascents in the area during which two party members have separate falls and another is struck by lightening while carrying a tent pole, Venables is the victim of one of the falls which he describes in graphic detail in the next item. An abseil peg pops—a broken leg and ankle—the painful drag across the glacier—four days wait for a helicopter—no winch means a dodgy hover while he pulls and Saunders pushes him screaming into the cabin. Griffin's story is just as epic. Tempted on a trip to N.W. Mongolia by a bunch of unattached girls in their early twenties he ends up trapped by the leg under a large granite boulder—alone. Most will have read or heard of his self constructed winch system to relieve the weight and the following evacuation in a helicopter flying on empty fuel tanks. If for no other reason these two stories make the Journal required reading. They don't write adventure novels like this.

There follows three short descriptions of that most traditional British apprenticeship to greater ranges: a trip to Greenland. 'The tiny boat slowly chugged its way through the ice floes...' may suit the Tilman devotees but a Twin Otter does have certain advantages. Skis and pulks give independence while nocturnal daylight requires no bivouac.

Skis are also the mode for Hardings traverse of the Alpine-like Kackar Dag in N.E. Turkey, where bears leave 12 inch footprints. Mal and Liz Duff very nearly don't make it en route to Pumori in '91 when an overloaded aircraft on the Lukla run only just squeezes over a high pass with engines at full throttle. Hamish Brown actually finds a part of the Atlas which is new to him, the joint Services succeed on Island Peak while Hoare and companion complete a rain sodden traverse of the main ridge of the Japanese Alps in four days.

The professionals don't seem to have been doing too well. A past President of the British Mountain Guides gets caught without a complete set of the so called seven essentials while another guide decides

that a 'feet on the ground' policy is better than any flight of fancy. I suppose a guide wouldn't be all that impressed with five ascents of the Matterhorn in seventeen years but Peacocke's list of ascents allows him to give an interesting little companion story to each. Up and down the Italian ridge in 2 hours 10 minutes must say something.

In the National Museum of Wales there is displayed a Roman sword, found on the summit of Carnedd Llewelyn in 1933. Was this mercenary of the Empire on a recce, manning a lookout post or just an early mountaineer? I have long held a minor curiosity in things Celtic Romano and therefore found the **Early History of the Alps** by Snodgrass to be of interest and a welcome alternative to the usual flog, fly or run over and about mountains.

From among the area reports the short piece on mountaineering in Romania has several appealing touches about it. Here are mountaineers with a newfound freedom keen to welcome visits by British climbers.

The M.E.F. continues to support the best form of expeditioning, i.e. small, light and compatible. Of the forty five approvals given in '91 and '92 there were several two-people teams while the largest was a fourteen strong group who succeeded on Masherbrum II.

The book reviews bring this one back to its beginning. I suppose Hodder and Stoughton know what they are doing in publishing a new paperback edition of Hunt's **Ascent of Everest** but when a hardback copy can be bought in almost any secondhand bookshop I don't quite see the point. My own copy cost me 30p.

Gregory's previously un-released photographs, Scott's lifetime quest and Jan Morris' reprint of Coronation Everest are well received along with many other titles that will have been on the shelves for several months now.

Which brings me to my final point about the Journal. Without doubt it fulfils the claim made each year on the inside cover but contributions from women climbers would make welcome additions. For too often the Journal resembles an annual of the **Boys Own Paper**.

KC Gordon

**4000er der Alpen Die Normalwege
Diadem 1993**

by R Goedeke
Price £15.99

The main appeal of this guidebook is likely to lie in the fact that here, for the first time in small format, all the 'High Mountains of the Alps' are gathered together under one cover, obviating the necessity to carry a small coffee table up to the hut in order to plan the next day's climb. The guide is both compact and informative; the information trimmed down to the minimum required to get there and back again with minimum hassle. The author is well qualified for the job, with first hand experience of the majority of the routes described and a series of previous publications, dealing particularly with the Dolomites and the Western Alps, to his credit. He assumes a basic knowledge of the techniques, tricks and training required to collect all the 4,000ers and thus wastes no space dealing with sub-issues better researched elsewhere. Goedeke readily admits that he has drawn on the experience of others and on a wide variety of alpine literature in order to fill certain gaps in his own knowledge. The general impression gained is of a workmanlike guidebook presented in a lively and entertaining way and written in a style which is at once tongue-in-cheek scholarly and convincingly 'environment-friendly' and thus likely to be well received by its target readership (competent 'Munroists' looking for challenges further afield?). It is a refreshing departure from the standard (German) Alpine Club area guidebook style, with its weighty pronouncements and undercurrent of reactionary cabal politics.

The 61 hills (Dumler has 57) are arranged in logical geographic pattern, with the Stecknadelhorn, Nadelhorn, Durrenhorn and Punta Baretto being accorded the honour of 'Independent' summits. How many 4,000ers there really are remains the subject of bar-room controversy but Goedeke's selection and the criteria he applies would appear to be as valid as any other.

Each section begins with a brief introduction to the area. The individual peaks are then presented, with a potted history of the main events and the 'dramatis personae' involved in their conquest and sufficient topographical information (often accompanied by a sketch map and route diagram) to enable the user to locate them. The normal route of ascent is accorded a grade of difficulty and the type of terrain likely to be encountered is described. 'Pain', 'Perils' and 'Pleasures' then follow, with the first category usually referring to the relative nastiness of the hut approach, the time required and the height gain, and the second to the objective dangers such as the seracs threatening the *Corridor Route* on the Grand Combin, the possibility of stonefall on the *Gouter Route* or the relative avalanche danger. The retrospective 'Pleasure

Principle' of alpine peak bagging is also mentioned, and here Goedeke is remarkably honest, paying due regard to the limiting factors such as mist, fog, filthy weather and the hordes of fellow collectors similarly bent on hedonistic (masochistic?) pursuits.

Thus equipped with the outline of a plan, the reader is invited to peruse the appropriate map of the area (details supplied) and given information on how best to journey to the chosen mountain. The author advocates the use of public transport where at all possible, which is a fine sentiment indeed and one which, oft-repeated, would do much to restore some of the natural beauty of the Alps.

The route is then described in detail, first up to the hut and then on up to the top. Times from the valley base to the hut are given under the 'Pain' heading and seem a little more realistic than the Olympic qualifying standards set by other guidebooks. The assumption is made that the climber will make use of the hut facilities during his ascent and that the attainment of the summit and the return journey to the hut can be achieved in one day. These are the most logical routes of ascent, following the lines of least resistance and generally retracing faithfully the path taken by the first ascent party. Each of the routes is a piece of classic alpine history and all are interesting propositions, not only for the seasoned hillwalker with greater ambitions but also for those mountaineers well capable of tackling more demanding routes yet still keen to acquaint themselves with the 'voies normales'.

The view from the top, subsidiary peaks, other worthwhile outings in the neighbourhood and the specialist area guidebooks receive a brief mention before the scene shifts to the next objective on the list.

League tables of the 61 big ones and 90-odd subsidiary peaks leave the reader to decide which ones are worthy of his attention, a 'sweat and toil' tick list of the actual metres of ascent to be grappled with is included for the faint hearted or the confirmed masochist and the package is completed with a breakdown of the mountains according to their height above the nearest rival, a kind of 'alone, aloof, majestic' list. Or something like that.

Tim Carruthers

**Yorkshire Limestone
Yorkshire Mountaineering Club**

**Edited by Dave Musgrove
Price £18.50**

From the county that has some of the biggest fish and chip shops in the world (ie. Harry Ramsden's) we now have the second guidebook in a unique series of ultra thick guidebooks! The Yorkshire Limestone Guidebook Steering Committee (YLGSC) have, under the direction of their new editor Dave Musgrove, given birth, after a seven year gestation period, to a veritable monster which covers Yorkshire limestone. Arguably it does for Yorkshire limestone what the gritstone guidebook did for Yorkshire gritstone in 1989.

Without trying to create the impression that some great dark force is at work, I must record at this point that I have something of a pedigree when it comes to reviewing the Yorkshire guides for the CCJ. In my review of the 1985 limestone edition, (see the 1986/87 CCJ), I commented on the great metamorphosis that had occurred on Yorkshire limestone over the (then) last 15 years and also on the threat to the Yorkshire Mountaineering Club (YMC) from the 'private' guidebook publishers that had raised its head in the early '80s. Ironically it seems that little has changed. The adoption of sport climbing at the premier crags has acted as a significant catalyst to new route development since the 1985 edition. However, this has increased the viability of private publications. Rockfax first published a topo-style guidebook and then went on to produce a 'convenience' topo card. So what has been the response of the YMC and what form does their latest edition take?

It is immediately obvious that, adhering stoically to their values, the YLGSC have spurned the popular trend of topo presentation and nailed their colours firmly to the traditional mast. Surprised? No, I doubt it. In every sense, this latest guidebook has its roots firmly embedded in tradition. (Actually, with a five-to-one ratio, check the graded list, of traditional routes to sport routes, the routes are fairly traditional as well.) The guidebook is a definitive volume, no attempt has been made to restrict the coverage to the popular crags, and it has all the in-depth information, such as first ascent details together with the anecdotal stories, which make a traditional guidebook such a joy to pick up and read time and time again. (Sadly though, there is no index: enough said?) The text is well written, although a little less than exciting in places. Some 45 new crag diagrams, all drawn by Nigel Baker, are wonderful. My, how the Committee must have been pleased to 'discover' such talent! Including the covers, the 42 colour photographs comprehensively illustrate the many facets of Yorkshire limestone, although for my money they show perhaps too much. The two shots of the Barleys climbing on aid in the mid '60s are entertaining, but not half as amusing as the shot of Alan Austin (captioned as the father of free-climbing) hanging on a nut

under the guise of 'prospecting'. What next, a photo of the Yorkshire Chipper? Photographs of *The Candle* seem de rigueur in Yorkshire limestone guidebooks recently, but if 'a picture paints a thousand words' then I for one will not be hot-footing it up the M1 motorway from Sheffield to get to Strans Gill (see page facing 409). As for the rest, some are boring (see Mick Johnson on *Balcony Crack*), some are inspirational (see Mark Leach on *Mandella*) and some shout 'I wanna get on that route' (see Mick Lovatt on *Supercool*). Reducing the numbers by eight would not have lost any of the impact for me though.

So I've given you the background to the guidebook and outlined the YMC's chosen style and substance, now it's time for the final analysis and the real question of 'can I afford to buy this book?' The Editor, Dave Musgrove, raises this very point in the introduction of the guidebook and asks six questions. I offer you the following answers to his questions:

Question

1. Can you afford **NOT** to buy it?

2. This will almost certainly be the last complete and definitive Yorkshire Limestone in one volume.

3. It's less than half the cost of a Flexible Friend.

4. You could buy two Yorkshire Limestone Rockfaxes but you wouldn't have half the information.

5. It would look rather nice on the on the shelf next to your copy of Yorkshire Gritstone, and complete the set.

6. You'll never need to climb in Derbyshire again.

Answer

If you haven't eaten for days or can't read, or you have no interest in climbing history or events, or don't need any inspiration, then clearly you can answer 'yes' to this question.

True, you can't get a quart into a pint pot, but I'm not sure that this is a selling point.

True again, but so what? After all, a Flexible Friend can be used in all countries, whereas this guidebook is only useful in Yorkshire.

Definitely true, but then again if you answered 'yes' to the first question then buy the Rockfax guidebook and spend the rest on some more 'T nuts' for the cellar.

True again. Perhaps you could use them at opposite ends of the bookshelf as book-ends?

No way! Even some of the most ardent stamina monsters from Yorkshire have travelled south in search of the power concept. Some even move to Sheffield and do the odd route in the Peak.

So there you have it. The considered opinion, for what it is worth, of a power-orientated, sport climber living in the Peoples' Republic of South Yorkshire. My advice then, go out and buy one. That way you'll learn about the past and make an investment in your future and all at the same time. As a traditional guidebook they don't come much better.

Keith Sharples

Nothing So Simple As Climbing Diadem 1993

by GJF Dutton
Price £12.99

No one complains if Phil Bennett or Gareth Edwards be asked to comment critically on matches with the oval ball; or Dennis Law on struggles with the other shape. If, however, some reject from the Beezer League be the pundit, the public may feel it has the right to say 'Who is he? What does he know about it?' Here we have a similar situation. Professor Dutton and his Doctor are well established in the Premier League of climbing humour (I trust we all have a copy of *The Ridiculous Mountains*) and yet here we have a reviewer from the Sunday Pub League to deal with the Mountains' resurgence.

We meet again in this collection of 21 stories the main protagonists from *The Ridiculous Mountains*, the Doctor himself, the Apprentice, and the Narrator, that much put-upon Watson to the Doctor's Holmes. These three heroes are joined by a collection of believable figures, people whose like you will have met on your hills, whose weaknesses are gently exposed and at whom fun is poked.

The same skill with phrases lies in the stories, waiting to please. Snow-filled gullies 'join wicked hands hatching powder snow avalanches'; the photography fever from which we have all suffered, at one or other end of the camera, is 'an attack of the click'; in a storm 'wet glaciers slid off the Doctor's hat down each side of his nose' You've been there? So has Prof. Dutton and his narrator tells you about it. We all, having been on the hills a few years, have met some of the circumstances of these stories but, not being invested with the gift of the crack, and a wry sense of humour, and a keen eye for the ridiculous in our fellow (wo)man, have just let the opportunity go by. Does the Prof. venture onto his by no means ridiculous Scottish mountains in disguise? By now his acquaintances may well be shunning his company lest they risk featuring as one of his butts.

The range of credible situations which the author can draw from his imagination, or his study of Homo supposed to be Sapiens, on which to base his tales is quite remarkable, but I am left with the feeling that the first collection has used the prime material and that although these stories still display Prof. Dutton's way with words the situations are just that bit less believable and some of them a bit too twee. They are none the worse for that. A team from the Premier League is always worth watching. The class is still there and the mid-field trio have the match well under control, well the mid-field pivot has anyway. Pay your entry fee, it's worth every penny and the enjoyment will last far longer than a mere 90 minutes.

Dave Gregory

Breaking Loose
Ernest Press 1993

by Dave Cook
Price £9.50

This book is simply described on the flyleaf as 'An account of an overland cycle journey from London to Australia' BUT what a journey! As this middle-aged, schoolteaching, communist, rock climbing grandfather (Dave's own words, aged 48) set off on an appalling day in April 1989, he vowed from now on his journey would consist of 'first' and not 'last' experiences. He did not quite break loose from the climbing part of his life until after Western Europe, where various friends met up with him to climb, but as he left the Alps, he 'metamorphosed' into a long distance cyclist and packed his rock boots away.

We follow him through Yugoslavia (on which he comments on the difficult situations there) and Bulgaria (difficulties with police), into Turkey where the heavy lorries were extremely frightening and dangerous. Sadly, this was where he was knocked off his bike in February 1993 on a subsequent journey and was fatally injured. It took him four months to reach Iraq, where he roasted in the hot sun and ran foul of the police as he became too friendly with the Kurds. Reaching Kuwait with relief, he flew to Karachi as Iran was closed.

The account of his first experience of the sub-continent is vivid and fascinating reading. His descriptions are so perceptive that the reader can almost smell the indescribable mixtures of scents that characterize this part of the world. The climax of the book is the journey through Pakistan (with a side trek into the Karakoram to recharge his batteries), India (where he found himself a celebrity) and Bangladesh. After this he felt a certain lethargy while waiting for a flight to Bangkok - hardly surprising I suppose. Travel was not possible through Burma, but he obviously enjoyed the final pedal down through southern Thailand and Indonesia, with superb unspoilt beaches and rainforest.

This account is more than just a diary of events. His thoughts and dreams come through clearly and we are left feeling that we know Dave much better. A sympathetic forward by Pat Devine pays tribute to him and we realise just how much he will be missed. Compelling and colourful reading - one of the best travel books I've ever read.

Sally Westmacott

We were sitting in the lounge at Ynys Ettws, me and Norman. Jancis was there, and some others. Cookie had just walked in and we quizzed him about the book he was writing about his recent cycling and climbing journey to Australia. He buzzed with enthusiasm as usual, saying 'and there's a chapter called 'Sex and the Single Cyclist'.' There isn't. As usual Cookie pulled his punches in this book, which explains how he was so popular with so many. He had the gift of raising questions without them challenging your relationship with him. In the end he did this with himself. I don't blame him. I wouldn't have dared either. The kind of self examination that Cookie wanted this book to be, falls short of some kind of ideal, thank goodness. He's one of us, the mortal.

In the washrooms the following morning he was asking me which travel writers I admired. He was impressed by Nick Danizer who writes from the inside out. This is the amazing double achievement of

Breaking Loose. Here is a traveller observing and an observer on travelling. 'We think we are travellers, but in fact we are all tourists', Cookie said at a Buxton Conference. This perception is one of the messages of this book. Another is Brecht's 'Even at the worst of times there are a few good people.' You'd better believe it. Cookie found them on this trip, as he would have done in Llanberis or Cornwall or Tower Hamlets.

Audrey Salkeld berated us for not short-listing this book for the Boardman/Tasker Award, saying that even the non-climbing bits were written in the spirit of a climber. This is true. You will love this book. It is what you are in the Club for. Here is one of our number pushing out the boat to see what happens to him, and bringing back a record that goes as far as he can: selling the bike in Australia. If only he'd written about visting Yosemite and Nashville on the return journey, as he did verbally, he'd have rounded off a climbing book. But that was Cookie's point. Our climbing lives are part of a richer tapestry which includes cycling and loving and thinking. We should embrace (a word he lived, if stood intellectually apart from) all these things, whilst accepting his Euro-survey: that in Europe the bolt had decimated climbing for the future like a plague. Above all Cookie cared for the rock and its next generations of climbers. He was honest and he was human. These things tempered each other into a kind of tact that allowed him to go on living with himself and others. Until, on his next trip, the road killed him. He has left us a book we'll all warm to and not match up to.

Terry Gifford

Annapurna, a Trekker's Guide
Cicerone Press 1993

by Kev Reynolds
Price £8.99

There is no shortage of books on trekking in Nepal. What makes this one different? Well, primarily size. This can be carried in the pocket and consulted as you go along; it is a guidebook, not a manual. Three treks in and around the Annapurna Himal are described in detail, the 'circuit' itself anti-clockwise, as seems to be conventional, though surely one acquires merit by doing it the other way round, and is also better acclimatised to take in the two popular 'trekking peaks', Chulu East and Pisang.

In addition, there are 40 pages of introduction about such matters as travel to Nepal, health, equipment, independent versus group trekking, and so on. It is well written, with humour, and much sensible advice. The section on the behaviour appropriate in Nepal is particularly good. A surprising and potentially serious omission is, however, any warning about polio. Also surprising, but not serious, is the statement that the evening meal on trek may finish at 6.30, 'allowing plenty of time...' Far too much time, in my experience. The nights on trek can be very long indeed. Has anyone any hints about reading comfortably in a small tent after dark?

Mike Westmacott

The Mountains of Greece - A Walkers Guide
Cicerone Press 1993

by Tim Salmon
Price £9.99

Looking for somewhere different? Try Greece, virtually unexplored and undeveloped and very beautiful. It has a surprising wealth of mountains topped by Mt Olympus at 2,917 metres, not high but certainly rocky. There is climbing to be found but not with this walking guide.

Tim Salmon is an expert on walking in Greece and his book has a reassuring style which tells you that he has been there, done it, and written it down while he still remembers the name of the people he has met! His prose is convincing and endearing to those opposed to safety on mountains. On emergency services 'There are none. So do not have an accident. And if you do, pray for a speedy end on the mountainside.'

With this book in your pocket you will get deep into the real Greece, meet people who find you so interesting that you will be their talking point for days! People whose way of life is no easier now than it was 1,000 years ago.

This is the first comprehensive guide to the Greek mountains and gives essential background information on travel, accommodation and weather. For those who want a major challenge, there is a month long traverse of the Pindos range taken by Lord Hunt's expedition in 1963. Much coincides with the trans European E4 way marked route and there are bail-out points for the weary.

Produced by Cicerone in a traditional pvc jacket, the book is robust enough for the job. Maps are adequate but hard to relate to the overview map of the country; a pity since good Greek maps are as

scarce as rocking horse droppings. Some colour and b/w photos give relief to the very readable text. From experience I know that users of the guide will read every word over and over again, before, during and after each day's walk. They will certainly get their moneys' worth.

Mike F Browell

Beyond Risk: Conversations with Climbers
Diadem 1993

by Nicholas O'Connell
Price £15.99

It was an Irish reviewer who pointed out that these 17 interviews are with 'the de facto steering committee of climbing for the last 50 years.' Well, whatever the direction each of them steered it in, it seems that most of them don't like the way it is going now. This is the unsought, unobserved consensus that emerges from the book. You might think that interviewing characters from Richardo Cassin to Tomo Cesen should produce some controversial discussion, but this American interviewer politely raises the right questions and then fails to follow through. These are nevertheless interesting conversations through which the individual's personality and approach to climbing does emerge in their own voice. The book's title derives from the interviewer's discovery of what he calls 'the life wish' of those who have imaginatively and distinctively shaped the course of the sport. What he does not seem to be aware of is the overwhelming concern emerging again and again that these climbers can no longer see a single, if multifaceted, sport. Here lies the importance of this book for the present.

Messner says that we are slowly destroying our playground with bolts and fixed ropes. 'There is at least one rule: we should leave the mountains as we found them.' Bonatti goes further: 'The technology of mountaineering and rock climbing has developed enormously in this century, but alpinism itself has not improved considerably with respect to the mind ... the values of mountaineering in some cases have even regressed.' This ought to give us pause. What is the least interesting is Lynn Hill's anger about the foot of a fellow competitor being placed outside a boundary line in a competition? Has the climbing competition approach to her freeing of *The Nose* reduced it to a boulder problem? Can this really be what Royal Robbins means when he says that 'People in the mountains are searching for something better ... it's the search that counts?' Peter Croft identifies sport climbing as the death of the essential spirit of climbing: 'When sport climbing became prevalent in all areas it took away the variety in styles, and that's a shame ... Why do you think climbing's a lot more popular now? All you have to do is take away the boldness, take away the risk, and it's another sport.'

For me the interview with Jean-Claude Droyer was the most relevant to the British predicament of the present. For nearly 20 years he has tried to influence the French climbing culture towards free-climbing. Ironically, just as we are giving over so many crags to the bolt year by year, he is still arguing for the environmentalism and adventure of British nut-protected climbing. We now ought to be quoting him, and the others from this book, in our current debates: 'Many young guys don't know anything about the history of rock climbing. They believe that climbing was born in 1979. And if they don't know the history, they will have the spirit of gymnasts, not the spirit of rock climbers. And then free-climbing could become a mere gymnastic routine.' This needs discussing. Buy a copy of this book and lend it around. There should be a copy in every club hut and in every climbing wall library. Whoops! Every wall climber's library.

Terry Gifford

The Ascent of Everest (2nd edition)
Hodder and Stoughton 1993

by John Hunt
£12.99

The past is another country; they talk differently there, of coolies, wirelasses, and chaps and things. Upper lips are stiff, everyone is fine, courageous and noble. To read *The Ascent of Everest* is to step back in time.

A re-issue of the 1953 original with new foreword and postscript by Hunt and Hillary respectively, this is an exhaustively detailed and clear report of the first successful siege of Everest. For siege it was; Hunt laid his plans with Napoleonic deliberation and engaged all to hand; even wives were volunteered for a marathon of name-tape sewing.

Everest never stood a chance against this barrage of chaps, Sherpas and oxygen tanks. It crumbled even as I crumbled under the solid, work-a-day prose which bristles with facts. Despite the historical interest (well, somebody, somewhere is surely desperate to know about closed-circuit oxygen apparatus), it is a dry read.

There is leavening in the dough, moments when Hunt the man, gives Hunt the expedition leader the slip, like the sparse but chilling description of the awesome Icefall, the terrible, cold beauty of Base Camp on a still night, the bleak menace in the absence of life at such altitudes.

Occasionally, there is humour. One particularly rib-tickling image abides long into the grave subsequent pages, to do with a suggestion for lightening the climbers' oxygen load. A hydrogen balloon charged just enough to avoid cries of 'cheat' and attached to the climbers, engendered a 'vision of the summit pair tiptoeing upwards, their feet barely brushing the snow... only dispelled when we learned the monstrous dimensions of the balloon required...'

Heath Robinson, where are you?

Hunt, to be fair, had a tricky commission in writing this account. It was urgently demanded while the triumph was still fresh, and written and compiled in a month, though there is nothing slapdash in its painstaking, military exactness.

It is also a gentlemanly account. Personal comments, other than those of a what-a-fine-upstanding-man nature, could not have been countenanced. Unfortunately, this is the reader's loss. The stout hearted characters who achieved this success (and Hunt's account makes clear how all contributed to

the summit pair's triumph) remain distantly decent, selfless to the point of inhuman. Didn't they nuzzle and squabble, and pinch the rations under all that pressure? If they did, Hunt gallantly ignores all human foibles except his own. Joy, oh joy, on page 163 he hives off to a tent alone to guzzle a tin of fish, offering none to his comrades. Hooray! I wanted to hug the man, kiss his feet of clay.

However, the stiff upper lip is swiftly re-purged, trembling only at the victorious return of our summiteers. Hunt sheepishly admits there were 'I blush to say, hugs for the triumphant pair.' Exasperating fellow. They had just climbed the world's highest mountain, previous attempts at which had killed several of the world's finest mountaineers. No sense of occasion.

In truth it is hard to retain a sense of occasion about the ascent of a mountain, which as Hunt now says, has since been climbed from every angle, without and with oxygen, and where recently, summiteers numbered 30 on one day. Hunt does not help. His account is of a smoothly run, carefully planned operation. The outcome is inevitable thereby defusing any excitement. I was not gripped. I knew they made it, I knew no one was even injured. There was no pathos, no emotion to engage me. The book is eminently put-downable and I frequently did.

Read it, if you must, and I suppose you must. It is a classic in the expedition bibliography by grace of its subject, and is certainly better than many of those turgid texts. But, if you seek colour, warmth, the sense of all-out, gritty endeavour, and the need to care about the characters, read something else. Better still, go climbing.

Kym Martindale

**The High Mountains of Britain and Ireland Volume 1.
The Munros and Tops and other 3,000ft Peaks.
Hodder and Stoughton 1993**

by Irvine Butterfield

Price £18.99

The great strength of this book is the wealth of information it holds. The layout and presentation are less impressive. It looks dated - and is indeed a 'fully revised and updated edition containing new information that has accumulated since the first edition in 1986' - so say Hodder and Stoughton, publishers of the Diadem imprint. The book is ambitious in terms of coverage and content. This bold approach necessitates a number of compromises. Pause to consider whether the author has chosen the right compromise for you. Let us take a closer look.

The first 27 chapters are devoted to the Munros; the last three to 3,000ers in England, Wales and Ireland. Chapters are subdivided into walks covering one mountain or more which may conveniently be approached from a common central point, and fronted by a succinct and frank one line summary of each. I found the summaries useful and direct, though I'm not sure I would agree with the description of Ben Lomond as Scotland's most famous mountain. Between the summaries and the descriptions of the walks is a section giving details appropriate to the whole chapter on necessary maps, transport, accommodation, stalking times, distances, and a small general map. The little maps are clear, and sufficiently uncluttered to give a general sense of direction and scale but are otherwise quite useless: there is always the argument that if you need to buy a proper map anyhow why bother with the book at all. The details are comprehensive, but not always consistent or terribly useful. For the student of the estate office telephone number the book is absolutely indispensable. For those who like to plan the intricacies of journeys, the entries on public transport are helpful but a note of which company operates the bus service is probably more use

than the knowledge that a service is supposed to exist, and would allow one to discover when it actually ran (or when it had been cancelled). I wondered too how necessary it is for every rail journey to start in London, and failed to penetrate the rather arbitrary selection of either Kings Cross or Euston as point of departure for Queen Street.

The text itself gives two, three or four alternative routes of ascent/descent, and it is this comprehensive treatment that is a particular, but not immediately apparent, strength of the book. I have the sense too that the author writes authoritatively from personal experience about real places he knows well. Notes on safety are well integrated into the text: it is indeed 'exceedingly hazardous' to attempt to descend the south east arête of Ben More Assynt before the cairn of the south top. I prefer to go still further to Carn nan Conbhairean and look at the moss campion (*silene acaulis*) on the way down.

This brings me to a regret that there is no mention of flora, fauna or avifauna. Neither do we get any translation of mountain names (until we reach the tiny print of the index) into the same language as the rest of the text. It is elsewhere enlivened by references to geology, structure and by the odd well chosen comment - I particularly enjoyed the chapter on Snowdon. Overall the text is generally very readable, but many mountain walkers do have interests beyond plain walking.

The book certainly has its good points. I did however have a problem with the layout and purpose. Many of the ample selection of colour photographs are good, but are too often crowded together, inappropriately split by the spine of the book or of uniformly drab appearance. The book is too big to carry about, and too small for the coffee table. The introduction is somewhat unfocussed, devoting much space to the debate of revisions of lists of mountains and tops. Though targeted to the activist rather than the armchair enthusiast the text assumes more knowledge than the novice might have, yet gives more detail than the experienced walker might need. It is a difficult balance to strike, but my sense was that the compromise was an uneasy one. I would have preferred a larger and less cramped format, with better quality photographic reproduction.

Nonetheless the book does offer a unique range of information and route choice. If that is what you want, go and buy it. You will not be disappointed. You will return to it time and again and be glad to have it on your shelf to dip into as need arises. All the same, for myself I think I'd rather spend £4 less and buy the slimmer, better presented SMC Hill Walker's Guide to the Munros, edited by Donald Bennett, forget Snowdon and its crowds and worry about Macgillcuddy's Reeks when I get there.

Henry Folkard

Sea, Ice & Rock
Hodder & Stoughton 1993

by Chris Bonington and Robin Knox - Johnston
Price £15.99

This is the story of Britain's best-known sailor trying his hand at climbing and her best-known mountaineer doing his stint on the boat by which they sailed to Greenland to attempt a peak called the Cathedral, apparently the highest point in the Lemon Mountains.

I enjoyed the account of the sea voyage, largely by Robin K-J but with sections interspersed by Chris, although I was not always clear whose account it was. Just reaching a landfall involved much ice-dodging and obvious serious risk of the boat (*Suhaili*) being trapped. You are kept aware of this continuing risk as the climbing party leave it and set out, dragging pulks and often on ski, to reach the mountain. They have two cracks at it, the first including Knox-Johnson, the second by Chris and Jim Lowther (who comes over as a great asset to this or any expedition), with some very hairy ice-work practically at their high point, before retreating, obviously not a moment too soon.

There does seem to be some doubt, at least in Bonners' mind, as to whether the comparatively nearby peak of Point 2,600 metres is not in fact higher than the one attempted, but the apparent easier one proved a tougher undertaking than expected anyway.

The 192 pages include about 40 of appendices on the background to the trip and the version I read was a paperback priced at £9.99, although it has about 28 illustrative photos, mostly colour, which greatly illuminate the account.

A jolly good read, with some gripping moments.
Bob Allen

Countdown to Rescue
Ernest Press

by Bob Maslen - Jones
Price £9.95

The author, a retired member of Llanberis Mountain Rescue Team and the Search and Rescue Dogs Association, has written this 200-odd page soft cover book purportedly as a way of educating the

mountaineering public. He seeks to do this by recording the 'facts' of a number of incidents, and making a comprehensive analysis of each, free from criticism. What sets out with a laudable aim unfortunately falls into the trap of so many quasi-autobiographies, self-aggrandisement and a lack of perspective.

Without doubt the book does have some good points to make, and hopefully, for the individuals and the statistics, some will learn from it, but who? As we all know, we learn primarily from our own scrapes and little from others'. Those most impressionable, too young for membership of the Climbers' Club, might love to receive a copy from their favourite uncle, but will they get past the prose? One can only cope with so much, "Hello, Bob here," I said. "Evening, Bob," said Harvey.....I suspect they will also find many of the photographs uninspiring and dated.

So, how do we find it as an accurate record of the rescues it describes? I have a confession to make. When the book came out, I would sneak into WH Smiths to read a few pages at a time, to see if it had my name in it, and if so, if I would recognise the incident. It did have my name in it, misspelt, and a number of incidents I had been on, but which I remembered as being somewhat different. Others had done the same, and come to much the same conclusion. Indeed, the word 'writ' was being bandied around. As no doubt many a newspaper editor will tell you, never let the truth get in the way of a good story; but if the story is not that good, or cannot be told that well, why tell it? Ah, yes, self-aggrandisement. As another member of the Team said, 'If they sold the film rights, he couldn't play the part.'

Now, this all sounds a bit cruel, and I would not like to give the impression that the book is all bad. I do think it would make a decent present from the favourite uncle, it has got some useful first aid advice, it does contain the odd yarn.

Major contribution to mountaineering literature? No.

Hugh Davis

The High Mountains of the Alps

Diadem 1993

by Helmut Dumler and Willi P. Burkhardt

Price £30.00

Actually, the title is just a bit longer, for this is Volume 1; The 4,000 metre Peaks, and has additional text and photographs by a variety of British names. Now, I'm sorry if that makes it all a bit long-winded, but what I am trying to get across is that this is the anglicised version of what is an already established german language book.

It all started with Karl Blodig's now famous **Die Viertausender der Alpen**, which probably started 'ticking' in a way which graded lists have never managed to emulate. The book and indeed the formula was taken over by the present authors, with Dumler as the editor and Burkhardt responsible for the brilliant photographs. This produced a classic in its own right, though the photographs lacked action. To me that did not matter, as their quality was sublime; after all, if you've been there, you don't need much more. I've spent quite a few hours pouring over Burkhardt's photographs, looking at routes I've done, wanted to do, or failed on, and now really want to do. The pictures are just that inspiring.

But it gets even better. The text has been added to by the skilful Ken Wilson, with liberal use of contemporary literature, often from the **Alpine Club Journal**. And now it has action photographs from distinguished British alpinists. What a formula! One can imagine that in lesser hands the original could have been debased. As it is, we have a book that is a must for anybody that has climbed in the Alps, and a book that will inspire those that haven't yet done so, a book that ought never date as the action photographs come and go with the passage of time. The size of the hardback book, 12" by 11.5" high, means that it ought not be passed over as a coffee table book, even though it does not sit comfortably on a shelf. But how could one make it smaller without compromising the quality of the photography? If it were smaller, could one justify £30.00? The arguments could rage endlessly, and I doubt if they could make an excellent book better.

Many things have inspired us to climb in big mountains. This book could inspire many, even possibly those who think climbing is about lumps of resin on indoor walls. For me it was the televising of the Matterhorn centenary celebrations in 1965, for my daughter it appears to be this book. Open it. The Burkhardt photograph will reach out and compel your whole attention, then move to the action picture to give it perspective, then linger over the text and trace the line from the sketch onto the main picture, look to the technical information, and book the car on the ferry. I'm committed to Boulder this summer, but it has got to be the Alps next year, even if I do have to take my daughter.

You may gather that I think that this is an impressive work, and you would certainly be right. However, am I not wasting ink? Surely everybody ordered it when the flyer came out with the Newsletter!

Hugh Davis

Menlove
Ernest Press 1993

by **Jim Perrin**
Price £9.95

This affordable second edition of Jim Perrin's outstanding biography of one of the Club's outstanding contributors to Welsh climbing is extremely welcome, particularly in view of the disservice done to Jim by his original publishers who let the book go out of print so soon after its publication. The revised introduction suggests that the book should be read not only for its spotlight on the climbing contributions of Menlove Edwards, but also within the context of today's government - led by attitudes of greed, self-interest and intolerance. It is easy to suggest, glancing at the gloss of political correctness and the acceptance, to some degree, of peoples' varied sexual orientation, that Menlove would have had an easier time of things today, but beneath it all the same dark emotions hold sway - the deliberate destruction of our health care services might well have brought him to despair in his professional life, if nowhere else.

It would be invidious to invite comparisons with other contemporary works, but Jim's background, including a Doctorate in political biography, provides him with a technical knowledge of the genre which other biographers can only acknowledge in passing. When combined with a painstaking approach, and an insistence on the truth even when less than immediately palatable, the result is a very worthy winner of the Boardman/Tasker award for Mountaineering Literature - an honour Jim might have received twice since had anthologies containing previously published work not been unfortunately omitted from eligibility.

There may be readers who would have preferred a shorter work, concerned only with Menlove's contribution to the register of classic routes in Snowdonia, but this a comprehensive record and appraisal of his life which has allowed many non-climbers access to the fascinating, but often painful, story of a man with outstanding physical powers slowly submerging in a morass of his own emotions - ultimately unfilled as they were.

The climbing aspects of Menlove's life are well covered in the narrative, and the appendix contains his collected works of prose and poetry; the bizarre feats of daring and fortitude, swimming the Linn of Dee at easter and rowing solo the 40-mile-wide channel between Wester Ross and the Outer Hebrides for example, are also well documented.

The reader's appetite is certainly whetted for the author's forthcoming biography of Don Whillans - another trying work where fact and fiction intermingle so seamlessly that the patient unravelling of the truth is a Herculean task.

Menlove should be read by anyone who climbs in Snowdonia, and whose interest in our sport rises beyond comparing gradings on the latest limestone topo - just don't expect a happy ending.

Andy Newton

Area Notes

North Wales 1993

So there have been the events - trivial as ever on the great rock faces which describe them - and there have been the trends they delineate, and it is the journal contributor's task to outline them, choose and assess from amongst them. So..!

We will begin at the peripheries before getting to the heart of the matter. In sub-Snowdonia, as certain regions were termed in the days of King Neill, a sub-species, the Dringoids - chiefly to be found in the vicinity of Porthmadog - of the genus Climber has been active in a hole above Nantlle. It has ascended three routes here, approached by abseil and each of them E1 or above. Be warned! Make sure you are thus competent, or end your days amongst the spleenwort. These same Dringoids ascended also a route on Moelwyn Bach. It is called *Maen Twr Og*, which is a pun of sorts, but would be laboured in the translation. The length is unknown, though the crag is at least 17 metres high, and it weighs in at E2 5c. At Carreg Lefain (we know where this is, and if you are sufficiently interested you will find out) several lines have been mastered by Littlejohn. As to grade, the general run of them require forearms, and the height is definitely a minimum of 18 metres, on to which can be added some for heather, steep approach and the like if aggrandisement is your object.

It was most definitely not Big George Smith's object in forging his route *Steep for Five Minutes* E6 6b, up the vertiginous aspect of Carreg Hyll Drem Fach (the crag of the moderately frightful appearance). Why would it be? The crag, drawing itself up to its full 12 metres, quailed into insignificance as George towered beneath it and powered beyond it. But enough of peripheries. Let us take ourselves to Ogwen, where Iwan Arfon Jones, patronymics taken as read, frequently found himself in the wrong valley and is rumoured to be changing his name to Iwan Ffrancon Nantygwryd Benglog Jones (would you please amend your Ogwen guidebooks accordingly).

On the south-western flank of Glyder Fach he explored the declivities of Craig yr Haul - a sunny place where there are V-Diffs to be had, and harder routes too, and all reaching statutory minimum height requirements for routes on the Glyders of 30 metres. Indeed, some are rumoured to surpass 60, though this has not yet been verified. What is for sure is that the rock is sublime and the outlook likewise, but it is too far to carry a camera and aetiolated rockstar, so popularity will never become an issue here, nor belay bolts and lower-offs a necessity. Iwan, with Paul Jenkinson, has also climbed the appealing arête on Braich Ty Du which bisects *Decameron Rib*. It is reputedly fine, E4 5c,6a, and may well be 50 metres in length.

Elsewhere in the Carneddau, Andy Cave immersed himself in the slimier parts of Craig yr Ysfa and emerged with *The Tranquiliser*, E4 6a (left of *Great Gully*) and *The Jellyfish Wrestlers* (at the same grade, but on the left wall of the Amphitheatre) to his credit. Both routes, wouldn't you know, follow cracks. Meanwhile in Ogwen, the young Scots or Turks Grant Farquhar and Stuart Cameron climbed a route on the Idwal Slabs. It is E3 5c and called *Fanny Deuce*. Enunciate carefully as one suspects, but would not wish to explore, a pun.

'Was it for this', mutter our elders into their brandy, 'that Peaker denied Edwards and Cox the use of the name Sodom? And what's this chap Ffrancon Jones doing in Colwyn Bay for the Lord's sake? Craig Bryn Dulas? Bryn Euryn Quarry? Bolts, lower-offs and French grades? Harrumph! In our day it was French letters, not climbing, in Colwyn Bay. Don't know what the world's coming to, ribbit, ribbit...'

We will go down to the sea again, where these young Scots or Turks or whatever have repeated *Extinction*, Steve Mayers' significant E8 6c on Gogarth Main Cliff, and added a route of their own, which, to continue a theme, is called *Sex and Religion*, is E7 6c, and undoubtedly 50 metres from top to bottom. It is said to be 'more serious than Panorama', but unfortunately we can expect to find even fewer Tory politicians roasting on it. Given that it is virtually protectionless, I would willingly hold any of their ropes on it, instruct them in how to knot them around their throats, and even arrange to have them winched in to two-thirds height. As a sport, it could be the greatest crowd-puller since Christians versus Lions.

To round up in Autolyman mode, the evergreen Martin Crook did this and that here and there, including *Lardvark* on Gogarth and *The Bear of Tralee* in the Aberglaslyn Pass, whilst a former instructor from the National Mountaineering Centre ploughed his way through clumps of Lloydia

Serotina on Drws Cwm Clyd whilst in quest of a couple of quick ego-fixes. Add his name to the list of Tory politicians Supra.

And so to the year's great event - Nick Dixon's *Beginner's Mind* on a roadside boulder above Pont y Gromlech. It is E8 6c with two pegs for protection: 'Awesome in conception, everything in execution, nothing in completion' commented its author, with guomic sagacity. However, a full-page photograph appeared in one of the magazines to subvert his assessment. Now the star to every wandering bark or yap in Wales, its worth may be unknown but its height is taken as being nine metres. A marriage of true minds has been reached - we view the world in grains of metamorphosed sand. Good! Or as a very close friend of mine used to say, 'it's not the length, it's how much you manage to cram into it. And don't worry about the mirrors in the cliffs. It's so much nicer when we can see ourselves doing it...'

Jim Perrin

Peak District 1993

Despite the month of March being one of the driest on record, even the Chee Dale Cornice dried out, it was not to last. The interminable summer rains ensured that many routes stayed wet for all of the summer; it was not to be a great year for climbing on many of the limestone crags, particularly in Chee Dale. However, the autumn months gave perfect conditions for the gritstone, prompting several climbers to put up some very hard new routes or repeat some of the hard, bold routes. Tragically this was the year in which Rachel Farmer died at Buoux, and this was to prompt several of her friends in Sheffield to publish the book *Face Dancing* as a tribute to Rachel, the proceeds from which go to the Rachel Farmer Trust which provides care and opportunities for the young and underprivileged.

So here is a tour of the Peak District's crags and what has been happening this year; first, the gritstone on which several new faces have come to the fore-front of the sport with their daring death-defying exploits on some of the hardest unprotected routes with the promise of much more to come in 1994. We start with the exploits of one of these young exponents of the art of keeping cool under pressure - Simon Jones, who has climbed some very hard routes on Wharnccliffe and Curbar.

Simon Jones has paid several visits to the rather unfashionable Wharnccliffe this year. Undeterred by the horrendous landings, Simon has summoned up the courage to add some new frightening lines of his own. *Dragon's Hoard* E6 6b, is a direct finish to *Cardinal's Treasure* using a marginal RP1 placement and *Journey into Freedom*. E7 6b climbs the 'gripping' wall right of *On the Air* finishing up that route. Simon also climbed the more amenable *News at Zen* E3 5c up the wall left of *Desolation Angel*.

On Rivelin Edge Adrian Berry spotted a gap and climbed the blank-looking slab right of *Wilkinson's Wall* to give *Of Mice and Men* E5 6b.

Derwent Edge had a rare addition this year when Simon Cundy climbed his *Hoplite* E3 6b, which starts up *Spartan* and climbs leftwards to the arête.

Bamford, also an unpopular crag, despite its fine position and good rock, provided Andy Popp with *Bamboozer* E2 6a, which takes the wide crack on Crease Buttress. More significantly, Andy also repeated Ron Fawcett's excellent *Jasmine* E7 6c.

Stanage has been the scene of many new lines, the majority of which have been climbed after the publication of the Stanage Topo book. Typically, this publication has been used to seek out the gaps between the existing routes. Inevitably, most of these are 'fillers in', however several impressive climbs have been added. Andy Barker climbed the smooth wall left of *The Mangler* to claim *Scapa Flow* E6 6c. The hanging nose and wall left of *Stanage Without Oxygen* gave Richie Patterson his *Skinless Wonder* E5 6b, which has an awesome mantelshelf to finish. Making the most of the good autumn conditions the amazing Robin Barker climbed the hanging scoop on Apparent North Buttress. The crux of this route involves a slap into an undercut at a worrying height with no protection below. Robin named the route, *Black Car Burning* E7 6c, after another rather worrying experience, this time on the way home.

On Burbage North, there is not much to report apart from Mo Overfield's *Biscuits for Breakfast* E4 6b, which takes the hanging slab left of *Red Shift* and Andy Barker's route up the wall right of the *Right Fin* at E4 6b.

Across the valley, Higgar Tor was the scene for Neil Foster's excellent eliminate, *Linkline* E5 6b, which gives good direct climbing linking the start of *Bat Out of Hell* to the crux and finish of *Pulsar* via a short wall. The route eliminates most of the problems of rope drag normally associated with *Pulsar*.

Area Notes

Froggatt hasn't seen much in the way of new routes, however, since Simon Nadin's televised ascent of *Beau Geste*, which made it seem straightforward, there have been several repeats of this superb route including a few which involved no pre-inspection.

Neighbouring Curbar provided Andy Crome's *The Art of White Hat Wearing* E5 6c, a short problem wall left of *Beech Layback*. More significant, was Neil Foster's ascent of *Mensa* E6 6b; by all accounts, a superb route up the arête above the traverse of *The Brain*. Of particular note, the route *Slab and Crack* E7 6c, unrepeated since it was first led by Johnny Dawes in 1986, had its second and third ascents from Simon Jones and Andy Popp respectively.

Baslow had its first major new route for some time when Robin Barker climbed the obvious roof and arête on Gun Buttress with a marginal friend placement above a nasty landing; *The Grand Potato* E7 6b, was named after one of his favourite take-aways.

At John Henry Quarry Sid Siddiqui and Jim Burton added *Gym'll Fix it* E5 6b to the right of *Rated Steep* and *Department of Stealth* E4 6a up the wall left of *Desperate Straits*.

Hobson Moor has had a few more additions from Sid Siddiqui and Jim Burton. The routes are mostly peg-protected and the best of them is *Fingertip Control* E5 6b, which takes the hanging crack between *Crock's Climb* and *Gable End*.

In Staffordshire Justin Critchlow and Julian Lines have dominated the scene by repeating some of the frightening desperates and adding some new ones of their own.

On the Roaches Lower Tier, Justin Critchlow made the second ascent of Nick Dixon's pebble-pulling desperate, *Doug* E8 6c, and a few weeks later Julian Lines made the third ascent; apparently it is worth every E point. Julian Lines went on to solo his *Apache Dawn* E5 6c, up the pebbly wall just left of *Catastrophe International*, this was duly repeated by Justin Critchlow who thought the route merited the E6 tag due to the potential consequences of a fall. Justin also climbed the lower arête of *Blood Blisters* at E4 6b. The direct start to *Elegy* was eventually solved by Paul Higgingson who managed to turn the roof below *Elegy's* traverse via a desperate mantelshelf move to give *A Little Peculiar* E6 7a; a side-runner in *The Bulger* protects.

On Bosley Cloud Justin Critchlow made an on-sight second ascent of *Summit Arête* E5 7a; Paul Higgingson made the third ascent, also on-sight.

On the Hanging Stone Julian Lines has added a good quality eliminate called *Jewel of Corruption*, at a seemingly amenable grade of E2 5b. This route takes the blunt arête directly below the finish of *Bridge of Sighs*.

In the Churnet Valley, Julian Lines made the third ascent of *One Chromosome's Missing* E7 6b on Harston Rock. He soloed the route after finding the potential protection (a hand-placed peg) was unclippable from the route; this makes one wonder how the other two ascensionists managed to clip it.

Peak District limestone has not been as busy this year, with many of the locals now travelling up to the more sheltered crags of Kilnsey and Malham. However, there have been some important developments, mainly on Raven Tor.

Starting with Stoney Middleton, Jim Kelly has added a couple of routes in the quarry area; *Vicky* E1 5b, climbs the wall between *Icarus* and the arête which used to be *Stupid Cupid* and *Daedalus* E4 6a, which takes the crack-line between *Icarus* and *Psychopath*, the only bolts being in the belay.

Moving along the dale, Horseshoe Quarry has had some minor new additions (all bolted of course); the best of which is Dave Simmonite's *The Big Fat Texan on the Corner* E2 5b which takes the wall right of *Sunday Sport*.

Love it, or hate it, Horseshoe Quarry seems to be one of the most popular limestone crags in the Peak, mainly due to its preponderance of bolted routes in the lower 'E' grades. Many of the older routes on the lower tier now have new bolt belays/lower-offs making it even more of a sport crag.

Peter Dale has been the scene of much bolting activity mainly by Sid Siddiqui in an attempt to turn it into a sport climbing crag suiting the less ambitious sport climbers. The best routes are *Walking on Hot Coals* F7a and *Come Dancing* F7a+. Unfortunately, the latter route has been somewhat spoiled by the cementing up of some of its holds in an attempt to make the route harder.

Smalldale Quarry has provided Simon Lee with another new route; *Soggy Biscuits* E6 6b takes the wall to the right of *Lost Contact*.

Raven Tor, continues to be the scene of many of the hardest new bolted routes, with its steep walls, easy approach and sheltered but sunny situation. Mark Pretty added a couple of new test pieces; firstly

he climbed the logical line of *Dialectics* F8a+, which moves right after the start of *Out of my Tree*, and then gathering his courage went on to climb the steep line of *Make it Funky* F8c, between *Mecca* and *Hubble*. *Make it Funky* has since become popular with repeats by Mark Leach, Ben Moon, Robin Barker, Elie Chevaux (a visiting Swiss climber), Francois Lombard and John Welford which must make it one of the most popular 8cs in the country! Earlier in the year, John Welford climbed his route, *Jehovakill* F8b+, which takes the line right of the start to *Body Machine* to finish at the first break of *Body Machine* (some ten metres of climbing). As for the future, there are still many impressive major lines to be climbed. For example, Mark Leach's project extension to *Mecca* still awaits an ascent and the old project above the original start of *Chimes* is being actively pursued by Jerry Moffatt. Finally, Ben Moon has been proving just how fit he is by traversing *Powerband* 8b, there and back twice in succession! He has also added another training problem which involves traversing *Powerband* and finishing up *Pump up the Power*.

On Rubicon Wall in Water-Cum-Jolly, in very cold conditions towards the end of the year Mark Pretty climbed a new line just left of *Let the Tribe Increase* to give *Eugenics* F8a+ (the science of race improvement).

Due to the poor weather, the only popular crags in Chee Dale seem to be The Sidings and The Embankment, with their sunny aspect and quick drying nature. In an attempt to turn the area into a safe sport's crag, many of the routes on the Embankment have been retro-bolted, however, the lower-offs have not been improved, which means that after a nice safe ascent most climbers risk lowering down off a single old bolt.

On the Nook Mark Pretty climbed the small groove to the right of *Theoria*; a lucky foot manoeuvre against a tree branch prevented him swinging off and so allowed him to lay claim to *There's Life in the Old Log* Yet F7c.

On Long Wall, Andy Popp managed to finish one of Chris Hardy's old projects, *Mouldwarp Wall* 7c+ takes the blank-looking wall left of *Brothers in Arms* (five bolt runners protect).

Chee Tor has been the scene of some retro-bolting, with two new bolts added to Ron Fawcett's masterpiece, *Tequila Mockingbird*; one bolt was added to protect the rather frightening and hard start (which has become harder due to the loss of holds) and another was added higher up the route to replace some doubtful existing in-situ gear. The lower bolt was only added after the perpetrator, Craig Devonshire, had already climbed it without. Several years ago, when Mark Pretty added two bolts to the start of this route (a spate of repeat ascents followed) they were removed a few weeks later.

Geoff Radcliffe

Lundy 1993

All the new climbs this season were packed into the August period. Only the guidebook writers Gary Gibson and Paul Harrison along with their respective bands of merry followers were active on the new routes front on what was marked improvement on last year. Hopes that the island would become bolt free in readiness for the forthcoming guide failed to materialise, although the quest towards this objective came significantly closer. Lundy was left at the mercy of the old two firms operating as usual who produced a good harvest.

Gary was first in on the act and chopped and removed the bolts on the following routes; *Mexico Speaks* E7 6c (three gone, two to go), *Jack O Bite* E5 6b (with a new direct start), *Alpine Disaster* E6, *That Semi-detached Feeling* E6, *Who Can Wait* E6, *Alpless* E6, and *Matt Blanc* E7 6c. An impressive crusade by any standards. At the time of writing Gary is hard at work writing the historical section to the new guide. We all wait with much interest what approach he will take on the bolt issue this time round. '... these routes utilised bolt runners, the justification of which seemed obvious to the ascensionists' he wrote in the '85 guide.

Whilst on Black Crag Gibson found time to cross the face from left to right with *Chizen Itza* E7 6c said to be worth three stars. On Little Black Crag he found *Metamorphosis* E5 6b a well protected pitch up the left arête and the brutal *Chameleon Kiss* E5 6b up discontinuous cracks on the southern end of the crag. On the nearby Wolfman Jack Wall Gary found space for yet another line, *An American Werewolf on Lundy* E6 6b just left of Wolfman Jack and finishing up the last section of *Jack O Bite* without the bolt. Finally in this area Gibson was *Splitting the Mighty Atom* E3 5c on Alpine Buttress which climbs twin cracks left of *Fusion*.

Area Notes

A little further north on the Wall of Grooves, Gary turned his attention to his earlier route *Vincent Price*, reclimbing the first pitch after its recent rockfall and, adding a new wild finish now at E6 6b,6c. Up on the Needle Rock he added a hard E6 6b on the south east arête *Hammer House of Horrors* E6 6b and up on the nearby Punchbowl cliff; *Right Between the Eyes* E2 5b, *Specific Nocean* E3 5c, and *Innocent Moves* E4 6a.

Activity on the Devil's Chimney Cliff was renewed. Paul and Neil Harrison climbed the obvious and excellent arête left of *Fifth Appendage Psylocybin* E2 5c and the steep blocky grove left of *Overboard* became *Jezebel* E1 5c. Also of note Roland Strube and Gareth Hughes combined the start of *Psylocybin* with *Peyote* named *Camel Ash* E2 5c which despite climbing a good line unfortunately covered no new ground. Mike Snell and Simon Cardy repeated *Stalingrad* who assured us it was still E3 5c and ought to be done more often.

On the Pathfinder slabs more lines were unearthed. *Bathing Beauties* E4 5c Gibson with Martin Wilson, takes the slabs left of *Douglas Bather* and *Bath out of Hell* E3 5c, by Roy Thomas along with Gary and Hazel Gibson follows the big gardened strip obvious, for all to see, after many hours work.

On the Pyramid Egyptian moves were apparently common place and the area came in for a lot of attention. The scoop right of *Pyramid of Success* became *A Geometric Study* E4 6a. The thin crack left of the *Pyramid Game* was *Sphinx Crack* E5 6b, the beak of rock left again *Carnage in Carthage* also E5 6b. These climbs, along with *Luxor Nothing* HVS5a and *Phoenix in the Groove* E2 4b,5b to the left again, were all part of Gibson's equation.

Mike Snell and Tony Sawbridge continued their relationship on the St.James' Stone (well who knows what they get up to out there), with *Lerina* E1 5b to add to their tally of climbs on this remote piece of rock.

Meanwhile down in Squire's View Zawn Gibson and Thomas found yet another route on the Diamond face with their *Blood Sweat and Smears* E6 6b whilst on the opposite face Simon Cardy nibbled his way up *Sheeps Eyes in Aspic* E1 5b to the right of *Sharks Head Soup*.

Paul Harrison and team found an excellent wall climb on the Torrey Canyon Cliff with their *Monoman* E4 6a. They also went on to find *Friday I'm in Love!* E3 5c and *Harrison Crusoe* E3 6b on the crack around to the left in the buttress now known as the Marisco walls.

The remaining new climbs were found in the far northern reaches of the island to which activists in these parts refer to the Devil's Slide as 'in the south of the island'. One of the last, if not the last, undiscovered zawns was entered by abseil and on the big back wall Simon Cardy ascended *Herbert Bronski's Back* at E2 5b. On the Dawn Walls Paul Harrison had a field day coming up with *The Abyss* E4 6a/b, and his hundredth new route on the Island *Song to the Siren* E3 6c. On the opposite wall Cardy and Harrison did a two pitch route *Mary Patricia Rosalea* HVS5a and, round on the seaward face Mike Snell finished with *Northern Lights* E3 5c to round off a good season.

Simon Cardy

Pembroke 1993

Activity in Pembroke saw a sharp decline in 1993, partly due to the lack of available information, which resulted in some routes emerging suspiciously close to one another, and in some instances, matching exactly! The initial new route frenzy of Range West has also worn off a little, as classic lines below E4 become harder to find and access restrictions seem to be on the increase. This, coupled with another wet season, has reduced the new route total from 300 in '92 to 79 in '93, and Range East together with North Pembroke almost matched this with a grand total of 65.

Starting with North Pembroke, in the Needles Rock area, Brian Davison and R Jones climbed the enviable line up the landward arete of the tidal stack, *Needless to Say*, an impressive lead at E2 5c. The same pair also added *Seal Slab*, E4 and *Three Men in a Boat* VS to the buttress opposite.

At Craig Llong near Trevine, Martin Crocker, accompanied by John Harwood, put up a handful of desperates on the re-named 'Asteroid'. The original climbs in this area were done by Pat Littlejohn, who was very secretive about the whereabouts of his 'Dinosaur Wall!' Crocker has now found, and added, *Moonstruck* E6 6b, *Souls of the Departed* E4 6a, *Strangers* E6 6b/c and, with Frank Ramsay, *Go Take a Running Jump* E6 6b and *Impetus Now* E6 6b, claiming them to be some of the best hard routes in Pembroke.

Nearby, at Mur Cenhinhen, Steve Mayers and Gill Lovick climbed the long awaited and much coveted line of *Sunset Rib* E5 6b,6a which takes the striking arête right of *Goneril*.

Surprisingly Steve Quinton, the local activist, only added one route this year, namely *Flower Pot Men* HVS 5a on St David's Head - married life must be suiting him?

Littlejohn returned to the area, creating a couple of easier lines with C Baron on Pinnacle Buttress in Lunar Bay *St Non's Pinnacle* Severe, a potential classic. He moved west to put up the first and only route on Skomar Wall, *The Wild West* E3 5c, a steep cliff of stratified quartzite facing Skomar across the turbulent waters of Jack's Sound.

South to Range West now, and despite a lull in new route production, the main activists are still at it: Western Walls, already containing a cluster of good quality, low grade routes practically side by side, nevertheless saw visits from Dave Wilkinson, who managed to squeeze in eight more routes ranging from Diff to HVS, and the Mutton and Lamb duo (sorry, that is Nicole Matton and Gareth Lambe - old joke), who also added a few V Diff's.

Emma Alsford and Paul Donnithorne continued their onslaught of the area, discovering the unclimbed Trog Zawn tucked away in the Funlands Region, and produced five new routes between V Diff and E2; while Dave Viggers and Martin Slee added *All the Fun of the Fair* E3 6a to the Unique Crater.

Bill Wright joined Donnithorne and alternated leads for *The Blizzard* and *Thoreau's Passage*, two E1s on the Strata Walls and, at Linney Point, Donnithorne rejoined his common denominator (I wouldn't let anyone else say that) Alsford to climb the awesome line of *Tombstone* E4 5b,6a,5b.

Matton and Lambe continued adding scores of severes at Bulliber, where Bob Allen, Pat Devine and crew paid many and varied tributes in the form of *Now We're Cooking* HVS 5a, *This One's for Cooky* HVS 5b and October 20 1991 VS 5a. It goes without saying that there continues to be a much missed presence as far as arrangements in Range West are concerned.

Mount Sion, already containing a large proportion of Range West classics, saw the addition of many more fine lines. Much admiration must go to Mayers this year for holding up the on sight ethic at the extreme end of the climbing scale: *The Scorchers* E6 6b at Mount Sion Central was only one in an impressive trilogy of routes..... At the more amenable western end of Mount Sion East, Viggers, in between busily writing the guide, managed to find *Trailblazer* E3 6a with Slee, while further east, unbelievably, eight more routes fought their way up the outrageously overhanging strata, the roofs of which seem totally impregnable on first impressions. Needless to say, Donnithorne was involved in all of them, alternating partners with Roy Thomas, Alsford, Viggers and John Hornsby.

The only two routes added to Greenham Common - re-named by the MOD 'Green Ham' Common, and strategically placed on a map by the entry gate! - were the other two feats by Mayers, *Wash Doubt* E7 6b and *Wolverine* E7 6a, on the fast filling infamous leaning wall. Andy Perkins made a flying visit to the area, putting up *Speedtrap* E4 6a, at Flimston with Alsford, and biking back to a party in Manchester the same day.

Over the border and into the more accessible Range East, where Donnithorne could not be held back from *Axial Dominion* E3 5c,5b in Elegug Stacks Bay, an obvious crack feature left of Gibson's *Only the Best Will Do*. This less popular western end of the range saw a surge of activity this year, with Dave Scott-Maxwell and Paul Deardon making a few trips to Flimston Bay adding quantity, if not quality to the area: *Metropolis* XS 5b, a serious route up the corner of the rotten looking slab, and the novel and worthwhile *Haven* 17 E3 5c, which climbs inside the right hand cave and through a hole in the roof.

On Levitaion Wall at Crystal Slabs, Damion Carroll soloed some easy routes and also paired up with Donnithorne (yawn,yawn) to do some fine mid-grade routes - *Crankshaft* E2 5b, *Midas Shadow* E1 5b and *Line of Cleavage* E1 5b, among others.

Paul Pritchard made a fleeting appearance on Mosaic Wall climbing *Rude Route* HXS, where Donnithorne sliced his finger on *Digital Tapestry* E3 5c, nearly landing a block on the unsuspecting Rob Parker, and then, adding insult to injury raining blood on his partner while courageously fighting his way up the final 30ft of jamming crack!

In Bullslaughter Bay Alsford produced the eliminate and unpronounceable *Uisgebeatha* HVS 5a, with Scot Alan Leary, who then climbed two routes on the obvious promontory at the eastern end of the bay *Sidewalk* E1 5a and *Jaywalk* E2 5b - dare I say it, accompanied by Donnithorne. The pair also added a Diff up the 50 foot stack *The Canine Tooth* with their best friends going along for the ride.

Area Notes

Further east and into the far more popular area of Huntsman's Leap, where Donnithorne (sorry) and Alsford reclaimed the fallen *Vladimir* - *Vladimir on the Rocks* E3 6a.

Finally to an area between Gun Cliff and Mowing Word, where D Wright and T Lisle took an unusual line through a hole in the roof of the through cave, creating *Sam's Affair* HS, and so endeth the stream of Pembrokeshire new routes - until another year!

Emma Alsford

