

**The
Climbers' Club
Journal**

1996

The Climbers' Club Journal

Edited by
Smiler Cuthbertson

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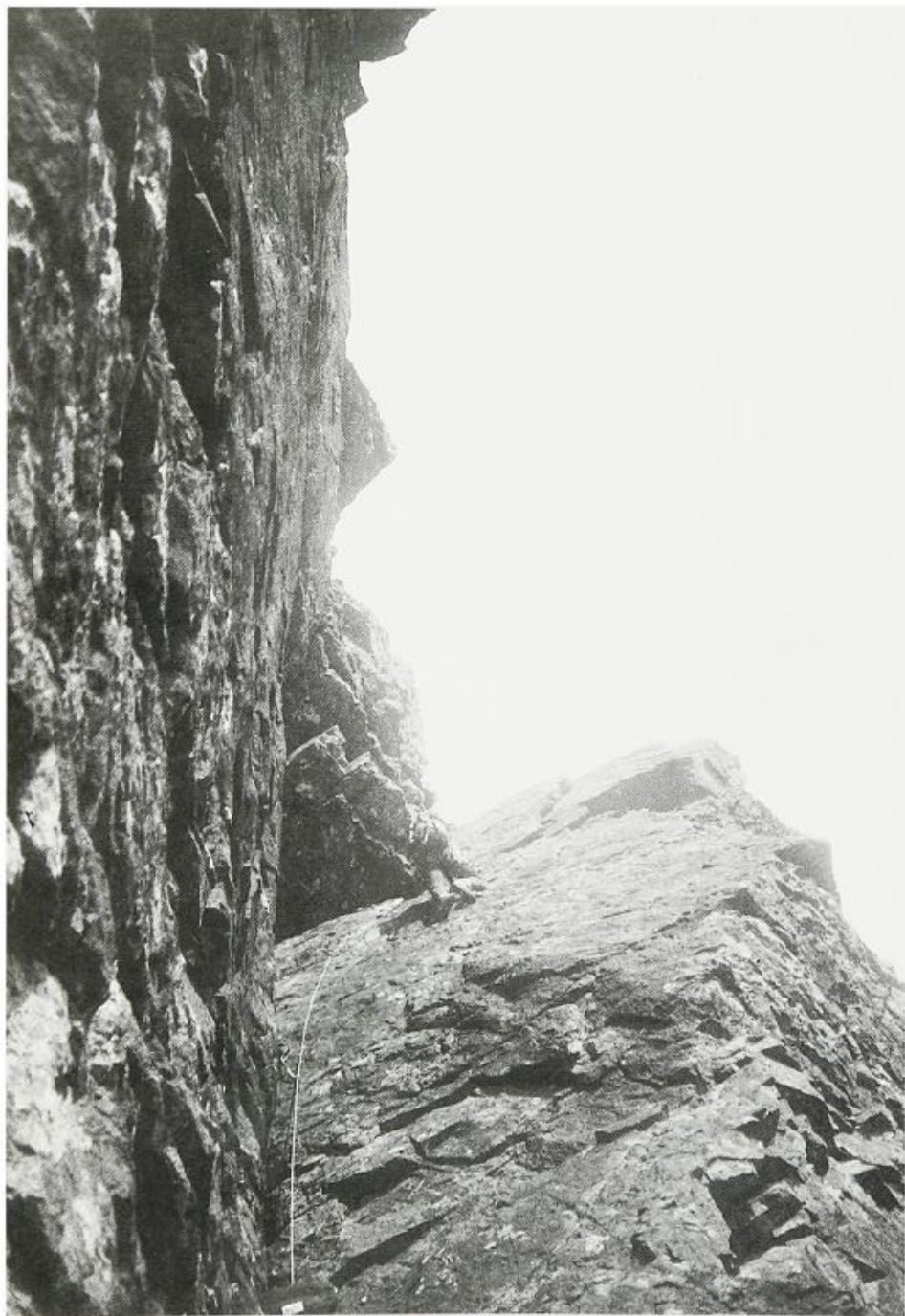
The Climbers' Club Journal

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Contents

Editorial	5
An Interview with Anne Sauvy	Terry Gifford 6
A Little Sense of Doubt	Bill Russell 10
Bow Wall	Tim Noble 11
A Birthday Present	John Harwood 12
Too Much Will Kill You -Too Little Ain't Enough	Tim Carruthers 16
Extracts from the Climbing Diary of Ivan Waller	Roger Briggs 18
Eyes from Olympus	Terry Gifford 21
Ma Lowe Investigates	A Well-Wisher 22
Best Boot Forward	Geoff Milburn 25
A Trek in Bhutan	Bob Allen 30
A Fly on the Wall at the Family Meet	Dave Gregory 37
Salt	David Hope 44
Beware Brother, Beware	Dennis May 47
The United State of Iran	Chris Lane 48
Sandstone Walking	Bob Moulton 51
Henry's Rock	Lindsay Griffin 55
The Applecross Organ: a'Chioch	Terry Gifford 59
On the Edge of a Scottish Island	Mike Burt 60
Into the Light	Bill Russell 63
So Wha'd'ya Know About Placement of Pro?	Peter Harding 66
A Bout with the Ben	Tim Noble 72
Travels with my Wooden Leg	Hamish Nicol 75
Rim to Rim - The Grand Canyon	Mike Browell 79
La Battaglia delle Arance	Al Churcher 82
Storm on the North Face of the Col du Plan(Winter)	Fritz Sumner 91
Falling Down the White Cliffs of Dover	Neil Boyd 95
Return Journey	John Hunt 98
Perspective of a Climber (Who Happens to be Female)	Gill Lovick 101
The Kentmere Round	Chris Craggs 105
Don't Leave it Too Late, Matey	Derek Walker 107
Banff Snapshots	Phil Grierson 113
Jebel El Kest	Les Brown 117
Some People Who Have Influenced My Life	Trevor Jones 121
Obituary	124
Officers and Officials of the Club	144
Reviews	145
Area Notes	161



King's Chimney, Sgurr Mhic Chionnich. Photo: Smiler Cuthbertson

EDITORIAL

It seemed like I knew him oh so well, and yet that morning, on a surprisingly sun-drenched camp-site in Argentière, I was to talk face to face with him for the first time.

He had helped me several times with Journal articles, mainly centred on South American climbing. I had the idea of a trip down there, the first for me in that country, so exciting. Was this the start of things to come?

Yes, we had written to each other, even talked a couple of times on the 'phone, about far-off places, storm-lashed snow-fields and sun kissed rock, yet here he was, in person. A tall and strong-looking guy, some would have said handsome, in a sort of way, but what I instantly liked best of him, was his friendly, unassuming manner. Here was a man I could call a friend, and in reality, the actual numbers of real friends I had were diminishing. Not that I'm unlikeable, I hope to the contrary, I seem to create a good atmosphere with each new person I meet, and still have lots of pals from the old days. But real friends, well, not so many.

I climbed with a best friend for over ten years, before moving on to a different place. We never lost touch, but I miss those weekend jaunts when we were always climbing and laughing together. Towards the end of our climbing partnership, I wanted more trips, more climbs, greater ranges perhaps. But the beginning of the end was in sight. An unsuccessful alpine trip, where his interest seemed to lie elsewhere, a new bride back at home. So we move on, I had to. Distant places, exotic climbing scenes, more and more routes but it wasn't quite the same. There were acquaintances, climbing partners, but no real friends.

So, is this the new beginning I wonder? We live a fair distance apart, for a start, so there won't be that mid-week club-night where we can plan the trip for the following weekend. Responsibility also rears it's head. I have my work to pursue, a calendar of climbs calling for new friends most of the time. And while I have my lovely family, he has a new girlfriend, so maybe it's fait à complet.

I put these all these thoughts behind me, boarded the 767 and dreamt of other heights as we crossed the Atlantic, bound for the Cordillera Blanca. Our trip was a commercial one, three clients to take to a great height. Our goal, amongst other things, was Huascaran, at 6768m, the highest peak in Peru, higher than I'd been and certainly much higher than most of the group. Except him. He'd not only done all our intended peaks, he'd done so much in South America while working in Columbia. Vacations had allowed him to travel extensively and as any keen climber would, he'd ticked off many of the bigger routes and climbing areas in South America. So he knew the score, and spoke Spanish. I was delighted when he agreed to join us. A sort of courier? Not really. A guide? In a way. But I had to have the 'buck stops here' job. No, he was much more, a friend.

This year? He wants me to go to the Pamirs, do another biggie. We'll see. For one thing, Peru beckons again but the Alps programme is full. Then there's Aconcagua next January! There is so much to do out there, but you know, perhaps a friend is more important? I'll always recall and smile at his favourite comment to me - 'There are no bandits in the Blanca, only friends'.

Smiler

An Interview with Anne Sauvy

Terry Gifford

Climbers are born climbers, but writers make themselves. Of course, everyone is born a climber, but the ape in us does not tell us how we might write about it - other writers do that. And just as Anne Sauvy has learned narrative technique from the French novelist Etienne Bruhl, I know that other climbing writers, including our own Dave Gregory, have learned from Anne Sauvy's stories. Having just finished reading a hundred years of the CCJ, I'd like to do anything that might encourage female members to contribute to the Journal. I know that exhortations probably do not work, but someone ought to say that contributions from Alison, Jancis, Kym and Audrey (a non-member) in the last ten years have been a breath of fresh air. Only Alison could have written **Three on the Eiger** (1988); only Jancis could have written **Breaking the Rules** (1991); Kym Martindale's honest, direct poetry, too, has been unique. I'd like to hear more of the activities of recent (and not so recent) female members and more of this should be encouraged to be adventurous writing, like the fiction of the Frenchwoman, Anne Sauvy.

So when the Editor asked me to follow up my 1995 Journal review of Anne's most recent collection of stories in English, **The Game of Mountain and Chance**, by reprinting the interview I referred to there, I was happy to agree. In July 1995 I talked to Anne at the Passy Mountain Book Festival just outside Chamonix. Anne, who younger members might not realise is married to CC member John Wilkinson, an Oxford expert on the Middle East, may have had a privileged introduction to climbing, but I discovered in the course of the conversation that she started writing short stories after a particularly stressful period of her life.

As we sat under the sunshades of the 'authors' salon at Passy, Anne revealed, in answer to my comment on the amazingly lively translation of this recent book, that Anthea Bell, its main translator, is also the translator of **Asterix** into English. In the opening story, **The Bronze Mountaineers**, the translator has great fun contrasting the West Country peasant voice of Balmat with the 18th century aristocratic sentences of Saussure, as these Chamonix statues re-ascend Mont Blanc.

"Actually, I put in a real sentence from Saussure, and also one from Jean Jaques Rousseau, but now I can't remember which they are!"

Her eyes sparkle at having caught herself out, but her brow suggests a strong determination behind the responsive sensitivity of her facial expressions. She speaks quietly and thoughtfully in a lilting English carrying a French subtlety of expressiveness that we lack.

Anne has had a studio in Chamonix for 25 years, and she remembers her first visit at the age of two because she was annoyed at not being allowed to go on the Mer de Glace. Her father had a passion for ski-ing (and rugby). When he took Anne to Zermatt at the age of 13, she says,

"I was so impressed by the Matterhorn and the other mountains that I decided I should climb". By 17, as a pretty girl who climbed well, she found herself in groups which included the most famous French alpinists of her day Terray,

Desmaison, Herzog - and she has continued to keep in touch with the French elite. Michel Piola actually named a route after one of the stories in **The Game of Mountain and Chance**, the cover of which, incidentally, is a forceful painting by Marcel Wibault capturing the soaring Chamonix Aiguilles assailed by ice from below and storm from above. She is herself now one of the respected figures of Chamonix, the city erecting a statue of Paccard because another of the stories in this book called for it. It's an indication of her popularity that in the first four hours of book-signing at Passy she had sold 36 books. Her new novel, **Nadir**, was being lapped up by the locals, perhaps because it is based on research the previous summer with the local guides' helicopter rescue service.

One Chamonix guide, Claude Jaccoux, knows Anne from their student days in Paris when a group of 15 students and workers who called themselves 'Les Serrures' (The Locks) would catch the Saturday morning train out to Fontainebleau. Usually they would catch glimpses of their heroes who at this time, in the mid '50s, were developing the bouldering in the woods there - Robert Paragot, later famous for first ascents of Mustang Tower and Makalu, along with Lucien Berandini who later achieved fame on the West face of the Dru. After a day's climbing and a big meal each person dug a bivouac spot out of the sand under a boulder. They bivied all year round and on one January night, after a particularly convivial meal, they heard singing drifting over the snow towards them. Through the trees three of their friends who had missed the early train appeared dressed as the three kings bearing gifts. From the beginning Anne's apprenticeship was based on gregarious groups of people. Such people are the focus of her fiction. And, of course, for more than 20 years she has been able to observe the diversity of characters attracted into the Chamonix goldfish bowl.

It was brave of her father, she points out, to encourage his only child to get into climbing. "

Perhaps he feared, but he did not show it. He did not try to stop me from climbing. He was very proud when I did even dangerous things, but well. I am very grateful for his attitude."

When I was writing to Anne in 1991 to persuade her to come to our fifth Festival of Mountaineering Literature, she wrote to me one day with moving simplicity, 'My father has died. I loved him.' Anne speaks of her father with that love and respect alive today.

"His father was killed in 1918 when he was 19 and already in the War himself. So my grandmother was a widow with five children and no money. But she made sure that all the children studied hard and they all did well. One of my aunts was an explorer and there has just been a book written about her. My father became a statistical researcher for the French government, eventually founded the world's first Institute of Demography, and was awarded by the UN the equivalent of a Nobel prize for his life's work. But more important," she adds, "he was a very interesting man, very good, very generous, very funny and he skied until he was 80."

So Anne Sauvy was brought up in Paris in the intellectual environment where she has established her working life, researching and teaching the history of publishing and censorship at the Sorbonne. Her life has been split between the Left Bank and the mountains, between the intellectual and the physical, between Paris and Chamonix, but in her climbing stories this double life is unified through

the medium of her creative energy. Her stories sparkle with the fun that's in her broad grin. The marvel is that her wit and word-play and spot-on mickey-taking (read **The London Dinner**) have been so spectacularly celebrated by this new translation. Of course, she says, her professional research has contributed to her sense of storytelling, but basically, she says with simplicity,

"I dislike boring books, and I try not to write them." Some reviewers have argued that her stories do not take narrative risks, although Robin Campbell in the SMCJ has recognised the 'inner tension' of her kind of fiction. It may be that the 1995 Boardman/Tasker judges, who failed to shortlist her new book of stories, considered them as limited narratives. In fact, reviewers' comparisons with Maupassant, by tending to emphasise the elegance of her stories, really miss the point. **The Game of Mountain and Chance** shows again and again that her narratives are driven by the emotional twists, ironies and conundrums that her ideas make possible. I ask if she was aware of this.

"No," she says, "that comes by instinct, but it shows that to write good stories you must not have too much technique, because that is rather dry, you have to have what is in the heart of all the different people, the mothers or wives of climbers, the people on the rope. That is what interests me most, together with mountains, of course, and the atmosphere of mountains."

This is perhaps the secret of the compassion that underlies Anne Sauvy's work. To understand where that comes from one might reflect upon the fact that her creative energies were released after an agonising five years during which she had a baby that died. Behind the playfulness of her stories there lies a deep comprehension of sadness. And part of the humanity of her work is the moral justice of her final twists - the hotelier who thinks a death would bring attention to his village finds, when it happens, that it is his only son.

"I like stories when ah! something at the end lands you somewhere else, sometimes changing what you have read."

Robin Campbell makes the point that in her work 'a tragic outcome is always on the cards'. I ask if she has had any epics herself?

"I was in an avalanche, but I had the luck to be dug out. I had been married to John one month. ("We have made a marriage between Oxford and Paris", Anne says.) I was ski touring in January. We were eight. Suddenly there was a big avalanche to our right. By chance we were carried not too deeply and the two guides with spades got free and managed to find everybody. I put this experience into a story in **Flammes de Pierre**. Sometimes I use my own experiences."

"Well, I can see that your memory of the climbs is very detailed."

"When I did them I wrote lots of notes, and when I have not done them I talk to people who have. To write credible stories you must have a very strong base."

Once again the value of the writer's notebook is endorsed, together with a professional approach to research.

But will Anne now be writing mountaineering novels after her first experience with **Nadir** (the cover of which has been painted by the Sheffield-born, Chamonix-based artist and climber, Andy Parkin)? Was the novel a form she enjoyed working in?

"I loved it. I was completely involved in the long story and the way people were developing. I had all my ideas at the beginning, but writing it was extremely interesting. It is one imaginary day for the rescue service and I invented the 12

rescues on this day, which I researched all last summer with special permission from the helicopter zone. I think I shall go on with novels."

Whether we shall see an English translation of **Nadir** will inevitably depend upon the success of **The Game of Mountain and Chance**. So let's hope that more readers discover the variety of witty entertainment and the dimensions of deep understanding that Anne Sauvy reveals in this new book.

A Little Sense of Doubt

Bill Russell

I was quite comfortable on this little ledge.

I was standing in balance alongside a leaning crack with a nice little handhold, with a comforting spike at the top of the crack. I even had a runner at the foot of the crack. Nice and comfortable.

However I could not stay here for ever. Tea was waiting! Not far away, on my left, was a foothold on a black granite wall. It seemed stuck on the wall just about waist high. So I put my foot on it. Then I leaned across with my left hand and reached for the black ledge above the foothold. It was then that a sense of doubt creep into the back of my mind. The handhold was flat, it maybe even sloped a bit and it was black. I was doubtful and I pulled myself back to my comfortable resting place besides the crack.

'It's time for another runner.' The crack was happy to accept another nut at about waist high.

I was quite comfortable on this little ledge, beside the leaning crack with two runners in it.

However I could not stay here for ever, so I reached out to those holds on the left. This time I got both hands on the hold. It was sloping and very black. Just above it was a small crack, a sort of layback hold. I made a tentative attempt at moving one hand to this hold. But that sense of doubt crept back into my mind and I retreated to my, oh so comfortable, ledge.

'If in doubt put another runner in'.

I was quite comfortable on this little ledge, beside the leaning crack with three runners in it.

All too soon I was back on the black holds. This time with a little advantage in the form of chalk on my fingers and the runner at the top of the crack. Both hands on the sloping hold, one hand in the crack, both feet on the foothold, a pull, and suddenly my eyes were looking at a large flat ledge with a big crack in the back. No problem. A quick heave and I was standing on the ledge looking down at Pete.

'Very nice'. Doubt, what doubt!

I bypassed the steep crack above by using the arête and was soon tied to a large pine tree. Pete rapidly joined me, apart from the slight problem of removing one of my runners from that leaning crack! I can't imagine why?

Bow Wall

Tim Noble

That day of the fall he knew
it might happen, at the edge
of thought, as he climbed up through
big flakes, unroped, to the ledge

below the bow - though the shock
came much later. Tied in tight,
he stopped talking, let the rock
speak about itself. But light

leached from the hill; long waves, stiff
in the wind, hounded the sound
of their own breaking and the cliff
shuddered. Every hold he found

was cold. Hands stammered then stalled
(granite gives nothing back
but to the brave and bold). Hauled
by himself to the black crack

under the roof, he could see
the steps across the 'pancake'
to the slab, but not how he
could jam his hands or then make

friction into fact. Ropes swung
idly in a damp sea-haze.
"This time," he called down, then hung
from bone, not sinew, and gazed

into mirror-stone. The swing
caught me out; I fed him slack.
Not on jams, but underclings
he launched out and up to smack

the top. Down the vacant air
he fell; grabbed, and turned sideways.
Fear was tattooed to his stare:
it will stay that way, always.

A Birthday Present

John Harwood

It was just before six when we started the walk in. Ten minutes later I was lathered in sweat and wishing I had more than a pair of trainers with which to negotiate the South African bush! Ten minutes after that I had proved without a shadow of doubt that any claims made by a well-known deodorant manufacturer, that their product would keep you smelling sweet and be continuously effective under the most arduous of circumstances, were about as meaningful as a treaty signed by Hitler! What was it that Paul Williams had written - 'some parties fail on the walk in'!

But I ploughed on behind the two springboks in front of me, who paused patiently every so often for me to catch up. Just as I almost reached them though, they were off again striding through the thorn bushes, nimbly side-stepping blister bushes and springing quickly up and down runnels. I had to keep after them or I'd lose the way in the trackless kloof. How did they keep their feet on the loose stones - mine seemed perpetually sliding in undesired directions! Looking up made me feel sick, there were hours more to go! But I had little time to worry about that, I was busy keeping an eye open for snakes. I was fairly confident that I could spot a puff adder and hoped there wouldn't be any (newly fed and reluctant to move) about at this time of the day but what was it Richard had said about the hooded cobra?

Who was it that had said - 'Doing something worthwhile is worth any amount of effort'? Well I doubt that he was an unfit Brit. thrashing up towards Du Toits Peak in the height of an African summer. But I could only blame myself, after all I'd been the one so pleased to be invited to a conference in Cape Town in January but why did I have to arrange some climbing for the two days at the end? And why did I pick one of the most famous climbs in Africa? I could have gone to some little crag by the road or gone bouldering down at Llandudno (the Cape Town version) beach. But then what would I have had to remember?

After three hours we reached the bivouac site.

"Only half an hour now just up the scree" said Richard reassuringly. I ate most of my food and drank a gallon or so of water. Fortunately, a ray of light sprang up in the form of Andre who volunteered to carry some water and our walking boots on the climb. My appreciation of this gallant gesture was tempered somewhat by the sight of his muscular frame - it was probably the equivalent of me carrying a chalk bag!

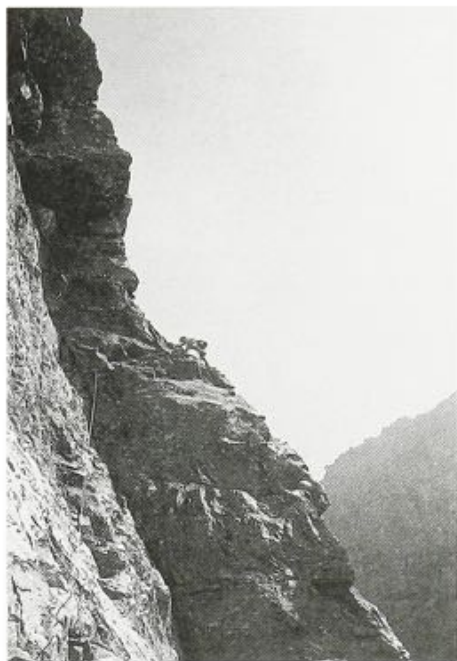
Up above loomed the immense North-West Face of Du Toits Peak, by reputation the most impressive wall in South Africa. We were bound for *North West Frontal* which ushered in a new era of climbing when it had its legendary ascent in 1949. Cape strongman Mike Mamacos and 'Boots' Butler were intent on a ridge to the side when they discovered the wall and made a spur-of-the-moment decision to attempt it. Their ascent in a day was an incredible achievement for the route finding is tricky in places and there is a lot of sustained climbing. Apparently, subsequent ascenders often had to bivouac. Anyway, after less of a rest than I had hoped for, we were off up the boulder scree to the bottom.

To start with we scrambled up some loose V.Diff rock to the starting ledge a couple of hundred feet up. There we put on rock boots and roped up. Richard led while Andre and I climbed together on separate ropes. How I wished I brought my new 9mm; the one I was using seemed to get stiffer (and weaker?) with every minute. Two best forgotten pitches followed. They were graded about Hard Severe and seemed HVS. Strenuous walls and bulges were interrupted by climbing up poised blocks. 'They're firmer than you think', they told me but I know a sandbag when I trip over one. The whole venture was becoming pretty dangerous. 'Don't worry it gets better above'. 'Huh', I thought. But he was right, fortunately.

Now Richard is a hard man and probably the best 'country climber' in South Africa now that his mentor Mike Scott has reached the same age as me. 'Country climbing, John, is a total experience. It's not just the climbing quality that counts, it's how impressive it is, what the approach is like, how difficult the descent, whether there's any chance of being rescued etc.' I was beginning to realise that blithely selecting a five-star route out of the guide when ensconced in a centrally-heated detached house in Cardiff was a bit simplistic! In fact, my original selection had been *Renaissance*, which only one person had ever summoned up courage to go on twice and that was Andy de Klerk, so it didn't count. Richard thought our ascent was the first of the face that summer. First of the summer and, maybe, the only one this season - imagine that on the biggest wall in any European country!

As befits a hard man, Richard decided to do a direct variation. One move stopped him for a couple of minutes so we feared the worst. Meanwhile, Andre lifted my spirits by pointing out the likelihood of being discovered and rescued in the event of an accident. Seeing as there were no walks into the kloof and no-one apparently climbed the face either, it didn't take too much imagination to make the appropriate conclusion. There was no doubt about it, this was no lycra-clothed play on a bolt ladder. This was the real thing - an exercise in seriousness or, as my new friends would say, 'a total experience' I just hoped none of us fell off!

In spite of the background tension of a serious climb on a big wall, I was beginning to enjoy myself. There was no doubt that the rock was much better. In the main, it was iron-hard compact sandstone with just the occasional loose section to keep us on our toes. Richard's variation involved



Turning the Roof Band on 'North-West Frontal', Du Toits Peak, South Africa.
Photo: John Harwood

getting onto an under-cut ledge using a hand jam at foot height. I suppose it's the sort of move that Johnny Dawes would like! But after that there was some superb and exciting climbing, dashing round bulges, swinging along rails and balancing up smooth slabs. The exposure was beginning to tug already as we came to the 'tiles' pitch. This is usually avoided nowadays but Richard's blood was up and he made short work of it. I could imagine Mamacos on it in much the same way I imagined Robin Smith on *Shibboleth*, committing himself onto the overlapping slabby walls (the tiles) off a slender pinnacle-block. The holds were all there but only just and it looked very blank from below. A true trip into the unknown in 1949. By now the sun was on us which was bad news. Put it this way, it was 34° in Cape Town that day and it's generally significantly hotter inland!

A couple of pitches higher and we were below the original route's crux. The hollow below this corner crack gave us some shade while Andre bemoaned the impossibility of applying suncream to prevent sunburn and then managing to keep fingers from sliding off handholds. The normal way now was to sneak around the side but before you could say 'overhanging corner crack' Richard was up and at it. The crack would probably rate 5b in Britain and made our climb the equivalent of any Dolphin or Brown route being done at the time for technical difficulty alone. I struggled hard with lichen sliding below my feet and sweat sliding everywhere else but Andre came up without a pause.

"You should have seen me, boys. I was up to the Camelot in no time, made a powerful pull one handed on it to reach the nut with the other hand and then, barely pausing to remove the Camelot, I came through with the opposite hand for the dangled sling. It was awesome!"

"Oh God" said Richard "an invalid ascent!"

By now we were getting higher and the climbing was becoming delightful. There were many interesting slabs and walls as we worked up and rightwards to avoid the obvious bulges above. A final capping roof was reached a further pitch up. From a good ledge, one climbed an undercut rib, moved delicately across and up a slabby wall to reach the roof at its left end. A couple of steep pulls around the roof above 1500 feet of climbing, with an exposure to match, led us to easier rock above. Soon we were able to unrope and solo carefully up to a grassy bowl at the top of the face. The last of our water was consumed but, of course, there wasn't nearly enough. But we couldn't linger long for we had to descend.



John Harwood and Richard Behne at the top of 'North-West Frontal', Du Toits Peak, South Africa. Photo: John Harwood

The descent itself was long and complicated but Richard guided us expertly. I was very tired and couldn't go as fast as I would have liked. On top of that it was the sort of route where any false move could be your last. Two hours or so got us down. Andre went on as quickly as he could to try and get through the wooded part of the kloof before dark so that he could make the road with the help of moonlight, but I had already decided to bivouac. Richard nobly stayed with me since he thought I might have an epic finding my way out. There's no doubt he saved me a deal of time in the morning.

As darkness fell I was confident that this would be a memorable bivouac and not the usual nightmare of discomfort. It was memorable all right! At first it was fine. It was reasonably warm and we were both sufficiently tired to try to sleep. I could hear Richard's heavy breathing as I shifted restlessly to gain a comfortable position. I don't know if I had slept or not but I was suddenly wide awake with the frightened shrieks of baboons just down the slope below.

"What the hell's that?"

"Oh, it sounds like a leopard in amongst them" said Richard matter-of-factly. A leopard! My eyes strained into the blackness and I tried to convince myself that only a fully fit leopard would attack a troop of baboons and it was only injured ones that were man-eaters! Was it the cold or naked fear that prevented me sleeping any more? I felt a bit less of a coward when I realised that Richard was staying awake as well!

The dawn came slowly as it always does but eventually we were able to move. It was only a short distance before we reached the first drinkable stream. The delicious water tasted so good but the sight of fresh paw marks brought me back to reality! I moved on quickly! With such incentives, the walk out took a mere two hours but I was finding it difficult to stride rather than hobble as I approached Andre's jeep. Boy, was I stiff!

But then later I could reflect properly. It was the next day and I could move my legs again or, at least, as well as you can move them on a Boeing jet. We were at 39,000 feet and it was my birthday. *North West Frontal* on Du Toits Peak was in my memory bank. But what a memory! One that loomed large. The fantastic mountains, some brilliant climbing on a long serious route with an approach and descent that made certain you'd never forget the climb. And then there were my two new-found South African friends with whom I have already made further plans! And, of course, there was the leopard! Hadn't Richard said that 'country climbing' was a 'total experience?' Of course, he was absolutely right but, then, hadn't I always promised myself something special for my 50th birthday?

Too Much Will Kill You..... *.....Too Little Ain't Enough*

Tim Carruthers

In a few short days you will blithely go to another memorial service where you will wonder abstractly about your own.

You idiot, it could have been so perfect: solo and uncluttered on an unknown climb, a fine line slicing the blue moorland sky like a scalpel, an unfamiliar crag and an autumn evening so intensely beautiful you could cry.

You'd think that, after all these years, you'd have seen it coming. Judged the mood, the feeling better than you did. Registered the taughtness in your back and your neck, the tense and jerky style on those hesitant warm-ups. But sometimes that is the nature of your disease.

You have spent the day accumulating aggression, tension, intolerance and selfishness, feeding on the negativity of those petty-minded people you sometimes have to spend time with. On your good days you can detach and view their antics with amused scepticism, equanimity even. This is not one of those days. Something has curdled your karma. Your head is in bad shape. Your nerves snag like cracked fingernails drawn across brushed nylon.

It doesn't feel right, but you go for it anyway in that bloody-minded way you have, and then you are 40 feet up and ill at ease. Looking down - bad move - you see the cruel, chaotic jumble of boulders below beckoning a threatening welcome. Haphazardly strewn razor edges, shin-snapping potholes, a gritstone mortuary slab, a big, flat sacrificial altar to spill your guts out onto.

Your spotter, redundant, offers to check out the top for you but you refuse, trying through the rising panic, clenched teeth, to be flippant. It would somehow up the ante, slide things on into a different level. You want to be responsible. He withdraws, turns to watch the sun set and is out of your mind.

So, by now, are you. Your whole being is concentrated now into that one perfect moment. The grain of the rock, its curve and colour become your whole focus as you build your dreams around the magnificent obsession that by some miracle of soul-control you can choreograph the moves and get them right first time, somehow arrange the pieces into something more manageable than the prospect of failure.

Climbing badly, you start the sequence, falter and the shot of adrenaline nearly kills you. You shout with anticipated pain as you grab the rounded top, pull and lean too quickly into the mantel. You do it that way just the same, of course. No one is going to die here now.

Back at the car and depressed, you sigh into the driver's seat as the first drops patter on the roof like hairpins dropping into a plastic cup. As you watch the rain, the cleansing has begun. You may even - and this is the only good to come of this - have experienced gratitude for blessings received, on that drive back to the edge of the city lights.

Two weeks, and I've been getting obsessive again, been gritting again, getting

it wired, getting strong. Fingers still tingling with its imprint, mind still fizzing from the physics of the moves I can do and those I can so nearly do, I take a two day city break for the rest then go to three for the psyche, keeping my weather eye open. You can when you live close.

Back at the crag, washed and blown dry by a brisk cold wind, I wire those moves that were so totally, so absolutely out-of-the question on the first visit. I can do the big link-in, for sure, but I still don't know about that finish.

Rehearsals are over, it's showtime, time to suspend disbelief. Mobilise, focus and reach out past what is normal. Perform. Even the chill valley plays along, gleaming improbably phosphorescent and silent as a concert hall as I breathe and concentrate, eyes closing.

Eyes closed now, breathing from the stomach, memory rehearses the sequence. Roll and stretch the shoulders, stretch the fingers and shake out. I can do this.

Chalk, blow and go.and I know it is hard but it is controlled and I am good and sharp and strong and the moves build fast as I work through the first five footless, lock out at nearly full span below the lip, pop for the intermediate to kill the swing and stretch on through for the ridiculous sloping nose. Out of the corner of my eye I view in a split second the hated hold; the loathsome non-hold, the one I have invested with a gruesome personality all of its own. Foot in the crucial dish, other leg flagged out I slap rightwards, catch it and nearly corkscrew before tensing and holding the body position to make the second slap accurately enough to share on the hold from hell. Cutting loose, I pull so hard on that hold that my teeth bleed, howling my delight over the moors as I foot-hunt the smear, nail it and grab the top.

On the drive back to the edge of the city lights I wind down the windows to give my smile room.

Too much will kill you.....Over Owler Tor, September

Higgar Tor, October.....too little ain't enough.

Extracts from the Climbing Diary of Ivan Waller

Roger Briggs

I first met and climbed with Ivan in May 1975 when we went to Bowfell Buttress to climb the *Plaque Route*. I know this for sure because I found the event meticulously recorded in Ivan's climbing diary - a diary that I was to see for the first time almost 20 years later when Max Biden and I visited him at his home in Kendal to gather information for this short biography.

What follows is really a summary of some of the main events in Ivan's long and extraordinary life as recorded by him and as told to me. It is not simply about climbing, though undoubtedly, this has been the great motivating force throughout his years. Some of these events are well known and documented. For example, the story of his first ascent of *Belle Vue Bastion* with music playing from a gramophone placed on a ledge at the base of the route! Also well known is his final ascent of that climb on the 8th of June 1985, 58 years later aged 78 years and six months! Others, however, are less well known. For example, who knows that Ivan climbed Beachy Head in crampons in 1933 both up and down long before Mick Fowler was a twinkle in his daddy's eye! Equally, although many of us know about his long and illustrious career with Rolls Royce, few of us know about his drive in the Monte Carlo Rally from Budapest in 1932 or his weekend at Easter 1954 in Glencoe with Roger Bannister just before the first four minute mile. Below are a feast of gems that would have been more than enough to fill ten lifetimes, never mind one!

The 'snapshot' below may well encourage some climbing writer with more technical skill that I to set about a detailed biography of the climber and the man. Surely it is one of the more obvious 'gaps' to fill in the history of our sport.

1906 Born 27th December in Weybridge, Surrey.

1919 To Lancing College, Sussex.

1924 To Trinity College, Cambridge.

1925 Started rock climbing and ski-ing. Elected to the Climbers' Club. Elected to the Alpine Ski Club. Climbed King's College Chapel and St.John's College Chapel tower.

1926 Abseiled down Hunnenfluh near Wengen, Switzerland at New Year.

Fell from *Flake Crack* on Scafell Central Buttress. Would have been first free ascent. Resulted in back trouble that lasted for the rest of his life.

1927 First ascents of *Belle Vue Bastion* and *Fallen Block Crack*. Both VS routes in North Wales.

Graduated in Engineering (Main) and in Polar Exploration and Exploitation/Geology of Mountains and Lakes (Subsidiary).

1928 Worked on SS Orford at Barrow shipyard. Climbed Helvellyn on skis. Climbed Altels above Gemmi Pass. Led F.S.Smythe and T.Graham Brown on the traverse of the Grépon at Chamonix.

1929 Elected to the Rucksack Club.

- 1929 Skied from Adelboden, Switzerland to Bourg St.Maurice, France over six mountain passes that were all snowed up for vehicles.
- 1930 Seconded Colin Kirkus on first ascent of *Mickledore Grooves*. Climbed Wetterhorn, Galenstock, Belgrat Aletchorn and Zermatt Breithorn with Basil Goodfellow. First experience ski-ing in Scotland.
- 1931 Seconded Colin Kirkus on *West Rib*, Dinas Mot. Met Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound and Gordonstoun school, at Schloss Salem. Climbed the Krenzbach with Bobby Chew who would become Gordonstoun's headmaster.
Traverse on skis of Silvretta glaciers, climbed Augstenberg, Hoch Thurne, Dreiländerspitz and Piz Buin en route. In Dolomites, climbing a host of peaks with Pat Aked, followed by a ski traverse of the Bernese Oberland from Jungfraujoch to Grimsel climbing the Finsteraarhorn en route.
- 1932 In the Monte Carlo Rally driving an Alvis. Camped on Ben Nevis summit at Easter with F. Spencer Chapman and Gino Watkins.
- 1932/5 Won two cups and seven tankards driving for Alvis at Brooklands, Donnington Park and other speed events including a first at Phoenix Park, Dublin.
- 1933 Climbed up and down Beachy Head in crampons.
- 1935 Climbed the Wildefrau, Kandersteg.
- 1936 Joined Rolls Royce, Car Division, Experimental Department at Derby. In charge of experimental endurance testing in France.
- 1938 At Nurburgring when Dick Seamen driving a Grand Prix Mercedes Benz won the German Grand Prix. Invited to the banquet at Adenau. Saw the Germans marching into Czechoslovakia.
- 1939 At outbreak of War to Rolls Royce Aero Division experimental flight test department. Became responsible for Vulture 24-cylinder aero engine in the field.
- 1940 Escaped by parachute from experimental Blackburn B20 flying boat when it crashed into the Clyde. Ivan landed in the sea in bitterly cold winter weather. (See article by Peter Harding in this CCJ).
- 1940/41 Responsible for the elimination of faults from the Vulture engines in the 200 Avro Manchester bombers, until the introduction of the Lancaster with its Merlin engines.
- 1942 Transferred to the Rolls Royce Tank Division.
- 1943 Eight months on loan to the Ministry of Supply at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland USA with a prototype Cromwell Tank.
Climbed Mt.Washington, NH on skis and skied down the headwall of the Tuckerman Ravine. Returned from the USA on the 'Queen Mary' which was full of US troops. It was a five day crossing with fog all the way.
- 1945 Sent to Germany to investigate the post war state of the motor industry. A year of hard rock-climbing and the first of several years ski-touring.
- 1947 More hard rock-climbing. Left Rolls Royce.
- 1948 Attempted Mont Blanc with Gaston Rebuffat. Defeated by strong winds. Gained the George Stephenson Research Prize for engineering.
- 1949/50 More hard rock climbing.
- 1951 11th in the Le Mans 24 hour race in a Jaguar XK 120.

- 1952 Climbed Titlis at Engelberg on skis and Hinter Tierberg from Sustenpass.
1953 Solo on skis from Col du Géant to Col du Midi and back.
1954 Climbers' Club Meet at Kingshouse, Glencoe with Roger Bannister in party shortly before the first four-minute mile.
1955 Easter camping at Shelter Stone with son Peter.
1956/63 Many visits to mountains with family as the children grow up.
1959 To Alps, Dolomites and Venice with wife Helen, motorcycle and tent.
1961 Climbed Gross Wiesbachhorn with youngest son Tim.
1964 Climbed Engelberger Rotstock, Uri Rotstock, Todi, Claridenspitz, and Disgrazia via the Corda Molla with Charles Warren and Iain Ogilvie.
1965 Attended Matterhorn Centenary at Zermatt with Helen.
1966 Celebrated his 60th year by doing one and only one pot hole!
1967 Bivied near CIC. Soloed *Tower* and *Observatory Gullies*.
1968 Soloed Riesend Nollen.
1969 Soloed Piz Sol on skis. Did the Pennine Way in nine days. Retired from full time employment.
1970 Soloed *Lyke Wake Walk* in 15 hours. *Lakeland 3000's* and *Cairngorm 4000's* with Harry Griffin. Both under 24 hours. Became a director of 'Outward Bound' and a temporary instructor.
1971 Diablerets solo on skis. High Level Route on skis from Chamonix to Zermatt. Snow climbing and rock-climbing in Lake District.
1972/84 is summarised in a detailed walking and climbing diary that is beyond the scope of this article. It was prepared for Ivan's 1982 entry into the national competition 'Golden Years Award'. (Ivan reached the semi-final). During this era Ivan walked and rock climbed every week come rain or shine. It becomes difficult to pick out the most impressive events that occurred during this period, there are so many, especially when one considers how limited most people become when they enter their 70s and 80s. However I include a few samples to give something of a 'flavour' of Ivan's lifestyle during this time. His diary reads:
1977 *Cuillin Ridge, Skye*. Age 70. Repeated it twice in 17 days. Each time under 24 hours.
1978 10,000 metres downhill ski-ing in a day.
1979 Completed all 517 Munro tops. I had done 95 by 1972.
1983 Aged 76, walked from Shap to Wasdale and back to Shap then home to Winster (60 miles) carrying a tent. Took 4 days.
1984 *Tower Ridge*. 6 hours in crampons. Easter Monday. Later in year, ski-ing in Pyrenees.
1990 Age 83. Two small hills in the Alps.
Throughout the 1972 to 1985 period Ivan was out rock-climbing, often climbing with Jim Ingham from Kendal. Often in the Lake District but many trips to Scotland too, sometimes on his 1000cc Vincent motorcycle! He was climbing routes like *Harlot Face*, *Laugh Not* and *Overhanging Bastion* when well into his 70s. His last hard rock climb was, naturally, *Belle Vue Bastion* on the 8th June 1985 and his last climb was *Curved Ridge*, Glencoe on the 19th October 1987 when aged almost 81 years. His last mountain was Mount Blair near the Spittal of Glenshee in 1992. Ivan was almost 86 years old. He climbed it solo!

Eyes from Olympos

Karpathos 1987

Terry Gifford

When Philipakis painted the eyes
of the angels he had to be careful
not to give them souls as well.

When Philipakis the singer of stories
told me this, I was the only person
to climb his scaffold: a safe mountaineer.

When Philipakis the lyra player
stroked a half-moon of brown
in the blank eyes of the angels

on the domed roof of the church
from his platform, he was reading
their faces from the floor.

When Philipakis the church painter
worked for twenty minutes each day
it was in the quiet heat before dusk.

When Philipakis the architect,
Oxford educated, Olympos born,
returned to the island and painted

their churches, he worked from the books
of tradition and explained to the climber
he could trust not to fall

that only Christ and Saint Peter
could have life in their eyes,
with a certain twinkle in his own.

Ma Low Investigates

A Well - Wisher

It's a dirty job, but someone's got to do it. I was clearing the encrusted Glengetty leaves from the bottom of the teapots, and straightening the flying ducks on the wall, when the call came. It was the landlord of the pub next door - he'd found the body of a climber, and the police had been called. I straightened my seams and high-heeled casually up the road. He'd found a body all right - the cadaver hung limply from the pub sign (Bishop's Tin-Inn - Good Food, All Welcome), a noose knotted tightly around his neck. He'd been stabbed in the back, shot through the heart, and I could just discern, through the gathering gloom, a copy of Pembroke RockFacts stuffed down his gullet.

The stiff's wallet revealed him to be one James Allan.

"Natural causes", said the police sergeant as they cut the body down.

"Tragic in one so young..."

It was just a hunch of course, I had no proof, but I could feel it in my bones, like a VS leader saying a 5c move above him - there was more to this death than met the eye. Could this be what I'd been waiting for? Could this be MURDER? (cue loud, crashing music ..)

Lowe's the name, Philip Lowe, and I'm a private dick. Not a fashionable occupation these days, to be a dick for hire, but then this gigolo never was much one for political correctness - the booze took care of that. In fact, I'd been halfway down a bottle of Bourbon (ice, no fruit) a couple of weeks previously, when the 'phone rang. The caller introduced himself as . (name withheld to avoid litigation) .. of MUCK, the Mountaineering Council of the United Kingdom. (OK, so I'm a bit dyslexic ..)

I asked him what his problem was. He told me his girlfriend had run off with a car salesman with rubber fetish. What did he want me to do about it, I asked? Nothing, he said, he'd rung to ask me to investigate a little MUCK matter.

MUCK was in charge of mountaineering in the UK (or had you guessed?) They negotiated access, said who could put bolts where, and generally ruled the roost. However, it had become clear that not everyone deferred to MUCK in matters mountaineering - there were those who felt that THEY should be in charge. It was believed they lurked beneath the cover of a hitherto respectable organisation - The Climbing Club. MUCK suspected they might take some sort of action in the current debate over the publication of the Definitive Climbing Club Guide to Pembroke, a guide long delayed, and piped to the publication post by the Pembroke RockFacts: Edited Lowlights. My brief was to watch the Climbing Club carefully, and prevent the take-over of the world by subversives.

The Climbing Club were planning a book launch for the Definitive Guide at Bishop's Tin, but how could I be there without arousing suspicion? MUCK had the answer.

"The World's End Café, next door to the pub, is run by Ma Easton; her Glengetty has dried out many a climber's gums over the last 20 years. It's the mark of a man, to lift one of her teapots after a hard day's climbing. We'll send her on a world cruise, and YOU'LL take her place. Bit of a hairdo, makeup by Spear

and Jackson, Marilyn Monroe seamed stockings, and no-one will know you're not her sister."

All this, and command of the nubile serving wenches too - as I said before, it's a dirty job, but someone's got to do it.

So there I was in Bishop's Tin, and now James Allan was dead, and it just so happened that James Allan was the editor/author of *Pembroke RockFacts*.

I minced into the pub. The launch party was in full swing, some 70 people mingling amongst the bread and chilli. I immediately identified the key characters (this is a short story, not a novel) who sat together in a corner, and I approached the 'inner circle'. Every one of them had a motive to murder.

A blond, handsome man rose to greet me; Bee Gees hairstyle and tight trousers, this was Seventies Man, one of the guide editors. He introduced me to his co-editor, the Prof., who viewed me suspiciously over his chilli as he sat chatting to the Climbing Club Serious Editor for Wales. Around them sat the New Routers (male and female a matching set), the Italian Stallion (from Chester? an unsolved mystery that one), the Child Prodigy, the Divine One, and various others of that exclusive sect that have tasted Range West rock and made mock of the Colonel.

A hush fell over the assembly as I stood over them - tension hung in the air. I looked at their faces ... Seventies Man, combing his hair back with his fingers - it was surprisingly grey what did he have to worry about? What was on his conscience? The Prof. tried to smile, but the fake tan only increased his pallor, and his blond highlights were damp with sweat.

"Lowe's the name," I said, "Ma Lowe" I paused to let this sink in never expect too much of the average climbing brain. "I'm here on behalf of MUCK, and I know who killed James Allan."

"But we're innocent" cried the Female New Router, obviously distraught. Nice looking dame, but could do with a bit of lipstick if you ask me. The Italian Stallion merely glowered, and allowed the Female New Router to put her head in his lap until she recovered. The Child Prodigy and the Divine One sat silently, the one contemplating future E6s, the other coveting the Italian Stallion's lurid waistcoat.

I took a shot of hooch from the bourbon glass in front of the Serious Editor for Wales - lines of anxiety wrinkled his cherubic brow.

"But who..what..how..and can I have an exclusive for High..?" he gasped, as he wiped his forehead with a copy of the *Definitive Guide*.

"Certainly, my dear Serious Editor" I replied. "It's quite simple really. You ALL had a motive to murder Allan. The Serious Editor is in charge of all Welsh publications - there wouldn't be any more if *RockFacts* was a huge success. As for Seventies Man, and the Prof., well they're guidebook editors, and it's their reputation on the line. *RockFacts* is direct competition, and they might want to eliminate it. The Italian Stallion and the Divine One have been lobbying for years for the Climbing Club guide to come out earlier than *RockFacts* given that it didn't, no wonder they'd want to kill the *RockFacts* editor. The New Routers wouldn't get all their new routes reported in an Edited Lowlights edition, and the Child Prodigy wouldn't know where all the E6s were - he'd need the *Definitive Guide*, and Allan was a threat to all that."

You could have cut the silence with a rusty peg.

"But," I continued, ungrammatically, but accurately, "The truth is that none of

you is the killer". (Collective gasp) "I took the precaution of looking at the copy of RockFacts that was stuffed down the victim's throat. It was marked almost exclusively with 'flutter box' E5s. There's only one person who could have done all those routes, one person that book could have belonged to, and that's Kim Cryan, Allan's business partner - besides which, his name was inside the front cover. It's said he's in the USA, but it would be easy enough for him to fly back for the day, drive to Pembroke, and kill his partner."

"But what was his motive?" asked Seventies Man, carefully adjusting his T-shirt to show bulging muscles.

"James Allan WAS RockFacts everyone associated him with the name. No-one has ever heard of Kim, but he was Allan's partner, and did half the work. He resented the fact that Allan got all the glory and he got none, and he killed him for it."

To be honest, I think it was one of my finest pieces of detection, and MUCK were delighted with the outcome. No litigation and only one dead body equals an excellent result.

And what of Bishop's Tin, and the café? Well, it's a nice little village, no hassle, except when the vicar comes to call, and I liked it there - I was keen to stay. So, when Ma Easton encountered a tragic accident on her way back from her cruise, well of course someone had to look after the nubile ... and I've always had the legs for stockings.

Best Boot Forward

Geoff Milburn

Prologue

On the northern moors bogtrotting supposedly evolved partly to prevent unfortunate walkers from sinking into a peaty morass but also to escape the tenacious clutches of ever-watchful gamekeepers. I had walked from early childhood but never knew why! Between the ages of four and ten, I merely followed in the wake of my father. Once, many years later, while ploughing across a wild stretch of boggy moorland, it struck me that walking put simply was merely 'the art of putting one foot in front of the other - without stopping'. On the hills when I was young my father had unintentionally baffled me with the urgent request (he had just spotted a rather large bull which was ambling towards us on the horizon) "let's put our best foot forward" As the bull approached, and my father's bulk receded, my puzzling dilemma as to which was my best foot was interrupted by my father's strident urging to 'run like hell' (the English language IS confusing for a very young person!). So what was this walking all about, why did I do it, and why was it so addictive? I mused about it for years without ever coming to an answer. At times the most pleasure seemed to be when it stopped, and the greater the distance then the greater the pleasure when it stopped.

Certainly long-distance walking is far from being a new phenomenon as during times of war and strife both individuals and groups of people, if sufficiently motivated or afraid, have completed great distances on foot in order to survive. Walking as an organised sport however did not start until late Victorian times and one of the first groups was the Manchester YMCA Rambling Club in 1880. The growing craze spawned many characters from early Peakland walking but none achieved greater legendary status than Cecil Dawson, the famed and revered 'Colonel of the 94th'. Many long distance walks were also created such as: the Marsden-Edale; the Tan Hill-Cat and Fiddle; Pennine Way; Coast to Coast etc. Some people have concentrated on distance while others in mountain tradition have become peak baggers - forerunners of the 'puerile ticker' so well-loved within climbing circles. While some are ticking off the great 8000m peaks of the Himalaya other enthusiasts, who are more down to earth, are content to steadily tick off the summits of our little island. And perhaps this obsession (and so it is) was started when Sir Hugh Munro completed (1891) his list of Scottish mountain summits over 3000 feet.

Within the major climbing clubs of Great Britain there has always been a strong hill-walking contingent but the Rucksack Club in particular has paved the way forward. In the aftermath of Rooke-Corbett's list of 2500-foot tops of England and Wales (The Twenty-Fives) the 1930s brought several significant lists. A combination of lists by Simpson and Moss provided all the 2000-foot tops and the first ascent of all these summits was finally completed on 22nd July 1951 by Edward Moss. It was to be George Bridge's list of 1973 however which was to motivate a new breed of mountain walker. Which brings me to my story:

Driving rain of the horizontal sort lashed my face as soon as I gingerly put one

foot out of the gently rocking car, and I carefully avoided a rather large puddle which was masquerading as the car park. Even a fool could see that the Buttermere valley was totally awash. In every direction hillsides were white with great curtains of foaming water. Anxiously I eyed Alan out of the corner of my eye to see if he would call my bluff, but the hard man was already donning his waterproofs. His eyes were steely and his far away look cut through the wild weather dismissively. So this was obsession! But what could he see?

Fate deals some strange hands, as some years previously Alan had arrived to work with me from some far flung part of Wales. He seemed to have tried every outdoor sport known to mankind and had enough paper qualifications from courses to paper a wall. He had got hold of a copy of George Bridge's book and was soon methodically ticking off the summits. A bad back quickly forced him to give up his weekly badminton and he then became a very successful orienteer which gave him the chance to carry on ticking summits on most weekends. The years passed by and soon he only had one 2000-foot summit left - Pillar Rock.

"We'll pick a good weekend, and I just want you to get me to the top." He didn't even seem bothered about how he was then going to get down - such is obsession. Anyway that was my brief and it explains why on perhaps the worst day of the year I found myself ankle deep in water splodging across Warnscale Bottom wondering what the hell I was doing there. As far as Alan was concerned however it was Pillar Rock or bust.

Once on the hillside Alan was off like a greyhound with a long steady lope heading up towards Scarth Gap, while I gritted my teeth and tucked in behind somewhere in his slipstream, pretending that I was quite enjoying jumping from one slippery rock to the next, and at frequent intervals slipping into some tributary or other up to my knees in icy water. At such times when he looked back and caught me smartly jumping out of a stream I consoled myself with the thought that as a keen biologist he would expect me to use my surplus energy in looking for rare Lakeland aquatic specimens. The sprint down into Ennerdale was no pause for the flog up to Pillar however and all too soon, just as I was about to have a well earned rest, Alan began to jog steadily up the hillside, not even waiting to sort out where the normal footpath/water course went. These orienteers seem to go anywhere nowadays and the shortest distance between two given points seems to be their cry. Unfit I pressed on, muscles whingeing while under my breath I chuntered quietly to myself trying to pretend that it was all in a noble cause. To avoid alarmingly steep rocks above, Alan slanted across the mountain through deep soggy vegetation and boulders. At one point he was silhouetted against the skyline going strongly and that was the last I expected to see of him for a while as he seemed to have no intention of stopping until he had achieved his goal.

Much to my surprise I caught him up at a stream where he was standing hesitantly musing awhile beside boiling foam which was arching out skywards. It was the stream's finest hour. Swollen to an intimidating size it boomed its defiance at us. I was quite ready to call it a day but Alan was not going to give up so easily without a fight. An academic and earnest discussion between a physicist and a biologist then ensued. This basically centred on the slim and what seemed to me to be a suicidal possibility of a chest-deep (or more) roped crossing of the turbulent torrent, which we both observed with keen scientific observation and

not some small interest, was steadily increasing its size by the minute. The physicist loftily talked about water power, downward forces, lateral current, and the fact that even though the lower edge of a pool might look white and frothy the water force just might at that point be actually 'spent'. The biologist in me was not impressed as all I could perceive was the frailty of the human form in such a maelstrom, and in any case I didn't fancy bobbing about like a cork on the end of 150 feet of good nylon - or whatever unnatural substance the best rope is made of these days. The physicist had at some time read of my exploits on Gogarth with the demon Moran when we had survived turbulent seas and monster waves. He actually thought that he was doing me a good turn and that I might even lower my sights to enjoy a trivial escapade with a mere 'walker' in this tiny uncharted stream. In desperation, as my every argument had failed to impress the physicist, I looked about like a cornered rat. As my pathetic excuses tailed away lost in the wind, not far below I spotted a pig-wire type fence at the top edge of the conifer plantation. The stream was making playful and show-off noisy attempts to hurdle the fence before reluctantly plunging down into the dark depths of the forest, where there were no prying human eyes to impress by its exploits. As if to challenge us to play, the stream threw down a few seventh waves all at once just to show us its mettle.

It was now the physicist's turn to express a degree of doubt, as the stability of the fence was somewhat uncertain. It was already swaying gently and rhythmically as if mesmerised by the stream. As I tried a cautious foot on a lower rung the fence woke up out of its trance and jerked about in alarm. Rather worryingly it didn't seem to be attached to very much, but this was my last chance to save my face. In any case I had met this species of fence before below Carreg Alltrem in Wales and like Whillans, I hadn't much truck with it. Decision time was at hand. With the water snapping and roaring at my feet like some demented bloodhound I swayed across in some trepidation trying to look 'cool' - which I was, and also very wet to boot. Alan followed, caressing the fence like a long-lost friend, and rather strangely seemed to have forgotten the Rock for the time being.

When both of us had reached the far side we regained both our composure as well as the correct path. For a while we pressed on upwards just out of earshot of each other. Alan was hungry for action while I was just hungry. A while later at the foot of what nearly 50 years' experience on the hills insisted was Pillar Rock, I ground to a halt and dumped my 'sack as a clear statement of intent. Of course Alan thought I was after the rope, but in fact I was searching for some food. Shivering enthusiastically in the very cold dense mist, with the intention of restoring circulation I spotted Alan who was barely in sight. A bit higher up the mountain and right of an evil gully he was keenly contemplating the next move from an uncertain base consisting of a steep chossy slope of loose scree and vegetation. My visions of sauntering (even swanking casually) up one of the west face routes of Pillar were rapidly evaporating into stark reality. The Rock, much to my annoyance, still hid from us and was smirking irritatingly in triumph. For a fleeting moment the mist parted and we were given a glimpse of what might have been. Dark slimy ooze seemed to seep out of every little crevice and my confidence ebbed. With tails between our legs we fled back down, racing over Scarth Gap in fine style and telling ourselves what a spankingly good adventure we'd had, - and wasn't it good fun - and what idiots there were in the rest of the

world, boringly tucked up for the day beside some roaring fire.

Alan brooded on the event and waited anxiously for the next vacant slot in our schedules. Time passed by, then months later, after an early morning 'phone call and a race up the M6, we went back via Wasdale and contoured in on the climbers' path from Black Sail. Some students of varying ability were festooned on *Slab and Notch*, which delayed us a bit, but in due course Alan followed the rope up the final grassy slope. Solemnly we shook hands and, as the wispy cloud parted to let the sun flood the valley below, Alan stepped up to the high point. He had become only the 33rd known person to complete the 2000ers of England and Wales and he was also the first person to finish Dawson's 1992 list of the Relative Hills of Britain.

Epilogue

The Long Distance Walkers Association (LDWA) via its magazine **Strider** recently published a fascinating article called 'The Hillwalkers Register of the Hills of England, Wales and Ireland'. This was put together by Alan Castle who is the club's Recorder. Although there may be people, unknown to the club, who have either finished a list or are in the process of completing one, it is likely that the club will be aware of most people who are involved in such a methodical project. The main lists in use in order of popularity so far are: Bridge; Nuttall; Wright; Buxton and Lewis; Simpson and Moss; and Dawson. It must be remembered however that Bridge's list in particular has been available in book form for 22 years whereas Dawson has only been going for three years. The current register has the following information:

Completers of the 2000 foot Mountains of England and Wales

No.	Date Completed	Name	List Used
1	22.07.1951	Edward Moss	S&M
2	pre-1975	Phil Cooper	?
3	10.07.1976	Charles W.Baldehy	Bge
4	May 1980	Molly Graham	Bge/W
5	May 1980	Ken Graham	Bge/W
6	1980	Bert Bailey	?
7	16.05.1982	Ken Hay	?
8	23.05.1982	Tony Blackburn	Bge
9	28.08.1982	Alan L.Brook	Private
10	02.10.1982	Geoff Wood	Bge
11	25.10.1982	Ben R.M.Brown	Bge
12	14.04.1983	A.Leadbetter	?
13	22.08.1983	Phil Clayton	?
14	11.09.1983	David G.Smith	Bge
15	25.08.1984	Peter Middleton	?
16	1985	Colin Dodgson	?
17	1986	Mike Brook	Bge
18	1986	Roger England	Bge

19	Jan. 1987	Andy Collinson	Bge
20	07.11.1987	Christopher Williams	Bge
21	26.06.1988	Pauline Haycox	Bge
22	26.06.1988	Bryan Haycox	Bge
23	18.11.1988	Tom Anderson	Bge
	15.10.1988	Tony Blackburn (2)	Bge
24	14.03.1992	Roy G.K.Gudgeon	Bge/W
25	21.08.1992	Mike Kirby	Bge/B&L/N
26	Sept. 1992	David Light	Bge
27	26.06.1993	Frank Yates	B&L
28	July 1993	Vallerie Moffatt	Bge/W/N
29	July 1993	Andy Moffatt	Bge/W/N
30	Sept. 1993	Peter J.Simpson	Bge
31	14.11.1993	Cherry Kirby	Bge/B&L/N
32	29.03.1994	John Edmunsden	Bge
33	08.10.1993	Alan Poxon	Bge/B&L/N/D

Alan Castle also highlighted the following data:

Fastest round:	2 years & 8 months by Charles Baldey aged 69
Slowest round:	35 years by David Smith aged 18 to 53
Youngest completer:	Tony Blackburn aged 24
Most rounds:	Tony Blackburn in 1982 and 1989
Oldest completer:	Colin Dodgson aged 75
Women Completers:	Molly Graham (1980), Pauline Haycox (1988), Vallerie Moffatt (1983) and Cherry Kirby (1993)

I wonder, just how many other epics there have been during the completion of the list and come to think of it, it doesn't surprise me to learn that four of the 'completers' decided to give Pillar Rock a miss - as an ascent would involve rock-climbing. They must be joking, rock-climbing is the safe part of it all. What you have to avoid is lightning, fires, landslides, gun-toting would-be cowboys, snow-storms, charging bulls, rock-trundlers and above all... floods!

A Trek in Bhutan

Bob Allen

At the end of October 1994, I went to Bhutan, one of a party of eight (plus our invaluable Indian liaison Chewang Motup) from the Fell and Rock.

"The Fell and Rock!!" do I hear? Like quite a few other ageing crinklies, and some who are still quite smooth, I am a member of both CC and FRCC, with many friends in both clubs, and it just so happened that when I got wind of this trip it was an FRCC rather than a CC party. So that was that and I'm not apologising because this is the CC Journal. It was an absolutely marvellous trip. We did not climb any peaks, but we did enjoy a most memorable trek in a beautiful and extraordinary country and some of you might get a chance to go there one day.

Now I know that the CC is stuffed full of tough guys who go out to the Greater Ranges at the drop of a hat and climb great peaks all over the place. But, unless you are a professional mountaineer, a drop-out, still young enough not to have any responsibilities or a University lecturer who can (or at least could) get time off, there are problems. Those of us who have had to work for a living, whose companies have to produce a profit, to consider how our struggling careers will be blighted if we go off on holiday in the middle of our company's busiest season, whose family will not be pleased if we use up all the holiday allowance just on ourselves, who have to plan in case we are stabbed in the back in our absence, and who have anyway still got to walk the dog every day, find great problems in disappearing anywhere for between four and five weeks. There must be loads of you out there like that and it is because you might, like me, eventually get your chance, that I am writing this. Because, despite more than 30 years climbing at home and in the Alps, when I came to go on a trek in the Himalaya I found that I had loads of half-answered questions. The real answers only arrive by going, but the tale of this trek might be of some help to others. And I would certainly urge anyone who loves being in the mountains as much as they wish to climb them, to go trekking. The fact that all your kit is carried (in Bhutan anyway) by horses (or, higher up, by yaks) and that you are waited upon almost hand and foot, is not the least of the attractions.

I had always wanted to visit the Himalaya, in the early days, of course, to climb mighty peaks. I will even admit that I recall feeling a slight pang of regret, in 1953 (when I was 17), when the news came through that Everest had been climbed: it meant that I could not be first up it any more. But the years rolled by and I could never get four weeks off. Trevor Jones would have confirmed how, in the middle of a two-week holiday, some time in 1971 or so, I had to use the radiophone from the Albigna Hut to phone the office in Bradford about something or other. Even 20 years later, to my eternal regret, because of the time problem, I had to turn down an invitation to go on Peter Mould's 'Green Expedition' to north-west Bhutan in 1991, when they scaled half a dozen unclimbed peaks in the Basingthang area. He wrote a report for the Bhutanese Government about it; by 1994, permission to climb any Bhutanese peaks had been withdrawn, which I think was exactly the opposite effect to that which Peter had hoped for. Bhutan was, however, by now on my mind and trekking was still an option. It was an expensive option, but we

realised that Bhutan was not going to get any cheaper, so we went.

Most people have hardly even heard of Bhutan, let alone know anything about it. It is a small independent kingdom to the north-east of India, with a population of about 2,000,000, thinly spread, rising from a thin strip of tropical jungle to peaks of up to around 7500 metres. It is not strategically especially important and this is probably why it has not been annexed. It has a state religion, Tantric Buddhism, which is virtually incomprehensible to most westerners, including me. However, its influence is all-pervading and it is one of the things that makes Bhutan so infinitely different. We were lucky in that we were allowed to see inside several of the ancient monasteries, but there were strong hints that later visitors were likely to be refused access as the clergy has brought pressure to bear on the government to restrict unwelcome outside influences. The government is anyway doing its best to guard Bhutan's cultural as well as its political independence, to accept only those aspects of western life and technology which it can control. Revolutions begin with television nowadays, so there are no TV programmes in Bhutan, no TV aerials. There are videos; video-hire shops are to be seen in Paro, to where we flew from Delhi, and in Thimphu, the capital, but the supply of videos can be controlled. There are a few western films to be seen in Thimphu, but carefully chosen, and shown in a single cinema whose prices are state-controlled. As a Bhutanese citizen you must wear the national dress, the 'kho' (or the 'kira' if you are a woman) and failure to do so can mean a week in gaol and a hefty fine. As a tourist (or trekker) you are well looked after, but at a price. The number of admission visas to the country is carefully restricted to about 2500 per year, which is apparently considered the maximum that the travel facilities can accommodate, and you pay a substantial premium in the prices; it costs around £600 to £1000 more to visit Bhutan than it does to spend the same time in Nepal. No cheap package tours here; no do-it-yourself trips; all visitors must be handled by one of the approved tourist agencies.

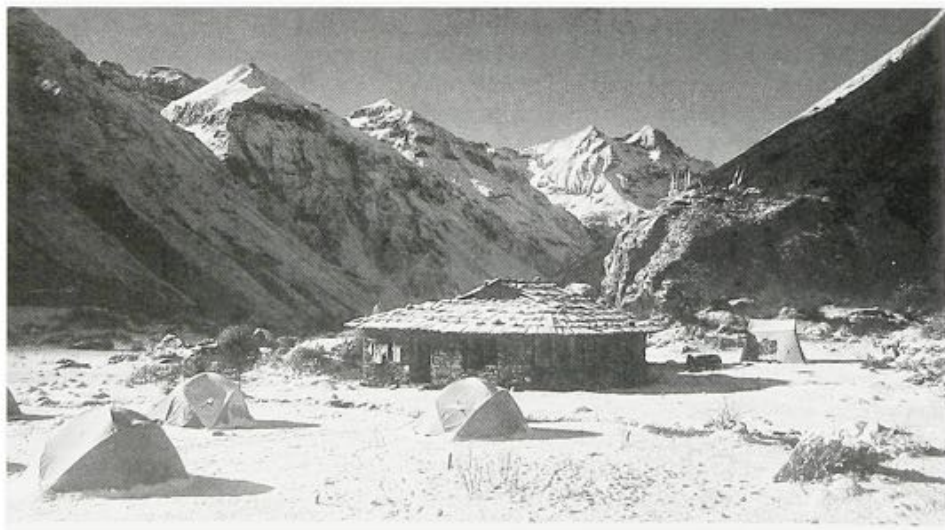
Does it all sound repressive and off-putting? That is not what I felt. No begging, no pestering by traders; schoolchildren (if not many adults yet) able to speak some English and English signs on the shops; no pollution, no crowds, none of the frenzy of Delhi; everywhere we were made welcome by smiling people in a smiling land. The children rushed out to ask us to photograph them, and there was never a hand outstretched for a fee for doing so. Our tourist agency (Be-Yul Excursions of Thimphu) gave impeccable service, the hotels we stayed in when not on the trek itself were good or very good; the food was excellent and not just all curries. Despite a simmering problem with the 'ethnic cleansing' of Nepali-speaking Bhutanese as a result of a government census in the late 1980s and the lurking suspicion that any political opposition in the country is promptly locked up, little of that was evident at all on the surface, although the sycophantic tone of the newspaper (in English) in Thimphu would make British anti-royalists puke. However, the impression that I felt very strongly was that this is a society which is essentially peaceful and contented. Agriculture supports it, and international aid money provides a stream of infrastructure improvements.

Before starting the trek proper we paid a visit to the 'Tiger's Nest', the monastery of Taksang Lhakhang, built in the 8th century and the place where the Guru Rinpoche is said to have landed on the back of a winged tigress as he brought Buddhism to Bhutan. At an altitude of about 2800m (750m above the

airstrip and little town of Paro), the buildings cling improbably to immense cliffs with huge overhangs, rather like house-martins' nests. When we reached it, after a three-hour climb which was rather trying in the hot sun, a caretaker monk let us go as far as the inner shrine containing a huge and terrifying effigy of the Guru, and poured holy rose water into our cupped hands. This you are supposed partly to sprinkle on your head and partly to drink. But water of course, even holy water, is the source of most of the gutrot problems that affect travellers in the third world, but you can hardly drop iodine into it there and then (which I did with all other water except that which I knew had been boiled or which was bottled mineral water with unbroken factory seals). So it all went on my head. Apart from the great intrinsic interest of this visit, it was excellent acclimatisation.

We would have liked to have been able to visit Paro Dzong, the immense fortress-cum-town hall-cum-monastery that dominates the Paro valley and which, like all the dzongs in Bhutan, is built on a strategic site on high ground, but that was not allowed and we had to be content with the National Museum and a walk around Paro buying up every umbrella we could find. I was surprised to find that umbrellas were for sale at all, but almost all the little shops seemed to sell an enormous variety of things. Motup assured us they would be useful to keep off both sun and rain. In the event we had such good weather that mine was used most of the time like a sort of flag-pole attached to my rucksack, with items like underpants, hankies and socks safety-pinned to it to dry in the breeze.

But what of the trek itself? The highest mountains, including the beautiful and sacred Chomolhari, are in the north-west of the kingdom, on the border with Tibet, and our trek turned out to be a well-established route crossing the grain of the land and giving stunning views of them. We were driven to the road-head by the ruins of Drugyel Dzong (destroyed by fire when a butter-lamp fell over) and as we clambered out of the mini-bus we had a brief glimpse of shimmering white light, ethereal and remote, rising above ridges of dark forest: it was our first



Camp at Jangothang, below Chomolhari, Bhutan. Photo: Bob Allen

glimpse of the icy summit of Chomolhari but, tantalisingly, it vanished into cloud almost immediately.

Walking up the wooded valley of the Paro River, we passed isolated farm houses built mostly of wood in the traditional way. Three storeys high, with roofs made of split planks weighed down by stones, the upper storey is used for storage of grains, hay and other produce; tools are stored on the lowest level and animals winter there, while humans inhabit the middle storey. What is distinctly odd is that such solid buildings are built without chimneys and the (normally unglazed) window-frames with heavy wooden shutters are blackened by the smoke that finds its own way out of the interiors.

We camped (in good quality dome tents) the first night outside the village of Sharna while the 15 or so horses that had carried all our food and baggage were turned loose to graze and our five Bhutanese lads got roaring fires going so that Pinjo, the cook, could produce the first of many tasty meals. There is no shortage of timber in Bhutan, large areas are thickly wooded and a state policy of timber replacement is intended to ensure that the deforestation that has affected Nepal will not happen here. We enjoyed wood fires every night, sitting on comfortable camp chairs, wrapped up in our down duvet jackets and padded ski-type salopettes. I'm a wimp and found Rohan winter bags not warm enough and moon-boots would have been a pretty good idea too because, although it was hot in the sun, even at around 4000m during the day, the temperatures plummeted as soon as the sun went down). The one drawback to the campfire is that sparks can melt holes in nylon, polyester and goretex in an instant. Handing over your water-bottle (cheaper plastic ones distort rather worryingly) to have boiling water poured into it for the following day's walking gives the further benefit of a hot water bottle to take to bed. Hamish Nicol taught me about one of the most important items of kit on a trek, especially at bedtime; I refer of course to the pee-bottle. Once you are over 50, you will be lucky if you can manage without one. And when you are taking Diamox pills to assist acclimatisation you find that you pee even more. Nor do you want the sort of open-necked thing that you use and then knock over as you wriggle back into your sleeping-bag. That is much worse than going to the loo-tent in the night and trailing your boot laces into the er....

At the end of the second day, still travelling up the wooded valley of the Paro River (relax, I'll try not to re-live every single day) we reached a sort of barn, minus chimney of course, built by the Bhutan Tourist Authority, at a place called Thangthanka. Apart from one other building nearby there seemed to be no other habitation. This barn is for use by trekkers as a sort of living/dining place, with a central fireplace. The Bhutanese lads seemed very uneasy that evening, and Uygien, the trek leader, asked me if I had fastened my tent securely, although without giving a good reason for the question. It was not until much later the following day that Motup told me that our lads had expected to find a caretaker at this barn, whose job it was to supply firewood and to maintain and guard the building. When they had gone looking for him, they found him slumped in a corner on the far side of the barn and thought he was drunk, as he was known to be fond of a drop of the lotion. A couple of hours later, when it was noticed that he was still in the same position, one of the lads looked more closely and found that he was dead, but only recently so, with a deep stab wound into his chest through his armpit, made by his own knife but which could not have been self-inflicted.

The Bhutanese knife is, rather appropriately, called a 'ghecchu' and it is used for everything from chopping wood to slicing up vegetables. What was remarkable about this was that this murder, for it must have been that, took place in a country where aversion to killing anything, let alone another human being, is deeply rooted and part of the Buddhist outlook. Uygen had been extremely worried that the killer might have still been in the area.

On the third day we reached 3900m and Jangothang, the basecamp - if you can call it that, for no-one is allowed to attempt the mountain anyway for Chomolhari. We couldn't see any sign of the mountain as it was covered in cloud, and the following day, when we walked up the side valley towards where we knew it must be, all that was visible were ramparts of ice cliffs disappearing into the mist. But that evening it snowed (thank goodness for the pee-bottle) and then froze to about -8°C and we rose to a glorious morning. There, towering 3000m above us at the end of the side valley, was the glittering ice face of Chomolhari, framed by the almost black sides of the still-shadowed valley. We sat outside to have breakfast, watching the sun creep down the valley towards us and hardly able to look at the brilliant light on the snows when there was a crack, a noise like thunder and an enormous avalanche poured all the way down that colossal ice face, filling the combe below and billowing in great waves. It was enormously exciting. I had known about Chomolhari ever since I had acquired my copy of Freddie Spencer Chapman's book **Memoirs of a Mountaineer** describing his (first) ascent from the Tibetan side in 1937. This was exactly what I had hoped to see and I was not disappointed.

Our horses had gone back down the valley the previous day and instead a team of yaks now arrived from the last, isolated habitation a little further up the valley. They would carry the loads over the high passes that were to follow. Quite how this was arranged I do not know; mobile phones seemed totally out of place



Avalanche on Chomolhari, Bhutan. Photo: Bob Allen

here, our lads certainly did not have anything like that and yet at several other places during the next week one team of yaks would leave to return to their own territory and another team would take over. The haulage work was shared out amongst the yak and pony-men along the trail; it just showed the high degree of organisation and pre-planning needed and about which we were largely blissfully unaware.

Within half an hour of leaving on that fifth glorious morning, before the yaks, who would catch and overtake us during the day, we turned a bend and there before us soared the fantastic spire of Jichu Drake, rather like the Matterhorn but 50% higher. Doug Scott made the first ascent of its highest summit sometime in the 1980s, I believe.

These two glorious mountains were to dominate our landscape for the next few days as we headed further north-west. Our itinerary showed that we had a series of passes to cross and the one for the following day, the Nyelela Pass (OK, I know 'La' means 'pass') was apparently at 4170m, so we only had about 200m to gain. We made that in the first hour and then saw that the pass was much higher and far beyond. In fact it was two further cols beyond and an awful long way before we saw the prayer flags fluttering in the wind. In the event Motup and I agreed (both having good altimeters) that it was at 4800 metres. Not high by hard mens' standards, but we were not hard men (and with an average age of 58) and it was certainly high enough to give us a very much harder day than expected and cause to be grateful for the acclimatisation efforts that we had made. On the long descent to Lingshi, where there was another (the last) of the 'barns', we had time to ponder how many other 'variations' we might find in the heights given on our official itinerary, particularly since we had another pass, the Shingela, somewhere ahead which was given as just under 5000m.

At Lingshi we had sight of another stunning mountain, Tsering Gang, probably unclimbed like almost every mountain in the country, and this took pride of place in the landscape as we continued to cross the natural lie of the land, with snow lying only on the north flanks of the passes. I became quite used to the routine of - wake at about 6am (just after dawn) with tea in bed, followed by a quick wash and shave in a shallow bowl of hot water (also used to wash anything else), packing up my duffel-bag, trying to gauge what kit I should carry for myself that day for, once packed, there was no access to kit again until that evening; then having breakfast of porridge, scrambled eggs, chapattis and jam. We aimed to be walking by 8am but only ever made it once; usually we were half an hour late because of the delays caused by breakfast and visiting the loo-tent. Then it was walking uphill for three or four hours, gaining about 750-900m of height each day, stopping at or near the col for a lunch of chapattis and savoury rice (which Pinjo somehow carried and kept warm in metal foil from breakfast) while the yaks and their drivers caught up and passed us and continued ahead to put up the tents and get a brew ready for us by the time we arrived in the late afternoon. Those lunches, rests and snoozes, sometimes for an hour or so - for there is no point in arriving at the next camp before the baggage - were some of the most enjoyable moments of each day. In poor weather it would not be quite so delightful, I agree.

We passed Lingshi Dzong, miles from anywhere and now, we learned, a high security prison, although there was no sign of life at all that we could detect. We camped at a delightful village called Chebisa, where the kids all rushed to be

photographed; we crossed the Gobula Pass to camp in a wild place called Shomuthang, like an enormous Scottish corrie; we crossed the Jarela Pass (4600m), seeing herds of bharal, the 'blue sheep' which look rather like deer but only live at around the 4000m altitude level, on the ascent. From the prayer-flagged col we could see a major range ahead, probably Gangchey Ta, and the col of our highest pass, the Shingela. Before reaching that we had a long descent and a barefooted crossing of the wide but shallow (and freezing cold) intervening glacial river, which gave my feet their first decent wash for a week (next time I will take a pair of these modern sport-sandals) and another camp on a wide shelf, on the tree line, in a superbly scenic position.

The crossing of the Shingela Pass, which we had viewed with a little apprehension in case it proved a lot higher than its official 5000m, proved to be straightforward, everybody arrived at the col within half an hour, and Motup and I had to climb up the adjacent rocky ridge for a couple of hundred feet to be sure that we were above 5000m. It was the physical high point of the trek and it had been quite strenuous, but some of the most interesting days were still to follow.

Beyond a grand spot called Lemithang we set off down a long wooded valley, crossing and re-crossing the foaming river behind the yaks until they suddenly turned off onto an open high alp, with a superb view of Gangchey Ta and one to the north, probably of Masang Gang. Here is Laya, the most northerly and probably most isolated village in Bhutan, at about 3780m. We had a rest day here and one of my regrets is that I had been so impressed by the official prohibitions about the export of antiques from Bhutan that I did not take the opportunity to buy some of the splendid silver jewellery (brooches particularly) that the local young women offered, especially as they performed traditional dances for us by the firelight and were so delightfully welcoming, letting us see inside their houses and enjoy(?) the butter-tea. (If you think of it as soup rather than tea, it doesn't seem quite so horrible.)

The loads were transferred once more to horses when we left Laya and we passed through the archway decorated with symbols to repel evil spirits and headed south down another long valley, contouring into every side valley en route. One of the horses was swept away at a river-crossing but fortunately not carried very far; even more fortunately it was not injured and it was only carrying the kitchen equipment.

We had another pass to cross, but it was hidden in forest and then, after a very long day, reached the hot springs at Gasa. My memories of it now are of luxuriating under a natural hot shower, of watching the locals washing a horse in one of the hot pools and of the middle-aged Bhutanese gent who had, in a desperate last minute attempt to find a cure for what Paul, our doctor, diagnosed as a cancerous growth that would kill him in a month, trekked for two days to drink the sulphurous waters.

Two more days saw us trekking down this long valley to the south, losing height gradually, whooping to scare away any Himalayan bears, dodging a bees' nest beside the trail, watching monkeys swinging through the bamboo, and, finally, scoffing cream-cakes at the road head at Tashigang. Cream-cakes? One of the guaranteed ways to get Delhi-Belly surely? But I felt sure that Chhimmy, the boss of our tour company who met us with a minibus and the cream-cakes, would not let us get the trots after surviving unscathed for 16 days. None of us did.

A Fly on the Wall at the Family Meet

Dave Gregory

The definition is loose. There are people there who are members of families, the other members of which are miles away; some people's grandchildren and other children's grandparents; people who are uncles and people who are aunts; even parents with their children; the whole gamut.

The conversation, as one would expect from the age range of the participants, is varied in its scope. Varied from that of a toddler whose idea of conversation is to have you turn over the board pages of its book, pointing imperiously at the simple illustrations insisting that you reiterate "tick, tock; moo, moo, etc." to that of greybeards droning on about climbing in nails, and National Standard loaves costing four and a half old pence while irreverent youngsters behind them play imaginary violins and giggle about 'walking t'mill wearing cardboard boxes'.

For the oldsters the content is that of conversations anywhere: recall, recollection, reminiscence, routes. For the young: last night, today, and who knows? tonight, and who cares about tomorrow?

For those who were not there, here is a sample of what reached the fly.

* * *

Disappointed parent: "Going to the beach? I thought you'd want to look at some of those overhanging 4cs. They're well-protected."

Overhearing cynic: "He wants to look at the overhanging 38Cs on Treen Beach. They're not protected at all."

* * *

Sotto basso: "I'm going to sew their legs together."

It is not known if this was to prevent the toddlers present from constantly running up and down the resonant floor above the kitchen talking-shop, thus preventing any conversation, or to curtail certain other, late-evening, activities of somewhat older persons present.

* * *

"He's going to North Cornwall at the weekend. He wants to do *Eroica* before he has his heart by-pass operation."

* * *

During a meeting with local representatives of The National Trust "There really ought to be no more gardening."

"I wish he'd tell my wife that. Hoeing is playing havoc with my elbows."

"I couldn't agree more. I've got weeders' knee."

After the meeting - "He seemed to be quite a nice fellow."

"Some of these conservationists are. He almost admitted that people had a right to be on National Trust Property."

* * *

"Have you tried that paté Terry's brought? It's Greek. Called humus. They eat a lot of it."

"Humus eh? No wonder his son's that size. It must be like putting horse muck in your boots."

* * *

Optimist, returning to the hut, sweat-lathered, viewing the array of vessels on the stove:

"Is that your kettle?"

"No, it belongs to the Club."

"Bloody witty Yorkshireman."

And later "You couldn't lend me a couple of teabags could you?" and, viewing the proffered rectangles with a jaundiced eye, "Hmm Yorkshire tea bags."

"How so?"

"No bloody holes in 'em."

* * *

"Which of these bottles of milk in the fridge is ours?"

"Just use the fullest one. That way we never run out."

* * *

"We ought to get some more biscuits"

"We haven't got any biscuits."

"What about those in our box on the side over there?"

"That's not our box."

"Well, we definitely ought to get some biscuits."

* * *

"Why does he need the gas-lamp to go out to his tent?"

"Perhaps he needs to check that it's still there if he wakes up in the night."

"What? His tent?"

"Well, that as well."

* * *

"Someone's stolen the generator again."

"Never mind. One of the kids will have a dynamo on his mountain bike."

* * *

"Who's that cheeky so and so who brought that string of kids in to use the toilet? Is he a member?"

"Shouldn't think so. He won't have time for climbing if all those kids are his own."

"He runs a business."

"Producing kids?"

"No, running adventure holidays."

"Bloody great adventure, coming in here for a pee."

* * *

"They ought to stop the family meet."

"Good God, why?"

"All these kids can climb better than us. It's very humbling. What will they be like when they get to our age?"

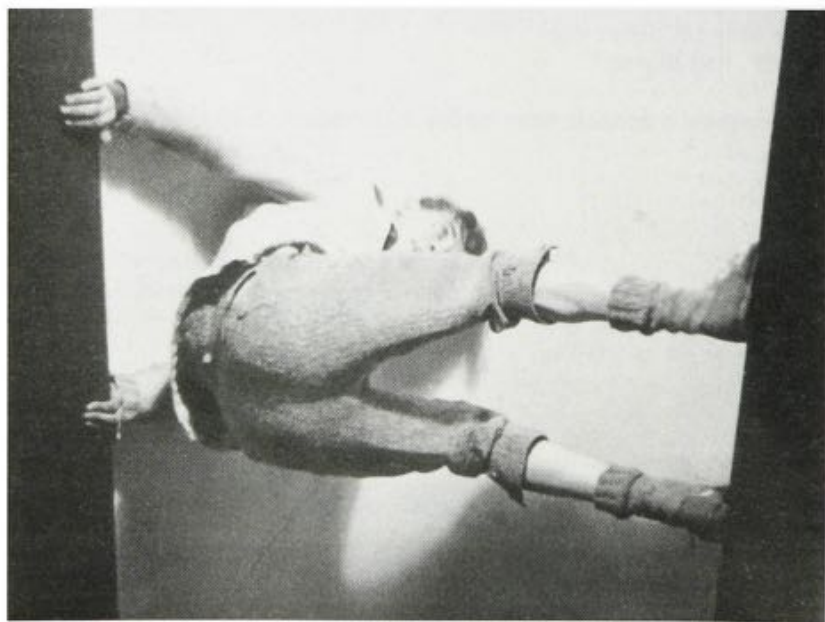
"Pathetic. Just like us."

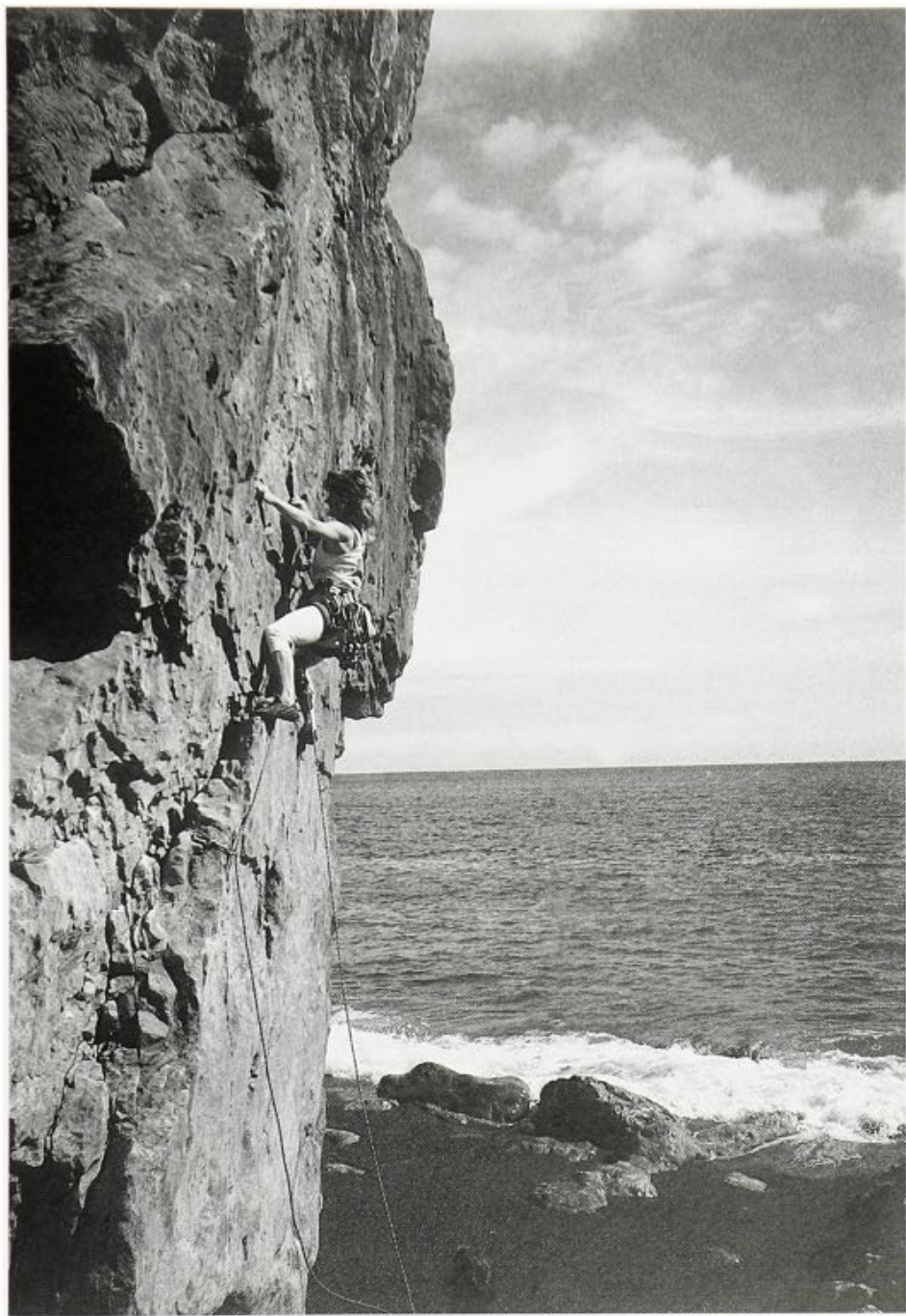
Which seemed a suitable time for the fly to take its leave.



Above: AB Opening the R.O.Downes Hut (1961). Photo: A.J.J.Moulam

Below: The 'Bumstead Traverse', Helyg 1948. Photo: John Disley Collection





Emma Alsford on 'The Scoop' E3 5c, Becks Bay, Pembroke. Photo: Paul Donnithorne



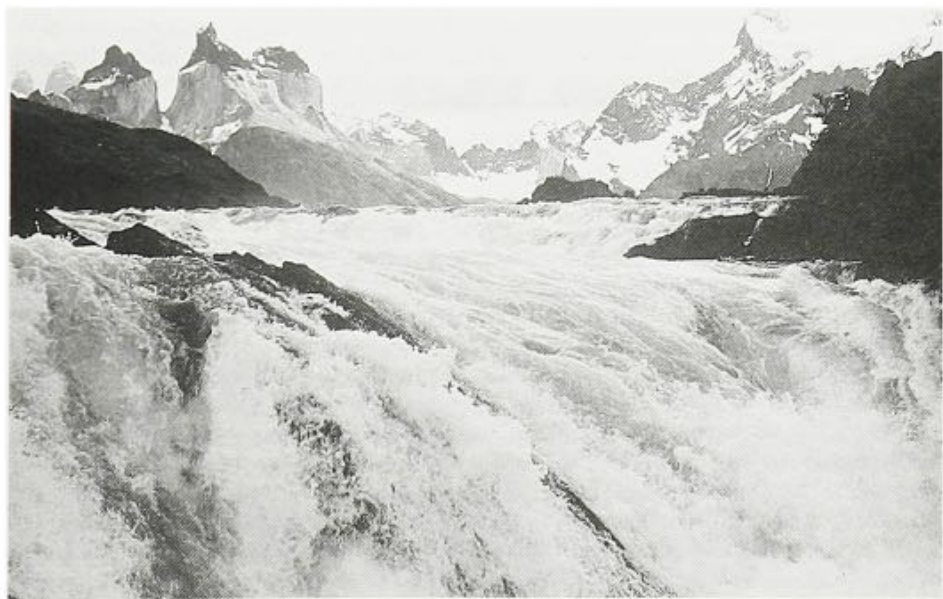
Monte Viso, the Most Spectacular Peak in the Queyras Region. Photo: Derek Walker



Above: Carslaw, Hunt, Wallen and Brotherhood on the Saltow Kangu Expedition 1935.

Photo: John Hunt Collection

Below: The Cuernos of Paine. Photo: Derek Walker



Salt

David Hope

She carried all her ghosts with her, when into the hills each day she walked, and onto the cliffs she climbed. I could not find them though for when she looked my way her smile would pierce my soul and I, blinded, my heart impaled on the steel of her eyes, would try to endure within her flame. It is the sea that she always wanted, that is her country. She was an ocean woman and loved to sit in those outrageous places of the coast where her tears would water the ground and in the springtime flowers would grow from the fissures beneath her feet. When dolphins leapt past at Sennen she would rush to the water's edge calling, a heartrending edge to her voice as, dreaming, they passed her by.

They leave behind the forlorn clanking of her rack as she wearily shifts back to the vertical plane, as though someone she loves has just gone by without acknowledgement and the remainder of the day becomes brooding and dark inside her. She is a creature of the sea, rather than the crag, and would spend her time under it. The summer she spends beneath the waves, dancing in the tides and beckoning me in. I hate the feel of sand between my toes and walk the beach in trainers and socks, foolishly stepping back from the waves as they dart at me, the sound of her silver laughter sensual in the breaking waves of passion that come later, lying in the gentle loving mockery of my fears. "I will teach you to love the sea", she whispers and curls herself tight into me. She is my friend and my love but I still cannot banish the past that hangs around her and keeps me apprehensive in her company.

We met in that most ordinary of places, the Wall, and shared a rope or two as she began to climb. I had some knowledge, and not a little experience, and would check her knots and point out the holds and occasionally tighten the rope on some hanging struggle for her. The shadows in her eyes held me in thrall but the past she kept closed so I could not find the way to her. That winter I spent my days on crags and moors and coasts, keeping company with her distant being, close but never near. Bit by bit a trust began to show with jigsaw pieces added, tiny fragments slipping out of climbs before, and of partners who, well, seemed to not be there any more. She had climbed but that I ignored in my teaching for it brought me close.

A while ago, I had a photograph before my mind, now newly remembered. It was of a beautiful woman framed against a cliff, her loved ones about her. Her eyes were open but in them her spirit lay closed off to all outside. She sees not the family around her and I find that my finger cannot pin the image down. It is in my memory from sometime ago and haunts me daily, the eyes probing into my present, following wherever I sit. I am conscious always of their direction.

The North Coast is a forbidding coastline in the winter yet I visit it often, spinning down my rope into the depths of the cliffs to run before the snatching waves and find climbs to fill my soul. Gowla is magical when the seas run wild and I often sit and watching the spray fly 300 feet above the summit towers. A quiet pint is routinely sampled in the local and there, chillingly, I sense the frame upon the wall, and within it, against a lifeboat, sits my love. In cold anticipation

the tale unfolds of a lost husband claimed in storm, a son who followed and a father washed to shore a bleeding hulk many Octobers before.

I cannot see the reefs of pain causing the wreck of her soul for the photographer has scavenged her beauty from the waves scattered offerings. And thus I dwell on the coast for a while, searching deeper beyond the barrier's mystery. Accounts of many storms and whiplash winds and tales of ropes hanging off cliffs, of brave men with women waiting for ever watching the sea for remnants of former lives to surface so peaceful rest can be claimed. The tale unfolds a hundred years or more before and my torch of discovery lights a mystery, a mystery of a lady who left to go up country so the local records say, 'Bristol way', to find and live in the blessing of a spinster aunt, a mystery of a beautiful, sad lady with chestnut hair and steel splintered eyes and a smile of such huge generosity that I cannot but help fall in love again and again, tying my knots within the embrace of her intense presence.

"I may drive down to Devon and sit by the sea", she said. I offer to come but no, she is adamant. It is October and there are relatives to visit whom I may not yet meet. "One day", she promises, "I have told them I have met a delicious man and they wait upon me as I tease them a little more. It is my way."

She did not come back. Months passed and then a year and the Autumn is here again. Exploration calls and I am by myself this weekend, my mates gone north for dry grit, leaving me lonely in my searching.

My pint sits untouched now and I stare morosely at the frame on the wall. The pub is cool, a new landlord unaware of its history but glancing askance at me as my eyes remain glued to the eyes behind the glass. The photograph is faded now, the eyes opening in on closed walls yet in their place lie fallen stones from whence my dreams tell me the barrage of my words broke through a year before. My imagination blurs the vision and I fancy I see an eyelid tremor and feel a sense of hiding there as the firelight behind reflects on my spectacles.

In the morning the beer lies stale upon my tongue as I prepare for the abseil, prospecting a likely looking corner, glimpsed briefly from a precarious grass lip a hundred yards away. A check of the knots and the belays and then I was ready.

I eased back into the strain of the rope and satisfied that all was complete, stepped out not looking up. For a few brief moments all was well the...I was flying backwards, automatically twisting in the air looking for the ledge below in an almost unconcerned effort to spot the grass for digging my hands into, knowing that I could arrest my unscheduled descent if I hit it just right. A crunching jolt brought me upright, scraping shoulder and skull against the rock. The belay caught my attention, only five feet above. Was that all it was? I gave a nervous half laugh come cough and saw that only one half of the double fisherman was tied. Luckily, the knot was on the far side of the crab and that had jammed so catching and holding me. Shaking, I placed my forehead against the cool of the rock and sighed with relief. She came to me then, flooding back into me and I started, feeling the grass brush against my cheek but so much softer this was and scented as her hair. The chuckle in her voice snatched at my heart and there, there above me she sat, the white Victorian high collar, laced and pure above the grey worsted dress in the photograph. Smiling down from the ledge, leaning towards me, her hand on the rope she reached out with her fingertips. A trickle of saline fear slid down my cheeks as her tears fell upon my tongue. The salt spray lies

bitter on my lips. "I need yours too", she whispered, the salt of her sorrow biting sweetly as she spread my crying across my face.

"Beloved", she murmured, and taking her hand in mine pulled me to the knot. I watched smiling as my fingers slowly, inevitably, unfurled the rope and gazing beyond myself, watched the end slipping softly through the silver link. I do not know how far I fell but some time later the sea took me and below, resting in her liquid arms, I found my beginning.

Beware Brother, Beware!

Dennis May

The summer of '95. Any cloudy day was met with an air of relief, and gardeners complained about the lack of water. The fact that they'd used too much in the first place seemed to be conveniently forgotten.

On the whole, I stayed away from my climbing mates. Severe tendonitis in both elbows was aggravated by too much work; hearing tales of long evenings on the grit or Cloggy made me feel worse, so I stayed away. On the whole.

On a couple of occasions, I decided that life was too short, and went for it anyway. Perhaps climbing could be an undiscovered cure for the complaint. (It usually took about ten minutes to prove otherwise). One such day resulted from a 'phone call on a sunny Friday evening. A happy voice, a happy female voice lifted the gloom.

"Helloooooo..."

The Barnsley accent, however, warranted caution.

"Oh, hullo Jo, what do you want?" I can't for the life of me remember why she called, but the result was another 'kill or cure' session. We met in Stoney café the next day, before driving up to Millstone Edge. As we took our 'sacks from the car, a very hot and flustered Mike Mortimer walked down through the trees.

"It's too hot, too hot to climb. I've just failed on *Great Portland St*. I can't believe it. It's too hot..."

"Oooh, I wanted to try that." Joanne was looking a little concerned.

"I just couldn't get up it," Mike continued "I left a gang of three young lads having a go. It's too hot..."

Jo had been climbing a lot with Rabbit, who after a three month layoff will solo an E1 whilst you struggle to second the adjacent HVS. Family duties had taken him to foreign climes, so I was on belay duty this particular day. As we walked into the bay at the bottom of the route, we saw what we presumed to be the three aforementioned 'jocks', sat on some boulders, passing the water bottle round.

Ropes were uncoiled, and chalkbags filled. It was when Jo started to clip the gear onto her harness, that the comment floated across:

"If she leads it I'll be well peeved".

Now I will admit to having a slightly chauvinistic attitude. Some would call me sexist. But a sense of self preservation prevents me from what is the social equivalent of attempting to cross a minefield on a space hopper.

"OOOOOOH! Did you hear that! Eeeeeeh! Ooooooh! Oooooooh! I'll... I'll..."

And no doubt she would have done too, had the ropes not been clipped into the Tuba. I managed to persuade her that it would be a shame to spoil such a nice day and better if she took her aggression out on the rock. (After all, you can only run so fast in rock boots).

Jo replied in the best possible way, and cruised it.

By the way Mike, Jo says you owe her a pint.

I'd cough up if I were you.

The United State Of Iran

Chris Lane

"Jesus Christ"! As we entered Iran from Turkey via the Bazargan border, just about the first sight we saw (no, it wasn't HIM - especially in Iran) were the huge limestone cliffs towering over the village of Maku.... "There must be hundreds of routes on there." There were so many obvious lines, it all made even El Chorro look a bit silly! Later we found that there were, perhaps two routes undocumented but for one of them you follow a line of bolts (in fact Hillman Minx gearbox parts!) evenly spaced at about 18m intervals for approximately 270m. The real meaning of route potential really hits you here and we vowed to return for just that.

We pushed on to Tabriz, 200 miles and about 60 pence on the bus, further East. We'd splashed out nearly £3 between us, the night before, in a luxury hotel in Maku - but what the hell, this was a holiday! In Tabriz we met up with Masood, Samed and Ali, three friends in the Iranian Mountaineering Federation. The next week or so we spent in their company. They gave up their jobs, businesses and wives just to help us out and look after us. Wonderful people.

We made various trips into the mountains north of Tabriz, in particular the Sabalan Kuh Massif. The culmination of these Alpine style ascents turned out to be a first British ascent the East face of Hiram III (4800m). This is the most attractive mountain in the group and quite an occasion as we met our friends on the summit where they erected a box-on-a-post to hold an ascentionists record book. We were shown the line of a magnificent new winter route (Jan. 1995) and were invited to 'pop-back' to have a go after Christmas!

After all the formalities and traditional gifts of goodbye we were put on the bus to Tehran, a day's journey away, with bizarre instructions for a rendezvous at the bus station there. We arrived late, in the dark, at a small town that turned out to be the bus station. Absolute chaos is perhaps the mildest description for the place, it was a bus station, but not as we know it. However, amid the confusion we were whisked away (we were easy to spot - we didn't see any other Westerners on the whole trip) and driven in typical 'Asian style', to the equivalent of a Curry's electrical store in the heart of Tehran. This was to be our 'basecamp' for the next couple of weeks. We planned trips, ate and generally dossed about here between routes. During our stay, Djalil, the owner, became more and more irritated by potential customers asking questions about domestic appliances and wanting to buy TVs and the like. All he wanted to do, together with his partner Ramin, was talk climbing. Eventually he got so stressed with these intrusions that he shut up shop so that we wouldn't be further disturbed. Djalil had been on numerous expeditions into the Pamirs, Caucasus and Hindu Kush not to mention a long list of Iranian first ascents. He was keen and hungry to do more and also show us 'his' mountains. Together with his mates - a never ending stream, their generosity, help and warmth was unbelievable, they just couldn't do enough for us.

To the North of Tehran running east/west along the Caspian Sea are Iran's highest range of mountains the Alborz. At 5761m, Damavand is the highest mountain in Iran. There are numerous huts and 20 or so routes to the summit. I

suspect that most of them are of 'similar interest' due to its conical shape. The route we did, the *Gezenak Ridge*, was easy angled but loose and of little variety over the entire length. This led to within 200m of the cratered summit where sulphurous gasses didn't help the lungs or the eyes at this height. Needless to say the views were tremendous. The descent to the first hut, nearly 1800m below was by glissade and scree running - amazing - and, another good reason for the slog to the top!

Iran's second highest peak is much more interesting, Alam-Kuh (4850m) and, with its immediate neighbour Takht-Soliman (4659m), give the best granite climbing in the country. The north face of Alam-Kuh is 600m high and has about ten routes, those to the right hand (east) side looking rather loose. However, the west side gives a selection of gems on superb solid white granite. In particular the 1966 *French Route* gives over 600m of immaculate climbing. Apart from the crucial tension-traverse it's all free and can be done comfortably with one bivvy.

Routes on the north face are best approached from the Alamchal Shelter at 4170m - this looks like NOT the place to spend much time in as it is on the move (down the Alamchal Glacier)! But we were told, 'no problem', a phrase I was becoming used to in response to my question on any safety aspect! There are also two bivvy huts on the west flank (descent) of the mountain and another shelter (Sarchal 3850m) below Takht-Soliman Wall, to the east. The (original) German route on the North Ridge of Alam-Kuh has had a few winter ascents, the first by Djalil (of Curry's fame) and a party back in 1982. It looks like a tremendous expedition and apparently is! I have a full account with super photos if anybody is interested. The trouble is, it's all in Persian!

Various other ascents were made in the 'Tehran area' it always seemed strange to be based in a mountain village of 11 million people, even though it's at the height of Ben Nevis. We visited the 'local outcrops', amazing faces on the south side of Tachal which rises to 3950m above Tehran and bouldered on the 'stones' of Bandedachal far below where we watched the locals performing with their 1960s gear, the women cruising the despies in full Islamic dress, as dictated by the law, a bizarre sight. Then after more socialising we were packed off south to experience the delights of the limestone in the Zagros Mountains.

Once again the machine took over. As usual we didn't know what to expect at the other end but we might have known! We arrived, two hours late, on the bus, at Kermanshar at 4.30am where we were met by a laughing, joking stranger who has been waiting patiently since 2.00am "just in case bus came early 'Meester Chrees' " With constant chatter (in Farsi) and laughter he rushed us to the house of more strangers who accepted us as family. They fed us, vacated their beds for us, and told us breakfast would be ready whenever we decided to get up. Also two other friends would be put on standby ready to take us to whatever crag we had time to visit when we woke up! Such was the hospitality of the Daechin family, the youngest son, Ali, would also take the next few days off work to act as driver and interpreter.

We had been shown photographs of the cliffs of Biseton, a 2750m limestone peak 35 kilometres east of Kermanstaf, at the end of the Paroow chain. The photos were mainly of a 40 metre wall that looked pretty impressive but we couldn't understand the excitement, only 40 metres? We politely listened to their enthusiastic chatter, deciphering what we could. What they didn't explain was

that the photos were of just the FIRST 40 metres to an overhang, above which soared another amazing 1200 metres of perfect rock. This 'crag' is, in all, about 2 km long and has less routes than your local outcrop!

We were directed up a route by our friends of the previous day, Mohammad and Kambiz. There was no route description but we were assured that there was fixed protection, good abseil points and two bivy shelters should they be required. I don't want to spoil your fun but suffice to say the bivouac hut we found was excellent but the fixed gear (which wasn't necessary for us but they don't have any Rocks or such-like) was another batch of agricultural spare parts! And as for the fixed abseil points and tat, take your own! But what a route, all on sun-kissed rock. Puig Campana? You're joking!!

The whole area bristles with peaks and outrageous route potential. It's also a scrambler's paradise with peaks such as Paroow itself giving a tremendous and long day out. If you're into caving there is Ghar Paroow, a 1500m cave system starting 200m below the summit. Apparently there are 22 sections down to a sump - they haven't been any further because they haven't got the equipment. Where are all you cave divers?

Well, that's just a taste of the Islamic Republic, the land of the US Dollar and Levis everything. It's even easier to get whisky here than it is in Utah, but don't ask the wrong person, the ones in charge don't mess about! If you want to know more I'd be happy to answer any queries.



With Ali Reza Daechin, Kermanshar. Photo: Chris Lane Collection

Sandstone Walking

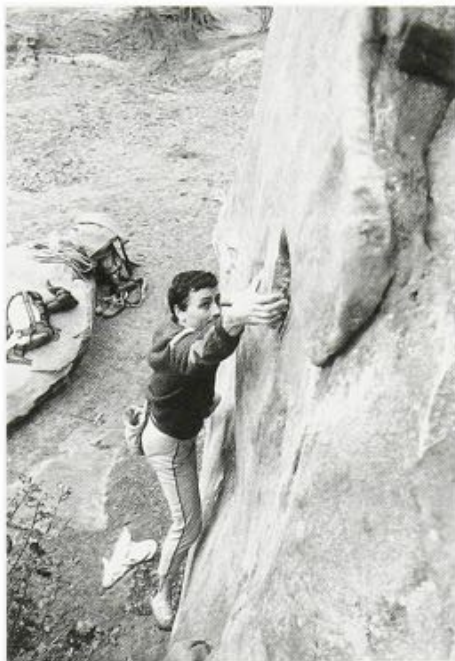
Bob Moulton

It was a reconnaissance for the Centenary Sandstone Meet, itself a reflection of a long association (welcomed or otherwise) between the Club's relatively large membership in the South East and the Wealden outcrops. The earlier South East guides recorded an interest from the likes of Ted Pyatt and Johnnie Lees in making a walking/climbing circuit of the major outcrops. However, with one or two notable exceptions such projects have had less popularity of late and the route variations are infinite, so a recce was called for.

The Meet is planned for as near to the summer solstice as possible, and this was mid-November but it promised to be a more worthwhile day than a typical damp winter's day at Harrison's doing (or failing on) the usual repertoire. An early start from London led to four of us meeting up at a deserted High Rocks car park at 9.30 on a grey drizzly day. With Mike Vetterlein, Robin Mazinke, Geoff Nicholson and myself in the party, we could claim over a hundred years of sandstone climbing in total, in one case over 1000 routes (but a lot less from two of us!), two **Climbing** magazine Sandstone correspondents (the only two!) and the author and editor of the last sandstone guide. We set off in one car to Bowles, which was equally deserted (but this did mean that we got away without paying). It was an inauspicious start for half the party on the three-star 5a, *Pig's Nose* which was followed by an easier route to ensure that we had all got up a climb here. (We were carrying enough ropes to divide into two pairs doing two climbs, but soon discovered that it was quicker for all four of us to do a single route.)

We then set off on what proved to be one of the most pleasant walking sections: we started up alongside the ski slope and then followed the avenue of trees mentioned in the guide as flanking the carriageway that used to lead to the house of John Bowles. This led to a footpath along the ridge overlooking the rocks and across rolling countryside (with a short diversion, amidst a chorus of barking dogs, to look up a friend who lived en route but turned out to be in Qatar) towards Eridge Green Rocks.

The going, as they say in racing parlance, was soft with continuous



Tim Skinner Exploring the Unclimbed Steep Slab Left of 'Brenva', High Rocks.
Photo: Mike Eden

layers of mud building up on our boots. We were already running behind schedule when we arrived at Eridge, so we abandoned the original plan of walking along the Rocks to the classic *Eridge Tower*. Instead we choose the first reasonable climb with quick access to the top to put a rope up (as those who have climbed there will know, quite a problem at Eridge) that we came to - thus saving 20 to 25 minutes.

Hanging Crack 5a, wasn't that easy with a brutish undercut start, but little time was lost and we were soon walking across open (and hence very muddy) fields towards Harrison's. The drizzle had turned into light but persistent rain, and my boots were leaking; this gave the added piquancy of wet socks to the logistics of the 16 changes of footwear that I was to have made by the end of the day. After a short stretch of road-walking we gained a track that led to Forge Farm and a quick scramble up the muddy slope to gain the foot of Harrison's below the Isolated Buttress. Here we met other climbers for the first and only time during the day. This meant a quick change of plan since people were on the obvious routes on the Isolated Buttress, but *Sunshine Crack 4c*, was close to hand to provide a certain way to the top in the wet conditions even if it did cause some of us to struggle. A few minutes were taken up by Robin showing Mike the line he had taken in the summer on his marathon girdle traverse of the Rocks (which included a Tryolean, two falls and some sections of 6a climbing - the idea was not to touch the top or the bottom of the crag at any point, though the line got very near at times). Lunch was partaken on foot.

We walked along the foot of Harrison's, past North Boulder, and up to the car park footpath and thence back to the road. A few yards along this led us to a footpath across a newly ploughed field. This meant more mud and thicker mud, so by the time we emerged at another road we seemed to be carrying half the field on our feet. Another hundred yards down the road and we were back on a footpath again, thankfully less muddy than the last. The party then split up into pairs with the A team, who had already asserted their authority on rock at Bowles, forging ahead and waiting every now then for us to catch up. We passed through a very run-down looking farmyard, which Mike likened to the Grundy's farm in *The Archers* (what would that well-know climber Simon Pemberton have said, and would Ken Wilson write another letter to the climbing mags?). Another road crossing led to a short stretch of woodland and then the railway line, where the map showed the path as passing over a footbridge, but the bridge had been demolished and the path stopped. The railway, a casualty of cuts in the 80s, is now being renovated by TWERPS (Tunbridge Wells and Eridge Railway Preservation Society), whose promises to open the line 'next year' are somewhat reminiscent of ours with the *Pembroke Guide*. After a few forays alongside the railway, we concluded that there was nothing for it but to follow it to High Rocks (and to hope that TWERPS wouldn't get their act together until after our Centenary). The railway soon became boring and unpleasant, as the sleepers were laid at just the wrong spacing for walking on. We passed over a bridge over the path we should have been on, with an impenetrable descent either side, and continued to the High Rocks Hotel. We had already decided to give High Rocks itself a miss in the interest of saving the £2-a-head entrance charge, and, more important, 30 minutes of precious daylight. We continued along the tracks and in fading light arrived beneath High Rocks Continuation Wall. Eager to get away

from the treadmill of the railway I confidently led the way into the undergrowth, tripped over a calf-high fence, and landed flat on my face in the mud on the other side.

Our route at the Continuation Wall, Turret Wall 4b (with Robin opting for the more direct *Drunkard's Dilemma* 5c), was accompanied by suggestions that we only did one more climb on the next outcrop and just visited the last two outcrops. The track along the foot of the Rocks led to a footpath, which took us back under the railway and onto the road. A few hundred yards along the road and we gained a track, which took us via an expensive looking housing estate to Happy Valley Rocks. For many years the only climbs described here were three 5c/6a desperates up an impressive but very sandy pinnacle, but recent interest has led to 31 climbs being described in the new guide. Coupled with this has been some extensive tree-felling; this has restored the area to its former setting, which must have given the place its name with delightful views over the surrounding countryside. This is probably just as well since it has to be said that the climbing is not the greatest that sandstone has to offer, with the new guide only managing a total of two stars!

In the ever-increasing gloom we walked beneath the main section of the crag and bushwhacked our way up a steep overgrown track to the outlying buttress that provided one of the starred routes, *Hidden Gem* 4c. It was certainly hidden, but with less than 20 feet of climbing it was perhaps a route for the sandstone connoisseur. It was almost dark now, and with more talk of only visiting the remaining two crags, Mike had opted out of this route, ostensibly to save himself if the rest of us wimped out of climbing in the dark. A short walk led us to and then along the main road and back into the dark woods to Bulls Hollow Rocks. At the best of times, Bulls Hollow has one of the less attractive settings for sandstone, though it provides a handful of excellent climbs, which unfortunately are rarely in condition. In these conditions climbing was not an attractive proposition, but my somewhat tongue-in-cheek offer to put a rope down the obvious choice, the 3-star 4c *Bramble Corner*, was greeted by the affirmative. This left me groping along the top of the cliff to find the substantial tree which I knew marked the top of the climb, and then down narrow crevasses/chimneys to join the others at the bottom. Only two of us did the climb, the other two nobly sacrificing their enjoyment in the interests of the clock! In fact, it was the ideal climb for the damp, dark conditions with good jams and occasional backing and footing.



Matt Smith on the Left Wall, Eridge Tower. Photo: Mike Eden

It was now pitch dark, and we sent the A team on ahead, as we re-traced our steps back through the posh housing estate, whose large houses were now ablaze with light, and back to the High Rocks road. A few hundred yards along this and we were beckoned into the hedgerow to a short track leading up to the tree-shrouded High Rocks Annexe. Luckily they knew where we were since I was completely in the dark. None of us had thought to pack a headtorch (hardly standard equipment on sandstone!) and it was a question of finding our way round by feel. A rope had been put down what I was told was *The Googly* 3a. As I started climbing, the conversation centred on the seemingly desperate descent, but I had problems nearer to hand: the holds were enormous so I stepped blindly up onto a ledge with the hope of finding a large handhold above but I didn't and with the rope going off to the side found myself back at the foot of the cliff. In these conditions anything went, and accompanied by a tight rope I was soon at the top. It was my turn to discover the delights of the descent, which involved committing oneself to overhanging tree roots above what seemed to be a large drop but was in fact only a few feet. One last change of footwear and we were back on the road and walking back to the High Rocks car park.

It had been a thoroughly exhilarating day and it certainly gave us the change from a typical wet November day on sandstone that we were looking for. We had taken eight hours from leaving the one car at Bowles to gaining the other car at High, and thus we were somewhat taken aback to read of Ted Pyatt taking only six hours with a circuit that took in the much more distant Stone Farm Rocks instead of Bowles. He was on his own and therefore soloing easy climbs and probably not changing his footwear, but nevertheless it was a most creditable achievement. In summer the ground underfoot should be (a lot) drier. The intention for the Centenary Meet will be to have a more leisurely but still fairly strenuous day, with the possibility of opting out of sections for late arrivers. Lessons have been learnt and improvements in the route will be made (particularly between Harrison's and High, with the prospect of an optional pub lunch stop at The Junction). Come and see for yourself on the Centenary Meet.

Henry's Rock

Lindsay Griffin

"Come on Down!"

I turned around to see two police cars stationary on the road and a uniformed officer standing on the roof, brandishing a loud hailer. A large crowd was beginning to gather. Apart from the ubiquitous drug smugglers, civilian arrests are fairly infrequent in this part of the world and every one wanted to be in on the act.

I looked at Brian and then up at the steep limestone wall just above. We were guests in jeopardy and needed to toe the line. Besides, we had already come to the conclusion that the approach slopes were steeper than we had previously perceived and any dislodged material would speed with laser like accuracy through the windows of a large apartment block directly below. Diplomacy ruled the day and we descended. Fortunately, our signed document from the Governor frustrated two pairs of jangling handcuffs and we were let off with a mild warning that we keep local authority better informed in the coming week.

As an alternative to a late autumn visit to the Costa del Vino, Brian Davison was proposing a somewhat less frequented venue - Gibraltar. I looked out of the window. Low cloud and gentle drizzle that had persisted across North Wales for the last week barred any view of the sodden, muddy fields across the road. It was Monday afternoon and deadlines could be met before a possible Friday evening charter to Malaga. I picked up the phone and after a quick talk to this illustrious journal's current editor, who I dimly remembered had climbed on the 'Rock' several centuries ago with Whillans, I dialled the travel agent.

Saturday afternoon found us on our first new route at Buffadero. Apart from the big north face, Gibraltar has vast quantities of limestone, much of it of better quality than the tunnel ridden precipice that looks out towards the Mediterranean coastline of Andalucia. It would be an understatement to say that the potential for exploration is vast; the major deterrent has always proved to be access. Unless one is part of British Forces, a permit will be needed to climb the crags in military controlled areas. Outside of these venues consent is needed from the civilian authorities.

Obtaining permission from the military is very difficult; from the civilian authorities even harder. Fortunately, our visit was prompted by the present Commander of British Forces Gibraltar - Colonel Henry Day, who amongst other notable achievements made the second ascent of Annapurna in 1970 and the following year accompanied Boysen and Burke on a televised ascent of the 'Rock'. Our five star mountain hut, the temporary residence for the current Commander and his wife Sarah, featured half a dozen bedrooms, a banquet hall, swimming pool and extensive library of Himalayan literature. I could see that if nothing else, this was going to be a highly enjoyable trip.

The history of climbing here appears to be confused. A small paperback guide was produced by the military in the '70s, documenting existing climbs on a number of the more friendly crags. The Boysen team climbed the big corner system on the right side of the 1300ft north face in '71, though it is rumoured that

Terry Sullivan may have completed a line on the wall sometime during the previous decade.

In what virtually amounted to an international incident, a Spanish climber was later rescued from high on the face after breaking a leg while attempting a backroped solo ascent. Thereafter, permission to climb would only be forthcoming if an 'official' rescue team was on stand by.

In 1980 two more routes were added: a line of corners on the left side of the face by Smiler, Dave Coward plus Whillans and christened *Metro Way*, and Pete Allison and the Wintringham's more demanding *Regina Mater*, which takes the left side of the central pillar to the 'Notch' followed by the headwall

above. Somehow, in the '90s, that man Fowler managed to penetrate the system and climb an impressive line directly up the walls between *Metro Way* and *Regina Mater*, undoubtedly creating the hardest route to date. We attempted to make our small contribution to this historic but rather dirty and not exactly solid piece of stone via a line to the right of *Regina Mater*. According to Henry this had not been climbed but it appeared far too obvious to have been left untouched. Four pitches and several ancient pegs later we were convinced he was wrong and when Brian hit me resoundly on the head with a large block, I rather lost interest in the venture and we rappelled back to the relative safety of



Brian Davison on the Third Pitch of 'Fatwa', Upper Levanter, Gibraltar during the First Ascent. Photo: Lindsay Griffin

the scrap yard that bars entry to the base of the wall.

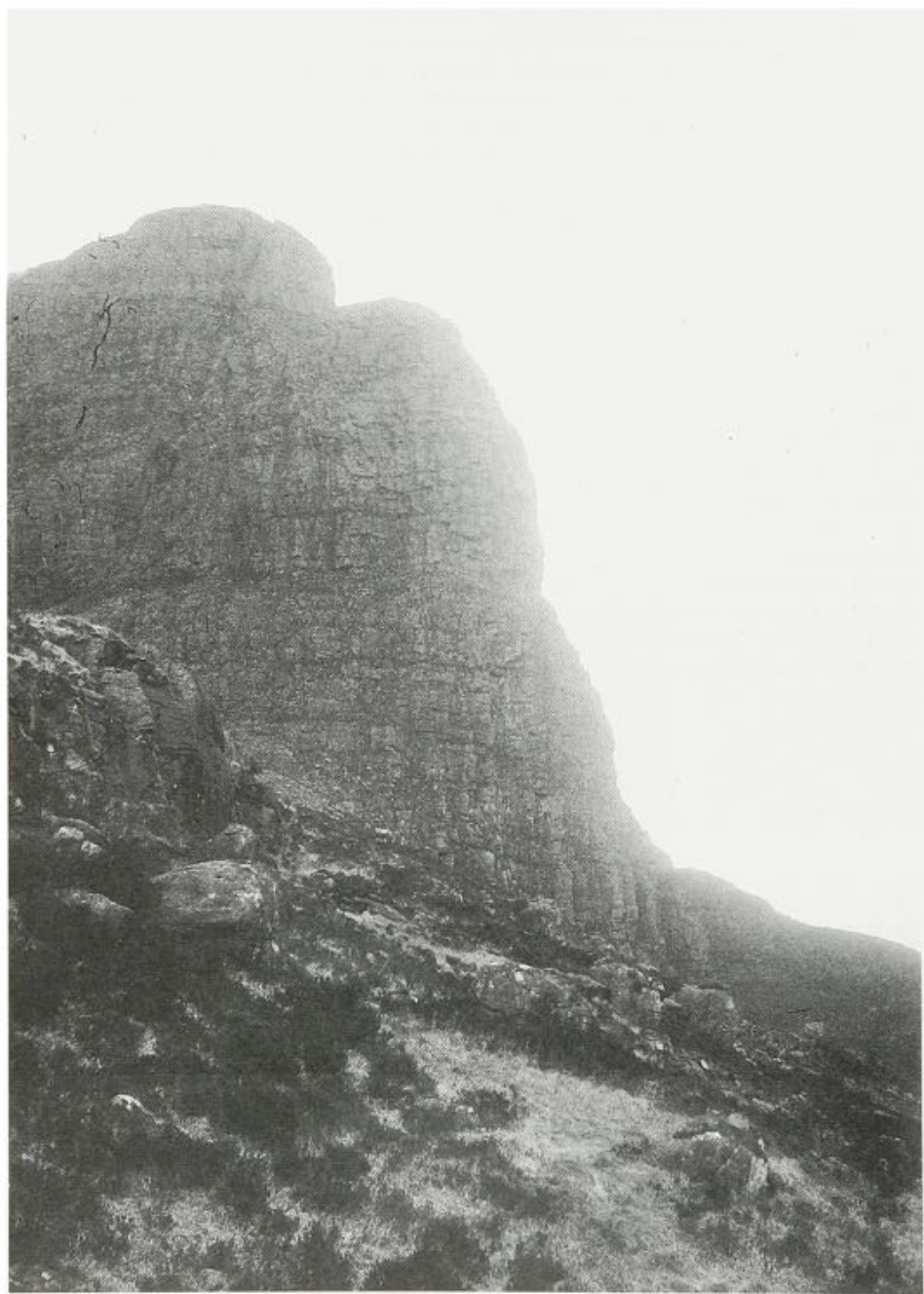
The highest point of Gibraltar is adorned with a huge cannon and lies at the southern end of the peninsula. The South Face has four distinct cliffs separated in a vertical plane by large vegetated terraces. By linking climbs on each wall it would be possible to produce a route from sea level to the top of Gibraltar and this soon became our ambition. The sea cliffs are by and large unexplored; not surprising when there is so much else of easier access to climb. Huge pillars of tufa will provide stupendous routes for generations to come but traditional protection will be sparse and for the present there are too many compelling natural lines to warrant any introduction whatsoever of drilled equipment.

First Chance was reached by a hair-raising rappel down a cliff we christened Clay Pigeon. On other days the Lower Levanter and Upper Levanter cliffs were climbed by four pitch routes on exceptional limestone. Finally, *Last Chance*, another four pitch route up the steep walls to the right of the established *Skyline Ridge* on O'Hara Cliff took us to a final belay on the cannon supports, whilst the lights of Northern Africa twinkled deceptively close across the quiet calm of a dark Mediterranean evening.

Before his term of office expires Henry is attempting to produce an updated guide. Any one with information is welcome to contact him via the British Forces.

Summary:

In all, 14 new routes were completed in a week of fine but often misty and breezy weather (the Levanter). All are from one to four pitches in length and offer a range in standard of Severe to E4/5 6b. It goes without saying that anything remotely difficult was led by Davison!



A'Chioch, Sgurr a'Chaorachain. Photo: Smiler Cuthbertson

The Applecross Organ: a'Chioch

Terry Gifford

In the cathedral of Coire nan Arr
The organ of Sgurr a'Chaorachain
Draws pilgrims up the boggy glen
From the cities of the far, far south.

The painter has pegged out his canvas
On heather, moss and woodrush grass,
A huge white scar waiting to be healed
By the play of full body strokes from

Arm-long brushes that trill softly or soar.
He listens, looks, finding its rhythm,
Its counterpoint of cracks and columns
Against cornice and roof, turf against rock.

He does not hear the cries from the organ,
Mark and Roger, the mice in the works:
'Take in!' 'That's me!' 'You what?' 'OK!'
He sweeps the canvas with charcoal.

He does not see the purple-backed
Beetles in the joints of the pipes
Moving as if under a magnifying glass.
He heals with a broad brush of colour.

He does not smell the air sucked up
The glen by the bellows, through the long
Flutings and out into glorias of clouds.
He is mixing his oils, the ointments he needs

The sun looks in and is gone. The dark sky
Spits. Furiously the painter is making
The music that, in the silence just after
The final coda, has to have healed him.

On the Edge of a Scottish Island

Mike Burt

"You could lead it" said Mike Banks, talking about The Old Man of Hoy. The idea took hold of me. Perhaps I could. It was something to think about. When I talked to John Goodier about it he thought that it was a good idea, but apart from the odd reference it was shelved for many months. We read what we could find about it. We talked to anybody who had done it. It seemed to be feasible.

Robin Quine heard about the idea and he was keen to take part. As a sea stack enthusiast he would add strength to the team. David Young would come separately from his cottage in northernmost Sutherland to take photos and to give us confidence by having someone on the ground to whom we could make incomprehensible signs. That part of the plan did not work out. He arrived just as we were leaving but we did manage to have a cup of tea with him.

So on 10th June 1995 the team set sail from Scrabster. The magic of the Scottish Islands was shrouded in sea mist. We were aware of having passed the Old Man, but not so aware that we needed to be upset by it. By the time we were on the smaller boat from Stromness to Hoy, the shroud was a bit less and the magic a bit more.

The little landing stage on Hoy is the stuff of dreams, remote and dramatic, Richard Hannay and the Scarlet Pimpernel, beautiful women, tearful farewells, ecstatic reunions.

Happily our taxi was there as well, so without any physical effort on our part we arrived at Rackwick Bay, not more than ten paces from where we were staying.

Has climbers' accommodation a monopoly on remarkable people? There was a German vet who had been to look at the Old Man. "It is frightening." A Scottish couple who were cycling around the islands and a man who had walked from the landing stage to loosen himself up for the Hoy Half Marathon the next day. The hut warden came in and explained how a puffin could catch a second fish without releasing one already held in its beak.

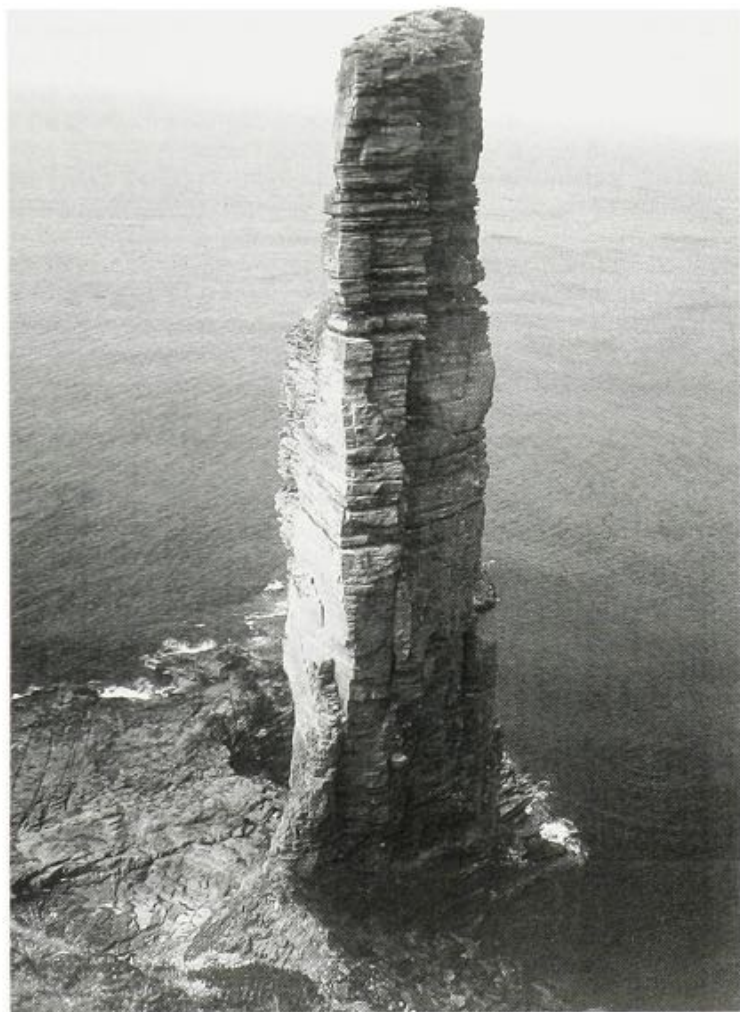
The next day it was hardly even worth going to have a look at the route. The atmosphere was supercharged with heavy water and hanging gloom, but you have to go anyway. The weather got better, but the wind was still very strong. When I first saw the Old Man all resolve and purpose left me. I knew I was going to be afraid but this was more than fear. There was no possibility of getting up that. I would have liked to have walked past and pretended that I hadn't really intended to climb it, but knowing that I couldn't get away with that, I decided to go through the motions of climbing to pretend to John and Robin. I would retreat from the first convincing difficulties. It's a long winding way down to the foot of the stack but it couldn't be long enough for me. I didn't want to get there. No one ever took longer to get into their climbing gear.

John said that my silence was tangible. Robin was cool. It was cold. There was no chance of convincing anyone that I couldn't get up the first pitch. It had ample room at the top and belays aplenty both natural and contrived. John settled on the

Opposite: The Old Man of Hoy. Photo: Mike Banks

belay and I started on the big pitch. The rock was much more solid than I expected for sandstone. Any grains that become detached don't have the luxury of piling up upon ledges. The winds insist on their company for a dazzling dance.

Once across the traverse and into the chimney there was some protection in place. It hadn't been rotting there since the '60s. It was in good condition. I clipped it gratefully. A chimney gives a comforting delusion of safety and a chimney with good protection strengthens that delusion. Progress could be made. Here comes the well known bad bit for sure. It's as hard as it's supposed to be and then some, but it's got protection in place. There are wedges driven in, they are sound, somebody loves me after all. I had watched a video of Chris Bonington doing this many times over but I found getting to where he started his demonstration to be hard. So I didn't do it like that. I needed a few goes and I got tired. My feet came



off, I made a retreat. Then after some wild moves I was on the little shelf. The rest of the pitch still had to be climbed. It's not a staircase but it goes.

Al Alvarez has written meaningfully about the belay at the top of that pitch. There are two massive threads. I tied on gratefully. John and I together fixed a back rope to guide us diagonally on the descent. A good blow on the whistle to let him know to bring up Robin and I could have a rest. It's hard to believe that a simple whistle can get around adverse acoustics, through the gale and over the bird screech. Here was a chance to look around. It didn't look too intimidating, but I wasn't going to write it off as a pushover.

In no time John's whistle sounded for me to bring him up. I couldn't see much of what was happening, but he always makes it and duly appeared. The next section was indeed not too bad, there was a complex of belay points all joined together and I helped myself to some welcome security. This time I could shout to John to bring up Robin. A gull was nesting a few feet away. It didn't seem to resent my being there but it managed to get the idea into my mind that it was hard enough sitting there for weeks without the likes of me making it worse.

At about the same time, a small plane passed between the stack and the cliff. That, it seems, is a tricky manoeuvre in such a strong gale. Each to his own, but our lives were being lived quite fully enough at that time.

Robin was fast, and for the first time we were all together; as we were to be again at the bottom of the final pitch, where, once more, there was a ready made belay.

Much later, when I was asked if it had been a good route, I had to think hard before replying. No, it had been an obstacle to be overcome rather than enjoyable climbing, except for this final pitch, which is well known for having the satisfying moves and steep climbing that can be relished at the time and savoured afterwards. The quality of the rock is very good too, but no one would go all that way just for the one pitch. The main requirement had been to deal with the almighty grip and to do something in spite of the conviction that an ascent was out of the question.

And so to the summit passing yet another prepared belay slightly lower. All three of us were soon up. There were waves and cheers from people on the cliff top opposite, Robin took a summit photograph. We almost missed the book for recording the ascents. It was hidden so cunningly under a cairn.

The birds were boss here. There were more puffins than I'd ever seen before, one with a single fish in its beak. They were all, when landing, using a strange technique of scraping their legs up the rock before getting a firm hold with claws.

Euphoria was held in check by the seriousness of the descent but the in-situ belay points were a great help. The diagonal abseil down the fixed rope worked perfectly. Robin insisted on bringing it down tied to his harness, so that we pulled him in. He wouldn't have it left as litter on the rock. He would have removed all the other gear as well, but John and I keep a sense of proportion regarding purity.

Back on walking terrain it looked as though we were going to lose the last round. The ropes wouldn't budge from the top of the second pitch. Huge full body weighted heaves made no impression. The wind had twisted them around one another. John managed to straighten them out. It was easy after that and we could all go home.

Into the Light

Bill Russell

I stepped from the dark into the light.

I moved from that dark, gloomy, anxiety-filled but safe tunnel onto the brightly lit stage. I seemed to float above it all and I followed the thin white line of crystal down and out. All mornings should be like this one.

In the middle distance stood the Aiguille Verte, Les Droites and Les Courtes and above them all in the far distance, towered the Matterhorn. The Vallée Blanche was like a white bowl to my right. Only a few days before I had been at the bottom of that bowl, suffering as I climbed back to the sanctuary of the Midi station. I made it, but only just, and I had thought I would never have the energy to return. But here I am again, emerging from the tunnel into that wonderful morning sunlight.

The *nevé* was crisp and sparkling as we descended the ridge and soon the anxiety was gone. We were dragged back to reality as we passed a pair of Frenchmen (?) in trainers dangling like the weight of a pendulum from their anchor, another Frenchman, who seemed to be lowering them down a steep and narrow section of the ridge. We dashed passed them as quickly as possible hoping they did not swing themselves, and us, off the ridge.

The four of us, Sandy and Jamie, Martin (RAF) and myself, regrouped at the bottom of the ridge. We were heading for the Aiguille Du Plan along the Midi-Plan ridge. It was a wonderful day, good snow and blue sky and we made good progress along the easy angled ridge. We bypassed a steep section in the shadow on the Chamonix side by descending slightly towards the Mer de Glace and then climbing snowfields back to the ridge. We arrived at the Col du Plan where we were meant to descend rocks to the col and then climb a snow filled gully back to the ridge. Except that it had been a long hot summer and the gully was filled with rubble. Luckily it was in shadow so we cramponed up the frozen gravel back to the snow. I didn't fancy coming down that later in the day when it was no longer frozen!

It was at the top of the gully that we discovered that Jamie had left their drink in my car in Chamonix. We were quite warm by now so we let Sandy and Jamie have a sip of ours. As we arrived at the Rognon we saw that a small traffic jam had developed. There are several schools of thought about the best way to descend this 200 foot granite cliff. One of them was to turn back. However having got this far it seemed a good idea to continue. One large group ahead of us was down climbing a crack system while another group was sitting in the sunshine looking at the vista. We tried to bypass all this inactivity by abseiling down the side of the Rognon to the glacier below. The first abseil was OK and we then scrambled down some ledges to where the rock steepened. I set up the anchor and lowered myself onto a vertical wall of lovely golden granite. I followed a ramp for a few feet but it was taking me diagonally away from the anchor so I moved back onto the wall.

Suddenly I swung wildly on the rope and dropped. But before I hit the glacier I stopped falling and the rope came tight. 'That's tested the anchor' I thought. The

rope had just come off the edge of the ramp back to the vertical and nothing more serious than a rapid adrenaline surge had occurred. I quickly dropped down to the bergschrund and let the others come down. The view up the wall as they abseiled was fantastic, they were silhouetted against the vivid blue sky on that wonderful rock.

The snow was pretty soft by now and as we gathered in the 'schrund we discussed what to do. It was possible to descend directly from the col or to climb the final snow slope to the Plan and then descend. We slithered through the snow to the col. We passed one of the other parties below the crack system. One of them was slumped in a heap, vomiting into the snow. 'That's how I felt a few days ago' I thought as I passed her.

We left Sandy and Jamie discussing their plans as we started up to the summit. We had talked about turning back at the top of the Rognon and at the col but in the end we had to reach the summit, the weather was good, we felt fit and Sandy was with us to show us the way!

We left our crampons and packs on a platform and scrambled to the rocky summit. I felt that we couldn't linger, enjoying the view and so we quickly returned to our packs. I regret not staying and enjoying the moment but I was really anxious about the long descent down the Envers Glacier. As we arrived at our packs we saw a pair on their way up. It was Sandy and Jamie who had left their gear at the col and were coming for the summit. It was good to see them.

We were soon all back at the col.

"That was brilliant, Sandy, really fantastic!"

"Yes", he said, "But we still have to get down the glacier." A sharp dose of reality!!

We now roped up as a rope of four. Sandy at the front to guide us down, Jamie, Martin, and then me as anchor man. The snow was soft and we were tired. It was hot and we were short of water. It was a long way down to the hut and even further to the valley floor.

We moved on down...step, step, slide, tap, tap...step, step, slide, slide, tap, tap!!! First one way, then another, crossing crevasses, some quite small, some larger which required us to jump. Concentrating all the time. Hot and tired. Time passed so slowly as we dropped lower. The rocks on each side moved in and we came across the odd boulder on the snow.

Then we came to a really big crevasse. Sandy stopped and the other two joined him at its edge. The path we were following led straight down to it. It just got steeper and steeper until you were in the crevasse. There seemed no option but to jump, yet there was no take-off point and it was big. Then as they discussed it I looked around me and there was salvation. A line of footprints led off to our right along the top of the crevasse. Would this lead us to freedom? We followed it and soon we able to cross this barrier and keep plodding down.

We had to jump at least one big crevasse and descend a steep icy slope, before a final abseil down rocks let us escape from the clutches of the glacier. The rope got stuck on the final abseil, of course, but Sandy got it free.

Arriving at the Requin hut was a real joy. We could relax, remove our crampons and boots. We drank as much as we could. Jamie was shattered, his first big alpine day! Sandy and Jamie wanted to stop at the hut for the night. But they had no money! Martin and myself had just enough Francs with us to lend them

for a meal and bunk. Nice of us, wasn't it! We were left to get down to the Mer de Glace and back to Montenvers in time to catch the last train home... but did we have enough money?

It did not matter anyway as we did not get there in time. The final trudge down through the forest to the campsite was awful. We were both tired and thirsty. We had had a wonderful day and now all we wanted was to eat and sleep. The path down seemed never ending, every now and then we caught a glimpse of the valley through the trees. It never got any closer.

At last we reached the campsite. The rest of the group were having a party. They were not entirely sober. They were a little worried about the fact it was now dark. Someone had considered going into Chamonix and asking if there had been any accidents but no-one was sober enough to drive, let alone communicate with the guides! When we did arrive we had to reassure them that the others were safe.

There was only a cold curry left to eat and, hungry as I was, I could not face it. I was not impressed! So I had a frank exchange of views with the drunken rabble and hit the sack.

Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z

So Wha'd'ya Know About Placement of Pro?

Peter Harding

In most modern aids to climbing safety, and indeed to climbing itself, friction plays a major role. So, first of all, what is friction? Well, it is certainly a fascinating phenomenon but beyond that the question is difficult to answer. We know it is something which opposes or prevents motion yet the means by which it does this are often obscure. Without any friction at all, many types of movement would be impossible; rock climbing would be vastly different from what it is today.

To the rock climber, friction is something which gives essential grip which he or she hopes will exist adequately and helpfully in any contact with rock; aiding upward movement and controlling descent, maybe even preventing the latter occurring too rapidly! Friction, as one famous British climber, George Bower, dubbed, is 'the climber's good fairy.'

The ultimate in friction is perhaps exemplified by those sticky soled pumps which enable their wearer to stand on the merest or most adversely sloping foothold. In truth this is stiction rather than friction, referred to as traction by the tribologist. (A scientist who specialises in the study of rubbing surface contact.) Perhaps the enhanced grip imparted to one's fingers by a coating of chalk, or that unnerving slipperiness of some types of rock in the presence of moisture, are truer examples of pure static friction, which is drastically affected by surface contaminants. Although none of this has explained what friction is, at least it serves to illustrate that it can vary from being extraordinarily high to virtually non-existent.

Having provided that reminder of one fickle, perhaps precarious, aspect of our sport it is timely to start considering those protection devices which, (other than

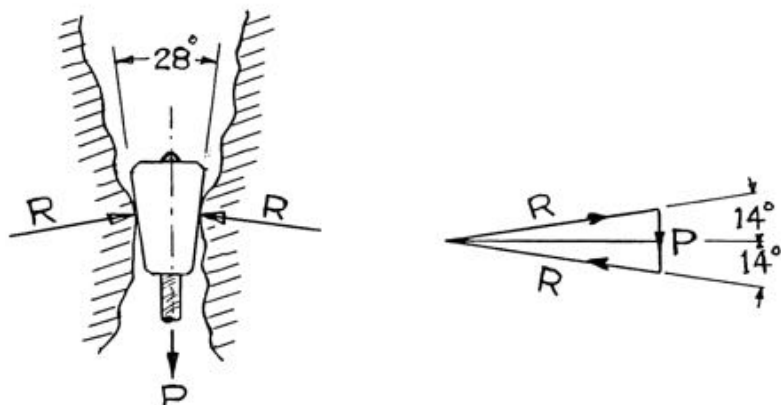


Fig. 1

personal skill), are our main defence against losing friction and/or contact with the rock. This will also help in the understanding of the basic laws of friction and some limitations - of protection devices as well as those laws! Passive protection, such as that provided by wired nuts and sling mounted hexagons, works by them being wedged against restrictions between the walls of cracks rather than by friction. Nevertheless the simple systems of static force which are brought into play should be thoroughly understood by everyone who uses them. Suppose then, we have a nut with plane faces angled at, say, 28° to each other and, somewhere in the middle of those two opposing faces, contact is made with the narrowing sidewalls of a vertical crack. (See fig.1)

We have, in effect, two 14° wedges side-by-side, (or back-to-back), and any downward pull, (P), exerted by the hanging, or falling, climber will be resisted by sideways reactions, (R), at the crack walls. Vertical components of these reactions, (helped a little by the friction between rock and wedge alloy), will act in direct opposition to the downward pull while horizontal components will try to crush the nut (or widen the crack!). From that triangle of forces a bit of trigonometry tells us that:-

$P=2R \sin 14^\circ$ therefore those sideways forces will be roughly twice as big as the downward pull.

If we use a nut with half that wedge angle the side forces will be about four times the pull so it will be a much more effective jammer but, like an axe, a damned good splitter! So be careful in its placement for it may not only be a bit of a swine for your second to remove when following your lead; in the event of a fall it may even remove itself, as well as an all-important piece of the crack!

Suppose our climber weighs Wlbs,(or kg); simply to hang on a running belay will give a static downward pull of similar magnitude, but hanging on it suddenly will produce a transient impulse force which is just twice as high. If held by the second on a rope from below, the static rope tension will, of course, be W but the pull on that runner, (nut, sling and karabiner), will be 2W. And should the climber, for any reason, come onto the runner suddenly, even without any slack in the rope, that instantaneous impulse loading will be approximately 4W, so you can easily figure out the probable magnitude of those side forces on the walls of the nut placement. A little more slack in the rope and it could be a lot more!

In both these cases we have neglected friction, on the nut and on the runner's karabiner as the rope goes through it. In a static situation this rope friction will not arise since there is no rope movement, however in the event of a fall, the pull on the protection placement would be affected by friction between rope and karabiner, due to stretch and any slippage of the rope at the belayer's end. A fully fledged 'flier' would induce an impulse force in the rope of considerable magnitude and, whatever it was, the top-most runner would bear the brunt, easily doubled and probably trebled.

To quantify this a bit more, let's say you are a little overweight for an average rock athlete and wearing rather more than a pair of natty cycling shorts and headband, plus a harness with an enviable array of protection hardware. How does 176lbs, (or 80kgs), sound? (The standard weight of a UIAA 'ready to fall' climber! OK?). Really high on the cliff already, you do the final pitch of 50 metres up steeper than vertical rock, running out all the rope but placing one nut runner, in a crack, halfway. (You may be overweight but you're bolder than the average

rock athlete!) Should you be unfortunate enough to topple off the top-most move there are a few things to worry about on the way down. First of all, your fall factor of unity - it could mean a large impulse tension on you and your well-anchored, strong-as-an-ox second. (Whose day job is sumo wrestling!) Secondly, though the rope won't slip through his hands or brake plate, will it stretch sufficiently to make some friction available at the runner's karabiner to help deal with your increasing kinetic energy? Thirdly, 'Bloody hell! There's that runner - going past at 50mph!' Finally, will its placement be good enough to stand a sudden pull of more than a ton?

Ah well, your prospects could have been worse; you could have been on the first pitch!

"But just wait a minute." you say: "I rarely climb more than five feet before placing some pro." (You too, eh?) Well even if you had been only ten feet above Sumo Sid, and just about to clip onto runner No.2 when you took flight, the impulse pull on runner No.1 would have been just as high, because your fall factor would be exactly the same! (Who said truth is stranger than fiction?)

Now let's move on from passive protection hurtling past that runner at 50mph seemed just a bit too passive! Let's go for the so-called active pro. and see what that can do for us. In principle an artificial belay device which uses cams is quite similar to our two side-by-side wedges, each rolled round a common spindle in opposite directions to provide a pair of cams. In fact it is more likely that there will be at least three or four and any argument about whether four cams are better than three, or even two, has less to do with the directional stability of cars, three-wheelers or motorbikes than with spindle shear forces, distribution of loading or even - walking.

The camming angle may have been designed to be exactly the same as our static wedge (14°). However, as we shall see later, the effective camming angle in practice will depend largely on the slope and topography of the crack walls in which it is placed and therefore an intelligent placement. Contact geometry between cam edges and rock will also be similar to the wedge, giving triangles of forces, but there the similarity ends for, unlike static wedges, 'rolling wedges' will work against smooth, parallel sided cracks of various widths and even in those having adverse flares. However, to achieve such magical performance they also have to rely on friction between rock and cam edges. Knowing from our climbing experience just how much this may vary we need to consider this in detail.

At any point of contact between two surfaces, (a cam edge, your finger tips, or the toe of a boot), pressed against a rock face, the maximum force available for producing friction is that which is perpendicular to the contact point. We call this force, and the rock's reaction to it, the normal (N). See fig.2. If a downward force (D) is also applied simultaneously, (to the cam, a finger, or boot toe), an upward force due to friction (F) will try to resist it and oppose any relative sliding motion. This is friction law No.1.

Clearly, friction will depend on the complex nature of the two materials and surfaces being pressed together but, much less clear is that it is independent of the apparent area of contact, unless there is any significant relative motion. So there are friction laws No.2 and 3.

As a result of the normal force (N), and its reaction, any downward force (D) will be resisted by friction force (F) and there will be a resultant force (R), acting at

some angle (A) to the normal. From this triangle of forces we have :-

$$F = N \tan A \quad \text{which is law No.4}$$

The tangent (tan) of angle A is taken as the 'coefficient of friction', a measure of the surface friction which, when multiplied by the normal force N will give the friction force F. Another way of looking at this is to visualise a lump of rock lying on a flat sheet of alloy: the only force pressing the two materials together is the weight of that piece of rock. If the metal sheet is slowly raised at one edge until the rock just starts to slide the slope then the angle of that slope is our 'angle of friction' (A), the tangent of which is the friction coefficient.

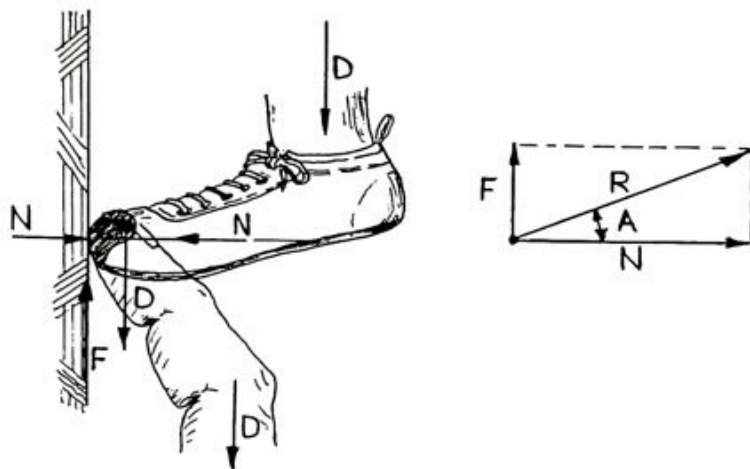


Fig. 2

All these friction laws were thought of by Leonardo da Vinci, nearly 500 years ago, (and perhaps by someone before him), but it was left to Amontons to name and claim them as 'firsts' in 1699. Then Coulomb came along about 50 years later, did his repeats, in somewhat better style and made his own claims to fame. (A bit like rock climbing!) So, friction is often referred to as Coulomb friction. However, it was found that the great Leonard Euler, in the mid-1700s, had 'soloed' them all, 'freeing' them so to speak, (mathematically that is!), and moreover, giving that coefficient of friction the name Mu, the Greek letter M. He even proved, theoretically, why dynamic friction is generally lower than static friction. (Equivalent to soloing a new E9 8b in trainers!)

But call it mu or what you will, if friction is high enough to prevent any slipping of those cam edges, or your fingertip or toe of that boot, the cams will try to roll, and you won't need any chalk to assist in stepping up daintily on one toe; as you can see from fig.2. Whereupon you may be inclined to shout; "Fan-bloody-tastic! Who needs any cammy gadgets?"

However, experience, (or mathematical insight), will tell you that such success in levitation will be extremely short-lived. So - come back cams, and very quickly too! The mechanics of operation is shown in fig.3 where we only need to consider one cam, having regard to all its mates being identical, and pivoted on the same spindle.

on the spindle, the decreased camming angle (C-B) results in those sideways reaction forces (R') becoming extremely large and they are transmitted by the cams to the crack side walls. This effect is, of course, all part of the 'magic' of the sprag belay device; its ability to work better in adversely flared cracks. However, those higher side forces may have other than magical consequences if the placement itself is unsuitable or downright stupid!

For a camming angle of 14° , in a completely parallel walled crack (should you ever find one), sprag will occur if the coefficient of friction is in excess of 0.25 - a reasonable minimum value for most types of dry rock, particularly when the serrated cam edge against the usually rough textured crack wall may be more akin to the meshing of cogwheel and rack on a mountain railway than to Amontons' (or Coulomb's microscopic idea of friction.) Such walls too are often undulating so any flare involved in a placement of active pro. may be hard to assess - the fact that your sprag belay device seems to lock up OK does not mean, per se, that it is in the best spot. But in a perfect crack, with those 14° cams, (or levers), acting exactly on their design angle, the side wall loading induced by a fall will be just twice as big as the spindle pull. However, if that operating angle is reduced by a 10° half-flare angle to become only 4° , the side load will be more than 7 times the spindle pull and as the adverse flare angle and design angle converge, those crack side loads become enormous, limited only by cam/lever and spindle distortions - or strength of the rock itself! Even a fairly average 'flier' can induce a rope impulse equal to 3 or 4 times the climber's weight. (That UIAA fall standard for ropes is 15!). So the sudden pull on your runner could easily be 7W and it only takes 20° of adverse flare, (10° per side), to ensure that your active pro. placement a real wallop to the rock - 50W is well on the way to being 4 tons!

Placement of any type of artificial pro. does therefore require its placer to have some grasp of the underlying theory of how it works, as well as the implications; and even then to be scrupulously careful in deciding whether it is real or psychological protection. Remember, if an apparently robust flake gets a piece busted off, or the internal rock surface is damaged by high (Hertzian) stresses and your sprag belay device pulls out - it will not be just bad luck, or the fault of that active pro., (they're engineered and made to the highest standards); It will be the fault of the amateur who placed it! (They are not always as reliable!)

A Bout with the Ben

Tim Noble

There were seven of us, crawling up the Allt a'Mhuillin into the mother of all winds, eyes ice-gummed, beards tinkling. Huge tongues of super-cooled Siberian air were licking tons of spindrift off the crenelated summit plateau of the Ben. The gullies were raging torrents. Each night for a week, in our damp and fetid caravan, we had been bickering, not about the empty bottles and baked bean cans stacked in the sink and round the loo, but about the relative merits of buttresses and gullies. Flashy encounters with *No 6* and *Crowberry* in banked out conditions couldn't compare with real contests on the Buchaille's *North Buttress* or in Stob Dearg's *Deep Cut Chimney*, the argument went; so this was to be the decider, topping the bill on Britain's biggest hill, with everyone on the rocks.

At the hut in good time, Sam the bacon man turned round with cold feet. Big Dave then took retching Richard off to 'walk up *Tower Ridge*'. Richard had already coughed his way up six routes, fuelled only by antibiotics and beer, so I had no doubt they'd go the distance easily. The rest of us tied ourselves carefully together in steep, deep powder under *Observatory Ridge*.

As John-boy swam away uphill in classic avalanche conditions, my money was already on the Ben to win and well within an hour. And I was nearly right because pitch two (remember that easy summer slab, split by a two inch ledge?) was the hardest lead I think I've ever had to make. Two steps above a dodgy peg, startled by the trochaic tattoo of my old Terrors on the brittle glass, I got a notch or two to bite, then arm-locked the wrist sling and slowly mantleshelfed the ledge. John-boy told me later he'd been tightening his chin strap and chatting to Lathan when the single nine started screaming through the sticht. Snatching at it, he was body-slammed onto the belay peg and pinned. Only later, when I'd got back on the hill 30 feet below, did he realise that I wasn't out for the count.

I pulled the rope down and pointed him at where my pick had levered off a dirty dinner plate. First round lost, one fall and one submission. John-boy had a ruminative suck on his anti-asthma lolly and nonchalantly edged across the ledge, 99% of his banana picks out of the ice. But this was intentional, apparently; the boy had climbed *Les Droites* and knew how to treat ice-plated rock. Perhaps the mixed age, mixed weight Wiltshire team had a chance on this mixed ground after all - but clearly, only if I could continue to keep the side up.

Pitch three was obvious up the edge overlooking *Zero Gully*. Then, on steep water ice in a little leftward-leaning groove I got the trembles again. Without my referee watching I tried a long sling over a block; it shrugged it off. A six inch screw bottomed after two inches; I remembered why I preferred deep gullies. It was about that time I heard the whimpering. Closing my mouth, I bridged the groove, crossed a steep rib into a cave and came back to full consciousness leaning on a Friend and tied off ropes. John-boy thrashed the groove for its impertinence. Round two to us. Steroid levels at maximum, he then gave the following ice bulge a metal bear hug and wandered off on another flanking powder traverse. This was followed immediately by a shock: a vertical, hoar-frost-encrusted shock where no axe was needed for 30 feet - just frozen mitts on drooping flakes. John-

boy looked pensive when I flopped down beside him because his inhaler had run out.

Lathan and RB were by now a little way behind us which was just as well because I didn't relish the jeers of an audience while I grovelled up pitch five; but John-boy, substituting chocolate bars for steroid sticks, was all stoked up again and raving about the rocks. I knew chocolate was bad for asthmatics so I turned him loose on the steep corner above. It was long after lunch and getting cold; cloud scoured a steel sky clean; my moustache grew icicles. John-boy waded up a trough and over blocks before insolently jamming the corner. At 40 feet he stopped and started breathing rather hard: sadly, I doubted if there was another steroid stick within 10,000 feet. I saw him plant a pick into the right wall and willed it to take root. He executed an appalling splits and looked back down to his trainer for approval. Talk about playing to the crowd. I thought he was faking the difficulty until he called for slack. Now winter or summer, John-boy never calls for slack unless he's planning to jump: up or down, it really doesn't matter - just so long as he's got enough rope to reach the point he's chosen. Time for the new winter call, I thought, as I paid out metres through frozen Dachsteins.

"Glow for it! Glow for it!" I shouted into the wisps of cloud and he somersaulted out of sight. I needed my second sling for aid to do the same, but I'm sure he didn't see me.

So there we were, five rounds up with three lovely pitches of the arête still to come. But as we wandered on, I distinctly heard paroxysms of coughing from away on *Tower Ridge*. Sure enough, when the mists dispersed momentarily, we saw retching Richard come into sight, bent double, periodically marking out the route for following parties.

I wondered if we'd done the crux of *Observatory Ridge* - of course the guide and **Cold Climbs** ignore important specifics like that, and in summer everything is Diff. But then it caught us out, just as the wind did again. With a simply awful nut low and to his right, John-boy, rather than take the crest direct, chose to pull up from the ramp he'd followed on the right edge, overlooking *Point Five*. It was a swing left across an icy wall using a letterbox for right hand and one axe thunked into a slim, powdery groove. For 50 minutes it stopped him. Following at full stretch, points splayed wildly on silly little bits of ice, I nearly threw in the towel. We sat on the ridge awhile after this, dazed, scoffing coffee and frozen sardines. I waited, partly out of perverse pride to see if Lathan could beat the move. Half an hour passed with no noise below, John-boy started up the mountain aphorisms to get us going again.

"To rest is not to conquer," he quoted sententiously, so I plodded off along the ridge.

It was while he was solving the last little groove below the junction with *Zero* that I heard the shouting looking down the 80 metres we'd climbed from sardine niche, I saw Lathan clinging to the crack above the crux. He was waving his axes in the air and hacking at the wall to the right of where he should have been. Now I knew he couldn't climb grade 7 and I was right. Suddenly, he gave a wonderfully phrased wail and vanished. A slight purple flash and clatter told of another tale that his brand new axe had gone as well.

Things looked bad: two falls and one submission. Was there another of the former still to come? We discussed the possibilities. Lathan was unhurt (almost

impossible); Lathan would descend with one axe (almost impossible); Lathan would climb the crux the proper way this time with his old Curver axe for support (almost impossible). We waited another hour, calling, watching. Night stole over Nevis and we froze. Then, in the gathering gloom, I saw RB swing into action. He led the crux in seconds. I was aghast. But RB runs a lot and weighs no more than both my old Terrors put together, so perhaps that's the real way to beat a thinly-iced up *Observatory* crux.

"Ah well, you don't beat the mountain, you beat yourself," John-boy giggled from the gloaming. I tried to thwack him with an adze, but nearly slipped off the stance. Of course we'd lost this bout: after two falls and at least two submissions and much more time than the rules allowed, all of us had been well and truly counted out. Even the last five pitches up *Zero* took ages because between us, we'd forgotten a Deadman.

From the freeze-box of the shelter I shone a headtorch back along the bearing as a beacon. John-boy sat and suffered chocolate and inhaler withdrawal symptoms, turning catatonic in the cold. However, we knew our friends were wise virgins, with full 'sacks and lights, so we left them eventually to a night on the bare mountain. But as we slunk off down the shoulder of Carn Dearg the wind hooted at us derisively and flung ice blocks. Despite our sufferings (John-boy had slight frost-nip in a finger and I'd broken a tooth), there was only condescension from retching Richard, Sam and Dave when we got home to condensation-castle. At 3am, though, the others shivered in and we all went to bed tired and emotional.

Standing under the cliffs of Stob Corrie nan Lochan two days later, John-boy declared to the world at large:

"I don't know about you chaps, but I, myself, am now a confirmed buttress-man." Lathan, RB and I looked at each other, then ran away into the lovely confines of *SC Gully* and left him gazing longingly but partner-less at the rocks.

As we prepared the final corrections to the 1996 CCJ, we were devastated with the news that, while rock climbing in Cornwall at Easter, Hamish Nicol fell and was seriously injured. For seven long weeks, we hoped and prayed for his recovery. Alas, he gave up the fight and died on 17th May 1997. Our thoughts are for Mary, Helen, Andrew and Louise.

A full obituary for our much-loved member will appear in the next Journal.

As a tribute to Hamish, we would like to continue, as planned, to publish his very famous article in this year's Journal.

Travels with my Wooden Leg

H.G. Nicol

To be truthful it's not actually a WOODEN leg. That would be impossibly ostentatious. I'm not in competition with Long John Silver, and don't even keep a parrot. Mine, or rather my right hip, is a contraption of plastic and metallic alloy, which was screwed and hammered onto me on 24.11.90. I'll never forget the date. It would have been my mother's birthday if she had lived long enough. My surgeon reckons that the metal bits belong to him, and that I'm just some sort of custodian giving them a spot of exercise from time to time. In fact he began to get a bit shirty when I accidentally let slip the fact that his creation had walked up to the top of a 4000m peak in Ecuador in November 1991.

"This chap" he wrote to Terry, my GP, "seems to think he can just wander anywhere, on his own. Doesn't he realise that it might dislocate so soon after the operation?"

OK it had been foolish but the legs often want to go into places where the hip doesn't. What really rankled was the 'This chap' bit. Up to then my relationship with him had been that of a colleague. Now I was just a tiresome patient. Every so often when we meet at a follow-up clinic he'll wave the X rays about expecting me to admire them. He can't understand my revulsion. I can't bear to contemplate all that infringement, that mutilation.

The name came quite soon after the operation. I had had six weeks off work, then crept into the surgery one Monday morning on my two sticks, and lowered myself gently into my desk. That felt better. My locum, Grania, an attractive but determined woman, became a bit upset at the sight of me. She must have thought that this was an attempt to usurp her period of employment.

One of my first patients was Mr Turner, a bluff outspoken whole hearted countryman, neither young nor old, neither grey nor grassy green. He never stayed for long and always came to the point at once.

"Well Doc", he said, "how's yer wooden leg?"

There was nothing wrong with him. He had just come to see me. Flattering in a way. That's how the name happened and it has stuck.

I had always thought that osteoarthritis was a slow thing like a glacier grinding away rocks and spewing them out 20 years later, but mine wasn't. From start to finish the whole process of decline took exactly 22 months. I had celebrated my 60th birthday by climbing the *Parson's Nose* on Snowdon with Malcolm Gate. Walking down Cwm Glas to Ynys Ettws my leg slipped on wet grass, and did the splits. That's when the pain started and it never went away.

An X-ray in February 1989 confirmed the diagnosis of osteoarthritis of the right hip. At least this explained all those graunching pains over the past 4 years. I had put them down to a form of sciatica coming from my damaged back. Doctors are good at self diagnosis and almost invariably they get it wrong. I had to give up squash, running, and ski-ing but not rock climbing and even managed to drag myself up Mera Peak in Nepal in November 1989. Soon after this the night pain started plus a low pitched agonising shudder which would pass through my right hip at times. This was a sign that the bone ends were actually in contact, the articular cartilage having worn away completely.

The reaction of patients to a handicapped doctor is interesting but quite impossible to predict. One young woman came to see me just before the operation and said:

"There's nothing wrong with me but Dad told me you were ill, so here's a little something to keep you happy". At this she plonked a bottle of whisky on my desk. Others are not so tactful. They reckon their doctor hasn't any right to be less than 100% fit, and ministering unto his flock at all times. I began to dread shopping expeditions in town where my Trendelenberg limp was very obvious. One afternoon a great hand fell on my shoulder and a voice said:

"Well, what have we been up to then?"

It's not so easy to concoct an answer to that when you haven't been up to anything. I looked round and saw a face looking at me, grinning broadly.

"Who's this then? The doctor? Are you RETired or EXpired?" said he laughing uproariously at his little witticism.

"Well not actually, I can't walk any more - it's arthritis." Smart repartee is not one of my talents.

Another problem was in the operating theatre where once a week I had to give anaesthetics for the visiting orthopaedic surgeons. In a theatre it is not possible to use a walking stick. So I had to cling onto the patients, and get to know the position of every hand rail and picture rail in the suite, and if necessary do hand traverses along them. This did not go down well in the Department of Anaesthesia who quickly awarded me six months sick leave. It was one of my partners who finally made the decision for me about a hip replacement. In truth he was right. I could walk about 400 yards with two sticks towards the end, and had to think seriously whether the trip up to the hospital wards, which were 200 yards from the medical centre, would be possible on foot.

Doctors are no more brave about major surgery than any patient, possibly because they actually know what the risks are. The day before the operation, waiting in that dreary hospital side room, and knowing where my car keys were, I contemplated driving up to Helyg and biding there. How long would it be before somebody found me?

The day after the operation an orderly came in, told me to get up and walk. I could scarcely believe that he was serious, because my leg was no longer attached,

and seemed to slide uncontrollably all over the place, making me clutch onto my zimmer frame. Two months later Mary decided on a convalescent holiday in Madeira, since my walking had improved. She thought a gentle stroll along a levada might be about right, but next day we both found ourselves on the summit of Mount Arieiro. This is not difficult. You can drive there by car. I knew there was a splendid footpath which went all the way to Ruivo thus linking two of the highest summits in Madeira. It was wet, cold and raining just like Scotland. Unaccountably my legs set off, in spite of criticisms from the metallic bits and from my wife. I had to go up and down hill one leg at a time of course but the going was easy and we made Ruivo in two hours, then returned. In June 1991 our annual Scottish party had decided to visit Ben Alder where George Band knew the owner of Culra lodge and actually had been clever enough to obtain a key. Terry Kenny carried my rucksack to the lodge which was kind of him. Culra lodge is a bit unkempt but we could make a nice coal fire and the posh Victorian baths and basins looked grand even though we had to fill them with buckets of water from the nearby stream. Ben Alder was a long day for a wooden leg, especially at the top where it was dangerously icy. In June 1992 my wooden leg had its big chance. It walked me into Carnmore and took me up *Wisdom Buttress* on Ben Lair. This is the best V.Diff in the UK: a pity it didn't make it into **Classic Rock** (see article in CCJ 1994). George Band, Dave Atchison, Terry Kenny and I made a party of four, but the real heroes were Roger Salisbury and Bob Allen. We had unwisely parked our cars at Kernsary Lodge. The factor, a disagreeable bearded man, pursued us up the Fionn Loch in his motor launch, and insisted that the cars be moved. Bob and Roger nobly volunteered to do this, and they missed the climb.



Via Ferrata Summit, Dolomites 1996. Photo: Hamish Nicol Collection

So it went on through '93 and '94. My hip improved to the extent that it was almost possible for me to forget about it at times. My retirement from full time General Practice in March '94 would present problems: that was obvious. Sitting at a desk writing NHS prescriptions is not physically very taxing, whereas retirement is. Mine started off well with a traverse of the Troodos mountains in Cyprus in April 1994, followed by Scotland in June and a month in Corsica in July 1994. Here, despite temperatures often as high as 38° C and with three different partners, I completed the GR20, which is one of the best walks in the world. (see CCJ 1994).

To round off the holiday, Messrs Atchison, Band, Newman, Westmacott and I tackled Finch's classic traverse of the Cinque Frati. On the final summit we were struck by an almighty storm. I could feel the lightning pass clean through my body and out via my right leg. Could my prosthesis have acted as a conductor and saved my life? Later that year Mary and I spent three months in the Australian deserts, walking, and in six days completed the Overland Track in Tasmania.

In June 1995 the Scottish party camped at Kinloch on the Island of Rhum. It was a bit damp at first, and exceedingly midgy at the camp site. Eating spaghetti bolognese inside a midgy hat takes some doing, but the alternative is even worse. On June 21st the weather improved, and soon turned into a 'heat wave'. In Glencoe on the return journey, 90°F was recorded, and in Langdale it was too hot to climb on Gimmer before 4pm. The other reason was that George and I did not get to RLH until 3pm that day, having driven down from Scotland. We climbed *Ash Tree Slabs* and *Oliverson's Variant* on the upper buttress. It was too hot to wear anything more than shorts and a T shirt.

Without any warning and four years after my total hip replacement, my wooden leg decided to ask for a rest. To be more precise it refused to carry me any more, and it came to this decision at the final belay on *Oliverson's*. Getting down without a stick, (I had left it at the bottom) was difficult. I had to crawl on hands and knees. Somehow George and I made it back to RLH. Alan Ferguson was out anxiously looking for us. That evening all sorts of wild and depressing thoughts raced through my mind. Two sleeping pills and two strong pain killers silenced them.

Next morning the pain had gone. A tour of Mont Blanc and a trip to Rara lake in Nepal completed 1995, both delightful expeditions.

In 1996 my wooden leg took me to the islands of Arran, and Shetland, traversed the Dolomites (including the ascent of 12 via ferratas in July), Rowaling - Nepal, in October, and India over Christmas.

Am I being unkind to it? Probably. Should I sit around and do nothing? Would you?

With many thanks to Mary who read the proofs, made useful comments and has put up with the author for all these years, to Peter Stone who gave me the idea, and to all those without wooden legs who have been so patient.

Rim to Rim - The Grand Canyon

Mike Browell

When it comes to sheer magnificence of scenery, the American States of Utah and Arizona have more than a fair share. In the deserts which characterise the arid south-west of the USA are six National Parks, many National Monuments, State Parks and Forest Parks. Even the vast tracts between the designated scenery are impressive and under any other system would be preserved landscapes. In fact the missing ingredients are people, for this area was colonised late and thinly for good reason; it is inhospitable and savage in its grandeur.

There are those who believe that there is a shortage of water in the desert. The reality is that there is exactly the right amount so as to ensure a generous spacing between rock and sand, plants and animals, homes and towns, which makes the arid landscape so unique.

In a landscape with some of the biggest views in the world there is some disagreement on the awesomeness of two big views, both of the Colorado River. Some favour the view from Dead Horse Point, 320° spin-around of desert panorama with 90° of teetering horizontal hold to assimilate. Others rate the view of 11 horizontal miles across the Grand Canyon, from Rim to Rim for simple mind-boggling grandeur.

The Rim to Rim has its special place but not in sheer awesomeness. In the transverse view it fails to convey its true magnitude in a mere 11 mile horizon because the real mind-numbing view is over 200 miles long, the linear chasm of the Grand Canyon which makes it truly Grand!

The 11 miles are shorter than a half marathon, much shorter than the Channel Tunnel. But when you look across those 11 miles in daylight you can't see the South Rim Village, nor the people, buses or mule-trains which you know are there. At night you see the twinkling lights more clearly. But the 11 miles as the eagle flies stretch out to 22 miles as the feet run because the trail zigzags cruelly to take up the gradient of over a vertical mile of down and up. Even this is as nothing compared to the 210 miles by road which are necessary to connect the two rims, a drive of four and a half hours of law-abiding 55mph driving through sad Navajo Reservations.

To make the Rim to Rim connection is compelling, one of the great journeys of the world. Naturally enough the protective cushion of the American National Parks system does it's best to deter anyone trying such a foolhardy trip. Whilst it is the unalienable right of every free born American to die in their National Parks, this remains a hard thing to do. Americans are constrained by the dire warning signs which continually nag at the nervous as they set off down the trail....*have you got enough food and clothing?.... are you carrying at least two quarts of water?.... don't even think about returning on the same day... beware of dehydration, of exhaustion and of ground squirrels!*

The North Rim at 2500 metres is slightly higher than the South Rim's 2000 metres and is climatically challenged, fortuitously resulting in it being considerably less tourist developed. When the winter snows come, the road becomes impassable except to Nordic ski and snowmobile and the Lodge closes

until spring. The North Rim Lodge is a beautiful structure perched above so much scenery, with just enough facilities to provide comfort to those who come to gaze, without providing Disney-style diversissements. The average stay is frighteningly short, just a few minutes to see the view and then a leap back into the car for a long drive home.

Mark Vallance and I hit the GC after a frighteningly short stay in several other Utah parks. Highlights included The Narrows and Angels Landing in Zion, a crashing contrast of claustro and agoraphobia, and the Slick Rock Trail! Although the awesome scenery and even the Mormon religion couldn't bring Mark to his knees, the Slick Rock Trail did!

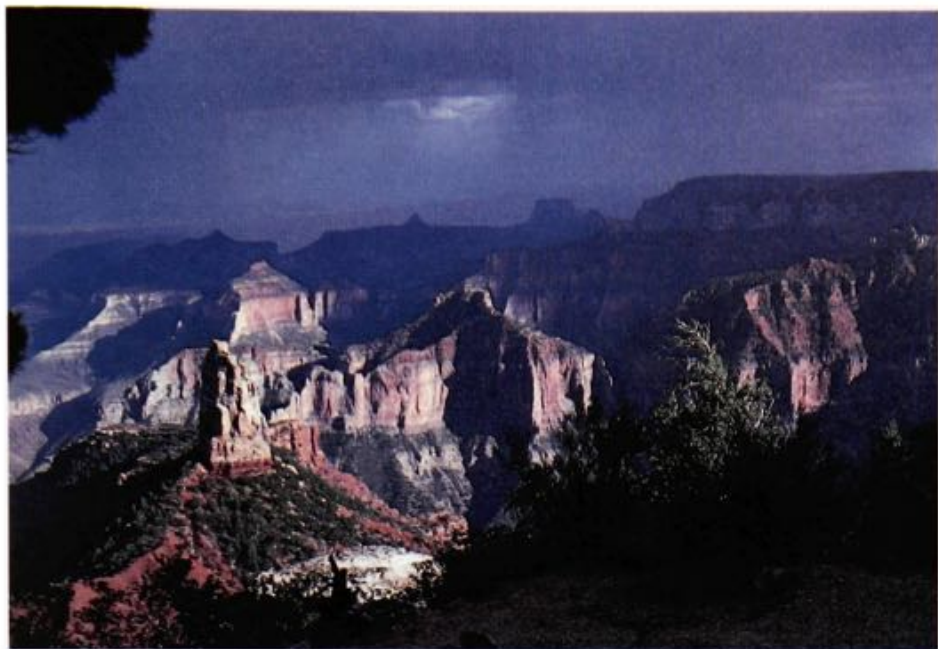
For our early October adventure there was a day of soaking up the altitude, atmosphere and ambience, and a three day wilderness acclimatisation hike deep into the canyon and out again. After that it was time for the Rim to Rim. Up at 5.00am on a clear starry night with a touch of frost, shivering in shorts until the first glow of dawn became visible towards six. The North Kaibab Trailhead starts a couple of miles from the North Rim lodge, the car park deserted in early dawn. Sub zero it may have been but the air and ground are so dry that there's nothing to freeze. Except the odd pool of mulepee!

The zigzags start straight away, deep down into Roaring Springs Canyon, down through the Ponderosa pine woods, cutting through horizontal hands of rock on a clinically engineered trail, sometimes amazingly audacious and not unlike the cat-walk at Malham, with serious death potential drop-offs, sometimes avoiding steep descents with gently graded soft slopes for tired mules. The ground conditions in pre-dawn gloom are tolerable, making it just about possible to avoid treading in the legendary mule-train dung heaps which attracts the name 'Donkey-plop Trail'.

All the serious descent is carefully compressed into the first five miles of the 14 mile descent to the Colorado River; virtually one vertical mile in five linear. It goes effortlessly in a gravity aided decline of one hour and culminates at a welcome tap offering clean water. Despite the severe warnings of dehydration, the cool start and rapid descent make the effort of carting superfluous water down to this point unnecessary and within another couple of miles the Cottonwood Camp is reached, also with a water supply. Then a steady seven mile trail leads down Bright Angel Canyon culminating in an interminable meandering rock-wall lined chasm which goes on and on, stretching the pleasure of downhill to breaking point before spilling out onto the lush widening of the Phantom Ranch floodplain. Some ranch! Some floodplain! Towering overhead are the 2000 metre walls of the Grand Canyon! And in this most unlikely spot is a heavily developed tourist village with many huts and more civilisation than is justifiable for such a remote and inaccessible location. But the impact doesn't spoil the experience of running through at breakfast time, already 14 miles complete and down at the river in just over 2.5 hours.

The muddy red Colorado River is a vast 100 metre spread of horizontal muscle taming the 2000 metre vertical walls and making it lie flat; carting hundreds of tonnes of rock in silty water past the suspension bridge every day, still doing what it's been doing for millions of years, cutting down and down through millennia of geological time.

Beyond the river the Bright Angel Trail seeks the line of least resistance up



Grand Canyon - Rim to Rim. Photo: Mike Browell

unlikely rock walls, some nine miles long and one mile up to the South Rim. By now the trail trekkers are in transit, laden with frame packs and lumbering along in twos and upwards. They envy the unladen runner with shorts and bum-bag (fanny-pack) in these hot conditions. From a frosty start the temperature has risen to 28°C and shade is welcome. Fortunately much of the trail is in the shadows and little water is needed. Refreshments come at steady intervals of Rest Stations at 4.5, 3 miles and 1.5 miles, necessitating little to be carried. And all the way up the trail are bright angels of every nationality, coming up and coming down.

Mule trains are a less welcome sight, requiring great patience and stillness lest they be frightened and upend their remunerative cargo onto the dusty trail, or worse, over the edge!

Finally at about 11am the South Rim is crested in a little over five hours and the glory of the most magnificent scenery on earth lies behind for leisurely viewing while in front are the hassling jostling crowds of mayhem, for this is not a fitting place to finish such a fine journey.

Postscript - Spare a sobering thought for the ultimate 24 hour challenge, Rim to Rim to Rim to Rim to Rim! It's been done.

La Battaglia delle Arance

(Ivrea - Piemonte - Northern Italy)

Al Churcher

It was the year of the great *Nebbia* - the never-ending fog that blanketed the plain of northern Italy for a whole winter. Although, more often than not, our tiny terrace farmhouse, or *cascina*, was left high and dry above a shining sea of mist broken only by the islets of the hilltop villages and *cascine* of the Barola country stretching away towards Asti in the south. To the north, some 90 kilometres away on the Swiss border, the mountain snows of *Monta Rosa* shone in a pure sunlight. A stark contrast to the previous night's TV - pictures of troglodyte city dwellers feeling their way around - choking streets, faces masked against the ever-rising pollution of factory chimneys and car exhausts - trapped within the *nebbia* by the persistent high-pressure above.

By lunchtime I could often sit shirtless outside, soaking up the sun after my ritual bicycle plunge through the icy fog to the ghostly, shivering village below for bread. Numb fingers thawing painfully with the return uphill.

But after this particular lunchtime I was unsure if the *nebbia* was inside or all around me. It was February, and from Venice to the simplest village it was *Carnivale*. In the next hamlet of *Colombaro*, a marquee had been erected behind the bar for the '*gran pranzo di mezzogiorno*' - a huge tripe stew washed down by an endless supply of the local *Dolcetto*. I normally steer well clear of lunchtime drinking - being fit for nothing else but sleeping afterwards - but when I found myself in the midst of a group of ebulliently friendly locals, my plan to stick to just a glass or two was doomed before it started. As *Silvio* was to drive us on to the day's main event, it was perhaps fortunate that he arrived too late to indulge much of his usual enthusiasm for the local vintages, though by the time he and *Piera* extricated me from my new-found friends I was past caring anyway.

My attempts to satisfy my head and body's craving for sleep were continuously frustrated by the pot-holes punctuating the road to *Ivrea*. And on the odd occasions that my eyes opened long enough to catch *Silvio's* face in the rear-view mirror, it held such an expression of demonic glee that even my befuddled brain began to suspect that he was deliberately finding as many ruts and potholes as he could, not a difficult task on that road.

Sleep-walking is never the easiest way of negotiating a strange town. But walking being so much smoother than *Silvio's* driving, it soon became impossible to keep my eyes open for more than a few seconds; although somehow I managed to avoid being run over, and to keep the others in sight until we reached the closed-off streets near the centre of the town. The combination of the fluttering banners, the roadside stalls of red hats and berets; the growing crowds and the arrival of the sun, soon drove away the last fumes of alcohol; and by the arrival of the first carnival float I was beginning to enjoy myself again. Even if *Silvio* and *Piera* had long since disappeared and I hadn't much idea where I was, as long as I found my way to one of the town squares it would be all right. Somehow we'd meet up again afterwards.

Little known, even in Italy outside Piemonte, Ivrea's spectacular carnivale celebrates an ancient legend. In medieval times, the Italian equivalent of the Lord of the Manor was said to have the right to deflower a maiden on the night before her wedding. In Ivrea, probably because it was rarely exercised, this right was apparently grudgingly accepted. Or was that is, until a particularly unpopular and lecherous lord decided to exercise his rights on a particularly well-liked (and presumably) virtuous maiden. At this, the town rose up and set fire to the castle, the unfortunate lord barely escaping with the clothes he stood up in.

Today's celebration takes the form of *La Battaglia delle Arance* - The Battle of the Oranges. Groups of men and women from the different parts of the town and neighbouring villages, save every lira for a year or more to finance one of the huge chariots whose horse's hooves were already beginning to echo through the streets. Towering high above the heads of pedestrians, with their steel sides painted with team banners and coats of arms, their occupants heavily padded and helmeted like some cross between medieval knights and American footballers, and their six horses immaculately combed and groomed, they begin the circuit of narrow streets.

Dressed in black or red, the rest of the population wait to do battle in the three main squares of the town, where hundreds of kilos of oranges are stacked in readiness. (Non combatants are distinguished by wearing red hats which in theory should prevent anyone from deliberately pelting them.)

Following the crowds after the end of the parade, I realised that the battle had begun. Chariots passed by running with blood-red juice, and the noise from the



The Battle Ground. Photo: Al Churher

piazza ahead was growing in volume and excitement as the oranges began to fly. Pulling out my old red ski hat, I joined the crowd around the edge. Already the cobbles were disappearing under a layer of pureed orange, for with two or three chariots in the square at any time, the air was full of oranges as 'peasants' ran to the attack and 'aristocrats' returned their fire - often with the two sides only paces apart. I'd already shot off one roll of film, but the excitement was too great to stay safely on the edge of things. I had to be part of it and was soon in the middle of the square with oranges whizzing all around me. Or at least most did, for my red hat was no magic talisman and I was soon liberally splattered with juice, pith and peel. Somehow I managed to keep my camera clear, but when I slipped in the morass of oranges and almost disappeared under a horse, it was enough. I was almost out of film anyway, and a salvo of oranges in the back of my retreating neck confirmed my decision.

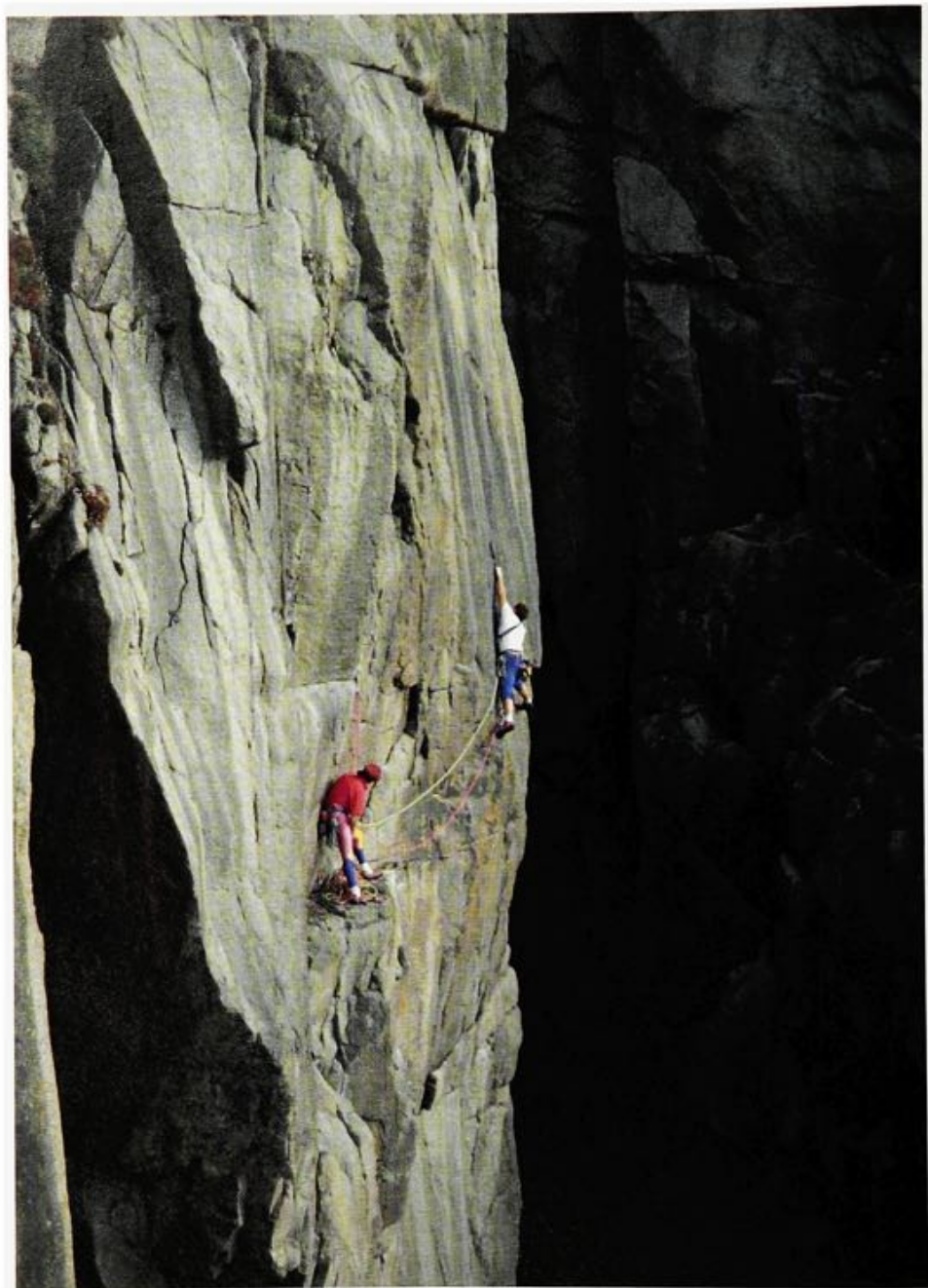
But what of the protagonists? As the battle waned and the throwers tired, I followed the circuit to the next piazza. Helmets off to wipe away the mixture of juice and sweat, the returning charioteers looked close to exhaustion. As for the foot-soldiers; Silvio told me later of his schooldays in Ivrea when he had often taken part. The day after the battle he was unable to even lift his throwing arm to get a shirt on, let alone write with it. But as the next day was always a school day.....



Above: Lyskam Nordwand. Photo: Smiler Cuthbertson

Below: Nesthorn via Normale - Jon de Montjoye and Party. Photo: Smiler Cuthbertson





*Chris Craggs and Colin Binks on 'Deja Vu' E4 6a, Great Zawn, Bosigran.
Photo: Chris Craggs Collection*



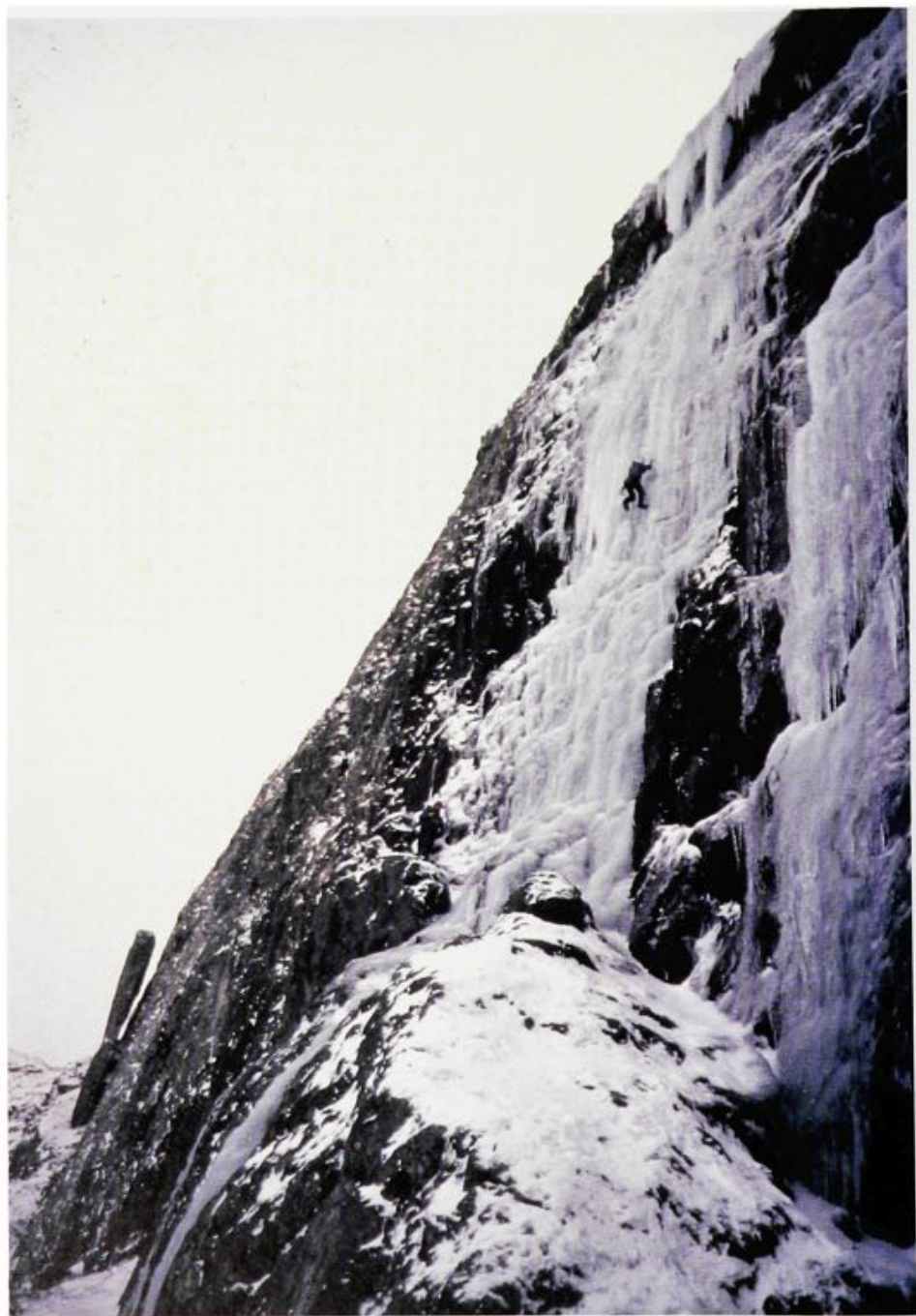
Above: Scrambles in The Lakes - The Haystacks. Photo: Smiler Cuthbertson

Below left: Graham Parkes in action on 'The Flytrap' E1, Gogarth. Photo: Chris Craggs

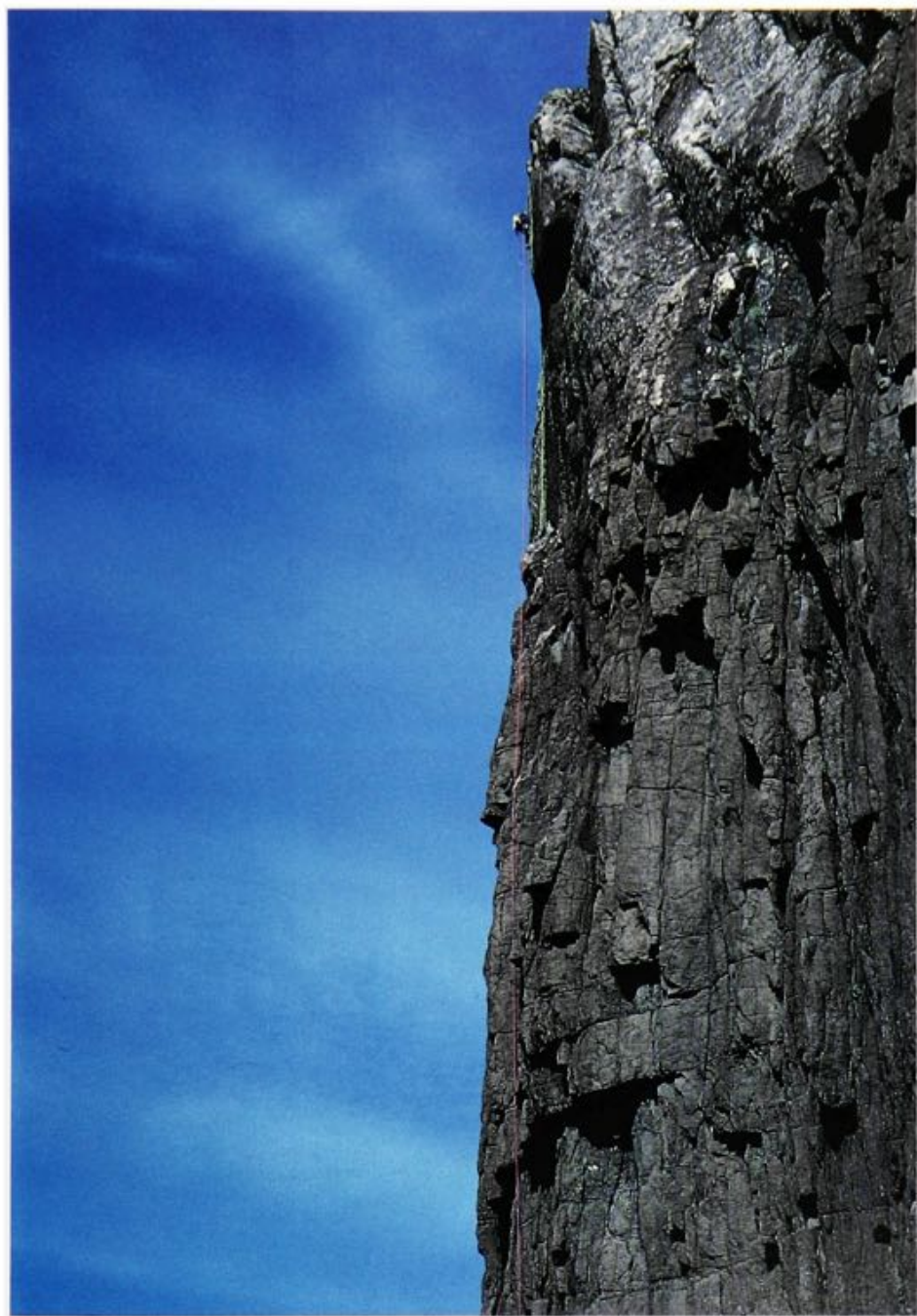
Below right: Colin Binks testing the friction on Baggy Point, North Devon.

Photo: Chris Craggs





Central Ice Fall Direct', Craig Rhaeadr. Photo: Smiler Cuthbertson



Howard Lancashire checking out Rubha Hunish, North Skye. Photo: Bill Birkett



Above: Huascarán, Cordillera Blanca, Peru. Photo: Smiler Cuthbertson

Below: Jichu Drake, seen from the path towards the Nyele Pass. Photo: Bob Allen



Storm on the North Face of the Col du Plan (Winter)

Fritz Sumner

Steve Coneys and myself arrived in Chamonix on the 26th January having just missed a superb high pressure spell in which my old mate Steve Burns had been lucky enough to land on. His epic on the North Face of the Charmoz must be another tale.

We were told at the Guides' Bureau that very little was in condition. A handful of routes would be OK, lack of ice and little snow was the reason.

We met Dick Turnbull and his partner Frank at a pre-arranged time in the Brasserie du Sport and rearranged our plans. Dick and Frank decided that the *Dru Couloir* was out and were going for the North Face of the Dru. We decided on the *Fil a Plomb*, an ice route on the Plan, just left of the North Face of the Col du Plan. We originally had our sights on the north face of the Charmoz but after Steve Burn's epic we didn't want to know.

We had our usual acclimatisation and in my case, misery, at the top Montets cable car station. A night here after doing the little North Face of the Petite Aiguille Verte always seems to do the trick.

The weather forecast in Chamonix had given at least three days of continuing good weather, the tail end of the big high pressure area that had been there for two weeks. We got the cable car to the Plan de l'Aiguille laden with big 'sacks for at least two bivys. The weather was superb. That glorious winter sunshine, cold and crisp. After a short chat to four extreme snow boarders, who were going for an ascent, and descent, of the *Spencer Couloir*, we were off out into the sunshine and into the cold shade of the Pélerins Glacier.

The last time I had been up this glacier was many years ago in the summer, when we had been two parties of two going for the North Face of the Col du Plan. Roger Bennion was leading the other party and I remember it became a bit competitive between Roger and myself with a race for the col. The result, a bad dose of heave ho on the ridge up to the Midi.

The flog onto the upper section of the Pélerins Glacier was comparatively easy due to the lack of snow. The ice line up the *Fil a Plomb* looked good if a little thin on its top hard pitch. We found a flatish area on the glacier beneath a crevasse and started to prepare our bivy. We were well out of the line of the evil-looking serac wall just right of the rock buttress on the North Face of the Col du Plan.

The evening was superb, the lower valleys filled with clouds, the peaks all around us turning red in the sunset and not a soul about, or so we thought. Voices from above brought us back to reality and two climbers appeared abseiling down a route left of *Fil a Plomb*. They eventually arrived at our bivy, our offer of a brew to them being declined. Both were guides, one French, the other Italian. After stashing gear in their 'sacks, they raced off into the gloom in the direction of Chamonix.

Avalanches had started to break away from the serac walls between us and the

Frendo Spur. A rather worrying feature as there was no wind and it was cold, 12°C. The long night was fairly uneventful except for the occasional avalanche roar, and at 4am, an offshoot from something nasty covered us in a wave of spindrift which of course got into everything.

The start to get away was the usual numb fingered, long drawn out effort. Eventually we staggered up to the bergshrund with our heavy 'sacks, moving too slowly for a serious attempt on the *Fil a Plomb*. So we decided to go for the easier North Face of the Col du Plan.

The initial 45° slope was on reasonable snow. We passed the normal summer start onto the rocks of the buttress on the right, and continued up to a narrows and deepening of the couloir. A short ice pitch gave way to a bigger ice pitch with spindrift pouring over at regular intervals. Timing and speed were the order of the day here but due to this, no protection was placed and the exit was on poor snow and rock. This felt more like Scotland than the Alps in winter.

The narrow couloir continued for two pitches on reasonable snow at about 50° to what looked like a completely blocked exit by a huge jammed block, with massive spindrift avalanches pouring over it. This was not what we had expected. To our right was the only feasible way out, a shattered rock groove leading to the top of the buttress on the right.

At this point we saw two guys abseiling down towards us. Both had skis

poking out of their packs. A long wait ensued with apologies from the skiers, before we could tackle the pitch. Their antics to put skies on, on a 50° restricted couloir, was hilarious, not to mention frightening as one of them dropped a ski stick. The other skier, 20ft below managed an out-of-controlled lurch to save it.

It was Steve's lead and it looked nasty. Outer mitts off, 'sack off and a few tentative tries finally launched him to a committed position. He reached the ridge in one run-out to find in-situ abseil gear. Looks as if we were on a well-used ski descent!



Steve Coneys after the bivy on the North Face, Col du Plan.
Photo: Fritz Sumner

I gained the top of the buttress to find more in-situ abseil gear. I decided enough was enough and bagged it!

We hadn't been taking too much notice of the weather, but we should have realised from the amount of spindrift avalanches that something was on the way. The wind had been blowing great plumes of spindrift over the ridge but now it was more than spindrift, snow was falling and things had a more serious feel. The long steepening slope to the Col du Plan was not in good nick. Deep unconsolidated snow, at times sinking waist deep and trying hopefully to make upward progress.

Darkness was not too far away as we gained a small rock outcrop 50 metres beneath the ridge. The snow was still coming down, the noise from the wind on the ridge just above us, terrifying.

We sorted out a snow ledge beneath the outcrop and got into our sleeping bags. Spindrift was getting everywhere and brews were difficult to make. Everything was soon under feet of snow, so everything left out of the 'sack disappeared. We could still see the lights of Chamonix, but not for long as the clag descended.

The protective hood on my sleeping bag seemed to be playing up. I was obviously producing my own mini climate. Water dripping constantly from it onto my down, with the temperature outside at approx. -8°C.

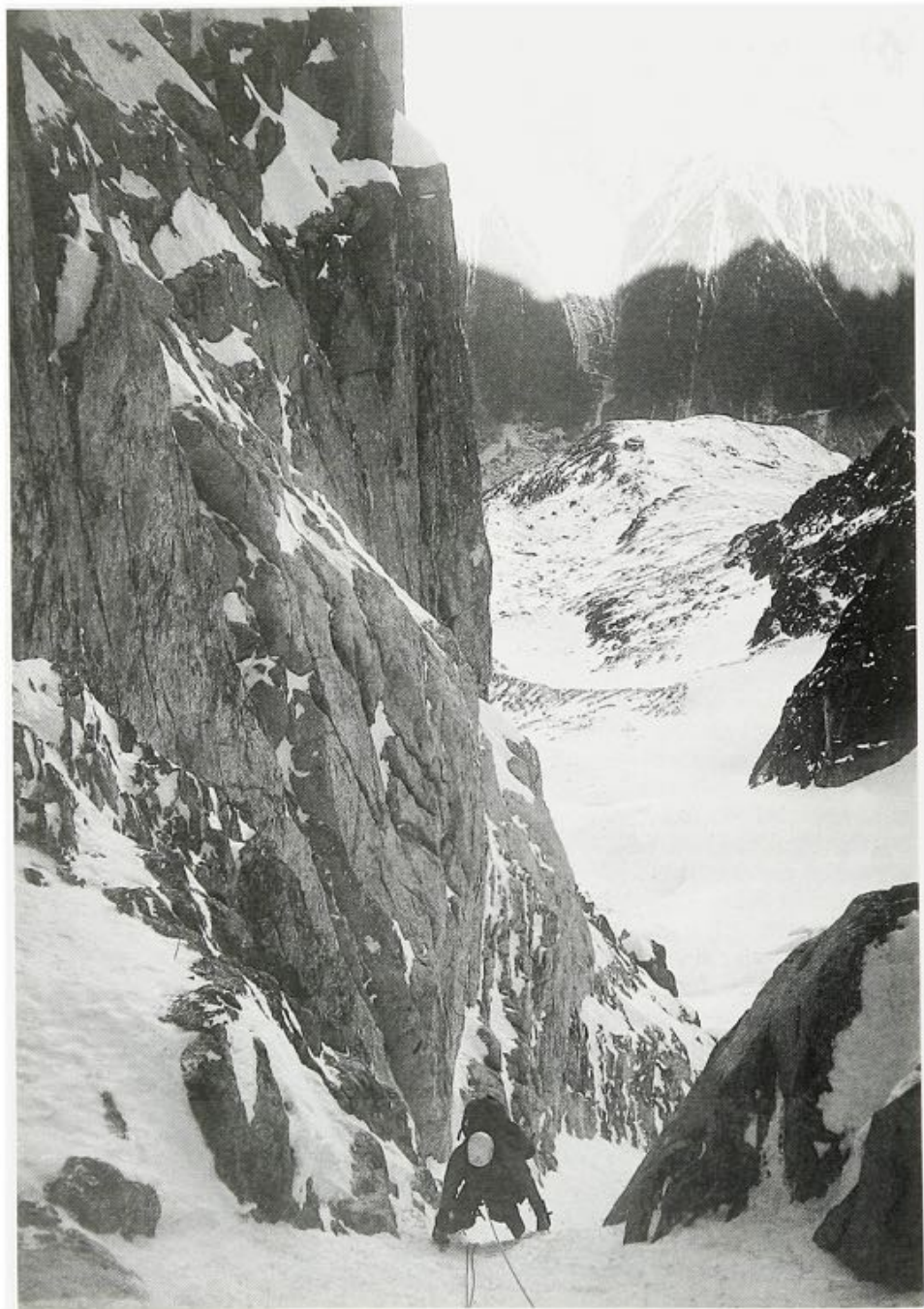
A night of being battered by lashing spindrift and snow, each time we came out of a doze, at least another six inches of snow was piled up on the sleeping bag. The howling wind above us on the ridge made us wonder whether it would be possible to make the Midi station next day.

I was hoping against hope that the morning would bring a clearance, but no such luck. Steve was first to look out and gave a dismal "it's solidly clagged in and still snowing"

Getting our gear sorted took a long, finger numbing time. A slight clearance gave us hope and I started up the snow slope to the ridge. Steve was well belayed just in case the slope decided to avalanche. On the ridge I could have jumped for joy, the wind had cleared all the loose snow from the edge. I could even see old steps. The problem was that the wind was at 50mph. The edge was out so a rising traverse just below it gave the way. At times it was on hands and knees, and the thought of doing the rest of the ridge like that gave me a bad dose of 'are we ever going to make it?'

Eventually the final slope to the ice cave appeared out of the mist and we slowly made our way, hanging onto the poles which now marked the way. We fell into the cave entrance totally whacked. After a few moments of recovery Steve suddenly pulled off his gloves and gave a groan. Two fingers were all bulbous and white. He had been wearing Dachsteins and they were not good enough for the conditions. I had kept my damp extreme mitts on with dry thermal inners and seemed to be OK.

The next three days were spent by Steve in the Chamonix hospital, fortunately not losing any fingers.



On the North Face, Col du Plan. Photo: Fritz Sumner

Falling Down the White Cliffs of Dover

Neil Boyd

It felt absurd and uncommon. There was a mist shifting in the channel and a sound of diesel engines from the ferries to Calais and Boulogne. There was a little milky wind blowing from France and a pale low sun. There were shouts from lobster boats as the fishermen of Deal and Dover passed a November afternoon in cold contemplation of their pots. The tide was bringing in flotsam and debris from the western approaches and made sucking sounds as it touched the cliffs around me. Yet I had the same tools on me as when I had stood on top of the Andes or shook with cold in a gully on the Ben. Here they were now, axes and crampons, digging into chalk at the base of the white cliffs of Dover.

Dave Barlow was hanging off three warthogs a hundred feet above me. He was experienced in this sort of thing. He said that November was the perfect chalk climbing month because the summer was too hot and there was a glare from the rock; whilst the Scottish season was not quite in full swing. Small groups of London based climbers would often spend November weekends in this peculiar environment.

Before leaving me in a tangle of rope on a white sticky boulder, Dave handed me a pair of welder's goggles.

"It's very loose" he said. "Bits get in your eyes," and then he thumped his way to the belay above. It's industrial work, chalk climbing. It takes three times more energy to place the pick in the chalk than in good ice. Dave, the expert, had mono-point crampons because that made it easier on his calves. For protection, people use screw-in warthogs. Apparently, they are bombproof and make the sport safe in what would otherwise be considered suicidal climbing. As I found out, 20 feet up the first pitch however, warthogs are swines to get out. You need to chip away for ages around the eye, followed by five minutes of awkward unscrewing which sends the calf muscles into spasms.

The feeling of artificiality in the surroundings, the unreality of the rock and the unusual temperature lent me some ethical width. I allowed myself to climb the cliff in an 'anything goes' fashion. I hung on everything, pulled on every solid thing and felt like a caver, a builder or a prisoner of war tunneller. Dave was hanging halfiway up the ramp. There was a vertical section of ten feet to overcome to get to him. As every second does, I marvelled at his bravery of getting up this bit without the rope tugging him upwards.

It was dusty. I coughed a bit and lots of little grains of dirty white chalk went down the back of my neck, into my boots and somehow even into my underpants. It was many days later before I finally got rid of the white stuff from my clothing, hair and equipment.

I arrived at the stance with my calves wobbly and the weird feeling one gets if you haven't climbed for a few months. It seemed madness to be here in extreme danger when an hour before I was enjoying the walk along the beach. But it also

felt like we were living life. Like we were pushing back the hazy edges of what is allowed and what is possible. I was thrilled and scared.

Dave offered me the lead. I found it hard not to laugh when I said "No, no, you are going well". It was what he wanted, he had the bit between his teeth. Ahead lay 40 feet of steepening ramp and then an overhanging shale cornice. This looked like the crux. We changed the gear over; I tied myself into the warthogs and hung off leftwards, feet braced straight, on the steep ramp.

Dave made good progress up to the cornice. The rock was getting worse away from the gluey effects of the sea and its spray. It was now crumbly and friable. A lot of it fell on my head from Dave's tools. He placed three more warthogs on the right, vertical wall before trying to climb the overhanging shale cornice. He did very well. Marvellous really. He somehow managed to sneer at gravity. It is a tremendous skill to be able to climb up friable rock. Just pushing and pulling with that little force that means upward momentum but still leaving the rock in place. Dave was using the flints embedded in the shale and was pushing upward and outward on one, his hammer embedded in the turf on top, when it all seemed to explode. Dave hurtled towards me upside down, his eyes wide and white behind the welder's goggles. Warthogs ripped out and it looked like he was being followed by a swarm of angry bees. But the bees were the thousands of fragments of shale that Dave had dislodged.



Neil Boyd in Song (The White Cliffs of Dover). Photo: Neil Boyd Collection

I was pelted. A big flint thwacked my left shoulder blade. I couldn't get into the cliff enough so I tried to hide myself under my helmet. There were awful noises as I closed my eyes and held on tightly. I thought of the little patch of rock in front of me. How safe it seemed! I hoped I wouldn't be dragged from the cliff down into the sea.

Dave had stopped a few yards above me. We both said calm things like:

"OK" and "Yeah" and "What happened?". We were both calm. Frightening times are far more scary on reflection. Dave had lost his goggles and mine were half full of grains of chalk. He had lost his watch too. I was worried he might have hurt himself with so many sharp points attached to his body but he seemed OK. He shook himself down and climbed on.

He reached the cornice again and after one half-hearted attempt to climb it decided he must tunnel his way out. The next hour was horrible. Dave shifted a good half ton of rubble. Most of it landed on me. The night had descended, my head torch was in my rucksack and I began to wonder what I was doing there. It was like a biblical martyrdom, a ritualistic stoning of St. Stephen. What had I done to deserve this?

I was seriously scared. There were big lumps hitting my left shoulder. I really couldn't escape and however much Dave said sorry I knew he had to keep knocking more rock down. I looked into that small space again in front of my stance and lived out my discomfort and my fear. I saw the tiny mosses and grains of rock and reflected on the troubling nature of life.

I willed Dave on. I desperately wanted this to end. He teetered again on the edge of success. His dark, shadowy form hung sloth like on the very top of the cliff, hardly daring to breathe. With a last powerful lunge he thudded an axe as far back as he could reach into the grass of Kent and stood up on top, hooting and hollering with joy in the garden of England.

I followed him. He had tied himself to a bush in the dark and he was shivering, watching the lights of the ships go by, when I finally reached him.

"That was really good, Dave. You did brilliant". I felt whole and alive. We were two men who had stood on the brink for a while and held their breaths.

We coiled the ropes and put on some clothes. We walked along the coastal cliff-top path past houses with good views to France. Crag Jones and Duncan Hornby met us and took us for fish and chips in Deal. Crag had also taken a 30-footer from an overhanging shale cornice.

At the fish and chip shop, the woman looked us up and down and asked us what we'd been doing. We told her, sort of laughing and hopping like children. I don't think she believed us as she wrapped our chips.

Return Journey

John Hunt

One of the charms of exploring and climbing in the more remote mountain ranges is the aftermath; what Stephen Venables has described as 'idling in the valley' after a spell of high drama and discomfort on a mountain: 'just being and looking', as he put it. Stephen was looking with special delight at the abundant wild flowers in the Balati Gadhera valley in Garhwal, after his successful climb on Panch Chuli II with Chris Bonington and three other companions in 1992. He was discovering what older generations of mountaineers (Charles Howard-Bury and Frank Smythe among them) had experienced more than half a century beforehand.

In 1931 Smythe, returning with Holdsworth and others after climbing Kamet (25,441ft) down the Bhyundar Valley in Garhwal, described the latter as 'a valley of peace and beauty, where the human spirit may find repose'. It inspired him to write his book **The Valley of Flowers**. Four years later, I was to share that enchantment on my return from the eastern Karakoram with one of my companions on Saltoro Kangri (25,400ft). How true is it that one's senses are more aware after a period of self-imposed discomfort and danger above the snowline! For myself, the return journey has often been the real reward; those memories tend to endure when much else has faded. I offer one such recollection to the editor, at his request, in admiration of his distinguished stewardship of the Journal, from which he is shortly retiring.

The reader is invited to accompany me to the western Himalaya in Kashmir, through which I was travelling at leisure with one of my companions after six weeks of high drama on an unclimbed Karakoram peak, on which a relatively inexperienced foursome had survived several narrow escapes from a combination of storms and avalanches - while very nearly reaching the summit. We were a trifle the worse for wear as we headed southward from the Indus Valley, up a succession of valleys and passes which would lead us back to the Vale of Kashmir.

We had reached Kargil, now a busy township on the high road between Srinagar and Leh; but in those days, long before the road was built over the Zoji La, it was a small sleepy village untouched by tourism and linked with the outside world only by bridle tracks. Rowland Brotherhood and I discussed our choice of route as we sat sipping cinnamon tea from shallow bowls, in a local merchant's shop. Jimmy Waller, the inspirational genius of our Karakoram expedition, had suggested that we might have a look at the unclimbed South Face of Kolahoi, and return to Srinagar via the Liddar Valley rather than by the outwards route over the Zoji La. But sufficient unto the day.....; for the time being we had no such ambition. It was enough just to live from day to day. We wandered up the Suru Valley, crossed the Ganche La (where we caught a last glimpse of Saltoro Kangri and the other Karakoram giants), we followed the Chalong Nala over another high pass; the Gulol Gali. We were spell-bound by the scenery. Above us rose towering cliffs down which many waterfalls cascaded (indeed, some of these gushed from cracks in the rockfaces themselves). The hillsides were ablaze with wild rosebushes, the blossoms saffron and pink,



Kolahoi South Face. Photo: John Hunt

double-petalled and delicately scented. The foreground was a carpet of flowers, anemones, primulas, gentians, edelweiss, columbines, irises, and tiger lilies. Colonies of marmots, smaller and paler-coloured than our familiar European species, gambolled along the boulders; several golden eagles soared overhead.

One night we camped in a field near the chalets of Humpet, with superb views of Nun (25,410ft) and Kun (23,219ft). A sweep of near-by slabs proved irresistible and we made several interesting routes up it before supper. It was, I think, at this point and with this prompting that Brotherhood and I began to feel some enthusiasm for Waller's suggestion. As Steve Venables has pointed out in his story of the Panch Chuli epic, 'being and feeling' can become 'too passive'. We stepped up the pace and hastened over the Gulol Gali to Pahlgam, in 24 exhausting miles down the East Liddar valley, enjoying the forest scenery and the carpets of dwarf irises in the open spaces below the Deodars. After a day's pause to savour the simple luxuries of furniture and food at the hotel, we headed up the West Liddar valley in the general direction of Kolahoi. We had neither maps nor photographs; but at the chalets of Arau we hopefully turned right up a side valley, assuming that in that direction we might reach the south glacier of Kolahoi. That night we enjoyed a delicious bivouac in the Deodar forest. There remained a high ridge to cross at the head of the valley; we were excited at the prospects for the morrow.

All was revealed on 12th July; it was a day to remember. Climbing some 5000 feet in three hours, we reached the ridge - and there it was. Kolahoi rose before us

on the far side of its south glacier beneath us. The south face looked like a worthy climb: 2000 feet dominated by a rock buttress running directly down from the summit. Descending to the glacier, we left our rucksacks and sleeping bags on a moraine, anticipating the need for another bivouac at that point.

Crossing the glacier, we started up the buttress on which, for some 800 feet, the rock was very loose, set at a high angle and demanded care. We reached a band of snow running across the face. The buttress above us was vertical, so we traversed to the left and found a rib of excellent rock, which provided delightful climbing. A final steep snow slope led us, after a further 250 feet to the summit. It was only two and a half hours after we had started up from the glacier and we could scarcely believe our luck.

As we began our descent down the easy east ridge, we were astonished to see a Himalayan brown bear with two cubs, making their leisurely way across the glacier below us, with apparent designs on our bivouac gear. We shouted, but to no effect. What was our relief, however, when they stopped some 20 yards from the dump, sniffed the air and, apparently suspicious of our scent, turned away.

By the time we arrived there, exhaustion and hunger were beginning to take their toll. But the prospect of a warmer overnight stop in the forest persuaded us to make a final effort; albeit that it involved a further 5000 feet of descent to the site where our Sherpa companion, Palden, was waiting for us. He brought us our supper as we reclined beneath a giant Deodar tree, with the stars winking at us through the branches.

It had been one of those really great days.

Perspective of a Climber (Who Happens to be Female)

Gill Lovick

I'm not bitter, but sometimes I used to be quite annoyed.

When I did my first climb I had no pre-conceptions, no knowledge of climbing. It was 1982, I was at University, and this was a weekend trip to the Peak District - in February. For the short time that I'd known about climbing (I led a sheltered existence in Norfolk) I'd thought of it as thoroughly dangerous, because you went up high, and I knew from experience that the ground is very hard when you suddenly become re-acquainted with it. Ropes came into it somewhere. I was taken by a soon-to-be boyfriend and his friend, neither very experienced climbers, but I didn't realise that at the time. Both were conscientious, but it took a couple of years for me to realise that neither of them were actually climbing with me, rather they were climbing with each other and I was allowed to come along too. The premise for asking me to try climbing was that I looked quite strong, and the proof came apparently when I managed nearly two pull-ups in the basement of the hall of residence. Unfortunately, I was less impressive on my first climb in the frost at Froggatt: I suffer badly from the cold, and during an agonising bout of hot-aches, became faint halfway up this 40 foot route. This was evidence, to these two young men, that women were less able as climbers than men, especially as I appeared to be frightened, not cold.

Though their opinions were never fully vocalised, they were intimated in many ways. And who was I to disagree? There are general differences between men and women, both physical and psychological, this is irrefutable, but as a biology student I knew that wherever there is a general, an average if you like, there is also an extreme, and surely plenty of room for overlap. So it seemed to me that if there were men who could climb VS, and these were the ones I knew, then surely there must be women somewhere who could climb harder than that. I should stress at this point again that I had no preconceptions about climbing, so this business about climbing harder (than someone else) was put into my head during my first few goes at climbing. It wasn't hard to grasp the idea, this competitiveness, having been a sprinter, hockey player, and more lately rower. However, I had come from a single sex school, been educated with and always competed against my own sex, and now I was being compared directly to men, and I don't like to be inferior.

This increasing sense of inferiority was reinforced from every direction. Photographs of women were only seen in climbing and caving magazines as rather un-ripped and fairly naked models draped in fibrepile jackets or wetsuits, adverts intended mainly for men (as were the rather un-ripped....). I saw few women at the crags, and those I saw were like me, often a single female, someone's girlfriend, drifting around with two men or more, and being offered a top-rope now and again. It would have been easy to give up climbing if a feeling of being equal to or superior to male climbers was paramount, but it wasn't. I

liked climbing. I liked the fresh air, going to different places, the athleticism of it, meeting a whole new crowd of people, albeit mainly male, just being somewhere else. But there was this underlying sense of not being good enough. Every now and again, though, there was a glimpse of another world. There was a magazine article about an American woman climber who started off as a ballet dancer and then took to climbing in a big way. I remember a photograph of her quite clearly: she stood, smiling, having obviously just climbed something quite hard, as her muscles and sinews stood out clearly under her thin skin. She wasn't the buxom lass in the fibrepile jacket, she was attractive, lean, muscular, fully functional and clearly very happy with her achievement and totally relaxed about her astounding physique. Non-climbing friends (and sometimes climbing friends too, both sexes) would explain to me that it wasn't natural for a woman to have such well developed muscles as mine, but here was a woman who was far more muscular than me, and obviously proud of it! I'd heard also that there were lots of women climbers in France, and some of them were quite good.

But where were all the women climbers in Britain? I certainly didn't see very many. Women had always been involved in climbing, even first ascents in the days when it was not considered proper for an outdoor lady to have her picture taken unless she was wearing her long skirts. I was once asked by a non-climbing friend about climbing, about grades, about women climbers (it seemed to him a strange activity for women to get involved with), and how good a climber was I? I replied quite honestly in my ignorance that in the greater scheme of things I didn't know how good I was, I only knew what grades of climbs I sometimes managed to get up, and because, I suppose, I had only ever competed at sports against my own sex, I could honestly say that I was the best woman climber I knew. This, unfortunately was taken as a boast. I knew I was not as good a climber as most men I climbed with - however I think it was just a sad reflection on the dearth of women climbers in the early to mid-80s, and how difficult it was to meet any others, let alone the good ones.

Being outnumbered and outclassed can have a broad effect on a (woman) climber's attitude to herself and adventure. A few women climbers who managed to find each other and climb together without the domination and support of their male friends were automatically labelled as lesbians by some people. And how many women would dare, once they realised how pitiful some of their efforts are compared to mens', to find their own adventure, risk making mistakes that were almost inevitable, and be ridiculed? Clubs, including the Climbers' Club, refused to allow women to join for fear of lowering the standard and general tone of the club. Of course, there was the Pinnacle Club, all women, scorned and mocked by some of the men I climbed with as being men-haters, and anyway they were none the better for keeping to their own sex.

But they were. I'd seen little snippets in climbing magazines about a handful of British women who were pushing themselves like any self-respecting athlete, and they seemed to climb together, maybe not all the time, but I knew they did. Men aren't to blame for women's attitudes to themselves, their attitudes and comments merely act as fuel for women's own often low self esteem when it comes to physical activity, and media images of slender, weak women, the original Bond woman waiting to be saved by her hero, all add to the idea that not only will a woman be weaker, less able and more scared than her male counterparts when it

comes to climbing, but she should be. So when women climb together, who should be weaker than who? That same denied competitiveness that men have always enjoyed when climbing together emerges just a little when women climb together, that same concentration on getting it right, that same feeling that no-one else is going to stop you getting into a mess, so you had better think about it yourself before it happens.

Over the years, generalisations (actually in articles published by men) like 'women will never be able to climb overhangs because they have no upper body strength', and 'women's broad hips and lower centre of gravity make them better at slab climbs than men' have dissipated, and I think one of the biggest influences has been competition climbing. This sport, which so many people were against when it first appeared in Britain, is the arena for men and women at the top end of ability to demonstrate what is possible, in a purely athletic sense. Both men and women saw women climbing exceptionally hard routes (not as hard, as was always pointed out, as the men's climbs), even overhangs! I will never forget the loud surprise of a fellow (male) climber spectator as he watched not one but six women in turn climb purposefully and gracefully through a large overhang. He insisted he had not believed it was possible for a woman to do this, and this was practically a life-changing vision he saw before him. He wasn't put out that these women could climb something he knew he couldn't; he was genuinely pleased to see it.

There have always been independent women, those that just get on with it and don't even think about having to rely on a man when climbing, but I wasn't one of them, and most women aren't. On more than one occasion, and with different boyfriends, I have turned up at a crag, only to bump into another couple, the male partner of which wanted to climb with my boyfriend, and the 'girls could climb together'. This threw me into one unhappy liaison where my whole day was changed for the worse because I was lumbered with the novice female who I had never met before, and left me feeling angry, unwanted and less preferable to a male climbing partner. Climbers obviously want to feel that their partner is equal and trustworthy, and a woman with a protective male (a natural relationship) will never be equal. I remember the first time I climbed with another woman voluntarily. It was actually suggested to me by a boyfriend, and I met her before I climbed with her, liked and trusted her from what I knew of her, and we chose a VS on Matlock Tor in Derbyshire. Both of us had been seconds on harder things, and done some leading, but this was our own challenge, two pitches, one lead each. It was brilliant, we were happy and in charge, and although a little nervous, we both had an overwhelming feeling of competence and achievement on this modest little route.

It is easier for women climbers to meet each other these days because there are more of them and there is the convenience of indoor climbing walls as meeting places, a kind of condenser for climbers and climbing. Men and women can see women trying hard and achieving things, both sexes try the same routes, and there is a greater feeling of equality compared to my cold gritstone days. Europeans have enjoyed this in the sunshine for rather longer. I'm well aware that much of this is due to warm temperatures and the relative feeling of safety (often) of bolted routes. A comment was passed personally to me by Ken Wilson (during a loud tirade against bolts in Britain) that the only reason there were any good

women climbers in France was because they only had bolts, and women were no good at putting in their own protection, and this didn't go down very well with me. I'm sure this was a sentiment felt by many, with educationists and society streaming women into non-mechanical ways, but we're back to generalisations and averages again. It has always been a question of confidence: women's confidence in themselves and men's confidence in women. Entering the relatively new environment of the climbing wall is a new form of education, a new angle. In this country's new efforts towards equality, little girls being brought to the wall with mum or dad don't know they're not meant to be as good as boys (looking at it old-style), so they just get on with enjoying it, and rightly so, though they may need a little more confidence boosting encouragement than their brothers. Gaining confidence by getting physically stronger and more competent on the wall has had benefits which transfer back to traditional climbing for many people of both sexes, and British women are just starting to show that traditional E5 and above are not beyond them, though in the laid back Australian outback and in the self-assured States they already knew that.

Personally, I have always been uncomfortable with the macho image of climbing, which came both from within and without the 'sport' (the macho element don't like it being called a sport). I have always liked the adventure element of climbing, and liked the feeling that the amount of adventure that could be tolerated on any particular day could be more or less controlled! I like the feeling of physical effort, or sometimes the physical ease with which things can be done. I like scenery, opportunities to be places when there is no other excuse for being there, I like the purposeful pointlessness of it. I like being with people like me, and in the past when I've had other occupations, climbing became the most important aspect of my life for this one reason. There used to be climbers and women climbers, but I don't feel now it is quite the same. Sure, there is an overall difference, especially, as some will point out, when it comes to peeing in public or dealing with anything else feminine. If you make a big fuss about these things then you're into the 'poor me' syndrome and sinking again into bitterness and inferiority. Stuff that. As a climber who happens to be female, I'd rather just get on with it in any way that I feel like.

The Kentmere Round

Chris Craggs

The publication of the Fell and Rock's new guide to the Lakeland Fells and the forecast of snow on the higher tops prompted a few 'phone calls and a Friday night journey up to Raw Head hut in Langdale with Jim Rubery and a plan in mind. I had never walked anywhere near the Kentmere Valley and that was a fact I felt was long overdue for changing. By 10am Saturday morning we had skidded and slithered our way up the hoar-frosted minor road to parking by the solid structure of Kentmere's lonely church. The surrounding hills were well plastered with snow above about 1200 feet and our proposed journey, an anticlockwise circumnavigation of the valley, looked an excellent proposition. Several of the guides that cover this walk describe the Kentmere Round as just that, the circling of the valley keeping close to the rim, in an attempt to reduce the amount of up and down. Despite this, it was our idea was to include a visit to all the nine tops that ring the valley, if conditions and fitness allowed.

The first objective was the hamlet of Green Quarter and we trudged there through a near white-out as heavy flakes spiralled slowly from a leaden sky, we began wondering if our trip was going to founder before it ever got started. A short distance up the old pack horse trail to Longsleddale the sun came out and that set the scene for the day: swirling whiteouts interspersed with sunny intervals and a continuous biting north westerly wind that gnawed away at our body heat. We plugged strenuously through soft snow and tussocky vegetation before meeting the substantial stone wall that runs along the watershed between the Kentmere and Longsleddale valleys and following this up to the top of Shipman Knotts at 1926ft, our first summit of the day. A long gentle slog led up



A view of the Round from Shipman Knotts. Photo: Chris Craggs Collection

the broad whale-back of Kentmere Pike, 2394ft, whilst to the south, great banks of dark swirling snow blotted out the sun in a most dramatic fashion. Apparently it rained almost all of the day in Ambleside, but being just a few miles further north, we were spared the worst of the weather as it was being pushed around the perimeter of the higher hills by the northerly winds. On the bald domed summit of Harter Fell, 2552ft, the full force of the wind hit us for the first time and I had my first doubts that this wind and deepening snow might make the complete circuit a bit too much of an undertaking for a short winter's day.

We dropped down several hundred feet into the rocky gap of Nan Bield Pass, and had a bite and brew in the open walled shelter here, chilling rapidly despite donning extra layers of clothing. The re-ascent to Mardale Ill Bell, 2496ft, soon got the blood flowing again and before long it was decision time. It was already almost two o'clock and the obvious way round the head of Kentmere valley was a traverse straight across the slope dead ahead of us. But neither of us had ever visited the top of High Street, 2716ft, only three quarters of a mile away to the north, and after a quick discussion we decided we would go for it. There were no discernible tracks and the continuous tramping through snow covered vegetation was an exhausting experience. Just a couple of minutes short of our self-declared deadline we stumbled across the trig point and after a quick handshake did an about face and headed for home. Our world was a monochrome one, with dark glowering clouds and snow plastered fells, apart from the view to the north east where the highest top of the Pennines, Cross Fell, could be seen beyond the sunlit Vale of Eden which flashed emerald green. To the west the bulk of Helvellyn disappeared up into a black threatening mass of cloud, and at our feet, wind blown spindrift covered our tracks in seconds.

With the wind now over our shoulders and using the occasional exposed patches of the old Roman road that runs along the fell tops here, we made better progress. That is until we were lured off route by the monumental cairn on top of Thornthwaite Crag, 2572ft, away to our right. Again slow plugging through drifts, knee high and deeper, slowed us down as we took turns at trail breaking. A brief rest in the lee of the cairn and the last of our hot tea were our deserved rewards.

Ahead lay three more tops and the ascent of the first, Frostwick, 2362ft, went off without too great an expenditure of energy. The longer haul up Ill Bell, 2483ft, proved a tougher challenge and by now the day was wearing on and our legs were fading with it. From the rocky summit, the long ribbon of Windermere came into view and suddenly we realised we would get around the whole circuit, as the final top of Yoke, 2316ft, could be seen to be only a bump on the end of the ridge. We trudged over frozen wet lands and then half walked and half slid down a final steepening to join the good track that ran right back to the centre of Kentmere village. The moment we stepped off the snow we realised how dark it had become, and it was time to don head torches for the last 30 minute amble down a cobble ridden lane and then onto tarmac and back to the car.

A shower in the hut soon saw us suitably revived, and although there were already discussions about another walk on the Sunday, I was looking forward to a round of another sort and it was Jim's turn! A quiet pint or two in the New Dungeon Ghyll was a perfect end to a superb day in this wonderful corner of England.

Don't Leave It Too Late, Matey

Derek Walker

Those oft repeated words of Trevor Jones were going through my mind on the evening of June 30th 1996, as Hilary and I wearied our way down to Conca at the end of our 12 day walk across the Corsican High Level Route. It was, in fact, exactly one year since I had retired, and Trevor had proffered his sage advice to me on numerous occasions over the previous few years, as he would grimly relate tales of his and his old mates' ailments his own bad ankle, Joe's back, Les' shoulder, Claude's hip and so on. "Don't leave it too late" he'd cry, and despite having thoroughly enjoyed my six year stint at the BMC, I had needed little of Trevor's persuasion to realise that it was time for me to leave, and get in as much climbing and travelling as possible while time and health were still on my side.

Within a few days of finishing work, I set off for the Alps with Hilary, now having the time to join her on one of the many long distance walks she had been doing over the last 10 years. We chose the Queyras region as our objective. Neither of us had been there before and it was conveniently close for me to the climbing at Ailefroide after she had returned to work. Old friend and Dauphiné guru John Brailsford fixed us up with initial accommodation, gave helpful advice and drove us to the start of our walk.

For the next 11 days we backpacked through this beautiful and relatively unspoilt Alpine region, crossing distant cols, climbing peaks like the Pan de Sucre,



*The Cuernos of Paine in Stormy Weather, Lago Nordenskold in foreground.
Photo: Derek Walker*

dropping down to high mountain villages like St. Veran and walking around the magnificent Monte Viso. It was a wonderful walk with superb views and many idyllic campsites. Perhaps the most beautiful was beneath Mt. Granero, beside a deep blue lake which reflected the spectacular peak above. High adventure came that night though, as we were 'attacked' at 1am by a fox which charged the tent, ripped a hole in the fly sheet and made off with my boot! Fortunately we found it in a nearby snow drift after the fox had launched a second attack which we managed to beat back at dawn.

On our return to Ailefroide Hilary went home while Malcolm Cameron arrived for some climbing. Last time I had been in Ailefroide in 1972 it had all been big mountain routes, but now we found rock climbs galore on the lower crags. The highlight, though, was a return to the Glacier Noir where I had last had a freezing bivouac with Trevor, Bob Allen and Pete Hatton, before an abortive attempt on one of the classic routes on the Pic Sans Nom. This time we were infinitely more fortunate. A warm and comfortable bivy preceded one of the most brilliant high rock climbs either of us had done. *Aurore Nucleaire* on the north face of the Pic Sans Nom is a 15 pitch ED in the modern genre on immaculate rock with some bolt protection, good belays and a rapid abseil descent right back to our boots and 'sacks. After all the wonderful climbing we did get a shock on the last rap when a horrendous stone fall came down the nearby gully and threatened to engulf us too.

After Malcolm's short holiday I drove across Switzerland to join a relaxed Mike and Marjorie Mortimer at Innertkirchen for some enjoyable climbing around Handegg and the Grimsel Pass. The weather then broke so after nearly five weeks away I came home via a damp, crowded and grizzly Chamonix to an England still basking in heatwave conditions. Within a few days in mid August I was easily tempted to set off with Trevor, Les Brown and Pete Turnbull for the CIC hut on the Ben. By some skilful diplomatic manoeuvring Trevor had managed to negotiate a Landrover lift to take us four aged pensioners to the dam, so avoiding the steep initial flog from the golf course in the heat.

We had three superb days climbing in shirt sleeves on the Ben, Les was in peak form, lean and very fit, he had retired three months earlier and just made the longest ever approach march and ascent of Mt. Blanc by walking right across France from Bordeaux with his wife Margaret! He and I climbed the difficult *Torro* with its several hard pitches and *Bullroar*, and with Pete and Trevor perhaps the best hard VS we had ever done, the magnificent *Minus One Buttress Direct*. We took in the Brown 'mindless variation' on the Serendipity pitch, involving a couple of desperate 5c moves, particularly difficult for those under 6'4" tall.

Ken Crockett arrived in the hut on our last evening with the news that Alison Hargreaves was missing on K2. As we drove south we heard on the radio that Alison was indeed lost, along with her team mates after reaching the summit. The same broadcast announced that two other British climbers had been killed in the Karakoram, Paul Nunn and Geoff Tier. The euphoria after our three brilliant days on the Ben turned to sadness and bitterness. With all due respect to Alison and Geoff, it was Paul's death which hit us hardest. We had all known him for over 35 years. Les had led him up *Cenotaph* on the 10th ascent in 1958 when Paul was 15. I had climbed *Piggott's* on Cloggy with him at the end of June, only days before my retirement and his departure for Haramosh.

The first of a series of more distant post retirement trips came in October, when I had the opportunity to go to Cape Town and within days I was climbing on Table Mountain with Mac and Paul Fatti, President of the MCSA. A star climber, Paul had been on the first ascent of the great east face of the Central Tower of Paine 20 years earlier. From Cape Town Hilary and I made the long drive to the Drakensberg, climbed Cathedral Peak, and then met up with Paul again in Johannesburg, from where we went climbing on the superb sandstone cliffs of the Magaliesberg. On our last day in South Africa, we watched the England cricket team play Soweto at the new Township ground which was surrounded by barbed wire. Perhaps because of our white faces and English accents we were ushered into the VIP enclosure, given a sumptuous buffet lunch and had a chat with Ray Illingworth. There was a great carnival atmosphere in the ground, much singing and dancing and a lot of fun - a great end to our trip.

On January 2nd after New Year ice climbing in the Lakes, I flew out to Chile for a return visit to the Paine, those breathtaking, windswept peaks where I'd spent so much time in the '60s. Two days after leaving Manchester I met up with Mac and Loretto and Jim Curran in Puerto Natales and the following day we were at our old base camp at Cerro Paine. Contrast this with our '62 expedition when our boat journey took 4 weeks from Liverpool to Valparaiso and it was a further 10 days before we got to the Paine. In the early '60s on our first visits we had considered Natales a bleak and dreary hole but now it is transformed into a bustling little town, full of good hotels and restaurants and a host of tourist agencies offering trips to the Paine and the Glaciers. Radic's old farm at Cerro Paine now sports a luxury hotel accommodating some 80 people with a nearby campsite for double that number. Approximately 40,000 tourists visit the Paine National Park each year, including 7000 trekkers. In 1960 and 1962 during our three months stay I doubt we saw more than half a dozen visitors apart from the local farmer. **The Sunday Times** recently featured the Paine as one of the top 10 national parks in the world. In 1960 all we had seen was a faded old photograph of the Towers in the British museum.

Our objective this time was to attempt the Cuerno Principal, perhaps the most photographed mountain in the park, which I'd tried and failed on three occasions. In 1961 with Dave Clark and Barrie Page and in 1968 with Ian and Niki Clough and Chris Jackson we'd been repulsed by foul weather. In 1963 with Barrie, Ian and Don Whillans we had reached the final tower of black crap rock which had defeated even the mighty Donald, before a storm sent us once more scurrying down to the valley below.

A Chilean team had later succeeded after sieging the peak and turning the final tower by a long and circuitous traverse. Mac and I thought we might repeat this route while Jim would come along and make a little film. False hopes! During our first 10 days the weather was not Patagonian at its worse, but quite foul enough to prevent any attempt. New snow, driven by fierce winds, covered the upper part of the mountain. We stayed low and walked. We consoled ourselves that in any event, the Chilean line looked poxy and really not worth repeating.

Memories flooded back as I walked up the Frances valley to the little clearing where we had the advanced base camp for Ian's Fortress expedition. You could just make out the outlines of 'Joint British Patagonia Expedition 1967-8' on the old tin plate nailed to a tree. It was from there that I had spotted through binoculars

John Gregory, Gordon Hibberd and Dave Nicol top out on 5th January 1968.

On our way back to Cerro Paine along Lago Nordenskold I diverted and dropped down to the peninsula where we had placed a wooden cross in memory of Peter Henry. Peter had been the leader of our very first British expedition to the Paine and had drowned in February 1961 when his tiny boat was overturned in a squall. I must have been the first visitor there for 30 years. It was an emotional few minutes as I spotted the upright of the cross, and then, lying a few yards away, was Peter's ice-axe Charlet-Moser, Chamonix. With some wire and cord I managed to fasten the axe back onto the upright post, where hopefully it should remain a few more years before being blasted away by the Patagonian tempests.

On January 16th, on a rare flawless morning, we all walked up to the famous viewpoint below the Towers. It was exactly 33 years to the day since Don and Chris reached the summit of the Central Tower, one day ahead of the competing Italian team and one day before Ian and I climbed the North Tower. The views were just as stunning as I remembered, surely one of the finest mountain panoramas in the world.

A few days later we hired a truck to visit the other magical Patagonian peaks of Fitzroy and Cerro Torre. Chalten, the settlement at the foot of the massif is growing fast and is reminiscent of a windswept wild west town with its dusty streets, bars and campsites. It is rapidly becoming a major tourist centre for visitors to the Park. Again, we were fortunate with the weather for our photographic opportunities. Jim likened the easy walk to the Fitzroy/Torre basecamps to a stroll through Ashdown Forest. As we approached the Torre we collapsed in near hysterical laughter, relieved that we were all far too old,



*Peter Henry's iceaxe and cross with Cuernos of Paine behind.
Photo: Derek Walker*

thankfully, to actually attempt to climb it.

Winter conditions were still good in February when we got home. There followed more good ice climbing days in Wales and a brilliant day in Glencoe with Bob Allen and Roger Salisbury when we got up a sparsely iced up *Crowberry Gully* by the skin of our teeth and the tips of our crampons. Arriving on the summit at 7pm we closely followed a compass bearing through the misty darkness and snow flurries and still managed to end up in Glen Etive and back at the car for 11.30pm. So much for experience!

Easter in Cornwall on Hamish's meet was sociable and climbing with Mark Vallance and Dave Roberts we enjoyed many of the great classics of Bosigran, Chair Ladder and Sennen. A week or so later, a chance meeting with Mike Simpkins at the BMC Dinner resulted in our going to Kilnsey on a damp, grey Thursday so I could tick off the famous overhang, one of my last remaining **Hard Rock** routes. Mike had already done it over 30 years earlier, as a teenager, so kindly allowed me to lead the sensational roof pitch. As we used every peg and bolt available in true, old fashioned artificial style we were full of admiration for Mark Leach's great effort in climbing the roof free in 1988.

The third long trip in six months came at the end of April when I flew to Arizona, had some good sandstone climbing and took part in the first ascent of a previously unclimbed pinnacle in Oak Tree Canyon. Further desert climbing was cut short by the news of Trevor's death which hastened my return to England for the funeral.

As Hilary left for the Robert Louis Stevenson trail in the south of France with the Ladies' team at the end of May, I drove to Scotland with Les to link up with an unofficial meet of CC veterans organised by Hamish on Arran. On the one good day we climbed the classic *South Face Direct* of Cir Mor, another **Hard Rock** tick, before retreating to the Lakes in poor weather instead of continuing to Carnmore as planned.

A few days later, just as Euro football '96 was getting underway, it was summer holiday time, so I drove through France to pick up Hilary at the end of her walk. We continued to Corsica bound for the GR20 - now well known to CC members, following the articles in the '94 Journal. Were we going to find it 'the hardest walk in the world' (Nicol) or sample 'the loneliness of the long distance runner' (Browell)? It was quite as good as we anticipated and apart from making a magnificent back packing journey through glorious mountain country, we also enjoyed some memorable footballing moments. We'd read about Gazza's wonder goal against the Scots before we set off. Fortunately, a tremendous rain storm marooned us in our tent after crossing the crux of the route, the Cirque de Solitude, just outside the Bergerie de Ballone - where they had a telly! Here we watched the England/Spain game with the penalty shoot out which took us into the semifinal. Three days later another storm kept us in the half-way hotel at Vizzavona for an extra day. The euphoria vanished when we saw, recorded at 3am, the disappointing end of England's hopes with the missed Southgate penalty against the old foe.

The southern part of the Corsican traverse is every bit as good as the more dramatic first half, and after our weary arrival in Conca at 8.30pm on Sunday June 30th we found ourselves in a restaurant where they were watching - yes - the Euro cup final. A great ending to a great walk - and honestly I'm not a soccer fan.

And so ended the first year of retirement. After a few more days cragging and photos on Corsica's sun drenched coastal cliffs, we returned to Italy and were in the Dolomites by early July. The village of Alleghe at the foot of Civetta was as beautiful as ever and blissfully quiet before the holiday onslaught in August. Joined by the Camerons for their week's holiday, Malcolm and I climbed two great classics, the *Tissi* on Torre Venezia and the justifiably famous *Pilastro* on Tofana with its two roofs and 'Mules Back' overhanging chimney. Wildly popular with British parties 30 years ago, there was only one other pair on the route behind us, CC architect and fell runner extraordinary Craig Harwood and his friend Andy Teasdale.

Mike and Marjorie had now appeared at Alleghe and after Malcolm's departure, we three climbed the South West Ridge of the Sasso di Calleda, an unknown but surprisingly good route with one particularly fine and exposed pitch. Mike and I then ventured onto the South Face of the Marmolada for the *Gogna* route, chosen for **Im Extremen Fels** as 'by far the finest route on the Marmolada' - this of course written before the more modern and desperate *Fisch* was climbed. Yet again, now in late July, there was no one else on the face and we had the climb to ourselves. And some climb! 28 pitches, poorish protection from aged and dubious pegs, some brittle rock in the upper part and much necky leading by Mortimer who is in his element on these big Dolomite walls. Climbing fast and threatened by storm on the elegant and exposed final arête we reached the top with great relief at 6pm and raced down the easy glacier to the road below. It had felt quite as serious and demanding as any of the big Dolomite routes we had done in the last 10 years.

There was much more climbing in the Peak, the Lakes and especially Wales in the autumn. For Malcolm's 50th birthday climb in late September he needed a fitting route so we nipped out on the Friday to the Cromlech and he led *Memory Lane* in a near gale a fine celebratory achievement. I then led the *Gates*, and having also led *Cenotaph* some days earlier we reflected on doing these great old classics just prior to my 60th birthday. 40 years ago, in 1956, when I began climbing, these were among the hardest climbs in Wales, *Cenotaph Corner* in particular being regarded as the most prestigious route in the country with only five ascents to date. How time, knowledge, nuts, friends, sticky boots, fitness etc alter things.

In late October, a mixed party of 10 old friends, with an average age of 58, set off for Nepal. So far, I seem to have escaped the more inconvenient physical ravages of time, but Roger was on his first trek since his pacemaker was fitted and Bob had suffered a completely unexpected heart attack in June. For them in particular, it was a case of taking their chances while they still had some. Fortunately, three weeks later, on a flawless day, a splendid trek was crowned with the ascent of Island Peak with sensational views all round: Makalu, Lhotse, Nuptse, Ama Dablam, Baruntse. It had been a fabulous trip and the culmination of a memorable year and a half of climbing and travelling - a superb honeymoon of retirement. How long it can all last is open to question but it has been great so far.

So if any of you out there are still dithering about when to go, then remember dear old Trevor's advice: 'Don't leave it too late.'

Banff Snapshots

Phil Grierson

We are travelling along the crest of a narrow ridge, the only tracks those of the skier we are following. The wind blows sharply and coldly from our left where the whiteness drops alarmingly away into a misty void. The right is defined more sharply by the outlined edge of a cornice.

Mike looks round to check we are still with him then glides through the soft powder to the very edge. He pokes the snow with one of his poles then kicks his ski tips right through the down-turned rim. He looks at us again.

"Wanna try it?", he asks, though it is somewhat rhetorical. Before we have time to reply he is gone. A bit of the cornice crumbles away and he disappears in a cloud of the purest, whitest, lightest, softest snow - the champagne powder of the Canadian Rockies.

There is little we can do but follow, hearts in mouths, over the abyss, through space and down onto the deep, steep, untracked slopes nestling vertiginously below. Swinging turns, a dizzying traverse on unbelievably close-to-vertical ground, slicing through the leading edge of yet another cornice, we turn downwards into a cup-shaped bowl and slide back up over the further lip before gliding silently in a gentling schuss back towards the security of a groomed trail.

Later, we are off again into the pristine wilds, first in a succession of down-filled bowls above the tree-line, then wildly dodging through the wholly unyielding larches below and the somewhat more negotiable - skis either side 'Christmas tree' shrubs. Mike 'whoops' in delight with the sound of his joy echoing through the still and silent forests and he tells us how he can't believe the snow is so good for the time of year - it is early April and supposedly the end of the season. We try to catch our breath, not quite believing anything about the experience we have just gone through.

This is ski-ing Lake Louise style, in the heart of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, and we are ski-ing, something else not quite to be believed on the back of our knowledge of European ski-ing, in the company of an unpaid volunteer, one of a group of 'ski friends' who guide anyone who asks around the slopes of the resort. Mike, who turns out amongst many things to be an ex-downhill Olympic coach (and, we suspect, a downhill skier himself at one time), does his stint every Thursday throughout the season, and makes a four-hour round trip to do so, so if you want an unreal ski-ing experience you know when to go and who to ask for! They do actually ask what level you ski at, and they do check you out. Mike started us at full bore on the slopes used for the mens' downhill race, stopping from time to time to put our efforts in perspective with alarming details about the real downhillers and the course they follow; how fast they'd be travelling at this point, how far they would jump from here, what the various turns are called and why the compression at the bottom is so difficult: all part of his role as a volunteer, not only to take people around and show them, as he certainly did with us, areas they might not otherwise discover, but also to pass on something of their knowledge and feeling for a place they hold in deep affection.



*About 1000m from here to the Base Lodge at Lake Louise.
Photo: Phil Grierson*

We are staying in Banff, the main centre within the Banff National Park. In the mornings you see elk eating the grass in the front gardens and wandering across the roads.

The Caboose is a great restaurant, situated in the waiting rooms of the railway station there is no longer a passenger service, though in the past monarchs and prime ministers, and all manner of the rich and famous have passed through in days of former, and much more formal, glory.

The food is good American stuff; huge steaks, pork ribs, salmon. Once in a while you pick up the singing of the tracks outside, and then the wooden-panelled walls and doors begin to rattle and the cutlery and plates vibrate as a monster freight train thunders through, two pairs of engines and a mile of trucks, and your eye flickers across the

framed and sepia tinted images, rocking gently on the walls, of pioneers standing boldly and proudly by the giant steam locomotives they brought with such audacity into this inhospitable wilderness all those years ago.

It is something that keeps coming back - however relatively short it seems in European terms - the history of the place, or, more correctly, the history of the white man in this place.

We are staying at the Banff Springs Hotel. Huge, baronial, gothic a kind of benevolent Ghormenghast, its grand design echoing the indulgence of empire and early tourism.

Here another image on a different but related wall, one amongst many old photographs hung along the opulently carpeted and wood-lined corridors, catches my attention. A group of hotel staff, standing in line on a roughly crafted raft tethered in the waters of the Bow river where it flows through the hotel grounds. Two young females, smiling and laughing, happy to be held either side

by a handsome, open-faced, youth poised between them. As the camera clicks they have all our yesterdays still stretching out before them, and if, in their youthful abandon, they had thoughts at all for the future it could surely not have been for that watery death, of which the caption beneath so chillingly and matter-of-factly tells - "Shortly after this was taken, the two girls were drowned in the river".

Norquay is the nearest, and smallest, ski area to Banff. Even this late in the season, the infamous double-black-diamond mogul runs are still in fine condition. Knee-shatteringly huge, the bumps allow of no easy descent, but they are safe enough and fun enough on an almost deserted slope. We head off into the upper reaches of a ravine, noting the debris of some recent avalanche. As we turn, and jump and side-slip our way gingerly down, a thing possessed hurtles past us at enormous speed. The terrain is barrel-shaped, like a skate-boarder's half-pipe turned to 45°. Seemingly beyond control, the 'thing' reaches the far side, takes to the air, pivots, and is off again, diagonally back - down, up, air, spin; down, up, air, spin. I complete a timid schuss, and turn sedately, running a gentle zig-zag till the gully widens out and water tinkles under the ice below.

We hire a car and drive through some of the grandest and most spectacular mountain scenery in the world, along the Icefields Highway to Jasper. It's about a three and a half hour journey, past towering ragged ranges, shimmering glaciers and great swathes of uncharted forest. Before the road, in good weather, it was a fortnight's wagon trail, over Bow Pass, along the Mistaya river valley and down to Saskatchewan Crossing, where the wagons would have clattered through the ice-fed waters coming down from the huge Columbia icefield. Then on up the Sunwapta Pass to the very tips of the glacier's frozen fingers before the long descent into Athabasca and the trapping outpost of Jasper itself, swollen later only modestly in size by the coming of the railway from Edmonton which thrust on through the Great Divide to the very edges of the Pacific itself.

It is, perhaps, that in this vast land the marks of human kind are small enough for our history to be transparent, landscape enough still to be seen to be marked. By contrast, here at home in England there is insufficient space left to clearly outline and make visible the impact we have made on nature's face.

There is little enough traffic around for two great horned sheep - bighorns - to come ambling down the highway towards us. We stop to get a photograph. They peer at us blithely through the glass, as if we are in the zoo, and trace their steaming tongues across the salt-encrusted dirt which is streaked along the sides of our vehicle. Unsure of their true demeanour, we keep the doors and windows tightly shut. They are very big, and their horns are even bigger!

The ski-ing resort of Panorama is a couple of hours drive away from Banff, and takes you through three national parks. Banff itself, Yoho and Kootenay. Our trip is a gloomy one, with rain and snow and poor visibility for the most part. We descend and cross a great rift on the western edges of the Rockies and, now bathed in sunshine, we see stretched before us the Purcell Mountains. Climbing back up from the valley floor we soon reach the resort, nestled, fan-shaped, at the foot of a large tree-clad 2000 metre peak which provides almost all of the ski-ing.

In the shimmering sparkle of sun on newly fallen snow we take the lifts up and gaze around at an endless array of white-coned peaks bursting upwards from the snowclad forests beneath. It is breathtakingly beautiful.

Here is another photograph. One I took. Julie stands with her skis hidden under the snow and powder up around the tops of her boots. There is no-one else. The tree-lined slope behind is deserted, showing only the tracks of perhaps two or three others who have passed this way. Behind her head a mist hangs in the air, diffracting the light. It is the thin mist of powder falling from tree-tops warmed as the sun's rays catch them. Later we check the run. It is called 'Shober's Dream'. Whoever he or she was, we shared it that day, on a swooping roller-coaster ride - which to our minds was the nearest thing to heaven on earth a skier could hope to find.

Lookout Mountain, the top-most point of Sunshine Village resort gives spectacular views into the very highest region of the Rockies, with Mount Assinbone sharply relieved on a crystal clear morning, once again after overnight snow. There's a run we've done before, off-piste but tracked, which should be good in the fresh powder. Turning right off a steep mogul-field brings us onto a traverse which swings us even further right to the very edge of the mountain and its sheer north face. This time there are no tracks to follow, only our knowledge of where we went before. Just before the edge we turn downwards on a steep shoulder. The snow is deep and each turn triggers little runs of powder, but we reach the tree-line without mishap. Then an exhilarating tilt down a forest path brings us suddenly out into a glade. The light dazzles and blinds with the sudden shock of such pure whiteness in our eyes. We stop, alone, looking backwards at our tracks down the mountainside and up into an empty sky. Again, there is no-one else. There is no sound. Everywhere is still. Just for a moment, it is as if we have been captured inside nature's own photograph of a fraction of itself. I think of how, in someone else's gaze, for a moment two girls were captured just before they drowned, and a slight wind shuffles the tiniest grains of powder across our already fading marks.

Jebel El Kest

Les Brown

I suppose if it had not been for the Beast of Baghdad, Trevor and I would never have discovered the climbing potential of the Jebel El Kest. Our planned holiday in October 1990 to climb in Wadi Rum was one of the casualties of his aggression. With dubious logic we simply switched deserts and went to southern Morocco where the Berber people were known for their strong independence of mind and disdain for Saddam.

An old travel book told of two limestone gorges located at the south-eastern end of the Atlas mountains where 'the walls rise sheer for hundreds of feet, seamed by vertical cracks and crossed by overhangs'. It also told of the delights of the Ameln valley in the Anti-Atlas. 'You could spend days wandering around the 26 villages....set against a backdrop of 600m slabs of rock....with springs, irrigation systems, rambling palmeries, brightly painted houses and mosques'. So here was a chance to re-visit our youth with some exploratory rock climbing and combine it with a walking holiday with our spouses.

The journey from Agadir to the Todra was a memorable and very long drive. A well surfaced single track road skirts the southern side of the Atlas passing across stony desert with the tawny Anti-Atlas to the south. Small fortified villages and small towns are dotted across the landscape with the occasional dilapidated kasbar with tapering squat pillars and intricately patterned walls. As you approach the Todra, tired eyes are rested by a continuous green line of connected oases.

The Todra gorge lived up to our expectations. The side of the limestone plateau is cleaved to form two mighty walls of tan coloured limestone separated by a pebble filled, partially dry, river bed. At its narrowest the gorge is no more than 50 metres wide. Set beneath the eastern wall under a cast overhang are two small hotels. The gorge provides an access route to the high villages. Lines of young women carrying animal fodder give the appearance of walking bushes. A splendid 250m column of rock with a route called the *Pilier de Couchon* was our objective.

As we sat on the hotel verandah waiting for our evening meal; and gazing up at a narrow slit of stars we had our first setback. Trevor was shocked beyond measure. The hotel was dry and the nearest booze was in Agadir! I think he blamed me for leading him into this trap. All was not completely lost. We joined our Berber hosts in a musical evening. They tapped complex rhythms with spoons on teapots and other tableware and Trevor, with his usual sense of the bizarre, gave an inaccurate rendition of 'Ilkley Mo Ba Tat' at their request. He was to his immense relief rewarded by two shots of brandy from an enthusiastic but slightly bewildered Spanish couple.

At first light we waded across the freezing river to gain access to our chosen route. In spite of ten pitches of steep and solid rock, made of painfully sharp limestone with finger splitting edges, the route was a gem and gave us great pleasure. On the descent I met an old Berber shepherd startled at my appearance.

"Quel age avez vous?" he asked. These days I seem to be asked this all too

regularly. "Cinquante quatre" I replied and, as Trevor appeared:

"Mais mon ami, il a soixante ans." This appeared too much to him.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Quarante" was the slightly sheepish reply. We descended with renewed vigour.

Next, our attention turned to the Dades gorge, anticipating the prospect of exploring new routes. A small, simple hotel above the gorge lay conveniently close to a very long line of limestone buttresses. The night was very cold at this altitude. Our hosts were embarrassed. Could we siphon off some petrol so that they could cook a meal and play the video? As far as we could make out, no climbers had been active here. There was, we were told, a mule track to the north of the cliffs giving an easy descent. The following morning we climbed a splendid seven pitch route at a steady HVS standard to arrive at the plateau at 2pm. Four hours later, after the sun had set, we stumbled across the elusive mule track. We dashed down, cold, ragged, sore and dehydrated, towards a small hamlet. I imagine the reactions of the Berber lady with only her young son as company, hearing strange sounds of tinkling metal coming closer. Then out of the gloaming appear two pale figures, one tall and thin with shining grey hair, the other short and barrel-shaped capped by a pink dome with a few wisps of white hair creating a halo effect. She bolted from her cottage closely followed by her son. Slowly she recovered her composure, concluding we were mostly harmless and, in a fit of giggles, directed us to the descent track.

A recovery period was called for. Perhaps it was time to move on to Marrakesh and then to walking in the Ameln Valley with Margaret and Anna. They too had experienced their share of adventures as they walked through the villages. Young women who demanded to see their jewelry, perfumes and watches. One woman tried to wrench off Margaret's wedding ring. They had found themselves catalysing a skirmish of stone throwing between a local trader and the hotel staff as they disputed who should sell them teapots. Our next stop, Marrakesh, however, is anything but restful. It is, at the same time, bewilderingly alien, stimulating and exhausting. Unmissable, but often left with relief and so after a two day visit we looked forward to Tafraoute, a small town in the Ameln Valley and the Hotel les Amandiers, a hotel built in the style of a kasbah. A relaxing conclusion to our trip.

As you approach the Anti-Atlas across the Souss valley, the mountains' features are lost in haze. The road climbs from the hot plain through increasingly striking mountain scenery. The view from the col at the eastern entrance of the Ameln suddenly reveals a lost horizon, green fertility under a cobalt blue sky, set in a sheltering cirque of water-providing rocky mountains. On the north side is the long chain of the Jebel El Kest, throwing down to the valley a long line of towers, ridges and buttresses, the ochre-pink and grey colours providing a stark contrast to the green oases below. We assumed that rock of this colour and shape had to be friable sandstone. The four of us left the car at the col and scrambled across skyline rocks to the first major buttress. What a discovery, our excitement grew as we found we were climbing solid quartzite, beautifully sculptured. Trevor and I were as children let loose in a sweet shop. So many choices and little time left to gorge. Our wives, supportive as ever, encouraged us to change plans and do some climbing, whilst they would carry on exploring unescorted.

The first route gave us a magical day's climbing and taught us that all the cliffs were bigger than they appear from the road. With our usual cavalier approach we committed ourselves to a line on the first major buttress north of the col. Again it was hot and very, very dry. We climbed 250m of grooves, walls, cracks and slabs, on rock which in places needed care but for the most part was very reliable, well supplied with holds, good friction and had a pleasant, positive feel. Protection was sparse but good. Like all great days climbing, the outcome was always in doubt, the route finding tricky and the crux exposed. Every so often we were startled by an explosion of sound, the call of the muezzin from the minarets below. The chant echoing from crag to crag gave us the uncomfortable feeling that, along with the swooping eagles, falcons and choughs, they were protesting at our intrusion.

The panorama from the hotel is best experienced in the evening sunlight, sitting on the terrace sipping an aperitif. Surrounding the hotel are the surreal wind eroded shapes of granite tors. Further away to the north the whole vast escarpment of the Jebel El Kest, coloured pink in the light of the setting sun, is clearly visible. As we mellowed out more and more, feasible new lines were visible, with the changing angle of the incident light. The dominant quartzite feature closest to Tafraoute is the Lions Head Face, its features clearly outlined by shadows at this time of day. To the left of the face is a deep gorge, one of the many scars on this side of the Jebel. In between is a long ridge, comprising a series of towers, leading to a final sharp arête. This we chose as our next objective.

We embarked on the lowest part of the ridge early, dressed lightly, and carrying only one bottle of water. Pleasant soloing up a strong ridge feature led us to a series of steps giving the odd HVS pitch. At mid-afternoon, after some 500m of climbing, we made for the summit, only to find we were on top of the largest tower, separated from the final face by a sharp cleft. Rattled and tired, we committed ourselves to an interminable retreat. Even Trevor's almost inexhaustible sense of humour deserted him and he was not amused when I suggested we'd be able to see in the dark from his glowing sunburnt scalp. So ended our climbing on that first memorable visit. If ever I had a reputation for route finding, I lost it in the eyes of Pete Turnbull and Roy Warner, one year later on a second attempt. I had a cunning plan to climb the west side of the ridge out of the gorge and thus avoid being frazzled by the sun. After several hours of labyrinthine route finding we made a dash for the summit. To my intense embarrassment here I was, yet again, merely on top of the towers. This time we abseiled into the cleft and I began a different tortuous descent with grim faced companions.

Trevor and I returned to the route, five years after our first attempt, more aware of its scale and our declining powers. We reached our point of retreat by climbing a gully on the east of the tower. The 250m of climbing up the final arête was delectable. This exhilarating, airy feature at about Severe standard on perfect rock lacked any protection but offered holds when needed. Trevor declared it probably the best day's climbing of his life. We enthused about finding 800m of climb and laughed at our early morning fright. Two curious local boys had accompanied us to the foot. As we left them to begin climbing they shrieked in unison.

"Attention! Messieurs. Attention le Sanglier" They jumped up and down, beside themselves with excitement at the prospect of an encounter between the wild boar charging about in the bushes and the two strange Europeans scamper-

ing for dear life up the rocks. At the end of the day, as we stumbled through their village, they brought friends to view the unlikely old gentlemen and touchingly gave us bouquets of wild flowers, seemingly pleased at our survival.

Since that first trip we have paid annual visits. Various other relics of a bygone age have joined us in the fun. Relics of an age when British mountain crags still offered opportunities for our primitive approach of exploring by starting at the bottom and going up.

Joe Brown, Claude Davies, Paul Ross and Pete Turnbull, and my son David, have all enjoyed the rare opportunity to visit an unspoilt climbing area and do new routes galore in exotic surroundings, with the unexpected always around the corner. For instance:- Joe climbs a route including a 45m 5b off width, using, as a runner...wait for it...a hand-inserted large chockstone, sent up by Claude. Paul climbs a brutish off width on the granite tors, to find several Berber children at the top, leaning down and offering him a hand. The children then parade proudly through town, swathed in gear. Paul and Joe climb together for the first time on a multi-pitch route without a single off width. Joe, distressed to find a scorpion on a crucial hold, narrowly avoids knocking it down into Claude's collar. Trevor knocks off a rock abseiling and severs the abseil rope beneath him, leaving him hanging and testing his rope technique to the limit.

Paul and I did the Lions Head Face in 1996 by climbing up the right side of its chin (true right) avoiding its mouth, reaching the bridge of its nose from under its right eye, and up the vertical furrow in its brow to finish on its mane.

One day we met a hunter with a rifle.

"Hello my friends. How are you?" he said in good English. "I'm looking for the porky pig. Have you seen it?"

Our 1996 visit was to be Trevor's last. Although we did not know it at the time, he was terminally ill. Nevertheless, in spite of being badly debilitated, tenacious to the last, he climbed five more new routes. The Jebel had provided him with five Indian summers of climbing. We had climbed together for 36 years, all over Britain, and had visited the Dolomites, Alps and Himalaya together. I was pleased that we had finished the Great Ridge the previous year and shall treasure the memories of all our adventures, enlivened by his unfailing enthusiasm, anarchic sense of fun and self-deprecatory humour.

About a week before Trevor Jones died in the spring of 1996 he gave me his notes for an article which he had intended to write for the CC Journal. They were scrawled and difficult to decipher, slanting across the pages. Reading through them, I could easily picture him again, mentally flitting about like a butterfly from one topic to another, making fantastic gestures with his hands, face and indeed his whole body, and having his audience in fits of laughter. As he asked to do, I've done my best to knock these notes into shape, and although occasionally I have had to guess at what was intended, the opinions expressed here were definitely his!

Bob Allen

Some People Who Have Influenced My Life

Trevor Jones

"When I came out of the RAF in 1951, I took up climbing again with the Birmingham Cave and Crag Club. It is difficult now, 45 years later, to portray the empty roads and the empty crags. After a couple of years I was leading Very Severs, having progressed through the grades wearing nailed boots.

One of the stars of the Cave and Crag was Harry Smith, a plasterer with incredible arm strength. He had keen eyes and a hawk-like nose and from the lips below it poured out a stream of salty stories and advice in an almost incomprehensible Brummy dialect. By this time the club had acquired a cottage at the back of Craig Pant Ifan and I could lie in bed and look over to Porthmadog and the estuary. Harry pronounced 'estuary' as 'estchoory', so I have called it that ever since. From our various first climbs it was grudgingly obvious that he was a better climber than me. He usually climbed in boots, as his mighty arms did most of the work. He couldn't stay with his family at weekends because of the conditions at home:

"My God, last weekend I stayed in on Saturday night. There was the old man, drunk, lying on the kitchen floor. Our wench's babby screams its head off, and our kid's revvin' his motor bike in the front room".

He was scornful of my skinny weak arms and invited me to join him as his labourer and do a real job of work. Harry had just come back from the Alps, and was soon whisking up things like *Deer Bield Buttress*, *F Route*, *Spectre* and *Kaisergebirge Wall*. Although it may be unbelievable to most people now, I was shy and timid in those far-off times, watching Harry's relentless surge upwards. From him I learnt how to tackle climbs aggressively, boldness often proving less trying than vague arm and foot waving at seemingly microscopic Welsh rock creases. Harry showed me that get-up-and-go attitude pays dividends.

One Whit weekend in Langdale we did *Kipling Groove*, *Deer Bield Buttress* and *Groove Super Direct*. I drank a pint of cider in the *Dungeon Ghyll Hotel* and

brought it all up again in three seconds. But that weekend triggered something and I led *Spectre* and *Ivy Sepulchre* on the following weekends.

These were the years of the pre-eminence of the Rock and Ice, with the mighty-muscled Don Whillans and Joe Brown at the pinnacle of their club, and also of British climbing.

What about Joe Brown?

My girlfriend at the time was Barbara, who thought it would be a nice idea to meet her friend Val. Val duly appeared.

"So you're Trevor Jones! A dirty dog, I'm told."

I tried to dispel this outrageous comment and pointed out that I was just a keen rock climber.

"You must meet my hubby, Joe."

I was staggered, but in due course met the great man. A flinty face which relented into a toothy smile.

"Better go into Derbyshire 'adn't we? Do a bit of 'and jamming."

Later, having pathetically seconded an overhanging crack which he had just walked up: "Haven't learnt much, have you Trev?"

I agreed. Better have a lesson. A lesson I've never forgot. Anyone can jam up a crack with perfect hand jams, it's the wider ones that take the skill. You can soon use up all your strength. Look into the crack once, shove your arm in and look away. Feel, until it is right, then just pull up to the next move. Never look into it, you'll keep fiddling about until your strength drains away.

I've never forgotten that lesson and it was probably the main reason why I continually attacked big cracks in the '50s.

Joe was by no means the strongest climber. In Chamonix, in 1958, Barbara, who weighed nine stone, sat on Joe's back and he shakily did one press-up. I could not raise myself one centimetre from the floor. Morty did an effortless ten press-ups and wondered what the fuss was about.

Hugh Banner

Hugh, in his time, was probably the best layback climber in the country. One day, in the '50s, all the top people converged on Froggatt to try the overhanging crack that was to be *Insanity*; Joe Brown, Don Whillans, Les Brown, Pat Walsh, Hugh Banner.

Each tried and all failed. Whillans' face became furiously red and it seemed as if he might pull the crack apart - and still failed. It was Banner's turn. With one shoulder cocked, into the corner, with effortless slowness, *Insanity* was born.

But Hugh was obsessed with Joe Brown's dominance of the sport. Hugh was probably number three, after Joe and Whillans, and he was fixated with the thought that Joe had somehow cheated his way up the routes. He spent most of his best years repeating Joe's hardest climbs, sometimes spending day after day repeating them. On the rare days on Cloggy when the weather was good his time was gobbled up with these repetitions when he should have been doing new routes.

However, Hugh did produce a few pearls. How many people do *Ghecko Groove* now? The protection is very sparse and the possibility of a serious fall is high, so it is quietly pushed to the back of the tick lists. But his high point in every respect is

Troach on the East Buttress of Cloggy, the first big serious wall climb in Wales, with sketchy protection and the possibility of a ground fall, produced in the days before nut runners and camming devices.

I remember in his later years on one of the Tuesday Derbyshire nights at Hen Cloud, there was a group of lean young men and Banner. He nonchalantly soloed down *Delstree*. You know it? With the hideous precarious move at the top, 40 feet above the ground. It caused a momentary hush and then there was a mad scramble to repeat his descent. *Spectre* in nailed boots was another tour de force.

We had many happy times together. Once, at Cwm Silyn, one wet camping night, we wondered why the guy lines were inside the tent. We assessed the problem scientifically and came to the conclusion that it increased the stability in windy conditions. In the morning, we realised that we had put it up inside out.

Pete Crew

Pete Crew wasn't the best climber in the Alpha Club; in fact, technically, he wasn't in the first half dozen. With all boulder problem experts, there are people who are superb up to ten feet, then there is an exponential decay in their abilities as the possibility of pain increases if they go higher. But Pete could produce his best form after a 100 foot run-out with no runners, and this is what saw off his contemporaries. I've never seen any one climb as fast as Pete, he seemed to attack a pitch like a sprinter, so that he didn't use excessive energy over any moves but fired his way up. Perhaps he was the first person, years before his time, to produce a 'dyno' type of climbing. Most important of all, he applied a scientific approach to new routes, having lists of crags and their potential new routes on them, which were all done in a mad rush as he applied his dyno-approach to them.

About *Central Pillar*, on Esk Buttress: he got wind of it in the pub that Allan Austin had it on his list for one weekend. Such a challenge was meat and drink to Pete and at crack of dawn he was off to snatch the glittering prize that had defeated Arthur Dolphin. That same day also caused Allan Austin much chagrin, for he appeared just to witness the picking of his plum.

But Pete wasn't any better than the Rock and Ice. Technically he wasn't as good as Joe, but applied his dyno-technique, his scientific approach and relentless determination to climb his wonderful routes. Tragically, he started to climb with Joe and the realisation came to him that he wasn't as good as the master; inexorably his self-confidence was eroded away as he grudgingly realised that he wasn't in the same league as Joe when it came to cracking a new route. Perhaps this came home to him with Joe's choice of *Dinosaur* as their joint route on Gogarth, which Pete sprinkled with pegs to get up.

Not long after this, Pete was on the slide from his pre-eminent position and Brown's flinty smile perhaps got a little wider as he realised he had semi-pushed Crew into a subservient position.

Obituary

Alan Bennet Hargreaves

1904 (1927) - 1996

AB died peacefully at the age of 92, after a short illness, in his local hospital in Ulverston, having survived about 10 years of arthritis, near blindness and diseased legs. Despite these handicaps he managed to live by himself and keep up a keen interest in climbing club doings, conservation in the Lakes and Wales and his own family's financial affairs. This was all achieved with reliance on his eldest daughter Susan and a dedicated series of helpers from the NHS and Social Services, a reader who read to him all the tedious detail from *The Daily Telegraph* financial pages, and a secretary for his voluminous correspondence.

He was born, the eldest of four brothers, on 22 April 1904 in Blackburn, where his father had a wholesale and retail tobacco business. On his own admission he was quite a handful, even from the day he was born. For instance his wanderlust led to him being brought home by the police one day after they had discovered him riding his tricycle down the tramlines into the middle of the town! On another occasion he was discovered on the road to Preston, having decided to run away to sea. Maybe this was understandable as his grandfather was Chairman of the Governors of Blackburn Girls High School, and AB was sent and 'suffered' there until he was nine.

In 1913 he went to Denstone School which he loathed and then in 1919 to HMS Conway, a training ship moored in the Mersey, for Merchant and Royal Navy Officers. He was much happier there but in the end was unable to join the Merchant Navy, as he had hoped, and so returned to Blackburn, where he did two years towards a BSc Engineering qualification at the Technical College.



Photo: A.J.J.Moulam

Leaving home in 1923 at the age of 19 he became articled to a firm of Chartered Accountants in Liverpool. He discovered climbing in 1925/6 when he had had a mountain biking holiday in Langdale. In those days there were no lightweight bikes with 15 or 21 gears and lugging a heavy roadster up mountain tracks in the Lakes and Yorkshire Dales no doubt appealed to his masochistic tendencies.

He records that 'my very first day's climbing on a mountain was with Robertson Lamb who was then over 60, and it was an unforgettable experience to see this old chap moving about so neatly and easily on quite difficult rock.' Whilst living in Liverpool he joined the Wayfarers' Club where he met W.R.Reade, J.M.Davidson, M.G.Bradley and Marco Pallis. He learnt a lot from them and from one day with C.W.Marshall. Only a little later he became a member of The Climbers' Club (in 1927) and then the Fell and Rock. This ubiquity was to enable him to make a balanced assessment of the interests of the majority of climbers, despite their various parochial views, for many years to come.

In 1928 he started to climb with Colin Kirkus, who was six years his junior. The Climbers' Club promptly nicknamed them 'The Suicide Club', perhaps not surprisingly as one their first exploits was Holly Tree Wall's *Original Route* (now 5a) in nailed boots and, to quote AB, "on a nice wet day"! Helsby was a convenient practice ground for them and they did a lot of climbing there. C.W.Marshall was a friend of both and when he was killed they took on the job of completing the Helsby Guide. As an aside AB never liked gritstone very much because the holds were always too far apart for his diminutive frame but the different nature of the Helsby sandstone, where there was always something available if only a sub visible rugosity, enabled him to bring his already considerable skill to a peak at which he was able to follow Colin up many of his new VS routes there.

Luckily AB's attitude to climbing was not either to get up the climb or fall off, but to go to any amount of trouble to avoid getting hurt, maimed or killed. Apart from paying meticulous attention to engineering the best possible belay in any circumstance, he developed his own belaying method, passing the rope over his shoulder to the leader, rather than under as was the normal recommended practice. It was certainly effective and contributed a lot to the future of our sport as AB almost certainly saved Colin's life on at least three occasions. Once when he (Colin) fell from South America Crack on Dow's *Great Central Route* and again on an attempt on the *Direct Start* crack to *Pinnacle Wall*. (Incidentally this pitch was not led until 1982, by George Band, and now rates 5b.) The third time was when over-enthusiastic flapping of Colin's hands to keep them warm, plummeted him from *Javelin Buttress*.

It was also at Helsby that AB met Menlove Edwards, then a student at Liverpool University. He invited him to the Lake District to see what real climbing was about and was impressed with his protégé's performance on *Tophet Wall Direct* in sparsely nailed boots, once again in the usual bad weather! They next visited Pillar, where Menlove flowed up the top pitch of *Walkers' Gully* in difficult conditions, after AB had failed. The two climbed together many times later and achieved several second ascents including *Great Slab* and *The Upper Slab* in Cwm Silyn, and of *Pigott's Route*, (although Pigott had already led it twice). They did the third ascent of *Curving Crack* and Edwards commented, "a fine climb, but I'm not sure if it is worth it. Definitely it is not if there is a terribly energetic little man swearing about above you on the rope and a tremendously heavy tall man swaying about below you on the rope."

It is a little surprising that AB led no significant first ascents, although climbing with such gifted, driven and ambitious performers it is likely that he gained his delight from organising the younger men. In the event he took part in the

following new routes: *Pharaoh's Wall* (with JME), *Heather Wall* (with FEH), *Central Rib*, *Rake End Chimney*, *Grooved Wall*, *Upper Slab Climb*, *Curving Crack* (all with CFK) and *Pillar Girdle* (with ML and AWB). Other notable ascents were the fifth of *Gimmer Crack* and the eighth of *Central Buttress*.

AB finally qualified as an accountant in 1929 and although Liverpool always retained its place in his heart he started to look around for another job. When he approached Lakeland Laundries his future was assured as the Chairman was W.G.Milligan, then vice president of the Fell and Rock, and as AB was without doubt one of the country's leading climbers, it is perhaps not surprising that he got the post in 1931. He stayed there for nearly 50 years, working his way up to Chairman, when he retired in 1973. This was not the end of the story as he then went on serving the company as a part time director until 1980. During this time the traditional laundry business was decimated by the introduction of washing machines to virtually every home and AB was involved in the changes necessary to survive, which included development of linen hire services, diversification into car dealerships and take-overs of other laundry enterprises so that the company prospered and became Lakeland Pennine Laundries.

Apart from climbing AB gave years of service to climbers and those who love the hills. He was a founder member and treasurer for 10-12 years of the Friends of the Lake District, and was on the Executive Committee for 50 years. He was a founder and director of the non-profit making company Lake District Farm Estates which bought farms and let them to tenants so that traditional methods could be retained. This enterprise was later taken over by the National Trust and the company was wound up. He was a keen supporter of The National Park when it was set up and he served for 15 years or more as Government appointee to the Lake District Planning Board but used to fulminate about its impotence if a development, however ugly (viz. silage towers) was reckoned to be necessary for Lake District farms. This work was rewarded by the Queen's Jubilee Medal in 1977.

I believe his first appointment for a climbing club was as custodian for RLH, the Wayfarers' hut in Langdale, but he only lasted a year and the job was then taken over by Harry Spilsbury. He was a member of the CC's Northern Committee from 1930-1933 and again from 1947-1951. As treasurer of the Fell and Rock he was a prime mover in the building of their first hut, Brackenclose, in 1938. In the '20s he was a regular visitor to Helyg and took a major part in its improvement, by the famous elimination of THE RAT. He served as President for both the Fell and Rock and the Climbers' Club and in the latter case effectively for six years as David Cox was stricken by polio, when AB was vice president and he stood in at most of the meetings. He was also offered the presidency of the Wayfarers' Club, but had to decline due to ill health, which would have made a unique treble. The Outward Bound School in Eskdale also benefited from his membership of its advisory board for many years.

In 1935 he married Maud Gordon who came herself from a distinguished climbing family, being the granddaughter of W.C.Slingsby and niece of Geoffrey Winthrop Young, but the marriage was not a success and it was dissolved in 1954. He leaves a son, three daughters, and eight grandchildren.

All this time AB continued to climb keenly pursuing his favourite pastime of 'mortification of the flesh', although often business 'caught him by the heels'. In

his late 60s and 70s he developed a passion for Ireland, its coasts and hills, and he set himself the objective of doing all the 2000 foot peaks on the island but the strength in his legs gave out before he could finish them.

He never lost his interest in AGMs. Even when unable to walk or climb because of the failure of his 'undercarriage' or eyes he still prepared himself for meetings and made characteristically shrewd and pointed interjections at appropriate moments. He kept a rapport with young climbers always being interested in their doings, right until the end.

Only weeks before he died I was able to take him onto Birkrigg Common where he struggled to a boulder about 100 yards from the road. He could go no further but remembered many times he had walked there through the years, and urged me to visit the summit whilst he waited, and then struggled back to the car. His funeral and wake was attended by many friends; we will all miss him.

Tony Moulam

Trevor Jones

1930 (1958) - 1996

The climbing world is full of rich and varied characters, and Trevor Jones was one of the most enthusiastic, exuberant, talkative, funny and extra-ordinary of them all. Quite simply he was one of the great characters of the post war climbing scene. Although he will always be remembered as a climber, he first went to the hills as a cyclist, in the shadow of his elder brother who was a famous racing cyclist, and for many years he was quite proud to be known as Stan Jones' brother.

Only eight weeks before he died, on our last day out together, Hilary, Trevor and I walked up Cader Idris on a fabulous wintry day and Trevor reminded us that he had first gone there and first seen the hills on his bike in 1947 or 1948. In 1948 he went to the Dauphiné Alps with a Ramblers party (can you imagine Trevor with the Ramblers?) with his life-long friend Reg Atkins whom he had met at grammar school, aged 11. Trevor was hooked by these experiences and became a climber.

After national service in the RAF where he was commissioned and for a time adjutant at Valley, he started climbing seriously in the early '50s, and his first big influence was Harry Smith with whom he did many hard climbs. As members of the Brave and Brag (sorry Cave and Crag) they stormed the Tremadog cliffs where Trevor put up a host of new routes including *Kestrel Cracks*, *One Step in the Clouds*, and *The Brothers* with B.A.F.Jones (who wasn't). He broke into the big league in 1958 with early leads of *Cemetery Gates*, *Cenotaph Corner* (perhaps the eighth ascent), *Vector* and the third ascent of the *East Buttress Girdle* of Cloggy. Always keen on new routes, he made a number of these new routes on Cloggy with Hugh Banner, Les Brown and Pete Hatton, including *The Hand Traverse*, *Guinevere* and *The Steep Band*.

He was a very strong, powerful and determined climber - feet didn't matter much because he had such a powerful chest and arms, and of course his natural

ability was helped by his carefully worked out 'J Plan' diet which he assiduously followed for 40 years: crisps, toffees, sausage butties and cider.

By now recognised as a leading British climber he was also renowned as a tremendous raconteur with amazingly funny facial expressions, who could keep pub audiences enthralled with his desperate tales of derring-do. Joe should tell us if *The Mostest* really was so-called because he had to spend three days in a darkened room to recover from the terrifying first ascent.

In Chamonix in 1958, his girlfriend at the time, Barbara Bennett, introduced him to Robin Smith (he soon realised Robin was a tough so and so) and they made the second British ascent of the *Brown-Whillans* route on the Blatière. He was the founder member in 1959, with Ron James and Tony Mason, of the Ogwen Cottage Mountain School, though to his disappointment, his involvement with that project did not last long. In 1961 he was a member of the famous Nuptse Expedition, notorious later as much for its squabbling as its success. Trevor did later forgive Chris Bonington for eating the tin of peas he had carried up and secreted at camp 3, and those stories of fighting and broken ribs are surely exaggerated.

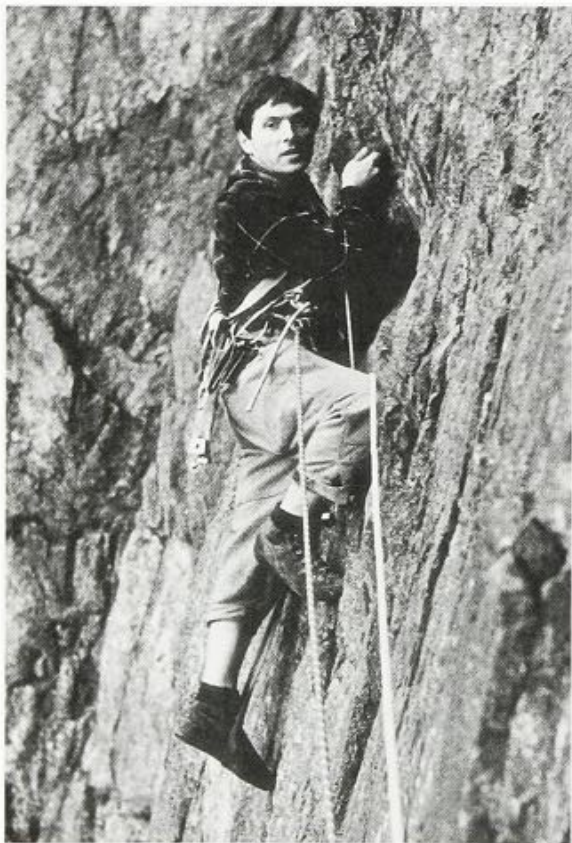


Photo: Bob Allen

All through the '60s Trevor continued going to the Alps, the *Comici* on the Cima Grande and the *Pilastro* on the Tofana with Les Brown, the *Solleder* on the Civetta and the Badile North Face with Jim Swallow, new routing in the Dauphiné with Derek Wiggett. He led a trip to Alam Kough in 1964, driving there as he had previously done to the Himalaya and relishing the travel, culture and history of the new places as much as the climbing.

I first met just before Easter 1958 with his friend Alfie Beanland and he gave me a lift down the Pass in his old ambulance. A week later Alfie died attempting *Zero Gully* on the Ben. I climbed a few times with Trevor in the early '60s and our partnerships were revived in 1971 after Hilary and I returned from a few years in Chile. By that time we both had little girls who got on well

together and we stayed a lot at the Jones' cottage above Deiniolen. At Easter 1971 I had the CTJ crash course in protection technique, when for my first hard route in five years he took me up *The Grooves* on Cynr Las and *Bloody Slab* on Cloggy. In my absence abroad, wired nuts and chocks had been developed and Trevor, as always, had more gear than anyone else, 'every cheating device known to man', and as a moveable belay at that time, I learned fast to 'take in tight on the blue.'

That year, 1971, he had researched the *Gervasutti* route, on Peak Gaspard in the Dauphiné, which hadn't had a British ascent, and with Bob Allen and Sherpa Roper we climbed it a few days before local expert John Brailsford. Over the next few years we went regularly to the Alps with Bob, Marjorie, Mike Mortimer and our close team of friends and he climbed a heap of great routes like the Meige traverse, the *Frendo Spur*, the Ferro Pillars, the *Mittelegi*, the Grauwand and the Kingspitze.

By the early '80s he had been to Yosemite and then discovered Kenya where he and Mark Savage made the third ascent of the difficult *Scott-Braithwaite* route on the Diamond Buttress, a formidable climb where Trevor led the 5c crux. His last big alpine route was ten years ago when with Mike, Marjorie and I, we climbed the *Cassin* on the Cima Ovest with its horrendously exposed traverse. The story later grew in the telling of course. We bivied at the top and after regaling us with hilarious stories of CC crinklies, he snored, as usual, all night long while we three shivered.

Although he had been from time to time a member of many clubs, the Cave and Crag, the MAM, the Cromlech, the ACG, and lately the Fell and Rock, his great love and loyalty from his election in 1958 was for the Climbers' Club. He loved the history and traditions. He was custodian of Helyg for ten years, wrote the first Tremadog guide and was Guide Book Editor for five years, was a long-serving committee member, organised, with Anna, those fantastic Ynys parties in the '70s and wrote regular amusing articles for the Journal. He achieved his greatest ambition by becoming the 27th Climbers' Club President in 1981, to follow in the footsteps of C.E. Mathews, Geoffrey Winthrop Young, George Mallory and Tom Longstaff - he could recite the names of all his famous predecessors. Trevor's presidency was certainly hectic and at times a stormy period, but things got done and his greatest achievement was finding and establishing the Pembroke Hut. True to form and in keeping with best CC traditions, on the day of the official opening by Wynford Vaughan Thomas, and after suitable liquid refreshment, Trevor went climbing with an ice axe for a belay.

His enthusiasm for climbing, and for walking in the hills never wavered. Trevor got people organised, he always had new or different projects - the Coast to Coast or the Pennine Way - he was a catalyst, he was always on the 'phone. I will remember the Sunday evening calls;

"Hello, had a good weekend? I've done....." and then reel off his latest exploits.

"What are you doing next weekend? Do you fancy a day out in the week?"

In the last few years he loved going to Spain and then Morocco with his old mates - Les, Claude, Pete, Paul and Joe. Morocco - "absolutely marvellous - done three new routes with the Master". He had given me up and took the mickey unmercifully while I worked at the BMC "Oh, you need an appointment to speak to Walker, he's always at meetings. Do you know, when he goes to bed, before

switching off the light, his last words to Hilary are "Is there any other business?"

He could of course be very forgetful. On our last climbing weekend together, in North Wales, he forgot his PAs one day and his harness the next. Fortunately Davey Jones was at hand to 'truss him up like a turkey' with some slings to make a harness and we managed a couple of E2s. How often did you hear him say:

"Oh, I'm a dozy old so and so - I forgot my sleeping bag again last weekend and had to sleep in a bit of old carpet". But we all thought he was 'as tough as teak' and that his little star would see him through.

We went to the new Warrington climbing wall - where he delighted in being called one of the Saga Louts - so he could get fit for Morocco. He was continuing to climb very well and it's great that his last few routes were with Joe in Morocco before he got ill. Cancer was diagnosed within a few days of his coming home and he was incredibly brave when he was dying and became so weak. He kept his spirits up and even the last time Roger and I visited when he was clearly so poorly, he made some quips about some stupid person he had seen on TV who had tried to fly off Ben Nevis and had fallen 400 feet and needed rescuing.

Trevor thought the world of Anna and fully appreciated how lucky he was to have been married to such a lovely woman for all those 33 years and to have been blessed with two terrific, bubbling and sporty daughters, Bridget and Victoria. There was a great bond between Trevor and Anna despite the occasional major row or 'Grand National' caused by some eccentric or outrageous misdemeanour.

Trevor has left us too soon. He was beginning to mold himself on a latter day A.B.Hargreaves and thought he had his mother's genes and would live like she did to a ripe old age.

"Tough old bird, my ma. If you think I drink you should have seen her. Her last words at 89 were: "You get a very good pub lunch at the Fox and Dogs"."

We shall all miss him tremendously and his departure leaves an enormous hole in our lives which will be impossible to fill - but the great stories and extravagant tales will live on.

Derek Walker

Bob Allen writes:

In addition to the points made by Derek Walker about Trevor concerning his enthusiasm, his barmy diet, his eccentric forgetfulness about his kit, his enormous dedication, his great ability to entertain and the way he acted as a catalyst in getting us out climbing, I would just like to remember his remarkable creativity. Sometimes it produced some quite potty gadgets and ideas, at other times it was obviously well-directed for he had a string of patents for new inventions registered to his name.

In another seam of creativity, he wrote two books, with Geoff Milburn: **Welsh Rock** and **Cumbrian Rock**, which were labours of love and researched with immense enthusiasm despite the obvious risk of upsetting people. But he also encouraged me greatly in my own new career as a writer/photographer of books for fell-walkers and he was always having new ideas for new books on which we would co-operate. The same creative drive led him to build his own advertising business; those of you who have built your own businesses from nothing will know what an effort that involves.

Ivan Mark Waller

1906 (1925) - 1996

Ivan Waller was born near Worthing in Sussex on December 27th and died at his home in Kendal on October 2nd, so narrowly failing to become a nonagenarian. During a full and eventful life this was probably his only failure for he was successful in pretty well everything he did.

Starting to climb whilst up at Cambridge reading Mechanical Sciences, Ivan joined the CC and quickly developed into the best rock technician of his day; the brightest star in the whole galaxy, often more distant, seldom seen, compared with the others; Colin Kirkus and Menlove Edwards, Alf Bridge, Fred Pigott and Maurice Linnell, not forgetting the ubiquitous Alan (AB) Hargreaves or Jack Longland, Ivan's lifelong friend from Cambridge days. Between the wars Ivan climbed with and was respected by all of them. He may not have led so many new routes as some but those he did were milestones in the development of rock climbing in North Wales and on Derbyshire gritstone: *Belle Vue Bastion* on Tryfan, *Fallen Block Crack* on Crib-y-Ddisgl and *Lone Tree Groove* at Cromford's Black Rocks hallowed names to my own generation. But something we didn't appreciate was the profound influence which Ivan Waller had on his fellow climbers during the late '20s and the '30s. His very participation in many of the first ascents led by others often ensured their success. The perception he had of possible danger and his flair for avoiding it was what made him a safe, careful and reliable partner. Ivan often told me that he was too easily frightened ever to have been a really top-class climber and I think the first part of this statement was true, but that was the very reason he was one, and probably the best soloist before World War II. His first lead of *Belle Vue Bastion*, in 1927, was a breakthrough in

Welsh rock climbing, but soloing it two days later, (and to musical accompaniment from a gramophone he had pre-placed on *Belle Vue Terrace* above!), was quite extra-ordinary. It just had to be followed by a handstand on Adam, or Eve - one of those two blocks on Tryfan's summit. (Later, Ivan did another on the more intimidating top of *Napes Needle*). *Fallen Block Crack*, three months after, was then in a single unprotected pitch of 115ft, his companion simply refusing to follow. In 1928, *Lone Tree Groove* - a good VS which still stops a fair number of intending leaders, Ivan described as; 'an ordinary boot climb, (that meant nails in those



Photo: George Warburton

days)---not at all difficult, except at the start.'

Most folk cannot understand why Ivan, despite his obvious talent, did not do many more new routes. The answer lies in his other activities, sporting and professional. Even before he left Cambridge to become an engineer Ivan had a passion for driving motor cars extremely rapidly and by the early '30s he was one of this country's most promising young racing drivers. Ivan may have been scared enough by steep rock to make him ultra-careful and safe when climbing it, but behind the wheel of his racing Alvis he became a fearless, daredevil driver. This was cameoed in the story (1985/86 CCJ) of how he won the Irish Motor Club's premier sports car event at Phoenix Park, Dublin in 1932, with a white knuckled Alf Bridge by his side as the (then) obligatory in-car mechanic. Only when Alf's mum saw a picture in the Sunday paper, of the pair of them bedecked with winner's laurels being cheered by admiring spectators, did she realise that her son's story about going off with Ivan, in his car for a few days at Helyg was simply a 'porkie'. And to think she'd distinctly told Alf not to let Ivan drive too fast!

Much later, in the '50s, Ivan was still one hell of a car driver. At the age of 46 he drove a Jaguar XK120 at Le Mans; it was the first privately entered car to finish behind the winning Jaguar and other works teams. Ivan himself drove for 18 of the 24 hours and during through the night, on a wet track, was lapping faster than anyone. (His co-driver, and owner of the car, was Rob Lawrie, of boot making fame.)

There is a tale about Ivan's car racing days, when practice for circuit events was often done on quiet public roads, which recalls how his Alvis Silver Eagle went into a certain corner at such a high rate of knots that it completely disregarded his turn of the steering wheel and flew straight into the garden of a country cottage. Ivan clambered out to go and apologise to the occupant(s). Before he got to the door it opened and a little old lady appeared:

"Are you all right young man?" she asked; "You must be shaken, come inside and I'll make you a cup of tea." Always attracted by, as well as attractive to, the opposite sex of all ages Ivan couldn't refuse. After her cup of tea with Ivan, his apologies and thanks, he backed the Alvis out of her garden and sped on his way. A few days later, determined to get round that corner, flat out in second, he ended up in the garden again, with renewed apologies and another cup of tea. Now those readers who never knew Ivan will not believe it, whilst those who did most certainly will, but it did happen a third time. On that occasion he had to knock on the door, give the old lady one of his charming smiles and say;

"It's me again and I'm terribly sorry but you do make such a nice cup of tea."

While still at University, Ivan found he had a natural talent for staying upright on all types of snow at all sorts of angles and, bitten by the ski-ing bug, he soon became a highly skilled and experienced skier - piste or otherwise (as he himself would say). Throughout his life he skied whenever or wherever he could. In 1951 he won a medal in the veteran's class of the Parsenn Derby at Davos and was also the first person to ski down east face of Helvellyn to Red Tarn. In later years he did many notable alpine traverses on skis including, as a senior citizen, the Haute Route, from Chamonix to Saas Fee. Even until he was nearly 80, Ivan regularly instructed on ski courses in Switzerland and I recall him telling me about the very last beginner's course he did there. At the end-of-course party, each instructor

having to recite or do something to amuse, Ivan composed a little ditty:-

"When trying to teach a young lady to ski, I couldn't get her to bend her knee.
She might make it flex, in bed for sex, but she wouldn't do it for me."

(I never did figure out whether he gave up ski-instructing due to disappointment or old age).

Most of Ivan's working life was spent in the motor industry. After graduating he gained his first practical engineering experience in a garage which specialised in preparing sports cars for racing and then in an iron foundry before joining Rolls-Royce in Derby. There he worked on car engine and chassis development, eventually taking charge of their reliability testing operations in France. When war broke out in 1939 he volunteered for the armed forces but was persuaded to stay at R-R and train as a flight test engineer in their aero-engine division. He learned to fly, as a matter of course, and was given specific responsibility for their newest and most powerful aero-engine - the Vulture. This involved him in tests on a revolutionary design of sea plane based on the Clyde.

Early in 1941, during its final maximum speed test over the west coast of Scotland, aerodynamic problems caused the aircraft to become unstable and eventually crash into the sea. Ivan was one of only two survivors out of its five test crew who managed to escape by parachute and were rescued from a freezing cold sea, in the nick of time, by a passing anti-submarine patrol.

After the war he returned to the car division and became the senior test and development engineer - a demanding job, though it did give him an occasional opportunity to visit North Wales. Back axles and chassis components could be tested there, on quiet roads, and Ivan's assistants too on the even quieter buttresses of Clogwyn du'r Arddu. (I didn't work for IMW then but was fortunate enough, on two occasions, to help him out with that Clogwy test!).

In 1948 Ivan left Rolls-Royce to join a firm of brake and clutch lining manufacturers in Manchester as Technical Director. Quite by chance, in 1951, I became his assistant. He was the perfect boss, firm but always ready to listen to other points of view before making a decision and much of the time there would be a sparkle of humour in whatever he said or did. Extremely competent, practically as well as theoretically, he was well known throughout the motor industry. His published paper on vehicle brakes had been awarded the George Stephenson Medal of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and remained, for many years, a standard piece of work on drum brake design and analysis. Ivan left Manchester in 1953, moving to a large automotive components company based in Leamington Spa, occupying a variety of senior positions until his retirement early in the 70s.

Just prior to retiring Ivan became hooked on long distance walks. At the age of 64 he did the Pennine Way, aided by a big, twin-cylinder motorbike, (yet another of his many interests), Starting from Edale and doing it piecemeal at weekends. Then, at 65, he back-packed it all in one go, from north to south, and in the 10 days allowed by SAS and paratroop training schemes. Afterwards there was hardly any big walk one could mention without Ivan admitting, rather shyly, that he'd done it. I was telling him about my son doing the Lyke Wake Walk a couple of years ago and, in typical fashion, he recalled that when he did that 24 hour, 40-odd mile flog across the North Yorkshire Moors, during the night he was overtaken by a party of ten policemen, taking part in the event.

"They weren't in uniform," he told me with a smile; "So I wasn't cautioned." During the following day Ivan caught up with them on a number of occasions. "Each time there was one less," he said; "Until I arrived at Ravenscar where there were only six of them." Another smile - typically Ivan; "Rather like that song, 'ten green bottles'. Only these were blue ones."

Full time retirement saw Ivan not only fell walking but rock climbing again regularly; mostly in Cumbria as he and his wife Helen had moved to live there. He revelled in the magic of modern equipment and safety provided by artificial protection devices, repeating many of those classic climbs of earlier days. One such route was Scafell's *Mickledore Grooves* on which he had seconded Colin Kirkus during the first ascent. He also climbed quite a lot in Scotland, on one occasion with his sprightly 71 year old friend, Charles Warren, making a continuous traverse of the *Cuillin Ridge* in Skye. Typical of his meticulous planning, Ivan had reced the whole route just three weeks earlier, to make sure everything would go smoothly and safely. He himself was 70 years old.

But his climbs as a senior citizen were not confined solely to rock. In 1984 at the age of 77, after attending a Scottish Mountaineering Club Meet, Ivan made a winter ascent of *Tower Ridge* on Ben Nevis.

During his Scottish visits Ivan completed all the Munroes, helped by Helen who functioned as cook, custodian and co-driver of their transportable climbing hut - a VW Combi. He went on to do the Grand Slam by visiting the Irish 3000ft tops, having already done those Welsh and Lakeland summits on umpteen occasions.

On one of his rarer visits to North Wales, for Climbers' Club celebrations to mark the diamond jubilee of Helyg, Ivan joined a large party led by Derek Walker and climbed his famous *Belle Vue Bastion* once more. He was almost 79 years old. Just a year later I took him to Snowdonia again, as principal guest at the Cromlech Club's annual dinner. Ivan had always been a good after dinner speaker, so often representing one of the many clubs of which he was a member. And like a good whisky he improved with age becoming very much in demand, for his amazing real life stories always sprinkled with a few funny ones. They would hold his audience or raise a laugh whether they were being told to the Steering Wheel Club in Soho or the Pinnacle Club in Pen-y-Gwryd. After the Cromlech dinner we spent an enjoyable day on Moel Siabod, climbing its delightful but easy *East Ridge*. Ivan took his old, long-shafted ice axe along, to use as a walking stick on the way down. Reaching the summit trig column, which was surrounded by lots of young people, he shouted;

"Come on Peter! We've done it at last!" Then, turning to a youngster nearby he asked; "This is Snowdon isn't it?" The lad looked dumbfounded and replied;

"No sir. Snowdon is right over there." He extended an arm, finger pointing, to the south west. With feigned surprise on his face Ivan shouted to me again;

"Sorry Peter! We aren't there yet, it is that one on the horizon." He raised his axe to point then set off in the direction of the distant Horseshoe. After a few steps he turned and smiled to his youthful audience - it got laughs all round. Typical Ivan Waller humour.

It was on our homeward journey that he told me about his experiences with that doomed seaplane for I had always wondered why he occasionally wore a tiny, gold caterpillar tiepin. (Escape by parachute automatically made one an

honorary member of that other CC, the Caterpillar Club.)

Recalling the past I was reminded that, during the war, Ivan sometimes helped Alf Bridge to run climbing courses for the Commandos and after the war had been invited to join an ex-commando party at Ogwen Cottage – it was a sort of reunion. When I arrived they were breakfasting and Alf introduced them to me one by one. There was Brian Hilton-Jones whom I already knew as a fellow member of the Climbers' Club and a much decorated ex-commando officer who had been badly wounded and captured during a wartime raid. Everyone there turned out to be the hero of some raid or other in enemy held territory. I felt very humble in such illustrious company, then embarrassed when Alf introduced me as 'one of our best young climbers who has led some of the hardest routes, etc etc.' Introductions over, for I already knew Ivan Waller who sat at one end of the table, there was only the sound of knives and forks. Until Ivan spoke;

"That new climb of yours on Black Rocks, Peter," he said; "is certainly not VS. I don't think it is even a Mild Severe." Everyone in the room stopped eating; there was a pregnant silence. Here was Ivan the Terrible, one of the finest climbers in Britain, clearly telling this young pretender where he gets off. (As for me, I felt as if a pinnacle on which I had been placed was about to fall over. (Before I could reply, Ivan spoke again; "It's only fair to admit, to everyone here, that when I tried Peter's new route I couldn't get up it." Well of course everyone roared with laughter, including myself. It was just one example of the way in which Ivan Waller encouraged young climbers like me, with his own brand of mischievous humour, taking the mickey then turning the tables on himself. (And I'll bet he shot up that *Lawyer's Left Hand Route* - which I actually graded as Hard Severe.)

Without doubt Ivan Mark Waller truly was a man amongst men - and women; a great rock climber, mountaineer, motor racer, flier, skier, long distance walker, automobile engineer and humorist. He was also an Hon. member of this Club, a former Vice President and perhaps the best President we never had. (So leaving that issue of women membership for a canny Scot to sort out a few years later.) Few people could have crammed so much into life, even if they lived to be 90, or more. He will be much missed by Helen and his two sons, Peter and Tim, as well as his many friends. But all of us are happy in the knowledge that when Ivan lived it had to be life to the full. And so it was.

Peter Harding

Tom Peacocke

1908 (1932) - 1996

Tom Peacocke died on 28th July 1996, aged 88. He was elected to the Climbers' Club in 1932, and I had known him since 1960. He had been resident in a nursing home for the last years of his life and his death was not unexpected, but with him also passed a singular character of immense mountaineering experience, and a much loved and well-remembered schoolmaster in the old style.

Thomas Arthur Hardy Peacocke was born in India, the son of a British army officer in the Worcestershire Regiment. I recently saw for the first time some photographs of him at a very young age in the arms of his ayah, and there already

was the piercing look of purpose and single-mindedness which stayed with him right to the end of his life.

Not surprisingly for the son of an army family, he was sent to school at Wellington College, Berkshire, after which he went on to University College, Oxford, taking his degree in Chemistry and with the intention of teaching. Up to that time, he had never been near a mountain, but in the late 1920's first jobs were hard to come by, and he found himself taken on at a small British-run private school in Chateau d'Oex, where the Principal evidently had a highly irritating and seemingly inexhaustible supply of Spoonerisms with which he sought to impress his wife, his staff and his young charges alike. But Tom now had his jumping off point, and his love for climbing and ski-ing grew and blossomed rapidly, as did his catalogue of classic alpine climbs.

His well known book on Mountaineering, in the Sportsman's Library series, was published right in the middle of the war in 1941, and makes clear the great wealth of experience - principally alpine, both guided and unguided - which he had amassed in the decade leading up to World War II. It is also a model of clarity and brevity of expression, even if some of its wide-ranging advice was effectively out of date, just as the Alps were completely inaccessible, at the time of its publication. But 20 years on, Tom was still tickled to be receiving enquiries from the remoter parts of the world as to how a copy could be obtained.

During the War, he had a considerable involvement with ski-troop training, principally the Lovat Scouts, firstly in the Cairngorms, then in the Rockies, tasting storm-force conditions aboard the 'Mauretania' in the North Atlantic en route, and finally in the Apennine hinterland of Rome. Here he had a narrow escape in a windslab avalanche which killed a number of men, and in which Tom went over a cliff and said he felt himself very close to death and 'outside his body'. In the subsequent enquiry he was exonerated.

Afterwards and now in his late 30s, Tom settled to his main spell of teaching and housemastering at St. John's School, Leatherhead. I gather from a number of his former pupils that he was a never to be forgotten teacher of Chemistry, and I suspect an outstanding one at that. It was obvious to me that his measured verbal delivery was unique and would not be hard to imitate, and of course boys did so, but only with the same kindness and good humour as he showed towards them. Not all schoolmasters, if they are honest, can say the same.

Throughout these years and later when he was teaching at Charterhouse close to retirement, Tom took regular parties ski-ing and climbing, the latter usually in Wales, during the school holidays. He also went to New Zealand in 1968, where he climbed Mount Cook with a guide, apparently upstaging Noel Odell who had failed to do so during his six years at Otago University.

Through a mutual friend I was invited to join one of his parties at Helyg in 1960, and as I have written elsewhere:

"Teatime at the end of our first day was enlivened by the arrival of an avalanche of telegrams for Tom. Some were on the old buff paper, some the new greetings sort, so whatever it was, it didn't look like an unspeakable disaster. These were being delivered in relays by a breathless youth in a peaked cap on a red Post Office motorbike. Curiosity grew to almost fever pitch, but well mannered as we were, nobody had the bottle to ask. So it was Tom who suddenly broke the silence by blurting out, "I suppose I'd better tell you the ghastly truth -

I've got engaged to be married." His exact words, I promise you, and instant approval when all was revealed. The thought lingered all week amongst us that here was one of the great exponents of bachelor schoolmastering who had succumbed graciously and unexpectedly at last, and who had timed its announcement to mischievous perfection."

Immediately after retirement he and his wife made haste to move to Andorra, where he greatly enjoyed, while he still could, the gentler climbing and ski-ing which the Principality had to offer, returning and finally settling in south Devon in the mid '80s.

Tom was an extremely loyal but not a well known Club member, the latter for two reasons. Most obviously, his termtime residential life was too tightly circumscribed to allow him to get away to Club dinners and meets. I also suspect his very first love was for the Alps and that his outlook was always influenced accordingly. But he knew the classic Welsh climbs well and was a marvellous correspondent, unfailingly encouraging to me and to others of later generations.

His alpine record was considerable. He was on the committee of the Alpine Club and also helped to organise their centenary celebrations in 1957.

In some ways Tom, by the time I got to know him, was inevitably the product of a bygone age, but there was never a trace of stuffiness about him when it came to listening to fresh ideas, or getting younger climbers of less experience than himself to 'have a go'. This was one of the delightful contrasts for those who could see it and enjoy the unexpected opportunities it brought. But Tom could also be, and was, alarmingly direct - still in his most measured way - when he thought he was right and suspected somebody else of getting it wrong. I once found this out for myself.

The passion in Tom was there right to the end. The last time I saw him he was severely incapacitated, and to help things along, I mentioned three distinctive climbs I knew he had done and enjoyed between the '30s and the '60s - *Great Slab* on Cloggy, *Soap Gut* and the *Waterpipe Gully* on Skye. His eyes lit up and he suddenly started to reminisce, almost as if he had done all three in the last few weeks and the excitement of achievement was still there within him. To rekindle the flame, albeit briefly, was a moving privilege.

He is survived by his wife Constance, who received with her unfailing good humour the Club's letter of condolence on his death some nine months too soon.

Richard Owen

Mike Statham

1947 (1990) - 1996

Mike Statham, who joined the Club in 1990, was in many ways a typical CC member. He had a long standing love of Welsh climbing dating back to the late 1960's when he worked his way through most of the routes of the day. He had a wide experience of mountains around the world; Yosemite, the Cordillera Blanca, the Karakoram, the Saharan Hoggar. He served his local Cleveland Club with distinction and was for ten years an unobtrusive, tolerant and enthusiastically improving warden of its Patterdale hut. He continued to climb hard.

Yet, again like most CC members, he was totally individual. Laid back, gentle and considerate he shunned the limelight. Typically in the 1989/90 Journal a photo of him and Ian Seville on the *Skull* had no names on the caption.

But within him were fierce passions. He hated regulations, especially those that cramped his dramatic driving style, he despised the shoddy standards of mass production (especially of car makers when he was reassembling their products). And he had an ideal concept (shared with Comici) of what a rock climb should be. I have spent many an anxious hour whilst in the face of guidebook advice he fought a purist line. One afternoon on Cloggy we must have tried all combinations of the *Leech*, *Serth* and *Serth Direct* as Mike worked out his distaste for indirect lines.

Mike also had absolute standards on rock quality. Another memory is of toiling through hot forests in the Durance Valley to a guidebook 'belle falaise' and the look of utter disgust on Mike's face when the wasteland of orange and red decomposing limestone appeared out of the trees. Mike didn't compromise and we left the rock untouched.

Mike's strength and technical skills were formidable but he preferred to enjoy several hard routes in a day rather than one desperate one. He probably could have climbed harder but he loved food too much to maintain an optimum climbing weight. His enormous bait box was always a sight of the crag with its selection of sandwiches, pies, cakes, biscuits and bars. It didn't leave much room in his 'sac for gear, which didn't matter as he had very little and that was ancient. He thought ropes were bought for life and that rock boots should be comfortable enough to wear to the pub. An ascent of *Comes the Dervish* in Fires large enough to wear over two pairs of socks and achieved almost entirely on finger strength before an unbelieving audience ended his interest in slate.

Gradually, as with many of us traditionally reared climbers, he realised the benefits of training and modern gear and that it admitted him to routes end places beyond what he had thought possible. In 1995 he realised some long standing ambitions including an immaculate ascent of the *Axe* which he had eyed for some years.

But whilst Welsh climbing inspired Mike he still felt a closest affinity with the Lakes and when he had some spare time would always return to Patterdale. His last day out was from the Cleveland hut on which he had worked so hard, around the fells above Grisedale that he loved and on the final slope back into the valley a freak avalanche swept him away.

John Chadwick

Dr W.H. (Bill) Ward

1917 (1938) - 1996

The Club was informed of the death of Bill Ward by means of a letter from his bank. The Editor commenced a search for an obituary writer, but had great difficulty until, at a stage close to printing, our member Stanley L.Thomas provided interim information, in the hope that a more complete obituary could be provided in a later Journal.

Derek Walker also provided information, obtained from Bob Robinson (ex President of the MAM) that can be used at this stage, as Bill Ward was a very important member of the BMC Equipment Committee.

Stanley L. Thomas writes:

Before the war, Bill and I were members of the Imperial College Mountaineering Club and with this body, we enjoyed Christmas at Helyg, Easters in the Lakes and had two splendid summer visits to Norway. Then Bill went to Jan Mayen with the pre-war Imperial College Expedition and it was this experience which generated his life-long interest in glaciology, rather at the expense of rock climbing pursuits. Nevertheless, he chaired the BMC Equipment Committee until the move to Manchester, when he became an Honorary Member of the Council.

His professional concern with soil mechanics and his personal interest in glaciers and their ways, were closely intertwined and kept him busy until his death.

Derek Walker writes:

Bill was a key figure in the BMC Equipment Committee - chairman for 29 years, from the formation of the BMC in 1945 until the move to Manchester in 1974. He was made Honorary Member of the BMC for his services.

Bill took part in an important expedition to Central Baffin Island in 1950 (see his article in the 1951 CCJ), when 20 members from many countries attended, under the leadership of Pat Baird.

On his Welsh climbing, Bill was on the first ascent of *Gawain* (Craig Yr Ogof) with Kretschmer, Emlyn Jones and Carpendale in 1943, and *Cockroach Crack* (Craig Yr Isfa) in 1944.

Bill Robinson writes:

My contact with him was limited to membership and as secretary of the Equipment/Technical Committee of the BMC when Bill was chairman (1945-1974). He was a forceful and determined chairman and much concerned about the quality of the equipment available. In the 'beginning' ropes and karabiners were our main concern, and later helmets. He arranged for the testing, in a number of government, university and company laboratories, of the equipment on the market. Frank Solari was vice-chairman.

As far as I can recall, his main climbing interests were in expeditions to places like Baffin Island, Greenland and Spitzbergen.

Bill was a civil engineer and had a director level post at the Building Research Establishment in Watford.

Derek Walker adds:

Some achievements of the BMC Technical Committee during its first 30 years.
(Summarised by Frank Solari)

- * Preparation of a specification for natural fibre climbing ropes. Issue of test reports on the relative merit/demerit of the available natural fibre ropes withdrawal from sale of the long-respected 'Alpine Club Rope' with red threads through the strands.
- * Publication of the vulnerability of the hawser-laid nylon climbing rope of

about 4.25lb/100ft ('full-weight' when nylon climbing ropes first became available in Britain) to damage when rope was dragged over rough rock during falling-leader accidents. More substantial nylon rope of about 5.5lb/100ft was recommended and came into general use, and was so recommended in **British Standard 3104:1959 Nylon Mountaineering Ropes** - the first such standard in the world.

- * Development of a new 'knotability' test to overcome the tendency of knots in some European 'kernmantel' ropes to become untied while in use. This test was offered to and accepted by the UIAA.
- * Publicity for the very inadequate designs and strength of many types of karabiner on the market-particularly of British war-surplus items. Development of a specification for light alloy and steel karabiners.
- * Development of **British Standard Specification 4423:1969** for climbers' helmets, which influenced the trade to produce better helmets.
- * Published the results of tests on the holding capacity of pitons of various designs on various types of rock.
- * Published the weakness of belay loops made of thin nylon 'line' of about 1.25lb/100ft as evidenced by the Cynr Las fatality. Issued advice to use much heavier rope for such loops. Issued recommendations for stitching belay loops of webbing to retain the strength of the material.
- * Issued recommendations for harness designs.

This work derived from studies of ropes and other equipment in use and particularly of items that failed in use and in accidents; from tests in laboratories and in the field; from consultations with experts in specialised fields, with the industry and with the UIAA.

The committee took a technical approach to the problems with testing and subsequent reports, in contrast to the UIAA which relied more on legal remedies for ensuring better standards. Each subject was thoroughly examined, problems solved and papers and reports published (usually in **Mountaineering**). It was an area of considerable achievement for the BMC - an object lesson of what can be done by a small group of dedicated experts. Griffin's departure from the National Engineering Laboratory in 1970 marked the end of an era but the BMC Equipment Committee continued to do effective work (in close collaboration with the UIAA) as described by George Steele in his detailed report.

(Text taken from **The First Fifty Years of the BMC**, published 1997)

Editor's note: Unfortunately the original notification of Eric's death went astray. We thank Peter Evans for providing the following obituary.

Eric Downes

1896 (1925) - 1985

Eric Downes (Honorary member 1980-1985) was elected to the CC in October



*Eric Downes second from left with family and Climbers' Club friends in the Alps 1925.
Photo: Downes Family Collection*

1925, proposed by Herbert Carr and seconded by Maurice Guinness (as was his friend George Lister, editor with Carr of **The Mountains of Snowdonia**, and later to become the godfather of Eric's only son Bob).

He was born in 1896 at King's Lynn of Anglo Irish stock; later the family moved to Cambridge where he attended the Perse school. From there he obtained a place at City and Guilds, the Engineering constituent of Imperial College. His studies, along with so many others (the Imperial College Roll alone lists over 2,400) were interrupted by the Great War and in November 1915 he was commissioned in the Royal Engineers. He joined the British Expeditionary Force in France in March 1916. He was wounded in March 1917 and his Military Cross was Gazetted in May 1917. He was invalided home in March 1918 after being gassed and again wounded. On his recovery he spent the last few months of the war as a Bridging Instructor. However, he was not to get back to university so soon, being sent off with the British Military Mission to Siberia by way of Canada in December 1918 (acting Captain): smallpox on the liner, hospital in Halifax, then to Vancouver, Vladivostock, Chita - we forget how long it all took in those days. It wasn't until July 1919 that he arrived back in London and was demobilised. He completed his university course in 1920 and took a first in Engineering. After a short spell as a Consulting Hydraulic Engineer he joined Sir Robert McAlpine and Sons and stayed with them until his retirement in 1964.

He started climbing in Wales when he was working on the Welsh Highland Railway at Beddgelert in 1922 or on the dam and power station, Maentwrog,

between 1924 and 1927. Certainly he had many photographs of a (largely CC) party in the Alps dated by him -1925 -, with names of people (Garnet, Reid, Anderson, Bowman, 'Carr, père et fils', Watson, Lawen, Lister, Lochmatter, and also there were his sister and his future wife) and places (Glacier du Géant, Torino Hut, the summits of Mont Blanc and the Aiguille du Midi, the Tour Ronde and so on).

Eric Downes was the most reticent and self-effacing of men (yet with a gravitas that was almost tangible) and it is no surprise that he recorded few of his climbs. His name heads the (un-alphabetical) list of 'friends who have assisted me' in Carr's book **A Climber's Guide to Snowdon** (London 1926). On one of the few occasions when I was able to draw him out a little on his climbing (he was equally taciturn about the war; I knew nothing of his wounds or his MC until recent weeks) my question 'Who led, when you were climbing with Carr?' brought the answer, 'We usually led through'. But it is clear from the article - **Cwm Silyn and Tremadoc** (J.Neill CCJ 1955) that he led the first ascent of *The Recess Route* (1925) and of *The Scarf* (1928) on Trwyn-y-Craig and, with G.A.Lister, *The Engineers' Route* on Craig Fawr (1925). The position of the apostrophe suggests that Lister, too, was an engineer - having seen Eric do The Observer Ximenes crossword in short order I know that the apostrophe would have been accurately placed, none of your hand waving and 'same difference' for him.

He had strong sense of patriotism, loyalty, duty: typically he concluded that a married man with a young family should not indulge a love of rock-climbing. However, when his son Bob, in his turn at the Perse, was introduced to climbing by one of the schoolmasters, Alec Storr (1899-1954 CC), he encouraged his interest. Bob's death on Masherbrum in 1957 at the age of 25 was the bitterest of blows. Eric was a member of (and generous contributor to) the R.O.Downes Memorial Trust which led to the donation of the Froggatt hut to the Club.

Many or the qualities one valued in Bob as a friend could be discerned under Eric's more reserved exterior. When all is said and done Eric was a man as reliable as the Greenwich meridian. It prompts the thought that, whereas most of us know we rely on 'the medics' when our human architecture and machinery go wrong, we take for granted the skill and integrity of our professional engineers in preventing the everyday world collapsing about our ears in the first place.

Peter E. Evans

Editors note: Thanks are due to Paul Burt for the following addition to the obituary published in the 1995 CCJ.

Tony Newton Husbands

1923 (1945) - 1995

I would like to add a little to Tony's obituary in the 1995 CCJ as I introduced him to climbing and was intermittently in contact with him for the rest of his life.

We first met during World War II when we were both employed in testing chemical warfare agents. Based at Runcorn we were close to Helsby Rocks where

I climbed with some other members of the laboratory and occasionally in North Wales where my CC membership allowed me to use Helyg. When Tony arrived at the lab. he soon became interested in climbing and joined the group. He was very enthusiastic and his great hand and arm strength gave him enviable natural advantages - so much so that on the more juggy routes at Ogwen he tended to regard footwork as an 'optional extra'. This could terrify seconds on the rope unused to Tony, who didn't know that he habitually spent long periods hanging from small holds, with boots scratching impotently! Connected to their leader with a hemp rope and no protection other than their stance belay, their fear was forgivable. In fact I never knew Tony to come off when leading even at this stage of his climbing development and when his footwork improved he became a bold and safe leader at up to HVS. He retained this hand and arm strength for most of his life and even in his 50s could still haul himself hand over hand up a single rope without using his feet.

His enthusiasm for long routes on Scottish mountains foreshadowed his eventual preference for alpine climbing. For a time our ways parted though we still kept in touch and in recent years, when we had both retired, we met occasionally to walk in the Peak.

Tony changed little. He was always a great companion with whom to share the hills, with a generally kind and considerate nature and a good sense of humour. There was, however, a streak of irascibility which the stresses and frustrations of climbing occasionally stoked up to bursting point and the resultant explosion could be quite impressive! Fortunately these outbursts were short-lived and he soon reverted to his customary geniality.

He had numerous interests other than climbing but none, I think, which meant as much to him. Not unusually among climbers he loved powerful machinery motor bikes, sports cars and even steam locomotives. He once drove a Gresley A4 Pacific on an Aberdeen-Edinburgh night express. The train was running late and the driver encouraged Tony to 'get her moving'. Having reached 80mph Tony thought this would be satisfactory, only to be told firmly that he would have to do better than that. He needed no encouragement and soon had the A4 roaring along in the 90s - one of the high points of his life I think!

About his many other achievements he was always modest and reticent and I was quite unaware of some of them until he had died. Tony would eventually have discovered climbing for himself I am sure, but I am glad to have had the opportunity to introduce him to our sport which he obviously found so rewarding.

I shall always associate him with our early climbing, when we were discovering the mountains, and I am truly sorry that we can no longer recall those times in mutual reminiscence.

Paul Burt

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Reviews

Into the Blue: A Climbers' Club Guide to 'Deep Water Soloing' in Dorset
Climbers' Club 1996

Edited by John Willson
Price £6.50

This guide comes as a breath of fresh air! After all the trad/bolt ethics arguments of recent times, here is a group of visionaries, who have created something really new. Soloing on good rock over the sea, in the UK!

If you're thinking 'this book and article is for super hard sports climbers only' you're wrong. If you can climb 5a there is plenty to have a go at, and at 5b/c loads. The superb photographs are inspiring and show the high quality of rock, although even on the south coast, not every summer's day is quite so warm and blue!

Into the Blue is edited by John Willson, and written by Jonathan Cook, Mike Robertson, Steve Taylor and Damian Cook. The book is well written, with great style and humour. I found it uplifting, and laughed out loud when reading it. Here is a group of true enthusiasts, who have developed specialist techniques and systems of their own.

An S0 to S3 grade indicating seriousness, is used along side the traditional grading system. There is an informative section on tides and techniques, and the reader is well informed where routes require a high spring tide, or there are submerged boulders etc.

The book covers Swanage to Portland, with many interesting venues. The maps and topos are clear and visiting climbers should have no problems in locating routes.

Whether you fancy a 'swash buckling tarzan swing on a knotted hemp rope to hit the route with minimal fuss' or a classic El 5b over at least 20 feet of blue sea, 'after your first splash down you'll never look back'. Well done to the CC for backing this book. At £6.50 this guide is a must for anyone visiting the Dorset coast, and an essential addition to Nigel Coe's definitive guide. See you on the south coast next summer!

Pete Finklaire

The Scottish Glens
Cicerone Press 1996

Peter Koch-Osbourne
Price £5.99

- Book 1. The Cairngorm Glens
2. The Atholl Glens
3. The Glens of Rannoch
4. The Glens of Trossach
5. The Glens of Argyll

With each volume sub-titled as 'A Guide for Walkers and Mountainbikers', to my knowledge, these are the first guidebooks written to appeal to both camps. Without the strict demarcation between footpaths and bridleways found south of the border, in Scotland this makes real sense. Like the author, I too have a foot in both camps, and despite spending most of my time on two wheels, would never dream of trying to take a bike over the *Cuillin* or the Five Sisters (who was the idiot responsible for the word mountainbike?). At the same time most walkers would confess to finding long open stretches of Landrover tracks no more than a boringly necessary evil, and the use of bikes to access Munroes is becoming increasingly common.

A few short quotes perhaps sum up his philosophy: 'Rannoch is my type of country, long routes through remote areas - whether on foot or by bike is immaterial - it's being there that counts - boots or bikes are only a means to an end'. 'The mountainbike...does not belong on the high tops but is ideal in the glens, covering at least twice the distance of the average walker, quietly, whilst still allowing a full appreciation of the surroundings and providing further exploration into the wilderness, especially on short winter days.' 'Mudguards are essential' (!) - and finally: 'The brightly coloured, 'high-profile' image of mountain-biking is unsuited to the remote glens. These areas are sacred and need treating as such.' This is mountainbikes seen as efficient tools for the job, not fashion accessories to be driven around the countryside as strap-on fashion accessories.

It's no surprise then, to find no emphasis on 'putting down the hammer', macho descents, and all the moronic urban jargon used in most mountainbike magazines (and one particular series of guidebooks). In fact these guides are unique in just describing individual areas and the links between them - leaving

readers to make up their own rides. Presented in the son-of-Wainwright, hand-written format, with pleasing sketches of bridges, bothies 'n' bikers, and personal asides on history, ecology, access problems etc., each section consists of a general introduction and overall map of an area, (e.g. The Braemar District) a group of relief profiles and, the heart of the guide, a series of sketch maps, notes and distance tables to each glen. (Glen Tilt, for example, has eight such maps). These simplify route planning, but are meant to be used in conjunction with the relevant OS sheet, and personally I would always transfer them to laminated Aqua 3 maps for use in the field.

One of the most useful aspects of the maps is his classification of tracks and paths into five types - each with its own legend. Graded from metalled road, through 'the usual rutted landrover track, rough but easily rideable, not too tedious to walk on', to 'walkers path, usually over 50% rideable, included especially as part of a through route', these are particularly useful in decoding OS maps, and estimating times. A more controversial note is set by his willingness to pay for access across 'private' estates, in preference to the blanket ban practised by others...

Though also excellent for shorter rides, it is in the provision of the Link Route sections for the planning of weekend and longer expeditions, that these volumes really come into their own. Consisting of diagrams illustrating how the different maps and areas interlink and overlap, along with overall route profiles and notes, these proved their usefulness when we used books 1 and 2 to plan a four-day route through the Cairngorms earlier this year (in conjunction with Ralph Storer's *Exploring Scottish Hill Tracks* - David & Charles 1991 - with its inspirational photographs). Even though a slight personality clash resulted in two of the team almost coming to blows at one point (watch this space for a full account in due course) the result was one of the most memorable trips I've ever made in the British hills - and plans for enough future expeditions to last me a lifetime. You can't ask much more of a guidebook than that!

Al Churcher

The Last Hero. Bill Tilman: A Biography of the Explorer

Hodder and Stoughton 1995

Tim Madge

Price £18.99

It is ironical that the second biography of Tilman should fall to a sailor. The mountains were where Tilman undoubtedly had his greatest achievements and the sea was where he finally had his greatest pleasure, if that is not too hedonistic a term for this Spartan 'hero'. He was John Muir without the explicit joyousness, needing little to get him into wild places. He was Scott of the Antarctic with sardonic wit, laughing ironically at his own reserve ('I believe we so far forgot ourselves as to shake hands on it', he famously wrote of the first ascent of Nanda Devi with Shipton). Tim Madge believes that Tilman, like Scott, ultimately gave himself up to his chosen wilderness.

Madge argues that Tilman was emotionally scarred by the First World War and shaped by Africa. He carried the reticence of the guilt of survival, the ready acceptance of further hazards that could not possibly be so devastating as those he had survived, and the learned loneliness of the African planter. His sense of humour provided the way to outflank these privations. (In four different books he chuckles at his favourite proverb, 'The sight of a horse makes the traveller lame'.) The sailor takes what weather comes, but it was hard for Tilman to accept defeat on Everest in 1938. His final reflection is worth repeating: 'We should not forget that mountaineering, even on Everest, is not war but a form of amusement whose saner devotees are not willing to be killed rather than accept defeat.'

The mountaineering chapters form less than a quarter of this book. The mountaineering biography and assessment of Tilman has yet to be written and those who knew him seem less able to demythologise the man than he was himself ('I was moving with more dignity than ease'). Tim Madge has written a very readable account of the facts of a life, with, as I've suggested, an overview running through the narrative. In his Epilogue he considers each of the popular questions about Tilman's life (centring around misogyny and misanthropy) and provides some half-hearted counter evidence in defence of his 'last hero'. Perhaps the most sad and most courageous evidence is Madge's carefully considered sailor's conclusion that Tilman knew he was joining an ill-fated final boat that ultimately disappeared without trace between Rio and the Falklands. Madge the sailor puts Tilman the sailor to rest in a fascinating, well-researched and well-told book.

Terry Gifford

The Trekkers' Handbook
Cicerone Press 1996

Tom Gilchrist
Price £10.99

Having recently come back myself from a trek in Nepal with a group of old mates to climb Island Peak, one of the most popular trekking peaks in the Himalaya, the Editor cleverly thought I was a suitable person to review this book.

Trekking now, of course, has become big business and apart from all of us independent travellers and climbers who can go to the most far distant places on the globe on the wide bodied jets, there are now apparently over 200 trekking companies in the UK alone ready to cater for our every travel whim. Tom Gilchrist has been a leader of over 40 treks, mainly in the Himalaya, Karakoram or Hindu Kush so he is highly qualified to write this book. He does so in a manner which is amusing, anecdotal and full of valuable information and advice.

The first chapter deals with your choice of a trek - when and where to go, how to get there etc. - and starts with a quote from Colin Kirkus to Alf Bridge, reputedly made on top of Sgurr Alasdair, which will appeal to Club members: 'You know, Alf, going to the right place, at the right time, with the right people, is all that matters. What one does is purely incidental'.

There is a lot of useful advice and suggestion in this chapter, including a salutary horror story from a girl who chose a cheap airline, and experienced the most appalling delays, unscheduled stops, extra costs and - almost inevitably - missing luggage on her eventual arrival at Heathrow.

Further chapters deal with visa and passport regulations, security and insurance and pre-trek health and fitness. Then there is the biggest and perhaps most valuable section in the book, 'On trek health', which is extremely good on sickness and its prevention and treatment. We read about water purification, garbage disposal, toilets, dysentery, hypothermia, frostbite, altitude sickness and all the other horrors you may experience. Suggestions for personal and group first aid kits and medicine chests are comprehensive and detailed.

Tom Gilchrist starts his chapter on 'Equipment' with another brilliant quote from 1891: 'Ten coolie loads of luggage and stores should suffice for the single traveller.....a folding chair and table, a portable leather bath, a rifle and camera formed a portion of my collection of necessities'. Don't laugh too much. The table and chairs are a regular sight going up and down the Himalayan paths, but we didn't notice any portable baths. Once again we are given sound and sensible advice on what and what not to take, and some useful lists to aid our memories.

The chapter 'On Trek' starts with a typically Himalayan day, beginning of course with early morning 'bed tea', and then tells us how the trek is organised, with the social structure of leader, sirdar, cook, cook-boys, and porters explained. We're given advice on tipping and how to deal with beggars, drugs and even, dare I say, drink and dress. The basics of the main eastern religions are covered, helping to explain some of the complexities of the different beliefs.

Finally, what to do in the case of theft, loss, accident, rescue and other emergencies. Obviously avoid them if you can. If you are ill or injured try to stay clear of third world hospitals, save in dire emergencies, get yourself well insured, a personal plug for BMC insurance here, and get home as soon as possible.

Altogether an excellent book, good value, well illustrated and a good read.

Derek Walker

Scottish Winter Climbs
Scottish Mountaineering Club 1996

Andy Nisbet and Rab Anderson
Price £16.95

This book is another excellent volume in the SMC's new series of Scottish climbing guides, the same series as the *Cairngorms* guide reviewed elsewhere in this Journal. Unlike the others in the series, this book has only winter routes (no surprise!) and is a selected guide. It is a single volume, selected from the whole of Scotland. I don't usually like selected guides myself, preferring to choose from all that is available, and I dislike the overcrowding caused by the concentration of climbers on the selected routes. But I must admit that, as selected guides go, this book is one of the best I've seen.

I say it's selected from the whole of Scotland, but not all crags nor all regions have actually been selected. There is nothing at all on the Islands (even Skye), nor on the mainland north of Ullapool, nor the Southern Uplands. Otherwise, the selection is a wide one including many crags, not just the most popular. For example, in the northern Cairngorms, we have the popular Northern Corries and Loch Avon crags, and also Craigan a'Choire Etchachan, and Beinn a'Bhuird (briefly), but not the Brairach corries or Coire

Sputan Dearg. Elsewhere, apart from the obvious Ben, Glencoe, Meaghaidh and Lochnagar, places that are in this guide include Beinn Dearg, An Teallach, Torridon, Applecross, Fannichs, Craig an Dubh Loch, Glen Clova, Aonachs, Orchy crags and Cobbler. The actual selection must have been hard, to avoid too much carping criticism from the likes of myself. Several criteria seem to have been used: accessibility, how often the route is in condition and independence of line as well as quality of climbing. For most crags included at all, this guide has about 25 to 50% of the winter routes in the current comprehensive guides. This ratio applies not only to the most popular crags. For sheer number of routes, the last Cicerone Press guide to **Ben Nevis and Glencoe** (Kimber 1991) had more in its area, but the new selected guide has fuller descriptions, and of course far more of Scotland is included.

The crude strategy of lifting the descriptions of all the starred routes from the comprehensive guides has been avoided, in a number of senses. Some unstarred routes have been included, e.g. very obvious features like big easy gullies; conversely, a few three star routes from the comprehensive guide have been excluded, e.g. extra routes on crowded parts of Ben Nevis. Many routes receive fewer stars than in the comprehensive guide, reflecting the selective nature of this one. Descriptions have also been changed where appropriate, and one or two routes regraded. The two tier winter grading system is, of course, used (e.g. IV.5).

The book starts with an excellent introduction, including useful information and advice about accommodation, safety, weather and conditions. There is no burden of historical and other educational impedimenta, and no graded list, nor even an index. Most crags also have individualised introductory notes on weather and conditions, access, crag layout and descent. This will be very helpful to newcomers, and is scarcer in the comprehensive guides of the series. Less helpful to newcomers are the sketch maps, not nearly as good as in the full guides, so Ordnance Survey maps may well be needed (not a bad idea in any case!). Incredibly, a few crags (e.g. Eagles Rock) are not even given grid references.

I am surprised that the SMC do not know where Carn Etchachan is. Their full Cairngorms guide has it marked on the wrong face of its hill - east rather than north. The sketch map, for what it's worth, in this book seems to locate it (and Shelter Stone Crag) somewhere close to the top of Ben Macdui. At least the grid references given for these two crags are correct.

Sketch diagrams of the crags are plentiful and good. Many of them are adapted from the comprehensive guides, but there are also some excellent new ones. The Lochnagar diagram has been much improved. On the Ben, the diagram (but not the text) to the west flank of *Tower Ridge* thankfully drops the traditional phrase 'Secondary Tower Ridge' - a concept I could never grasp.

Guidebooks' main purpose is informative, which can make them seem rather soulless. This book makes up for any such tendency with its colour photos, which are beautiful, varied, and inspiring.

This guidebook is not perfect, but few are. It is a very good one. I would not buy it myself, as I am collecting the set of comprehensive guides (equally good). Buying these would cost about £100, which may deter some climbers. I thoroughly recommend this selected guide to anyone wishing to climb widely in Scotland in winter, who is not inclined to splash out £100 on the full guides. Some who are less mean than I, may want to buy it as well. It is certainly the best guide of its type yet produced for Scotland.

Dave Wilkinson

The Cairngorms, Volumes 1 & 2
Scottish Mountaineering Club 1995

Allen Fyffe & Andrew Nisbet
Price £11.95 per volume

The latest definitive guide in the SMC's excellent series of modernised guidebooks to rock and ice climbing, these two volumes to the Cairngorms maintain the high quality of the others in the series. The SMC are to be congratulated on finally producing a series of good and (more or less) comprehensive guides, even if it did need an expatriate English editor to do so! **Glencoe, Northern Highlands Volumes 1 and 2, Lowland Outcrops, and Ben Nevis** are already published. Still to come are **Skye and The Hebrides, Southern Highlands and Highland Outcrops**. These may well be in the shops by the time you read this.

I like these books very much, so I'm almost inclined to leave it at that, but I suppose I'll have to justify my free review copies with a more detailed, and at times nit-picking criticism. An apology to start with, this review is rather out of date - the Cairngorms volumes were, unfortunately, received slightly too late for last year's CC journal. As I write this, (Jan '97) I have only just got them myself, so I haven't yet had time to check the accuracy of all the route descriptions! I'll have to deal with other aspects of the guides. The previous version was the single volume **Cairngorms** guide by the same authors & publisher, 1990 reprint with addenda. Any comparisons I make with the 'previous' guide will be with this edition.

Unlike some recent CC guides packaged as pairs, these two volumes are sold separately. This will be seen as an advantage by some people, and a disadvantage by others. Coverage is as follows:

Vol.1 has all the Cairngorms north of the Dee, except Beinn a' Bhuid, and so includes the Northern Corries and the Loch Avon crags (Shelter Stone, etc.);

Vol.2 has Beinn a' Bhuid and all south of the Dee, so includes Lochnagar and Craig an Dubh Loch. The inclusion of Beinn a' Bhuid makes Vol.2 only slightly the smaller. The combined size of 460 pages (compared to 400 in the previous edition) was enough to split it into two volumes.

Is the guide a selected one or a comprehensive one? To quote the introduction: 'This guide now contains all routes, although some may only be noted.' This means that the guide is almost a comprehensive one; all routes are either given 'full' (in the Scottish sense) descriptions, or 'noted' (described even more briefly or just mentioned.) The saving of space by merely 'noting' some routes is in fact not very great, and seems rather pointless, since more than 80% of the routes are described in full, so full descriptions of all routes would, according to my estimate, only add about 10 pages to each volume, still well within the bounds of two volumes. If you want full descriptions of the 'noted' routes, presumably you have to refer to the relevant SMC journal. Do I detect a residual hint of Scottish insularity here? (I thought they had grown out of that tendency).

In this age of grade VI and VII, there are still people who like tromping up grade I's, and guidebooks should cater even for them. But some of these routes are noted over-dismissively, e.g. Shelter Stone's *Pinnacle* and *Castlegates gullies* whose existence is not apparent at a glance, and Stag Rocks' *Diagonal gully*, which is un-graded.

Since the previous guide, new routes in summer and winter have been recorded on most of the major crags. Most numerous of these are more than 40 new winter routes in the Northern Corries. Gradings are fully modernised, two-tier rock grades (e.g. E2 5c) are of course used (and were used in the previous edition.) The two-tier ice grades are now also used in this edition (e.g. V.4). These are included in the descriptions, rather than in an appendix as was done in some of the earlier guides in the series. Where appropriate, some routes have been given revised gradings, rather than just copied from the previous edition. This has dealt with a few previously undergraded horrors, for example Coire an Lochain's *Savage Slit* in winter goes up from IV to V.6. No doubt there will be more of this in subsequent editions.

Route descriptions seem clear, concise and informative, and I've no reason to doubt their accuracy. For a route only climbed or only recommended in winter, the description is given for a winter ascent, and the summer ascent (if any) merely mentioned. Otherwise, the main description is given for a summer ascent, and the winter ascent (if any) is described more briefly or just noted, as appropriate. This saves space in duplication of full descriptions for both seasons, but leads to some anomalies. For example, Lochnagar's *Eagle Ridge* is recommended in both seasons. The main description is given for summer, the winter description is much briefer and makes references to the summer route. The route probably gets far more ascents in winter (certainly by English parties), so the apparent assumption that people doing a winter ascent will be familiar with the route in summer seems grossly outdated. Actually, I'm talking nonsense here, because I'm quite in favour of very brief route descriptions for winter, when there is more need for climbers' route finding ability than guidebook details. But it gave me the chance for another little dig at the Scots, and filled another paragraph of my review.

Each crag is given its grid reference, but not altitude and orientation (e.g. 500 to 650 metres, NNE facing.) I would have liked to see this information - it's useful in choosing a venue to suit the weather and conditions, but it's not absolutely essential as it can usually be found from OS maps. Many of the crags, especially in volume 1, have no notes on conditions or descents. Such information is given for almost all crags in the selected guide *Scottish Winter Climbs* (also reviewed in this Journal). If there is room for this in a single volume selected guide, surely a multiple volume comprehensive guide has ample space. I prefer a modicum of such material to the many pages of historical and geological notes, and lists of first ascents, etc.

One of this edition's best features is a set of completely re-drawn crag diagrams. These are much more pleasing to the eye than those in the previous edition, and also, for the most part, more useful. The Northern Corries and Glen Clova are now well provided for, with extra diagrams, which did not appear at all in the previous edition. Shelter Stone crag also has extra diagrams, making three in all, but it wasn't immediately obvious to me how they inter-related. As exceptions to the general improvement, two of the other drawings seem less useful than their predecessors: the overall diagram to Lochnagar which only shows starts of routes rather than their lines, and that to Craig an Dubh Loch which only shows the finishes of some routes.

A nice bonus is provided by the excellent little sketch maps showing approaches to the main crags. Carn Etchachan is misplaced, but otherwise they are so good that I'll be tempted to abandon my Ordnance Survey maps! Less good are the overall maps on the end-papers, all four of which (front and back of each

volume) show the total area of both volumes identically. I would have preferred one per volume to show that volume's coverage at a glance, and eliminate the risk of packing the wrong volume in the 'sack'.

Finally, the excellent colour photos should be an inspiration to all users of the guide, and well show the variety of fine climbing to be done in the Cairngorms.

Dave Wilkinson

A Portrait of Leni Riefenstahl

Jonathan Cape 1996

Audrey Salkeld

Price £18.99

By now everybody knows that this is the winner of the 1996 Boardman Tasker Award. David Craig, chair of the judges, admitted candidly that they had 'wondered how far Riefenstahl can be counted as belonging to 'the mountain environment' when she spent comparatively few years of her long life filming those amazing melodramas set in the Alps and Dolomites.' However, he went on to praise Audrey Salkeld's opening up of the important and problematic area of 'how a cult of extreme experience can feed into Fascist philosophy' and commended her 'moral steadiness' in defending her subject.

It is true that this biography of the maker of the films *Triumph of the Will* (about the 1934 Nuremberg Rally) and *Olympia* (about the 1936 Berlin Olympics) is a plea for a reconsideration of the life and work of a major film-maker based upon the carefully researched facts. It is a plea for the artistic recognition of the work of a woman who was more a victim of Nazi propaganda than a maker of it. The question is whether it is plausible for the greatest female documentary maker in the cinema's history to also be politically naive?

Audrey Salkeld is even-handed in producing the evidence for a self-centred, ambitious, opportunistic film-maker whose volatile nature was part of her 'permanent adolescence'. First a dancer and choreographer - who would later celebrate the body in all her films - she became an actress, then a maker of escapist adventures. She climbed in the Dolomites between films and was clearly, for a time, a mountain spirit. She tried to decline Hitler's personal invitation to make documentaries for him. She only wanted to be able to continue to be an innovative film-maker, despite the changing times around her. At the time she made her most famous films she, like most Germans, could not predict what was to come. When told, as she arrived in America, of the *Kristallnacht* destruction of Jewish homes and businesses, she refused to believe it was possible. Then, when the war broke out and she witnessed the first atrocities in Poland, she immediately returned home and avoided any part in wartime documentary filming. For seven years she worked on a popular fiction film which came to nothing.

After the war there were the rumours and accusations. The fake diaries of Hitler's mistress Eva Braun, placed her in the heart of the Führer himself. Riefenstahl was cleared by post-war courts and in her 70s began a series of photographic books about the Nubian people of Sudan. Blocked as a film-maker everywhere for the last 50 years, her still photographs are now used against her as evidence of her continuing fascist aesthetic, most famously by Susan Sontag in her recent collection of essays. Salkeld reviews all the critical positions on Riefenstahl's work in an attempt to represent them fairly, although this book is ultimately a defence and a claim for cultural reinstatement. As such I find it almost convincing.

But Leni Riefenstahl was having a good time in a dream factory her society could not morally afford. Escapist naivety is no excuse. No woman is an island, even if she makes films set in the mountains. By 1935 Goebbels declared the film industry 'Jew-free'. After *Kristallnacht* in 1938, her business manager stayed in America, where they were touring *Olympia*, but Riefenstahl returned. We must assume that she felt personally protected by her contacts with the Nazi leadership. This humane and well-researched biography makes the case for a rational consideration of the real facts about an individual. To accept Salkeld's arguments would make us more forgiving, but not demand that we are more socially questioning about our culture, or more responsible for its victims. This is an important and fascinating book because, in gently testing our thoughts about compassion and complicity, it also makes us look over our own shoulders to the treatment of our fellows today.

Terry Gifford

A History of Mountain Climbing

Translated by Deke Dusinberre Flamarion 1996

Roger Frison-Roche and Sylain Jouty

Price £45.00

This is a major tome, a large format book extensively illustrated in colour. My first impression on flicking through was that this was going to be one of those awful publications of gloriously irrelevant colour and

unfocused text. This isn't the case despite the rather brazenly named chapter 'The French to The Fore, 1940 to 1960.' In fact the book is both balanced and informative. It reads well, is superbly illustrated and I found it interesting throughout.

Despite the title of the above chapter (probably named by a whizz from marketing), the Brits do get fair and qualified recognition. From Edward Whymper to our own late Alison Hargreaves. Well researched, I personally welcome a different perspective to that of the profoundly ridiculous 'British male hero rules OK'. In fact I haven't enjoyed an illustrated mountaineering book so much since the work of the late Gaston Rebuffat or Doug Scott's **Big Wall Climbing**.

Bill Birkett

Ice World
The Mountaineers 1996

Jeff Lowe
£19.95

Let me say emphatically, before I get started, that this is an inspirational book. Since Yvon Chouinard brought out his now seminal work **Climbing Ice** in 1978 there have been numerous instructional tomes dedicated to teaching the techniques of ice climbing but none that managed to capture the spirit, the purity and inspiration as completely as **Climbing Ice**. Here however is a modern updated and equally exciting work that transports the reader through and beyond the worthy tedium of basic techniques into the rarefied realms of modern state-of-the-art practice that makes you desperate to get out there and do it!

Now the eulogy is over what's it really like? Well, as an English reviewer writing for a UK club I feel that, like **Climbing Ice** of 1978, **Ice World** of 1996 is written in a style that can only confirm Oscar Wilde's perceptive remark that the US and UK are two peoples separated by a common language! Jeff Lowe uses a similar gameplan to Chouinard, in that history, techniques and a gear review are mixed with personal experience essays to give a unique personalised interpretation of what makes the author tick. Open either book and you are immediately sucked in by the photos. Suddenly you are desperate for winter to be here, for ribbons of rippling ice and rime coated crags. Somehow nothing beats good ice shots for that inspirational feeling.

The 'Introduction' firmly puts Jeff Lowe's visionary credentials and motivation on show and after a short intro-glossary of terms it's straight into a brief history of global ice climbing that is a concise, well balanced account of the major international events and the important individuals that have shaped modern ice climbing. Then - the vision! Somehow this section of the author's own writings seems somewhat premature but presumably he really wants us to feel the 'why' before we are told the 'how'. Titles like 'Grabbing Friendship by the Ankle', 'Mind Marathon' and 'No Se Gana, Pero Se Goza' (You're not winning if you're not having fun) make you realise that you are being told something very American - i.e. be in touch with your inner self or you're not worthy!

Anyway, by page 90 you're in! But what's this? *Accoutrements* ?? I may be ungenerous but is that not just a bit pretentious! No climber I know have ever called their gear their *accoutrements* - well not in public! However more of this strange need to burst into French when discussing ice climbing later. Only a mere ten pages on '*accoutrements*' suffices for a visionary! Here I must confess my personal interest as a lowly gear seller (hopefully soon to be promoted to the dizzy heights of '*accoutrement purveyor*'!) - but I think that this section is too limited, the illustrations too nondescript and unhelpful and, overall, too lacking in insight and depth to do justice to such an equipment sensitive branch of climbing.

Then, the good stuff. After this you get 86 pages of what you really want. How to do it! This section starts with the basics (you experienced people always scan this, either to check you are doing it right after all these years or in hope of catching the author out) and is closely followed by the seemingly obligatory section of traditional French technical terminology - *piolet* this, *piolet* that, *pièd* a *plat* etc. etc.! It seems to have become a necessary literary convention in all ice climbing books to use French at this point rather than somewhat more comprehensible English directions. Personally I blame Chouinard! Surely by now we ought to have the courage to call things what they are - in English!

Then as you turn the next pages the pictures start to take over. You're into the 'Extreme Ice' section and now it's really hotting up! It is here that the literary trick already used in this section of putting instructional advice into a narrative description of the illustrated sequence both enhances the reader's personal involvement with what the author is doing or explaining as well as slightly aggravates as only that seamless American promospoken can. But you're hooked! This is what you've waited for. Photo after photo leads you into the key section of the book. This is what you really need help with - class 6 techniques, thin ice techniques - phew! Then follows an outrageous sequence of dramatic photos of what the author does best and you can only dream of. The roller coaster's running full speed now - next you're

into 'Mixed Ice and Rock'. Goodbye elegiac spiritual descriptions, this is the modern world, beyond Chouinard, of 'dry tooling', 'precision thin ice sticks', 'figure of 4s' and 'stacking tools'. The photos tell it all. This is why you need this book. This takes ice climbing on above and beyond what most of us can, will or dare think we could do. Chouinard gave us his late '70s vision in **Climbing Ice** and here Jeff Lowe finally escapes the shackles of that spiritual and slightly fey legacy in this unromanticised description and depiction of the tangible hard core realism of modern high standard ice and mixed climbing.

After this comes a very brief 'where to' world guide that cannot possibly do justice to such an extensive subject in only eight pages. This section is followed by a strange 'world classics' guidebook chapter i.e. prestigious ice climbs the author has been on. Why these two sections are there only Jeff Lowe knows! Somehow these sections feel disappointing after the intensity of the previous content. I know the book is called **Ice World** but the very slightness of these sections makes them seem weak after a diet of such strong stuff. Maybe the author just didn't know how to end the book, or more probably true to himself, he wants to illustrate his delight in the whole process of climbing ice by inviting the reader to see for himself by doing the routes.

When all is said and done this is a good instructive and genuinely inspirational book. The inspiration comes not so much from a spiritual invocation of ice climbing as a path to self knowledge but from showing us what is actually possible and more to the point, how to do it! Even the compact size and layout seems to have been chosen to be more workmanlike than the large format grandeur of Chouinard's **Climbing Ice**. In the end Jeff Lowe does himself and us proud and as you can possibly tell, I loved it - well most of it!

Dick Turnbull

**Waterfall Ice. Jeff Lowe's Ice Techniques
Arctic Wolf 1996**

**Jeff Lowe
Price £26.99**

This is the instructional and technical guts of **Ice World** put onto video. Basically it is a three hour straight instructional video (from which the book's still photos were selected), shot to show how it's done. As you would expect, it's enthralling and again gets you going by showing what is possible. As all masters of their art, Jeff Lowe makes it all look eminently reasonable but still exciting. After this, my football and rollerblade obsessed 14 year old son suddenly asked if he could come ice climbing as it looked so 'cool'. (No pun intended!) Even to old seasoned pros, Jeff makes it look all too 'cool' and my recommendation is to watch it, but as it hasn't been translated into English as we know it yet, I'd turn the sound down!

Dick Turnbull

**The Return of John Macnab
Headline Review 1996**

**Andrew Greig
Price £16.99**

Just after returning from the First World War three young aristocrats, a lawyer, a banker and a cabinet minister, in the course of conversation at their club find that they are each frankly bored with their lives. Even shooting and fishing seem without sufficient challenge. But what if they were to turn poachers, with their reputations as well as their heads at risk? So warnings are sent to the three estates neighbouring their friend's deer estate in Scotland which they can secretly use as a base. Between specified dates a deer or a salmon will be poached in a sporting manner and delivered to the laird's house without detection. Each letter is signed 'John Macnab'.

John Buchan's 1925 novel **John Macnab** is an adventure story set in the north-west Highlands which nevertheless confronts the issues of Scottish land ownership raised by this apparently 'Bolshevik' disrespect for property. It is the son of the American laird (Buchan's topical joke) who finally worries that 'there may be a large crop of Macnabs springing up' and 'it's a dangerous thing to weaken the sanctities of property'. He is made to look as foolish as the three John Macnabs when it is pointed out by his father that, of course, no gentleman landowner would have dared spoil the reputations of three men upon whom business dealings might rest anyway. The self-interest of the landed class hushes up the escapade and it's back to business.

Ever since Buchan's novel there have been sporadic real 'John Macnab' re-enactments, so Rennie McEwan tells me. **The Angry Corrie**, Scotland's hill walking fanzine (£6.00 for 6 issues from House 48, 170 Sandfield Rd, Glasgow, G5 0DL) has confidential memos from John Macnab. Now Andrew Greig's cunning second novel has sprung a tripartite John Macnab for the '90s challenging estates in the

Cairngorms. With a sharp eye for witty details Greig's economical style concentrates on plot tension and lets the emotional and political themes develop within the drive of a thriller. The American is replaced by a Dutchman and his nasty keeper will be instantly recognised by some senior members of the CC (although thankfully replaced in 1995 by a friendly young keeper from Wensleydale). The three modern Macnabs resemble the characters in Edward Abbey's radical, influential novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, upon which the Earth First! movement was based. Alastair is ex-army, survival-trained and votes Conservative. Murray is a radical District Councillor who keeps the access issues bubbling. Neil is the central character who is suffering from too much emotional control of a personal crisis that is sensitively handled by Greig. But the character with whom the author obviously has most mischievous fun is local journalist Kirsty who discovers John Macnab early on, like her predecessor Janet Raden, but who insists on playing a more wicked role. 'There's no sex in *John Macnab*', Neil complains, as his and Kirsty's pasts get as increasingly tangled as their feelings for each other.

That the final estate challenged is Balmoral, and that Charles himself arrives to defend it, brings the added edge of a shoot-to-kill policy. With M15 on their trail these modern 'scallywags', as Buchan called them, are heading into a heavy duty noose and the novel takes an unexpected turn, even for a book of tightly orchestrated sudden turns.

The Return of John Macnab manages to be both gripping and hilarious. No a feartie chapbook, it gallops in the face of stalking and will tak awa as a mureburn tak's the hill. That is to say, this is a guaranteed good Christmas present for anybody. Ergo, you.

Terry Gifford

K2 Challenging the Sky
White Star/Smithmark 1996

Roberto Mantovani & Kurt Diemberger
Price £19.95

This is a combination coffee-table picture book and history of the mountain. It is large format book, with about two thirds of its space devoted to the pictures. In the 144 pages, I counted 12 double-page photos, 42 single page ones, and many smaller. As a picture book, it has some merit. There are certainly some fine colour photos of the mountain from most directions, and of climbing on it, taken by various climbers on various routes. Also included are some interesting historical black and white shots from early expeditions, mainly the Italian ones in 1909 (Duke of Abruzzi) and 1954 (first ascent). However, many of the views are very similar, the organisation is chaotic, and the captions are rubbish, as if written by a blind tabloid journalist with no knowledge of mountains. For example, the caption for a fine double-page photo (pages 6/7) of the Americans in 1978, tells us that 'The snow was so deep that the climbers sank to their waists...'. Maybe they did, but of the climbers in the photo, one is partly out of sight, another is up to his ankles, and the third not quite up to his knees in the snow.

The pictures are the book's best side. The text is even more chaotic. It consists of about 45 mini articles, varying in quality from readable to badly translated journalese. Some are by climbers describing their experiences (often lifted from previous writings), others are un-credited. I had first assumed the latter to be by the authors, but a few are actually credited to one or other of them, so I'm not sure. The second of the articles gives a year by year list of attempts, 'conquests' and failures. This has plenty of errors, and is very hard to follow, sometimes the same route is given several different names. For example, the spur left of the Abruzzi is variously referred to as 'the south face', 'the Cesen route', and 'the south-south-east Ridge'. Many of the other articles are no better. This points to the book's worst failing: editing is very poor or non-existent. The articles are arranged in vague chronological order, but headings are tabloid-standard and it is often hard to tell which expedition and which route you are reading about. At times, one is even faced with two parallel articles on the same page.

I would not recommend this book to anyone but the most ardent K2-omaniac, or a climber planning to go there. Such readers may find some of the pictures interesting, but the text is best forgotten.

Dave Wilkinson

Scafell, Wasdale & Eskdale
FRCC 1996

Al Phizacklea
Price £13.00

A major guidebook, detailing over 1100 climbs, to one of Lakeland's premier regions. A monumental work, edited, written, illustrated (with maps, 3d type elevations and crag diagrams) by Al Phizacklea. Al's even responsible for a considerable percentage of the modern routes as well as finding time to appear on the front cover. How do you do all that? The format is tried and tested, there are some 24 colour plates (mainly by Al) and the diagrams and maps are excellent.

Bill Birkett

Dow, Duddon & Slate
FRCC 1993

Al Phizacklea
£13.00

Written and illustrated by Al Phizacklea to cover the mighty Dow Crag, the secretive Duddon and the popular slate, this is an extensive guidebook. There are some 21 colour plates. Al is responsible for much of the new routing and is featured on the front cover (a shot of *The Shining Path* by Andy Rowell). A word of warning. Since the guidebook was written there have been some extensive rockfalls in the slate quarries. Parrock Quarry, between and including *Wall and Slab* and *Master Blaster*, has been decimated (stay off the latter as the wall to the left has moved massively). In Hodge Close a major rockfall from above the tunnel east of the diving board has made all the routes in and surrounding the All Weather Gym and *Sideshow* potentially extremely dangerous. As an alternative, for value and apparent security, the stainless steel staple bolted routes on the West Wall right of *Calling the Shots* should be considered. *Skyline* F7a, *Face the Times* F6c, *Face the Music* F7a and the highly absorbing *Face Lift* F7b. Large rockfalls have also been reported in Moss Rigg Quarry although as yet *Black Hole/Cathedral Quarry* appears to have survived.

Bill Birkett

The Rope
Red Beck Press 1996

Terry Gifford
Price £6.95

First, some strong words of warning. Dr.Gifford is a problem, he needs watching. He arrives at the hut on impulse, rotten weather, not a soul there, he's bored and restless. Never mind, he can write a poem. He chucks a bucket of coal on the fire, grabs a bottle of wine, and out it comes, no messing. But if you walk in on this he'll make you stand still while he reads it out in a big firm voice. It's unnerving. (When he gets to the end, will one be expected to say something? Off the cuff, what the hell can you say?)

Further, he is the paparazzo of British climbing and not too choosy about his subjects. Exchange a civil word with him and you're in his next poem, whether you like it or not. The three gentlemen with their trousers off, p34, in the public toilets at Glendalough - ears cocked, one eye on the door, wondering whether the Republic is about to burst in and arrest them on suspicion - are the poet, Norman Elliott and myself.

And furthermore, some will declare that the poems in this collection aren't proper poems, they don't rhyme, you can't hear horses galloping and all that. It's true that they're from that province of free verse where straight speech may be delivered, chopped up and served as poetry. Look inside them, though, and you notice that the tone of bardic announcement or enhanced meditation or selective reportage is floated on an economical use of an arsenal of poetic devices - alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme, and a battery of rhetorical resources.

These 30-odd pieces offer perceptions drawn from the world of climbing, mostly not too far afield, a quarter of them set on Derbyshire gritstone. All but one (**Snow Leopard**) spring from his own experience. They're about the trials and the gratifications of the sport, about the spirit of place, about the impact of nature upon us and about our own impact on nature. They examine personal relationships and they face the death of friends.

'Are they any good?' Ah, that's the tricky one and I'm an awkward critic. I live on the resounding stuff, Yeats, MacDiarmid, earlier Robert Lowell; I like pure music too, as in Wallace Stevens; I can even make out on pieces from modernism's wilder shores - say Robert Duncan's elegy for Stevens. But my test is stringent. Can I read the poem three or four times and retrieve it word-perfect from memory 50 years later?

In fact, they aren't a style of poetry that lodges itself like that. Yet the more you read them, the more they grow on you. It can't be just because I was there that I kept looking back at the **Glendalough** poem

with growing curiosity and respect, since, the same thing happened with the ostensibly unstudied response to the death of Dave Cook. The terse notes on Malta certainly achieved their aim. The simple chronicle of a year on Stange left me in a swamp of nostalgia. Aside from detail there was the pure, almost physical delight of leafing through a poetry collection, even a slim paperback, a delight that comes to me from no other class of book.

You can't offer poets advice, they always have a smart answer. The closest friends of a minor Victorian begged him to rewrite a couple of lines, to save what little reputation he had. "I cannot change it," he replied stiffly; "It came from above." Nevertheless, in all modesty, I want to point out that a 'thumb-braced-across-the-gap' is a sprag - a term in use on Derbyshire grit in the '50s - and any good dictionary should lend support. There isn't any harm in calling a sprag a sprag.

Harold Drasdo

Mountain Tables

(Tables of the Mountain Hill Summits of England and Wales)

Constable 1996

Michael Dewey

Price £12.95

Just how many of the 433 '2,000-ft' (600m) summits (south of the Scottish Border) have you completed? Which haven't you yet done?.....and how would you like to start a long-term project to complete the rest? If your appetite is whetted by the thought, then Constable's market-cornering new offering (which is uniform with their ever-increasing series of outdoor titles) will start you off - along with many others no doubt. Although this book will be an ideal beginning for anyone who is about to tick-off all the hill summits of England and Wales, it will be of relatively little use to those who have already embarked on such a project using one of several other lists in existence.

After perusing the eye-catching front cover I was drawn to read the press hand-out. Its extravagant claim, which proudly heralds that this is the most complete list of tables of England and Wales published in one volume to date, is certainly provocative. On further consideration though this is perhaps a convenient lapse of memory as it completely ignores Alan Dawson's 1992 book *The Relative Hills of Britain*. In addition the historical section also ignores *The Mountain Summits of England and Wales*, the well-known 1986 book by Buxton and Lewis. Perhaps the list below might have been used for a more complete picture:

- 1911 Rooke-Corbett, J. (Rucksack Club Journal) Twenty-fives, the (130) 2,500ft tops of England and Wales.
- 1933 Elmslie, Rev.W.T. (FRCCJ) The Two Thousand Footers of England, (using Bartholomew half-inch maps).
- 1937 Simpson, F.H.F. (RCJ) Concerning contours, list of 2,000ft mountains in the English Lake District.
- 1939 Moss, E. (RCJ) The Two-Thousands of England, (excluding the Lake District).
- 1939 Moss, E. (RCJ) The Two-Thousands of Wales
- 1954 Docherty, W.M. (Darien) A selection of some 900 British and Irish Mountain tops
- 1962 Docherty, W.M. (Darien) 2 vols. A supplement to the above book.
- 1973 Bridge, George (Gaston's/ West Col) The Mountains of England and Wales
- 1974 Wright, Nick (Hale) English Mountain Summits (2,000s)
- 1975 Bridge, George (Climber & Rambler, Jan/Feb) The County Tops
- 1985 Marsh, Terry (H & S) The Mountains of Wales
- 1985 Dillon, Paddy (Gaston's/ West Col) The County Tops of England and Wales
- 1986 Buxton, Chris & Lewis, Gwen (Red Dial) The Mountain Summits of England and Wales
- 1987 Marsh, T. The Lake Mountains One and Two
- 1989 Marsh, T. The Pennine Mountains
- 1989 Nuttall, John & Ann (Cicerone) The Mountains of England Vol. 1
- 1990 Nuttall, John & Ann (Cicerone) The Mountains of Wales. Vol. 2
- 1992 Dawson, Alan (Cicerone) The Relative Hills of Britain
- 1995 Dewey, Michael (Constable) Mountain Tables

To embark on a list, does one go for hills of 3,000, 2,500, 2,000, or 1,500 feet? If one goes metric it only seems to point to 750m or 500m. Merely identifying the 2,000ft mountains has certainly been an ongoing headache, as no two lists are identical owing to differences in editions of OS maps used, as well as

differing criteria taken to specify an entry as being a distinct summit e.g. contour lines and nearness of the next 'summit'.

Chapter 2 opens up the country a bit more with a fascinating list of 373 tops of over 500m (1,640ft) which must be a good incentive for anyone new to the game, and in the book there is plenty of room for the reader to record details as well as dates.

The list of 'Notable' Hill Tops of Chapter 3 is perhaps the first published list of this type. Being totally subjective it gives plenty of food for thought and debate - unlike Dawson's list of relative hills which by definition had to have a 500-foot rise.

In Chapter 4 the list of County Tops is useful but Dewey ought to find out that Edward Moss completed the (pre-1974) County Tops in 1961 using his list in the 1951 Rucksack Club Journal. Charles Baldey also completed the tops in 1974 using the list from Climb and Rambler, and then there is Paddy Dillon who completed the tops in 1982 and then wrote his book (1985). In fact some walkers are still trying to complete the pre-1974 (boundary reorganisation) tops as listed by Bridge and Dillon.

Wainwright's Lake District Fells found in Chapter 5 are also listed in a number of other publications such as J.M. Turner (1982 and Outlying Summits in 1984). Given the idiosyncratic nature of Wainwright's list it is far more logical to include the outlying fells for a complete round of Wainwright's. This list of 316 summits has now been completed by Alan Poxon in 1995 and others are close to completion.

More lists means more walkers and climbers fell-bent on ticking - and thus more erosion. Sadly this book is going to be popular.

Geoff Milburn (and Alan Poxon)

John Muir: His Life and Letters and Other Writings
Baton Wicks Publications 1996

compiled and edited by Terry Gifford
Price £20.00

The first time I really took any notice of the name of John Muir was in 1991 during a holiday visit to California and the Sierra Nevada (it included a look at Las Vegas as well!). I climbed Mount Whitney by the 'Mountaineers' Route' and on my descent the following day realised that the tourist route that I was on was part of the 'John Muir Trail' along the crest of the High Sierras.

The following year, 1992, Diadem published **The Eight Wilderness Discovery Books** by John Muir, a project suggested by CC member Terry Gifford, who also wrote the introduction. Dipping into that, I began to have some inklings of his (i.e. John Muir's - although I do not belittle Terry Gifford's!) importance and to realise the tremendous influence his writings and activities have had in the creation of national parks and the retention of wilderness areas.

This new collection is a follow-up to that first volume, and you certainly get plenty of meat for your twenty quid! Smiler has been nagging at me to get on with it, unaware that I have a permanent backlog of about a dozen books, and so I cannot claim to have read it all yet. What I have read has been of far greater interest than I ever imagined when I first took this volume to bed. For instance, the series of essays collected as 'Studies in the Sierra' and commenting on the effects of glaciation in California were a revelation to Americans. They apparently made Muir famous but they greatly impress me, well over a century later, with their clarity, with their indications of how our own British hills may have been shaped. He wandered deep in the forests of pine and giant sequoia but he was also clearly a competent mountaineer and climber, as his ascent (the first) of Mount Ritter (4010m) and early ascent of Mount Rainier show. The long months he spent, before he was 50, in almost solitary wandering and travel into his beloved mountain and glacier areas, must often have been desperately lonely, but he was not distracted by the modern amusements of telly and video and used the time to hone his writing skills, frequently in letters. The beautiful and powerful descriptive prose that emerged could only have been written by a man who totally loved wild places, felt that their preservation was, and is, essential to everyone and who felt a strong sense of purpose in making the rest of us realise it also.

The John Muir Trust was founded in 1982 and has since acquired three wilderness properties in Scotland: the north side of Ladharr Bheinn in Knoydart, land at Torrion on the SW coast of Skye and, in 1993, Sandwood Bay, 12 miles south of Cape Wrath on the north-west coast of Scotland.

Bob Allen

Storms of Silence
Jonathan Cape 1996

Joe Simpson
Price £17.99

He was only a few feet off the ground, but Joe Simpson paused, looked down at me paying out his ropes and barked:

"Now pay attention to those ropes. I can't afford to hit the ground with my ankles." Readers of his previous books will know two things about Simpson: he's a survivor and he needs to be. Surgeons have reassembled most parts of his anatomy after a succession of climbing trips to the world's highest mountains. I wanted to talk to him about his new book, **Storms of Silence**, but had somehow not been paying attention and now found myself responsible for his safety as he pushed the boat out again on *Moyer's Buttress* at Gardom's Edge. It was freezing. He looked at the crux, reversed a bit, wedged his bad knee in a crack and let go so that he could blow on both his hands.

"I might come off here", he said encouragingly, before going back to find a way of pulling onto the front of the buttress on his second attempt. Committed now, his heels quivered slightly above an overhang as he found there was nothing to hold onto. The quivering moved up his legs. It was obviously very cold up there.

"I thought I'd written everything I wanted to say about climbing", he'd told me before we left the deceptive cosiness of his huge Sheffield home, "but after the 1994 trip to Cho Oyo and seeing those Tibetan refugees in Chinese baseball boots on a 19,000 ft pass in winter, I'd had my conscience pricked. I asked:

"Why am I travelling to these countries?" It's not just me, it's all of us. We just don't want to know about the rest of it. I was going to call it 'Credit Card Adventure' because we're comparatively safe when we go."

Well, that's if you call it 'safe' climbing an avalanche-prone slope, for example. The first page of **Storms of Silence** contains a remarkable sentence about just such a situation: 'It was as if everything was holding its breath, waiting to see whether I would pay attention.' It is clear that in his previous books Simpson has been paying attention to the climbing, the mountains, his 'inner voices', the death of his friends, but in this book he opens himself up to pay attention to the social and cultural contexts in which he lives and climbs. In personal encounters with a skinhead in his local pub, with the Peruvian police, or with the woman who feels stared at by Joe in his local gym, Simpson examines both his instinctive and his more considered reactions with scarred honesty.

He admits to having cultivated in his youth a certain withering look and to being quick to wish violence upon those who would bully him now. But these self-examinations, scattered throughout the book, are a confession to a complicated frustration that is channelled into an outrage against the Chinese holocaust in Tibet, as against a mountain's earthquake destruction of 18,000 lives in Peru. Somewhere in the stillness after the storm of his vivid writing about these tragedies there arises a compassion that admits a complicity. 'I'm using anger as energy to get over pain', he says. The result is the coming of age of the macho survivor climber who, in **Touching The Void** and **This Game of Ghosts**, has found it easier to stare death in the face than himself. He can avert his gaze from time to time in this picaresque through the picturesque, but his inner journey from confession to compassion, from rogue to radical makes this a book which will give all travellers pause for thought about complicity in the regimes they go just to 'take a look at'. It's not his best book, but it's a significant stage on a journey through the mountains of the world.

As his legs started to quiver on *Moyer's Buttress* he found that by pointing his fingers upwards he could hold on. He teetered further up the slab. There was another long pause higher up. When he reached the top I felt as if I'd just read one of his books. 'I don't want the reader to feel preached at, just made to feel uncomfortable', Simpson says. I'd say that, like his climbing, in **Storms of Silence** he succeeds at both.

Terry Gifford

Chatsworth
British Mountaineering Council 1996

Edited by Geoff Radcliffe
Price £13.95

I suspect there might be a few cries of 'foul' when this book is reviewed by someone who had a hand in writing it, but Smiler was desperate, and I trust I can take a reasonably objective overview of the volume, so here goes. When the plans for the new (5th) series of guides to the Peak was announced and the boundaries were drawn up I thought could see a major flaw in the thought process of the committee. The eastern grit edges were to be done in three volumes; **Stanage** with Derwent Edge, Rivelin, Bamford etc.; **Froggatt** with the Burbage Valley, Millstone and Lawrencefield Quarries, Froggatt and Curbar; and this final one, the **Chatsworth** volume. I had visions of two huge and popular bumper volumes and a thin,

miserable 'poor relation' of a guide with all the less inspiring edges of Gardom's, Birchen, Chatsworth, the sparkling highlight of Cratcliffe and then all that scrappy stuff down Matlock way. Well, I will be the first to admit I was wrong. **Stanage** has 414 pages, **Froggatt** has 390 pages and the new **Chatsworth** volume has a healthy 392 pages, many of them featuring quality routes.

So what's it like? First a small gripe, the **Stanage** volume is fine, but the **Froggatt** volume has a picture of Curbar on the front and back cover and **Chatsworth** has a picture of Gardom's on the front cover and Robin Hood's Stride on the back. Now call me picky but I think it isn't too much to ask that at least the cover shot is from the cliff the book is named after, especially when the name is emblazoned across the photograph. If you can't get a suitable shot then change the name!

As to the book and its content; firstly I like the solid card cover. I never did get on with those plastic jobs that were inclined to split and also to shed their outer photograph, by degrees, each time they were used. Overall the content is good, with well written text, inspiring colour and intriguing historical black and white shots in about the right mix, many sensible regradings (but see below), great diagrams and even a spot on poem.

Mentioning gradings, now I know this is a subject that climbers can never agree on, but how come *Sentinel Crack* (1959), *Vibrio Direct* (1976), *Tomb Thumb* (1971), and *Mental Pygmy* (1976,) are all in at E2 and are all harder than *Demon Rib* (1949) which is in at E4? I rest my case for the abandonment of graded lists in our guidebooks.

On the same subject I have heard a few complaints about some of my overly generous up-gradings at Birchen Edge, well as I said in the introduction to the cliff, it makes a nice change, maybe next time they can all be put back down again and lower grade climbers can go back to having depressing epics on this popular edge!

Also I tried to enliven the text with a (heavy) smattering of 'funnies'. Apparently at one of the committee meetings a worried Geoff Radcliffe asked Dave Gregory what he was to do about all my appalling jokes. Dave replied,

"If you take them out, then you tell him!"

Well, take them out he did, without telling me, so here for your entertainment is a selection of the same, all in good harmless fun!!

The Crow's Nest.....now you really have something to crow about!

Look-out Arete.....on the first ascent a lemming leapt from the cliff top just missing the leader. He mistook it for a different kind of rodent and the name of the route is a corruption of the warning he shouted down to the second man.

The Funnel.....Seasoned gritstoners should smoke up this one.

Admiral's Progress.....The wide V chimney allows for easy progress (up the ranks) if you can adopt the right positions.

Polaris Exit.....head out left past a block to reach to a chimney and rocket up this to the top.

Barnacle Bulge.....make like a limpet.

The Long Promenade.....The whole route can be climbed in the opposite direction, and this is probably easier done than said (Edanemorp Gnot Eht).

Copenhagen Wall Traverse.....Originally graded Severe, the VS stands for Very Slippery, or Very Silly, or Very Sketchy or even Very Serious, you decide!

Much more seriously, and in final summary, this is a **good** great guide, buy it, use it, and enjoy it.

Chris Craggs

Mountains of Central Spain Cicerone Press 1996

Jacqueline Oglesby
£14.99

The Sierras de Gredos and Guadarrama run west to east across central Spain, splitting the central tableland and are apparently (and certainly to this reviewer) virtually unknown except by Madrilenos, the vast majority of whom never go anywhere near the high ground. They (the mountains, not the Madrilenos) reach a height of 2600m and are snow-capped for five months of the year. With the medieval cities of Avila and Segovia to the north and with Madrid only 30 miles or so to the south, the appearance of this detailed guidebook should be a great help to anyone thinking of combining a mountain with a sightseeing holiday in central Spain. Indeed, San Lorenzo de Escorial (the site of Philip 11's enormous palace/monastery) is the recommended base for the Guadarrama. Tantalizing brief mentions of rock-climbing sneak into the text here and there, on rock which is granite in the Gredos and a mixture of granite and gneiss in the Guadarrama, but essentially this is a book for walkers and scramblers.

The introductory chapters are especially good, I thought, dealing with background and practical information, covering topics as diverse as the weather (best time to go seems to be May and June; but March, April and September can also be good), wildlife (Spanish ibex, griffon vultures etc), access (very good generally), accommodation (great variety), transport (to go by car seems the most versatile but quite a few of the walks are accessible by public transport in the Guadarrama). The chapters that follow describe walks in what appears to be sufficient detail to get the best enjoyment without getting into a muddle. There is even a brief description of a 10-14 day waymarked traverse of the GR10 across the Guadarrama.

The well-written text makes it perfectly clear that there are notable differences between the two ranges which the author (who lived in the area for several years) elucidates as follows: 'If the Sierra de Gredos appeals to those who like big walks in extensive, wild and remote scenery, the Sierra de Guadarrama is for walkers with a taste for variety and texture and constant changes of perspective and terrain...an enormous choice of circular day walks.' Sounds a bit like west coast of Scotland versus the Lakes.

Any grumbles? The comparatively small number and size of the colour illustrations makes it a little difficult to get a good visual picture of these mountains, but that is a function of cost and not the author's fault. Clearly a labour of love, I suspect this book will be the English-speaking walkers' bible to this area for many years to come.

Bob Allen

The Alpine Journal 1996 Volume 101
The Alpine Club/Ernest Press 1996

Edited by Johanna Merz
Price £18.50

The Alpine Club, and particularly its editorial team, are to be congratulated on putting together a splendid and historically most important journal.

This is a bitter-sweet book, the obituaries section immediately fills one with sad but wonderful memories of the many friends lost during the previous two years. It is particularly fitting that the picture of Alison Hargeaves on the summit of Mount Everest graces the inside cover, and prominence given to her account of this climb written from K2 Base Camp.

The journal brings together the most important documentation on Kangchenjunga ever to be found in one book, and it is therefore essential reading for anyone intending to attempt this wonderful peak. There are stories of other Himalayan expeditions, with some outstanding photographs on Makalu and Hidden Peak.

It was pleasing to read retrospective accounts of two great Sherpa leaders, Dawa Tenzing and Angharkay, which gave voice to the rare qualities and bravery they showed in supporting so many expeditions. There are many other excellent articles on exploration in the furthest corners of our globe, for example, Doug Scott sail/mountaineering in Tierra del Fuego and the tale of a great adventure with Paul Knott and his friends in the remote Cherskiy mountains of Siberia. Just reading this last article will exhaust you!

There is of course the chronicle of the Saga sponsored Golden Oldies expedition to Xinjiang in China. Saga will not be sponsoring a mountain expedition this year, but are prepared to support just about anything else, so ideas to Mike Banks - who will already be putting them into action!

Europe is not forgotten with enjoyable descriptions of Colin Beechey's epic on the Dent Blanche, and cross country ski-ing in Arctic Norway in the company of Johanna Merz. John Hunt contributes an account of his explorations of the Brenva face of Mont Blanc in the 1950s - how different things are today. He concludes his article with the following lines; 'And the thought came to me, as so often in the past: only here, on the borderline between life and eternity, is my escape. Here lies security from false values. This is fulfilment. This is why men climb.'

Somehow just this one glorious thought made all those obituaries easier to bear.

Norman Elliot

Skye and The Hebrides Volumes 1 & 2
Scottish Mountaineering Club 1996

Edited by Roger Everett
Price £19.95

It's actually mind-boggling to see just how far out of touch most of us rock climbers are. By out of touch I mean that there is so much more to do than we usually even know about, let alone have the guidebooks for.

This long awaited dual volume guide covers in superb detail, not only the traditional centrepiece of

the north Skye and west, the Cuillin Hills, but also the rest of Skye, unknown to all but a few adventurous climbing teams.

Even more unfamiliar are the islands of the Inner and Outer Hebrides - Lewis, Harris, Eigg, Rum, Iona, north and south Uist, St. Kilda, Mingulay, Pabbay, and so on. These are all covered in Volume 2, with a meaty 324 pages interspersed with fabulous colour photo pages.

Perhaps the only piece of rock west of the Cioch most of us associate with is that most well known of all cliffs - Sron Ulladale, and that's only because the superstars - Dawes, Pritchard, Moon and Waddy dragged the place into the 21st century with their free ascent of *The Scoop*!

Apart from these adventurous climbing teams, and I know only a few climbers from our Club who might qualify as one of them, the isolated islands and crags don't even register when it comes to exploring far-distant climbing regions.

I say I know a few members - Chris Bonington took a group to St. Kilda in 1987, which included Howard Lancashire, Pete Willance and Brian Hall. Interestingly, rock climbing details of this island are not described in the text, only the history of events there. Possibly something to do with the difficulty in gaining permission to visit there. Even before then Chris had led a team to Mingulay, which included Mick Fowler, Graham Little and Kevin Howett (a very formidable bunch, to say the least). Steve Mayers followed up a Mick Fowler attempt (1980) on Creag Mo with his blockbuster climb *Central Grooves E6*. John Harwood, Doug Scott, the late Paul Nunn, Brian Molyneux, and 'Ginger' Cain have all visited and climbed new routes over the years.

Not surprisingly, climbers from north of the border have been prominent in the exploration of the more accessible, though still remote locations. My namesake, 'Cubby' Cuthbertson, still the most respected climber in Scotland (and what do you expect with a name like that!!), left his mark on the Sron back in 1985, and was well positioned to be the author for the Lewis, Harris and the Uist section. With Graham Little dealing with Mingulay, Pabbay, Colonsay and Eigg, Bob Duncan covering Rum, and Colin Moody handling the Mull and Iona section, the Series Editor, Roger Everett must have felt pretty confident a good volume would turn out.

And so it did. Volume 2 has over 1000 routes, of all standards, and there's so much unclimbed rock left, it will take a lifetime of climbing to make any dents.

Volume 1, written by John Mackenzie and Noel Williams, covers the more traditional, certainly more well known areas. The Cuillins, with the northern, central and southern sections. After an initial section on the main ridge, including text on the winter traverse, the volume proceeds to 'blow the gaff' on the seemingly limitless climbing on the island. The section 'Skye Outwith the Cuillin' is indeed a marvellous revelation as to what is available and largely un-frequented (before this guide, that is). The Scots aren't too quick at letting their secrets out. Once again, a meaty 352 pages describe nearly 1800 climbs. That's in this volume alone, so I see the reason for the dual volume. I particularly appreciated the colour photographs of the Cioch and Kilt Rock - mouth watering.

Adventure climbing lives on, and the message is fortified by the publication of these volumes. That is not to say some will argue against drawing the masses into these once quiet areas. Whether those masses do come and irritate each other, remains to be seen, but there is a lifetime of climbing in these volumes and I for one am grateful to the SMC for producing this guide, to add to their already superb series.

Smiler Cuthbertson

Area Notes

North Wales 1996

Well, it's hard to know where to start, there's been so much going on in 1996. As usual, most of the new routing has been done by the same few adventurers, spreading themselves around North Wales, with only a few other, often furtive new-routers keeping crags so secret that we'll only ever get to hear about them once they're convinced they've climbed everything possible, leaving the hardest pickings to the better known climbers.

I should start with cold climbs last winter. A number of new ice climbs were done on the Black Ladders by various hardy souls, and conditions were good enough for a while for parties to do new climbs on the Glyders, Llechog and Lliwedd, and on Cadair further south. A hard new route was done by Paul Pritchard and Dave Towse on Clogwyn Du: *Blender Head* is graded a tough VI 7, and is based on the summer route *Hebenwy*, and over on Craig y Rhaeadr, Nick Dixon minced his way faithfully up the foot wide ice smear to the right of *Cascade*, which in summer is about Hard Severe, and in an icy winter gives *Waterfall Climb Direct* VI. *Central Icefall Direct* on Craig y Rhaeadr was seeing quite a few ascents, but these diminished for a while after Terry Taylor took a bit of a fall, unfortunately still quite attached to the icicle of pitch two. Luckily, he escaped without serious injury.

It is easier to describe all the notable new rock routes now more or less by area, and I think I'll start with Tremadoc. Tremadoc is that crag that everyone flocks to as soon as the weather is only half OK, giving you the best chance of not getting rained on if it's a bit dodgy, and with so many routes at such a wide spread of grades it's hard to believe that there are many more lines to go, except at the big E numbers end. However, I'm proved wrong, and Iwan A. Jones (compiler of guidebooks) and Paul Stott found plenty of space near *Valerie's Rib* to climb *Rip Torn* E2 and *Llafur* E1. Jim Perrin and Martin Crook were lucky enough to find ways of criss-crossing other routes in the *Leg Slip* area to give two E2's, *The Morrgan* and *One for the Crow*, and unlucky enough for a whole bunch of past new-routers to crawl out of the woodwork and tell them that one had already been done by plenty of people over many years in a variety of permutations. *One for the Crow* may or may not be a new route, therefore, but fortunately that has landed in Iwan's lap to sort out.

Early in the year, a dry winter and spring saw the Cromlech dry, enabling young student Tim Emmett to go for a second ascent of *Nightmayer*, which takes the blank and often wet line that many abseil down after climbing *Cenotaph Comer*. After a bit of top-rope practice Tim breezed up what was more or less the hardest route in the Pass, a scary and serious E8 6c, first done by Steve Mayers four years previously, and he confirmed the big E8 grade. In the run up to this Tim had already been playing around Craig Ddu, and found one of a number of unclimbed arêtes to his taste, giving *Gram Negative* E7 6c. Well warmed up towards the end of the summer, and with exams far behind him, Tim was back on Craig Ddu on the leaning black wall to the left of *The Bog of the Eternal Stench*. This strenuous, technical and varied climb, described as 'quite steep', was not climbed on sight, the gear (a tiny RP) was placed on the lead; thus *Totally Wired* 9 came into being, and was given the grade of E9 6c (for a future on-sight lead), being quite a serious undertaking. Tim then ended up in Bangor casualty after skinning his shin bouldering. Then, in January this year, through the exuberance of youth and the relative 'safety' of a stone wall in Bangor, Tim ended up in hospital once more after falling from a 'boulder problem' (or is it a builder problem?) one Friday night with the rather more serious injury of a smashed kneecap. This, I gather is healing nicely, probably ready for another season of real rock climbs which he seems not to hurt himself on.

Neil Carson, known recently through the magazines for his successes on super-hard sport climbs and for being one of our best competition climbers, ventured back into the mountains, and on a steep buttress above Gallt yr Ogof in the Ogwen Valley did a couple of new free lines. *Mission Impossible* follows the old pegged line to the left of *Heart of Stone*, which Neil felt had to be graded in two ways: it is in the mountains and is protected with natural gear, but because of the presence of the old pegs it is a semi clip-up, so the grades are E8/9 6c and French 8b, to help describe the overall feel of the route to those that can appreciate it. He also polished off another route nearby at E6, naming it *Baby Face*. Elsewhere in the mountains, Pat Littlejohn added a couple of new lines to Carreg Mianog: *Laughing Matter* and *Wisecrack* are E3 and E4 consecutively. In the Moelwyns, *Parsimony*, a face and crack climb was climbed by Nick Dixon on Carreg y Fran and graded E6. The year was dry enough to be productive on various mountain crags, and many routes of more modest grades were added, including five new end-of-term lines by teachers Chris Jex and Steve Porter on Benglog Buttress, near Alphabet

Slabs in Ogwen, graded V.Diff to VS. At Castell Cidwm, a visit by Sean Myles and C.Lowry saw the old aid pitch of *Dwm* freed to *Freedum Roof*, becoming E7 6c in the process.

Slate had one or two additions, with bolted lines being climbed by teams comprising Paul Pritchard, Geraldine Westrupp, Adam Wainwright, Tom Leppert, and George Smith, mostly in the Middle Earth area. George's *The Wall Within* is the hardest of them at Fr7c in Lost World, while Paul's *The Porphyry Chair* is probably the most unusual, displaying an odd sitting move that few people have ever appreciated.

On the limestone of Pen Trwyn and environs, Karl Smith's supplement updated devotees on the many new lines bolted up with staples. The major new route here (and in the world, judged by athletic ability and French grades) is *The Big Bang* on Lower Pen Trwyn. Most people would have heard of *Liquid Amber*, Jerry Moffatt's super-route graded 8c, once the hardest route in Britain and among the hardest in the world, and Ben Moon's *Sea of Tranquility* which saw a little less publicity, even though it is a harder climb of 8c+; nearby is a piece of limestone which kind of looks unclimbable, but with vision, talent, dedication, hard work, practice, time and big muscles it eventually succumbed to an ascent by the modest Neil Carson who nervously whispered that it is probably 9a! At the top end of the sport grading is something of a worry, so other top climbers will eventually confirm the grade.

Much of the action through the year was at Gogarth and Rhoscolyn. Glenda Huxter, who finds that the mental and physical demands of Gogarth suit her very well, set her sights on the E7s at North Stack. First of all she polished off *Wreath of Deadly Nightshade*, becoming the first woman in Britain to on sight a route this hard, and a few weeks later ascended Redhead's demanding *The Bells, The Bells!* in the same good style. Cool Glenda combined determination, good technique, finger strength and plenty of stamina to climb both these routes on sight. Numerous new routes fell to George Smith, Twid Turner and Louise Thomas, George Smith, Adam Wainwright, Twid and Louise, Paul Pritchard, George, Twid - got the picture? Where do I start? There were, and still are, gaps on Yellow Wall, but Paul climbed with Ian Wilson for *93 Million Miles* and then with Leigh McGinley and Tom Leppert on *Sign of the Sun Dog*. Adam Wainwright and James Harrison's *Fire and Grimestone* nicely summed up Red Wall, and George Smith and Adam were nicely summed up by *The Mad Brown* in Wen Zawn, which they described as 'a fabulous expedition' up the looseness left of *Mr Softy*, comprising four 3-D pitches between 5c and 6b, but the whole route getting an overall grade of E (for expedition) 7. Ice pegs were used for a belay. In the *Spider's Web/Britomartis* area Adam added a steep but safe and rather hard line: *The Fourth Dimension* E7 6b/c. *The Wild Underdog* (George), climbed another line in Wen Zawn on sight at E7, and got together with Dave Holmes to climb 'an unparalleled series of parallel enthusiasm cracks' near South Stack, on yet another day of unfettered enthusiasm. In a little-known area of Rhoscolyn, Twid, partnered by Louise Thomas, Ian Wilson and Chris Wentworth at various times produced routes which went up and over arches (Twid likes them) and a variety of arêtes, and *Echo Madness* which Twid climbed with Chris, followed an arch on Penlas Rock, at E6 6b. Crispin Waddy got a look-in too, spying out a tibia-shaped arête in the Tsunami Zawn area: *God's Bone* was climbed with 'no relevant gear' on its left side, carefully timed with a high tide, preferable to climbing on its right side over boulders.

So much was done in '96 in North Wales it is hard to do justice to everyone, but adventure and athleticism appear to be alive and well.

Gill Lovick

Lundy 1996

A fair smattering of new additions were made during the '96 season in what might be described as a year of consolidation on some of the lesser known crags. New visitors, Ben Bransby and Grant Farquhar made some good contributions having quickly spotted major unclimbed lines. The seasoned campaigner Paul Harrison made up the rest of the new routes. Paul's fixture on the island is now so mandatory he is becoming known as Lundy's fourth lighthouse.

Starting way down in the far south, the short steep wall on the southern end of the East Wall in Hidden Zawn caught the attention of Paul and Neil Harrison. The central line here became *The Plastic Gnome* HVS 5a whilst the pumpy, left slanting crack was filled with *Dawn's Generous Portions* E1 5b. Just round the corner Ben Bransby along with Dave Viggars extracted yet another route from Focal Face, *Of Myth and Legend* E4 6a,4b, the smooth wall bisecting *Ulysses Factor's* traverse then a line to its right. A little to the north in Two Legged Zawn Paul Twomey, Dave Viggars and Ben Bransby took the left arête of the Voyage Wall finishing up 'choss' at E1, 5a,4c called *Alicia the Wild Physique* (I'm sure the first pitch is fine however).

The Battery cliff took a major pounding this year from the guns of the Harrison's. The steep black groove left of *Every Ready* was **Black Power** E4 6a, said to be a 'leg pumper'. **Free Range** E2 5b,5c takes the steep crack and technical groove left again whilst the slim groove system just right of *Supercharged* (another stemming leg pumper) located the **Alternator** E2 5c. Finally here **Wow! Jazz Mugs** E2 5b,5c took the varied line up the pillar containing *Incantations*.

Paul Harrison and Mike Snell found a new crag at the seaward tip of Dead Cow point which, whilst short, gave very accessible excellent rock. Just the sort of place to nip down as the sun sets to finish off the day. **Calf Carcass** E3 6a is the thin crack in the left arête, **Veal Meat Again** E1 5b the central crack line, **Chuck Berry** E1 5b is the thin crack line right again, and **Eric Heffer** VS 4c is the groove in the right arête.

Meanwhile dropping in on Bomber Buttress, Paul and Neil Harrison found a major line in the form of **Herman the German** E3 5c,6a which takes a steep and exciting line up the corner and ramp in the right arête of the buttress. How this had been missed in years gone by only goes to show how many quality routes are yet to be found. Across onto the Egyptian slabs the pair turned **Blue for Tuna** E3 6a,4a right of *Silverado*.

The 'climbers climber' Sandy Wilkie made a welcome return to the new route scene on Lifeboat Buttress, climbing the chimney crack left of *All Hands Lost*, **The Peoples Poet** HVS 5b. Sandy and his partner D.O'Keefe were also having **Suanage Dreams** VS 4c a juggy line left of *Marianne*. (Look Sandy - it's Lundy or Swanage, which is it to be?)

Way out on the St. James's Stone, Paul Harrison and Mike Snell ran about like the **Headless Chicken** E1 5b, the ramp left of *A Climb Called Alice*.

Grant Farquhar and Adam Wainwright had a busy week repeating routes on the Black Wall and the Pathenos. They also made the third ascent of *Wolfspane* and climbed the big wall to its right named **Arther Gibson and the Lunar Tuna of Canned Furniture** E4 6a, don't ask me why.

Ben Brandsby and Paul Twomey claimed another obvious line looked at before right of *Wall of Attrition* on the Torrey Canyon cliff. This crumbly crack line was **Penitence** E5 6a.

Finally in the far north Paul Harrison climbed the slab and arête left of *Strugglers Sidestep*, **Trawler Race** E1 5b, and Mike Snell did the corner system right of *Little White Lie* which he named **Honest Paul** VS 4c.

Simon Cardy

The South West (Cornwall North & South), Devon (North) and Avon 1996

Cornwall

From the depths of Cornwall it is perhaps a tale of the old and the new, with the old being ably represented by evergreen Pat Littlejohn. At Bosigran, along with T.Ralph and M.Chapman, he allowed *Morgawr*, Cornwall's own sea monster to escape up the centre of the Coal Face. This E6 sports a 100 foot 6c pitch to clear the main overhang and is by all accounts a bit of a heart stopper! Pat then moved on to make a free ascent of *Dangerous Visions* on natural gear although Roland Edwards disputes ever using any aid on the first ascent - they do like their mysteries in the south west! Shane Ohly has continued to produce a large quantity of desperates, most of which are unlikely to see many repeats. On Right Angle Cliff, following on from last year's routes, are **Voodoo Child** and **Fuji Frenzy**, both at E7 6c, up the walls above the large sea cave and involving a degree of pre-inspection. More easily, **Blind Fury** E2 5b, courtesy of S.Needham and D.Foster, has some good climbing up the wall to the right of *Rosebud* at Zennor. Mark Edwards also continues to do the business with **Off The Mark** E7 6c, up the wall right of *Black Saper* at Robin's Rocks and **The Paragon Returns** E7 6b, up the overhanging arête at Sennon. Here also is **Messenger From The Furnace** E6 7a, on the wall and slab left of *Angel's Highway*.

On the other coast Dave Viggers acted in **Loco Parentis** E1 5b, to Ben Bransby - a two tiered crack left of *Chopper Chimney* at Pordenack and again on **Blood, Sweat And Fears** E1 5b, a pleasant outing crossing *Immaculate Crack* at Carn Boel. No doubt both of these will prove to have been done by the Edwards'. The whole of this coast then seems to have been the scene of claim and counter claim. On Fox Promontory Shane climbed **The Blade** E6 6b, to find it four grades harder than that given by the first ascensionists (E2). On Chair Ladder's Wolf Buttress, both Shane and Mark Edwards have climbed/claimed various routes around the Animated Wall area - *Aero Dynamics* would appear to vary from E7 7a to E5 6c and **Crash, Boom, Bang** from E8 6c to E6 6b although under different names from Mark. This rather sorry state of affairs continues onto Polostoc Point where *Amazing Things* is up the central arête at E6 6b or E4 6a - pick your route and take your choice! At Logan Rock Shane has produced a number of short hard routes of which **Phobia** E7 6c, and **Wet Dreams** E8 6c, would appear

Area Notes

to command respect out of all proportion to their height - these are situated on the smaller isolated slabs. Further on, on the left-hand side of Coffin Cove is *Manslaughter* E7 6c, and this is matched by *14 Lives*, *13 Souls* on the steep slab right of *Hail*, taking the central line.

It would be nice to think 1997 will see a degree of reconciliation in Cornwall, some repeats of Shane's routes, some route descriptions from Mark and Rowland and England winning something - all vain hopes probably. On a more constructive note Tim Dennell's new topo style guide should be out this summer to fill in some of the missing information.

Devon

On the South Devon coast Dave Scott-Maxwell and Dave Turnball have added to the country's stock of esoteria with *The Double Locks Mustard Pot Incident* - a three pitch HVS up the skyline ridge of Beer Head, of which the final crux pitch is entirely horizontal! Paul Twomey continued this deplorable low standard climbing idea with *Amid Devonias Alps*, a VS 4c on the east face of the rarely visited Leedon Tor. At the Old Redoubt Ian Parnell joined *Yardarm* and *The New Stoneage* with the strangely named *Sub Low Extension* at E4 6a and joined up with Dave Henderson for *Gotcha*, an E2 6a slot on the underside of the fishing promontory near the Bismark Wall. Of more importance perhaps *How To Steal A Million* E5 6a, is a wild trip on wayout holds up the blunt undercut arête beneath *False Alarms*. More sedately *Moonstone* is 100 feet of grade 3 ice to add to the sum of Devon's winter climbing - a sub sport if ever there was one! It is situated within Meldon Quarry near Okehampton and can be blamed squarely on Dave Hillebrandt and Martine Scholl.

Avon

In the Bristol area, Cheddar has seen surprisingly little traffic in 1996 and subsequently many of the routes are becoming seriously overgrown. A degree of pre-inspection/cleaning may be advisable for some of the longer, harder routes especially in the more remote gullies. In Avon, only the upper wall has seen any appreciable development which probably means there is very little scope left anywhere on this city centre crag. John Alcock offered up *Spinductor*, to the left of *Arms Race*, which was climbed in a similar style to many of the routes on this wall i.e. top-roped and practiced beforehand. John then teamed up with Ben Bransby to give *Level Headed*, a two-pitch E6 6b,6c right to left traverse across most of the upper wall routes. M.Telfer and I.Whitehouse managed to squeeze in *Uncertain Smile* (is there now one of these on every crag?) to the area left of *Gammer Gorton's Needle*. Out in the boondocks Martin Crocker has pulled another pair of routes from the main crag of Brea Down. *No Worries* E5 6a, takes a line 20 feet right of *Distant Voices* while *Nightmare Alley* E4 5c, is even more loose and scary to the right of *No Worries*. Martin has also developed a short bolted area on the tip of the headland for which a topo guide will shortly be available. Mells is a 40 feet limestone crag, two miles east of Frome which has been developed by Martin, with five routes from HS to E4 6a, and is apparently a good, sunny evening venue. In a similar vein is Oakhill with seven routes from HVS 5b to E3 6a, again courtesy of Martin. Holcombe Quarries is a much bigger quarry system in the heart of the Mendips which has been an open secret for a number of years and which features mainly sports style climbing with the odd horror show traditional route to scare yourself on. Routes vary from VS to some mighty E6 6b test pieces and although perhaps not a crag to travel vast distances to, it does offer some good sport locally to Bristol. In the main Gordon Jenkin, Francis Haden, Ken Wilkinson, Ed Heslam and Keith Marsdes are to blame. For further information on these areas, cheap topo style guides are available from: Gordon Jenkin, 36 Burghley Road, St.Andrews, Bristol, BS6 5BN.

Dave Viggars

Pembroke 1996

The main event in Pembroke for 1996 was of course the Sea Empress oil spill disaster. Despite being an environmental catastrophe, it did not manage to put much of a halt on new routing activity, with over 150 first ascents made in the year. The worst affected areas from a climbing point of view were Huntsman's Leap and Stennis Ford, because they are such sheltered lawns, and climbing in these areas over the summer was particularly noticeable by its absence. The new guidebook continues to enthuse regular activists and has produced a surge of activity from more newly acquainted Pembroke devotees.

Routes have gone up all over Pembroke, with practically no areas escaping the relinquishment of virgin rock, but by far the most ferociously developed area of the year was Beck's Bay, with over 30 new additions: Needless to say, the new routing frenzy in this area was instigated by Pembroke stalwart Paul Donnithorne.

Beginning with North Pembroke, where two more routes were squeezed onto the popular Carreg-

y-Barcud. Andrew Walker and Susie Hartsham went *Bap Boxing for Beginners* E2 5b, between *Safari* and *Mobassa*, while enthusiastic local Steve Quinton climbed the clean groove 20ft left of *Sometimes*, producing *Roll on Summer* HS. Charlie Viganò made two ascents in St.Non's Bay left of *Cormorant Front*: *Tidewatch*, a VS corner and *Spock*, a HVS on the wall further right. In the St.David's Head area Quinton has been busy, firstly in Steep Zawn where he had to *Take the Subway* VS 4c, with J.Worsley, which starts at *Elbow* and follows the easiest line across the slab to finish below *Strongbow*; then with S.Fitton he climbed the obvious steep corner bounding the lower overhanging wall on the right, producing *Captain Hook* E2 5c.

Range West has seen very little activity this year, despite an attendance of over 200 to the combined briefings. The continuing bureaucracy is, not surprisingly, dulling climbers enthusiasm for the area. Also the flood of routes produced in the initial years has left little virgin rock at the lower end of the scale. Nevertheless, some impressive ascents have been made, firstly on Greenham Common's infamous leaning wall, by Steve Mayers and Grant Farquhar, who added two E6s, one either side of *Tasmanian Devil* and John Arran climbed *To Be or Not To Be* E7 6b, which starts from the perched block on the ramp of *Aperitif* and, after pulling into the scoop, makes its way up and rightwards. He then teamed up with Ian Parnel on Mount Sion Central, at the left hand side of the platform; *A Little Touched* E4 4b,5c, *Quite Absurd* E6 6b,5c, and *Perfectly Ridiculous* E7 6b, which follows a groove left of *The Scorchier*, were the results. Between the ramp in the same area and Juggy Point, Ros Bell and Mike Wilson added a couple of VSs, *Datsma Groovethang* and *Pitcher This* and at the point itself Chris and Mike Simpkins added *Jugless* S 4a, 10ft left of *Jugular*.

Into the less bureaucratic, but soon to be more restricted, Range East. The Germans have moved out but rumour has it that the TA, amongst others, are coming in, and this may lead to the range being closed on more weekends. The access situation is not looking good for Pembroke.

In the Elegug Stack's Bay area an unclimbed stack was discovered by Paul Donnithorne and Dave Scott-Maxwell. This 150ft pinnacle lies between the Cauldron and the Stack Rocks car park and surrendered a two pitch HVS, *The Old Mad Man*. It was descended using a simultaneous abseil and to reach the top of the mainland the adventurous pair found *Madman's Crack* E2 5b,5a, a corner crack and chimney between *Madman's Wall* and *A Madman in the Pulpit*. In the Cauldron itself, P.Shepard and Mike Dawes found *It's That Old Devil Called Ron* E5,6a,6a, left of *Toil and Trouble*.

On Battleship Buttress Emma Alsford and Donnithorne climbed the stunningly strong line of *The Vampire* E4 5c,5c, with some aid through the initial roof, and less than a month later George Smith and Crispin Waddy freed the roof at E5 6b, also adding an independent second pitch.

Next to Rusty Walls, where Dave and Moira Viggers with Bob Allen had a *Brief Encounter* E2 5b, up the crest of the buttress overlooking *Windjammer* and on the Lucky Strike wall, Scott-Maxwell and Paul Dearnold added the independent line of *Good Luck Mr Gronski* E1/2 5b left of *Strike Lucky*. (A very interesting story about the route name...). Further right Crispin Waddy, Watson and Viggers climbed the diagonal line of XXX E3 6a, starting from the chimney of *Scapegoat* and finishing up the arête overlooking *Solar Quest*.

At Misty Walls Donnithorne and Alsford *Missed The Boat* E3 5c, an eliminate but good climbing up the shallow groove and diagonal crack left of *Bon Voyage* and the same team added four lines just around the corner at Quarry Point. The small hidden zawn containing *Cereal Killer* is now known as Breakfast Zawn and boasts the tasty lines of *Jam Toast* HVS 5a, *Crumpt Crack* E1 5b, and *Greasy Bacon* VS 4b, on its east wall and *Have Your Oats* E1 5b, on its west wall.

In the neighbouring Hollow Caves Bay, Smith, together with Noel Craine found *The Giant Pumpkins* E6 6b, through a cave in the north east corner of the bay, which brings us to Saddle Head where 15 new routes have sprung up. In the Cyclops Eye Area Paul Twomey, with Viggers found *Surform* E4 5c, left of *Sharp Practice* and *Size Isn't Everything* E3 6a, a slightly eliminate arête right of *Bridge of Size*. Further right Bill Lounds was *Leaning to the Left* HVS 5a up the 'V' and slab above, and then with Quinton climbed the arête on the left edge of the sea cave at E1 5b (un-named). On the main cliff 30 yards west of *Blue Sky*, Lounds discovered pleasant climbing on *Political Animal* HVS 5a, which took a roof and groove, and from the right end of the same ledge Ben Bransby and John Alcock climbed the steep wall and groove above, *Evening Light* E4 6a.

Onto Bosherton Head, which has become increasingly popular over the last few years, not least due to the notorious *Preposterous Tales*, which continues to be the site of many an epic. The huge overhanging wall on the west side of this headland, which was bolted a few years ago by Pete Oxley, causing much outrage, now sports *The Big Issue* E9 6c; the hardest route in Pembroke and a tremendous achievement by John Dunne. Although climbed in sporting style, the route was led on natural protection. On the south face of the headland Stefan Doerr and Dan Donovan climbed *Hydrophobia* E5 6b, left of *Frigid Digits* and just right of the *Preposterous Tales* cave entrance.

Donnithorne and John Hornsby found *The Book* E2 5b, a big bottomless corner discovered by traversing left from *Chakademus* and *Pliers*. On the east side, at the entrance to Huntsman's Leap, Martin Crocker ascended the corner system between *Big in America* and *Insignificance* at E6 6b, while Waddy and Andy Long made *Creature* E6 6b,6b, a bizarre expedition starting as for *Woeful*. Opposite these, on the east wall, Viggers and Jim Clayton had a *Leap of Faith* E4 6a, left of *Blind Magic*, and around the corner on Stuntsman's Buttress Donnithorne and Viggers were *One Man and a Scrote* E3 6a, on the crack up to the roof of the cave right of *Out of my Mind*. Viggers added four more routes in this area with various partners - *Dodging the Issue* E1 5b, *The Fast Show* E2 5c *Jessie's Diet* HVS 5a and *Job of Work* S.

On Stennis Head Tom Charles Edwards and Adam Livett made *The Anvil Chorus*, a short HVS 5b below the easy descent while Viggers was again busy with *Reincarnation* E2 5b, right of *Riders on the Storm* and needing a very low tide to start.

Newton Head, surprisingly, has seen a few additions this year with Alsford and Bob Watson climbing *Independissima* HS 4b, on the arête and wall left of *Overhead Man*; and then with regular partner Donnithorne she ascended *Aqua Marine* E2 5b, to the right of that route.

On Chapel Point Donnithorne found Alan Leary at *The Altar* E3 5c, between *Cat and Mouse* and *Barnacle Ben*, which has various features including a chimney, flake, groove and slab, after which they stormed *The Temple* E4 6a,5b, which climbs the obvious corner at the left end of the Weekend Warrior Wall, gained via a cave on the left.

Arran and Parnell were yet again a force to be reckoned with, this time on St Govan's Head, where they started in an overhanging crack in the sidewall left of *Public Enemy*, to finish with *Paranoid and Sunburnt* E6 6b,6a. Parnell also found *A Room Full of Ghosts* E1 5b in a chimney below the lookout fence and Arran soloed *Space Case* E3 5c, between *Test Case* and *Space Cadet*.

St Govan's East delivered *A Little Treasure* E1 5b, to Donnithorne and Alsford up the right side of the arête behind the now collapsed pinnacle and the Lounds' with A.Spurrett found *Seagull Crunch* E1 5b. Between here and Broadhaven Bay a large team ascended another unclimbed stack on its landward face. Scott-Maxwell, Kath Pyke, Andy Donson, Helen and Matt Ward produced *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* S, and had fun with mallow plant belays and simultaneous abseils. On the west side of Broadhaven Bay Alcock and Matthew Bransby found a caver's delight with *Matthew is a Camel* HVS 4c, which takes the left-hand cleft and exits through the hole in the roof.

Alcock, together with Ben Bransby this time, put up the first route on Raming Holes west wall. A strong line up a groove and corner at the right end of the face, but rather muddy, resulting in *Dig For Victory* XS 4c. They also added a couple of lines to the east wall, the more independent being *Blockbuster* E5 6b, which takes a steep wall, groove, then hanging slab 40ft right of *Coloured Skins and Nations*.

A long way east now where Scott-Maxwell and Donnithorne made a bizarre choice on *Long Cave Climb* E2 5a, which climbs the Manorbier fault at East Moors cliff. This is part of a band of sandstone sandwiched between the limestone in South Pembroke, and the route involved 120ft of back and footing up the 4ft wide (and 300ft long) cleft.

Next to Blind Bay where Donnithorne and Doerr picked a central line up the east wall with *The Vision* E2 5b,5a, which finishes up the bottomless headwall left of *Alien World*. Next door at Mother Carey's Kitchen, Bransby teamed up with D.Hume to climb *Mars Bar* E3 5c, the wall opposite *Deep Space/Galaxy*, starting at the pillar between the two seaward facing windows and finishing as for the parent routes.

Last, but by no means least, is the newly developed area of Beck's Bay, which, despite appearances, contains routes of about 80ft in height (mid-tide onwards), on perfect rock with sound finishes and of all grades up to E4. Probably due to the proximity of the pebble beach, these routes are unique and characterised by an unusual quantity of threads, tubes and caves. Scoop Wall is situated in the middle of the Bay and contains the original route *Magic Flute* E1 5b, a delightful climb through scoops, bulges and tubes behind the large block, courtesy of Donnithorne and Doerr, while *Dreamscape* E4 6a, and *The Scoop* E3 5c, take lines to the left and right respectively. Alsford, Donnithorne and Allen climbed *The Squeeze Box* E1 5b, up the first chimney east of Scoop Wall and also on the wall opposite played *Beach Games* VS 4c, up the obvious corner. They then swapped leads to go *Out and Out* E2 5c, from the next cave right, finishing up the corner above. *Topsy Turvy* E1 5b, climbs the prominent slabby supporting pillar of the through cave further right, on which the team were joined by Ben Dressel, who then followed Lounds on *Green Piece* HVS 5a, which bridges up the north east corner of the bay. Alsford had *Buckets of Fun* E1 5b, gaining the obvious crack on the adjacent promontory, to finish up the steep rib, and the next area east of the bay is Finland. *Loud Proud and Well-Endowed* E2 5b, takes the most obvious line up the flake on the right side of the fin, while *The Rankler* E4 6a, takes the left-hand line,

both products of Alsford and Donnithorne. On the overhanging wall east of the fin two counter diagonals were made: Alsford, Donnithorne and Alan Leary on *Seaside Rendezvous* VS 4c, and the right to left traverse climbed by Glenda Huxter and Dave Anderson, *The Wasted Years* El 5b. Donnithorne also made a direct ascent through *The Wasted Years* with 500 Miles E3 5c, (so named because it was his 500th new route, and counting...!) On neighbouring Bubbleton crag, Donnithorne also placed a couple of worthwhile additions - *The Umbrella* El 5b, with Doerr, climbs the obvious steep wide crack right of *The Long Wait*, and *Fresh Slant* E2 5b, with Leary, takes the rightwards trending rampline to the right.

At last, I am finished, but I don't think it will be long before another Pembroke guidebook is in demand - sorry chaps!

Emma Alsford

Peak District 1996

So what's been going on in the Peak for the last twelve months - another breathless period of catch-up; innovation above and beyond this physical realm; or has it been one of those rare years of dormancy, where everyone rests their battered tendons to take stock?

Well it's certainly not been the latter, more a combination of the first two options, with perhaps a 60-40 split in favour of catch-up. I'm reminded of that seminal period in the late '70s and early '80s where Tom Proctor's routes still had the 'bogeyman' aura about them, and the Sheffield crew were on a mission to blow the Peak's nose.

Little routes with big numbers, and big routes with even larger numbers have been brought to book, and there were more than a few jitters along the way. Vying for the top award were Marc Le Menestral and Seb Grieve.

Self effacing Marc, the pukka Parisian powerhouse, stormed *Brad Pitt's* brutishness with effortless ease. Formerly regarded as the hardest boulder problem at Stanage, if not the world, Marc's ascent left more than a few locals slack jawed. One wag commenting: "It's a shame he's such a nice bloke..."

Seb, by way of extreme contrast, packed his 'guns', a body weight haul bag and enough beta blockers to calm a raging rhino (and if he didn't he should have), when he repeated John Dunne's *Partheon Shot*. Clipperty-clop-type tales aside, and glossing over the back-biting which usually accompanies such feats of dare-devilry, I think a cap doffing is due Seb, his haul bag and the blockers.

Second ascent madness has continued unabated with many of Johnny Dawes unrepeated masterpieces finally succumbing. Seb Grieve, on an adrenalin roll, managed *Gala* at Black Rocks, although the wind was taken out of his scarier-than thou sails by the up and coming Zaff Ali. On an early attempt leading up to his successful third ascent, young Zaff took it upon himself to use a fifth point of contact when things got more than a tad out of hand. He ended up having to bite the proffered top rope, his fingers otherwise engaged in fending off the inevitable bone crushing fall.

Bamford, Dawes and the scaleless slab of *Smoked Salmon* E8 7b. "It's about as hard as slab climbing gets," reckoned Nick Dixon who took six days to munch his way up the route's less than obvious delights.

Cruising like a Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost, Neil Bentley has also been very active on the repeats front, taking Jerry Moffatt's latest Froggat testpiece, *Renegade Master*, to pieces in short order. His refusal to be drawn on its true grade may well indicate a strong desire to keep his present job.

From the Eastern Edges to those of the West, and from the Dark to the White Peak no stone has been left unturned. There has been a veritable grit revival, and this snapshot can barely do it justice. The edited highlights that follow are by no means comprehensive, they barely scrape in at secondary modern, but they are an education. If "could do better" should escape your lips then I suggest you buy the forthcoming guides to get the fuller picture.

Agden rocher has had another of its periodic overhauls courtesy of Paul Harrison. When he's not over t'water on Lundy, our Paul can be found beaver away at what he does best, discovering esoteric gems.

Richie "I'll just pitter-patter up this thing of Pollit's at Curbar", rang time at the bar for *Knocking on Heaven's Door* and its peg, giving rise to the aptly named *Born Slippy* E8 6c. He was last seen disappearing into the Underworld in search of a couple of much needed lager lagers.

Publication of the **Chatsworth** Guide proved a much needed shot in the arm for this area's popularity. Not surprisingly Johnny Dawes, for it is he, added something of a flight path to the Black Rocks Promontory. A swift lasso of the *Rope Trick* spike protects what can only be described as an airborne adventure. Obviously the price tag of E6 6c is a stab in the dark, and there will certainly be no

need to book early to avoid disappointment.

Cratcliffe beckoned two lottery supplicants, namely Martin Veale and Neil Foster, to gamble with a fulsome pair of routes and a sly wink which said "It could be you."

Beneath the start of *Sepulchre* lies a fine boulder, once covered with vegetation and now sporting a rather fetching No. 1 all over, and an arête to die for. *Grimoire* E6 6c demands flexibility, a cool head, and above all a good shampoo and conditioner.

On the other hand, Mr Foster's *The Long Distance Runnel* E5 6c, takes a direct line above the crack of *Requiem*. The alluring crevice above demands a good length for the extending moves to reach it from *Mordaunt*, and a pinch of panache to stick with it once entered.

Over in Amber Valley the crags have been resounding to Richie Patter still singing his lager lager song while adding *Come fly with me* at E2 5c - a bold and blind line between *Mr Crispy Crusoe* and *Corpse Crack*. Attracted by the catawailing, Kim Thomson decided not to let Patter have it all his own way, and added *Hot Timing* E2 5b, which traverses left under the roofs from the ledge on *Creeping Crack*.

Niall Grimes, aka Grimer, got his *Northern Comfort* at a conservative E6 6c when he tackled the wall above the left side of the *Valkyrie* flake at the Roaches. This old Simon Nadin project demands super bendy-stretchy arms to overcome the crux reach - I think a swift pint of Southern Comfort should numb the pain for all us shorties.

Sticking with Staffordshire for a paragraph or two, Mark Katz has been very active. The 'super boulder' by Rockhall Cottage now sports an E6 6c leaning arête by way of *Particle Exchange*. What with all the gluons and taceons knocking about, Mark went ballistic and followed up with an E5 6b on Hen Cloud, *Desperado*.

Ray's Roof, garden gloves, sticky tape, blood sweat and tears, these are not any of my favourite things, but Johnny quite likes them. Hence *Johnny's Indirect Reentry* E5 6b up the third slug trail right of *Ray's Roof*, and following it in hot pursuit Sean Myles climbed Seb Grieve's old project to the left of *Ray's Roof* at E6 6b.

Even Stanage and Burbage have been blessed new route wise. To Burbage South a bouncing baby arête weighing in at a healthy E4 7a and named *Desperate* by its doting father Johnny Dawes, and Stanage, well let's see now, is it, yes it is - quads! Well sort of. You see Martin Veale forgot to register the birth of *Dope Test*, an E3 6a up the roof and arête above the start of *Wall and Slab*, and the poor kid hasn't had a birthday since. As for Paul Mitchell's *Help the young Xs* 6b+, it's balding good looks and mature ways haven't gone down too well at kindergarden (i.e. the overhanging pocketed arête right of *Millsom's Minion*), and could well be asked to move up a class. Meanwhile Percy Bishton and David Simmonite spawned *Big Dave's Wall* E3 6a, a teething problem up the wall right of *Agony Crack*. As for John Welford's sprog left of *Magnetic North*, is it human? At E7 7a *Little Women* ain't so little, and is probably something of a tomboy, though good looking all the same.

Bleaklow and Kinder got some attention too, with a host of reprobates crawling out of the woodwork to prove there is life in the old dog yet. Though detailing the many and varied exploits would take forever, it was Malc Baxter who caught my eye with a new E1 5b at Bleaklow Brook. *Silent Wings* climbs the arête left of *Fatality*.

And so to grit's lesser cousin for the year, limestone. Not much to report really. A few sport routes, a further bolt debate and a crate of Sikka. No revival there then?

Nick White

